

Tobacco Control Asia Pacific Monthly Bulletin

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Highlights

Regional Mayors' Meeting for West and East Nusa Tenggara to strengthen subnational tobacco control efforts



Delegates of Regional Mayors' Meeting for West and East Nusa Tenggara

During the ADINKES National Meeting, Vital Strategies grantee Udayana Central organized a Regional Mayors' Meeting for West and East Nusa Tenggara, bringing together governors, mayors, and representatives from 31 districts to strengthen subnational tobacco control efforts. The meeting served as a platform for local leaders to exchange experiences and identify key priorities, including the implementation of smokefree policies, bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS), prevention of tobacco industry interference, and the use of local resources to support tobacco control initiatives.

The meeting was attended by 271 participants from across the two provinces, reflecting strong regional engagement and commitment to advancing public health policies. During the event, the Governors of West and East Nusa Tenggara expressed their commitment to strengthening tobacco control measures in their respective provinces and supporting continued collaboration among local governments.

Monitoring tobacco use and prevention policies

Myanmar: The Ministry of Health disseminated the findings of the 2024 STEPS Survey, highlighting significant progress in reducing tobacco use in Myanmar over the past decade. The survey showed that overall tobacco use declined from 54.5% in 2014 to 45.6% in 2024. Among men, tobacco use decreased from 79.8% to 68.2%, while among women it dropped from 29.1% to 19.4%. Daily tobacco use also fell from 44.7% to 38.4%, smoking prevalence declined from 26.1% to 23.3%, and smokeless tobacco use saw a substantial reduction from 43.2% to 33.4%.

Protecting people from tobacco smoke



Meeting with parliament leaders from Tanah Datar and Banjarmasin

Indonesia: Vital Strategies supported the Ministry of Health and the Depok City Government in hosting parliament leaders from Tanah Datar and Banjarmasin to share best practices and lessons learned on implementing smoke-free initiatives and strengthening local tobacco control measures.

- The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Home Affairs, and Central Java provincial authorities reviewed progress on smoke-free policy implementation, noting that only 2 of 8 districts currently have regulations in place. Targeted advocacy and technical support are planned to accelerate adoption in the remaining districts.
- Vital Strategies grantee Indonesian Association of Public Health Experts (ADINKES), together with the Ministry of Health, supported Kepulauan Sula and Baubau City in enacting smoke-free policies, which are expected to protect over 260,000 people from tobacco exposure.
- Vital Strategies conducted a high-level meeting with the Denpasar City Secretariat to strengthen commitment, coordination, accountability, and enforcement of smoke-free policies.

- Vital Strategies conducted a coordination meeting with smoke-free coordinators and heads of health centres in Makassar to strengthen coordination and support enforcement activities. In April, 100 venues in Makassar were randomly inspected. Of these, 58 were found compliant with the law, while 41 were non-compliant. A total of 20 venues/retailers received warning notices.

Philippines: Members of the Tabuk City Smoke-Free Task Force conducted enforcement activities by removing tobacco and vape promotional materials from business establishments in Bulanao and Bulanao Norte. “No Smoking/No Vaping” signage was also installed and displayed in public spaces and transport modes, including ombaks and other local conveyances, to strengthen smoke-free compliance.



Smoke-Free enforcement activities in Tabuk City

- The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) also strengthened local enforcement coordination through task force engagements, including planning for intensified smoke-free operations in Quezon City and closer collaboration with barangay and city-level implementers. In support of these efforts, posters were recently installed in Barangay Bagong Silangan by a team led by Barangay Councilor Jun Quizon, encouraging residents, visitors, and workers to cooperate in making Quezon City safer, cleaner, and healthier.



MMDA receiving a Plaque of Recognition for its Tobacco Control initiatives in Metro Manila

The MMDA received a Plaque of Recognition from the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use for its commitment to smoke-free policies and evidence-based tobacco control in Metro Manila. The recognition was presented by partners including Bloomberg Philanthropies, Vital Strategies, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Imagine Law, and the Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance at Novotel Hotel in Quezon City.

Representatives from Partnerships for Health, Agriculture, Nation-Building, and Socio-economic Upliftment, Inc. (PNBI) paid a courtesy visit to Mayor Lany M. Baobaoen-Carbonell of San Gabriel to introduce the organization and discuss the Smoke-Free La Union Project. The team presented the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) standard template for smoke-free and vape-free ordinances and expressed readiness to support the Local Government Unit of San Gabriel in developing a local ordinance. The initiative aims to promote a healthier and safer community through stronger tobacco and vape control measures.



Meeting with Mayor of San Gabriel for smoke-free activities

- Vital Strategies grantees Data and Implementation Sciences for Health (DISH), PNBI, and Transcend provided technical assistance and capacity-building support to local government units (LGUs) in La Union, South Cotabato, General Santos City, Benguet, Baguio City, and Iloilo Province. These coordinated efforts strengthened local adoption and implementation of WHO FCTC-aligned smoke-free and vape-free ordinances, while also supporting improved enforcement mechanisms at the subnational level.
- **Timor-Leste:** The National Alliance for Tobacco Control, Timor-Leste (ANCT-TL) is planning to conduct a smoke-free compliance survey to assess adherence to existing tobacco control regulations across selected public places. The survey will systematically observe compliance with smoke-free provisions, including the presence of no-smoking signage, absence of active smoking, and restrictions on tobacco advertising and promotion. Findings from this exercise will help identify enforcement gaps, inform targeted interventions, and support ongoing advocacy efforts to strengthen implementation of smoke-free policies at the national and subnational levels.

Offering help to quit tobacco use

- **Indonesia:** The Ministry of Health has finalized the Smoking Cessation brief advice pocketbook guideline, which is awaiting final signature from the Director General of Disease Control prior to dissemination.
- The Ministry of Health has trained more than 2,700 health workers through its online learning platform on providing brief advice for smoking cessation. Webinar views on YouTube have reached 7,042, bringing total outreach to 9,742. With the training module remaining open through April, total outreach is expected to reach 10,155 by the end of the month.



Meeting with the Director of CENAT and his team

Cambodia: Vital Strategies and the National Centre for Health Promotion (NCHP) held a meeting with the Director of the National Tuberculosis Control Program (CENAT) and his team, securing commitment to record smoking status and secondhand smoke exposure in TB patient cards. NCHP also developed two smoking cessation guides tailored for TB patients and primary health care settings to strengthen the integration of tobacco cessation into routine health services.

Warning about the dangers of tobacco

- **Indonesia:** An interministerial meeting was held between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance to discuss the draft Ministerial Regulation (RPMK) on packaging and health warnings, focusing on strengthening pictorial health warnings and standardised packaging measures.
- A public consultation was conducted with the Ministry of Health and the Coordinating Ministry of Human Development and Culture to gather feedback on proposed maximum nicotine and tar limits in tobacco products.

Nepal: The National Health Education, Information and Communication Center (NHEICC) conducted a multi-stakeholder meeting on 9 April 2026 in Kathmandu to discuss the re-submission of the draft plain packaging policy to the Cabinet (Honorary Phase II). The meeting brought together 20 participants, including government representatives, legal experts, public health professionals, and WHO. Discussions highlighted the importance of plain packaging in strengthening tobacco control, while noting challenges related to enforcement, coordination, and monitoring. Participants also reviewed revisions to the draft policy, discussed progress on pictorial health warnings, and raised emerging concerns around e-cigarettes and youth use, contributing to a comprehensive and constructive dialogue.



Multi-stakeholder meeting to discuss the re-submission of the draft plain packaging policy to the Cabinet

- Action Nepal held a meeting with media professionals to raise awareness on plain packaging initiatives and promote the implementation of 100% pictorial health warnings on tobacco products. The engagement aimed to strengthen public understanding of tobacco harms and support compliance with national tobacco control regulations.

Enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship



Meeting with the Mayor of Magelang

Indonesia: MTCC Magelang held a meeting with the Mayor of Magelang to follow up on recommendations from the APCAT Summit. During the discussion, the Mayor expressed commitment to implementing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS) and point-of-sale displays (POSD), and reported that 30 tobacco advertising billboards had already been removed.

- Vital Strategies held meetings with the Head of the Jakarta Provincial Health Department and the Regional Development Planning Agency (BAPPEDA) to support the inclusion of a sustained ban on tobacco advertising in the proposed amendment to Governor Regulation No. 100/2021.
- **Philippines:** The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) strengthened coordination across Metro Manila LGUs through the rollout of a digital monitoring database and provision of technical support for enforcement and policy implementation. Inspections conducted across 164 schools and 38 transport terminals identified over 2,400 violations related to tobacco and vape sales, TAPS, and signage compliance, with findings shared with LGUs for follow-up action.

Protecting public health policies from tobacco industry interferences

Nepal: Action Nepal hosted a workshop titled “Exposing and Resisting the Tobacco Industry’s Dangerous Nexus: Charting a Strategic Path Forward for Collective Action,” bringing together 35 participants. The event focused on examining the tobacco industry’s links with government bodies and its interferences tactics. Participants discussed strategies to collectively counter industry interference, strengthen tobacco control efforts, and enhance government accountability.



Workshop for exposing tobacco industry’s tactics

Novel tobacco and nicotine products



Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport's notification to prohibit the use, sale, distribution, and advertising of e-cigarettes and HTPs at educational and sport facilities

Cambodia: On 29 April 2026, the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport issued separate directives strengthening controls on electronic cigarettes and heated tobacco products (HTPs). The Ministry of Labour prohibited the use, possession, production, and storage of e-cigarettes, smoking chemicals, and shisha at enterprises, companies, and factories to protect health, safety, and workplace order. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education instructed all public and private educational institutions, dormitories, community learning centers, gyms, and sports facilities to strictly prohibit the use, sale, distribution, and advertising of e-cigarettes and HTPs within and around their premises.

General Tobacco Control

- **Indonesia:** Vital Strategies joined a meeting with Indonesia's Vice Minister of Health, dr. Benjamin Paulus Octavianus, alongside TCSC IAKMI and the Youth Forum, to discuss ICTOH 2026 and tobacco control priorities in Indonesia. During the meeting, the Vice Minister expressed concern over the increasing misuse of vape products and showed strong support for strengthening tobacco control measures, including stricter vape regulations and expanded smoke-free areas. Vital Strategies emphasized the importance of comprehensive tobacco control policies, including a total ban on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS), stronger smoke-free policies, and higher tobacco excise taxes to reduce cigarette affordability and smoking prevalence.

The Association of Indonesia Subnational Health Authorities (ADINKES) organized a National Meeting in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Health, bringing together more than 700 participants from health offices and public health laboratories across Indonesia. During the opening plenary, speakers highlighted the critical role of tobacco control in ending tuberculosis in Indonesia, emphasizing that TB elimination will not be possible without addressing tobacco use. Key messages included the need to increase tobacco taxes, strengthen smoking cessation services through primary health care, and integrate tobacco control into routine TB programs and policies



Governor of West Nusa Tenggara commits to strengthening TC at the opening of ADINKES National Meeting



Meeting with the Jakarta Bureau of Development and Environment

Smoke Free Jakarta convened a meeting with the Jakarta Bureau of Development and Environment and related agencies to advance the adoption of the Governor Regulation on tobacco control, supporting ongoing efforts to strengthen smoke-free policies in the capital.

Cambodia: Vital Strategies and the National Center for Health Promotion (NCHP) met with H.E. Or Vandine, Secretary of State and spokesperson for the Ministry of Health, Cambodia, to discuss progress on the 90% pictorial health warning (PHW) policy and upcoming activities, including the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) meeting, a session on Article 5.3, and preparations for World No Tobacco Day (WNTD). The IMC meeting will also serve as a platform to discuss initial strategies for drafting legislation on e-cigarettes, retail licensing, and illicit tobacco control.



Dr. Tara Singh Bam's meeting with H.E. Or Vandine



Delegates from the capacity-building workshop on tobacco and e-cigarette control

The Ministry of Health of Cambodia conducted a capacity-building workshop on tobacco and e-cigarette control in Kampong Chhnang Province, chaired by H.E. Dr. Or Vandine, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Health and Permanent Vice-Chair of the Tobacco Product Control Committee. The workshop aimed to strengthen collaboration and capacity among ministries and relevant institutions in implementing the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). A total of 39 participants, including the representatives from government agencies, WHO Cambodia, CMH, and SEATCA attended the workshop.

Nepal: Vital Strategies and Action Nepal team met with the Minister for Health and Population, Dr. Sudha Sharma Gautam, to discuss tobacco control priorities. During the meeting, the team emphasized that effective implementation of the tobacco control law should be the government's main priority. Concerns were also raised about the growing use of vaping and e-cigarettes, highlighting the need for immediate steps to regulate these products and protect the younger generation. In response, the Minister reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to tobacco control, acknowledged challenges due to pending court cases, and noted that efforts would be made to address these issues and strengthen regulation, including for e-cigarettes and vaping.



Meeting with the Minister for Health and Population, Dr. Sudha Sharma Gautam



Workshop on Smoke and Smokeless Tobacco Control and Regulation

The National Health Education, Information and Communication Centre (NHEICC) organized a National Workshop on Smoke and Smokeless Tobacco Control and Regulation on 31 March 2026 in Lalitpur. Held at Hotel Square, the workshop brought together 56 participants, including government officials, legal experts, public health professionals, WHO representatives, NGOs, and other key stakeholders. The workshop aimed to strengthen coordination and advance efforts on tobacco control and regulation in Nepal.

Vital Strategies and Action Nepal have advanced tobacco control efforts through high-level engagement with the Acting Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City, resulting in a jointly developed annual action plan to strengthen tobacco control implementation in the city. Action Nepal also held meetings with mayors from more than five local governments to build local-level commitment for the effective enforcement and monitoring of tobacco control policies.



Meeting with the Acting Mayor of Kathmandu



Meeting with the Minister for Communication and Information Technology

The Action Nepal team met with Minister for Communication and Information Technology Jagdish Kharel to discuss strengthening public awareness on tobacco control. The team shared an attention letter encouraging the dissemination of evidence-based messages on tobacco and e-cigarettes through radio, television, and digital platforms, particularly during prime time. Minister Kharel acknowledged the importance of the issue and stated that he would direct relevant officials to take the matter forward.

Philippines: Vital Strategies participated in a coordination meeting with the Ateneo School of Government (ASOG) and the Department of Health–Bureau of International Health Cooperation (DOH–BIHC) on 27 February 2026 in Quezon City. The discussion explored opportunities to strengthen collaboration on public health governance and tobacco control. Vital Strategies reaffirmed its commitment to supporting evidence-informed policy and fostering strong institutional partnerships to advance tobacco control efforts.



Meeting with ASOG and DOH-BIHC

- Transcend continued supporting implementation through orientation and application of tools such as the Index of Tobacco Control Sustainability (ITCS) and MPOWER-based trainings in Benguet and Baguio City, strengthening LGU capacity for enforcement, monitoring, and sustainability of tobacco control programs.



“No Smoking/No Vaping” signage installation initiative in Tabuk City

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