

Tobacco Control Asia Pacific Monthly Bulletin

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Highlights

8th APCAT Summit Unites Regional Leaders to Advance Tobacco Free Cities



Delegates of 8th APCAT Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia

The 8th Asia Pacific Cities Alliance for Health and Development (APCAT) Summit was held in Jakarta on 25–26 January 2026 under the theme “Together We Bring Health Solutions,” convening over 200 delegates from 41 cities across eight countries. Mayors, governors, public health experts and civil society representatives reaffirmed their commitment to advancing tobacco- and nicotine-free cities. Dr. Bima Arya Sugiarto, Vice Minister of Home Affairs, called for innovative communication strategies and stronger cross-sector collaboration to sustain tobacco control efforts.

A key highlight was the appointment of Dr. Hasto Wardoyo, Mayor of Yogyakarta, as the new Chair of APCAT, succeeding Dr. Bima Arya Sugiarto and Francis Anthony Garcia, who have led the alliance since 2016 and expanded it from 12 to 133 cities. Leaders and partners underscored the importance of effective enforcement, sustained political commitment and local leadership to ensure tobacco control policies achieve meaningful health impact. Jakarta’s Vice Governor Rano Karno also highlighted concerns over rising e-cigarette use among youth, noting the province’s adoption of a strengthened smoke-free policy in December 2025 that prohibits smoking and vaping in public places, workplaces and public transport.

The Summit concluded with the adoption of a declaration recognizing APCAT as a critical platform for collaboration and shared learning across the region. Delegates acknowledged the heavy toll of preventable deaths from tobacco use, noncommunicable diseases, tuberculosis and antimicrobial resistance, and committed to advancing comprehensive tobacco and nicotine-free policies, increasing taxes on unhealthy products, strengthening accountability in public policy and investing in tobacco control as a core prevention strategy.

Monitoring tobacco use and prevention policies

Nepal: With support from Vital Strategies, National Health Education Information And Communication Center (NHEICC) conducted a discussion session to finalize the questionnaire for the KAP study on the use of electronic cigarettes/vapes, chewing tobacco, and smoking among youth in Nepal. The meeting brought together 30 participants from the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP), Department of Health Services, NHRC, WHO, NGOs/INGOs, and other stakeholders. The session focused on refining survey questions prior to pretesting, aligning them with study objectives to assess youth knowledge, attitudes, practices, prevalence, and influencing factors related to tobacco and vaping. Participants emphasized growing concerns about early initiation and increasing e-cigarette use among youth, highlighting the importance of evidence-informed prevention strategies.



Participants of discussion session on finalization of the questionnaire for the KAP study on the use of electronic cigarettes/vapes in Nepal

Protecting people from tobacco smoke



Socialization meeting to strengthen village-based smoke-free areas in Denpasar

Indonesia: On 29 December 2025, the Udayana CENTRAL, in collaboration with the Denpasar City Village Community Empowerment Office and the Denpasar City Customary Village Assembly, organized socialization meeting to strengthen village-based smoke-free areas in Denpasar City. The event engaged 45 village and community leaders to enhance their role in implementing smoke-free policies and integrating them into traditional village regulations. Discussions focused on the role of customary villages in advancing smoke-free areas and highlighted the best practices from Panjer Traditional Village. As a follow-up, villages and customary villages are encouraged to formalize smoke-free policies within their local regulations in line with their respective authorities.

Vital Strategies grantee ADINKES met with leaders from Gorontalo City, South Sumatra, West Sumbawa, Tana Tidung, Banyuasin, Banggai, and Palembang to advocate for strengthened tobacco control policies. Discussions centered on commitments to adopt 100 percent smoke-free regulations, ban tobacco advertising, and implement point-of-sale display bans, reinforcing subnational momentum for comprehensive tobacco control across Indonesia.

Philippines: In Rizal Municipality, Kalinga, with technical support from Transcend, a fully FCTC-compliant smoke-free ordinance was passed and institutionalized, including deputation of enforcers and the commencement of implementation activities.

In Tabuk City, Kalinga, efforts to fully implement the Comprehensive Smoke-Free Ordinance continue to advance. On 26 November 2025, over 70 barangay officials and public order officers were deputized during a Smoke-Free Enforcement Training to enforce Ordinance No. 006, 2025, and conducted a practicum identifying violators, informing establishments near schools, and distributing anti-smoking materials. Local government officials are now finalizing rules for the full rollout of the anti-smoking ordinance to strengthen enforcement and compliance across the city.



Smoke-Free Enforcement Training in Tabuk City, Kalinga



Smoke-Free Youth Health Education and Prevention campaign at Madaymen National High School

Transcend visited Madaymen National High School in Kibungan, Benguet, to conduct a Smoke-Free Youth Health Education and Prevention campaign using social and behavior change communication strategies, encouraging schools nationwide to integrate smoke-free and vape-free education and promote a healthier generation.

Vietnam: On 29 December, Vital Strategies and the Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP), in coordination with the Ninh Binh Center for Disease Control (CDC), conducted two workshops on smoke-free hospitality settings for 150 managers, owners, and workers. Sessions covered legal requirements, internal policy development, and practical skills for addressing customers who smoke. The trainings strengthened the capacity of local authorities to conduct ongoing monitoring and ensure sustained compliance across the hospitality sector.



Workshop on smoke-free hospitality settings in Ninh Binh

Warning about the dangers of tobacco



Meeting on re-submission of the draft Plain Packaging policy

Nepal: A meeting and discussion on re-submitting the draft Plain Packaging policy was held on 13 January 2026 in Kathmandu. The activity was conducted by NHEICC, the Ministry of Health and Population with support from Vital Strategies, and brought together 19 participants, including government officials, legal experts, WHO representatives and other stakeholders. The discussion was focused on the amendment of the Tobacco Products (Control and Regulation) Act, 2011 and evidence on the impact of plain packaging, followed by a detailed review and revision of the draft and its guidelines. Participants also discussed implementation of plain packaging, the status of 100% pictorial health warnings, emerging issues related to e-cigarettes and vaping, and industry reporting requirements. The revised draft was finalized for submission to the Ministry, with emphasis on strengthening enforcement and monitoring.

Timor-Leste: The National Alliance for Tobacco Control (ANCT) met with the Department of Non-Communicable Diseases to review a proposal to replace selected Pictorial Health Warnings (PHW) in line with Law No. 14/2016 (Articles 12–14). The proposal is based on findings from ANCT's 2023 PHW Replacement Survey, which indicated that several existing warnings are losing effectiveness. ANCT has proposed introducing three new warnings - throat cancer, mouth cancer, and pulmonary disease - to replace the current images on impotence, death, and heart attacks. The proposal will be submitted to the Vice Minister of Health for approval.



Meeting on replacement of current PHWs

Enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship

- **Philippines:** The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) conducted inspections of 230 schools and 51 public transportation terminals across Metro Manila, identifying 3,356 violations related to tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, sales, and no-smoking signage.

Elimination of illicit trade in tobacco products



Illegal cigarettes confiscated by MoEF taskforce

Cambodia: The Ministry of Economy and Finance (MoEF) has intensified enforcement against illicit tobacco trade, cracking down on 21 cases of illegal cigarettes. Of these, 18 cases were handled by the General Department of Customs (GDC), while three were jointly managed by the General Department of Taxation (GDT) and GDC. Authorities confiscated a total of 5,702.59 cartons, along with 1,276 packs of mixed-brand cigarettes, 143 kg of hand-rolled cigarettes, 216 kg of chewing tobacco, 2,292 electronic cigarettes, and 640 bottles of e-cigarette liquid. Esse brand cigarettes accounted for 3,179 cartons (55.75%) of the total seizures, followed by 1,250 packs of Hero brand cigarettes.

Protection of public health policies from tobacco industry interferences

- **Cambodia:** The Ministry of Economy and Finance has reported to the Prime Minister on tobacco industry interference following claims by the tobacco association which cited NielsenIQ data that illicit cigarettes account for 49.3% of Cambodia's market. After reviewing the methodology, the Ministry identified significant gaps and inconsistencies, contrasting with WHO and national studies estimating illicit trade at below 20%. The Ministry urged the association to refrain from using misleading figures and to cooperate constructively with authorities in addressing illicit trade.

General Tobacco Control

Indonesia: Vital Strategies held two meetings on 23 and 29 January with Dr. Bima Arya Sugiarto, Vice Minister of Home Affairs, to sustain his commitment and support for strengthening tobacco control at the subnational level. Discussions focused on advancing regional and national alliances, enhancing local policy implementation, and identifying strategies to address and counter tobacco industry interference.



Meeting with Vice Minister of Home Affairs



Meeting with the Ministry of Health, Indonesia

On 29 January, Vital Strategies held a meeting with the Ministry of Health of Indonesia to review progress on the implementation of Government Regulation No. 28 of 2024 and to discuss next steps for strengthening tobacco cessation programs. The discussion covered current policy developments, emerging opportunities, and key challenges, reflecting sustained close collaboration and ongoing engagement with the Ministry to advance national tobacco control efforts.

On 27–28 January, Vital Strategies and partner organizations conducted a Tobacco Control Strategic Meeting in Indonesia to review progress in 2025, set objectives for 2026, and develop a joint action plan to strengthen collaboration. The meeting brought together more than 85 participants, including 26 local civil society and professional organizations, youth groups, international partners from the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use, and representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Home Affairs, and Ministry of Communication and Digital Information. The event provided a valuable platform to reflect on achievements, align priorities for the coming year, enhance synergies, and foster stronger coordination between civil society and national government stakeholders.



Participants of Indonesia Tobacco Control Partners Meeting 2026

- In January, Vital Strategies grantee, the Muhammadiyah Tobacco Control Centre at the University of Magelang, conducted five meetings with the Regent of Wonosobo, the Regent of Kendal, the Mayor of Salatiga, the Mayor of Magelang, and the Mayor of Surakarta respectively, to secure commitments for advancing the adoption and implementation of comprehensive tobacco control measures at the local level.



Meeting with the Regent of Wonosobo



Meeting with the Regent of Kendal



Board in public place to raise awareness about the tobacco control in Purbakhola Rural Municipality

Nepal: Purbakhola Rural Municipality in Lumbini Province has become the first rural municipality in Nepal to enact its own Tobacco Products (Regulation and Control) Act, 2081 under the Local Government Operation Act, 2074. The law bans smoking in public places, mandates compulsory licensing for tobacco retailers, and promotes awareness through hoarding boards installed across all six wards. Within less than a year, the municipality has demonstrated strong enforcement through regular market monitoring and seizure of non-compliant products, with shops discontinuing tobacco sales and the only federally licensed retailer voluntarily canceling its license, showcasing the powerful role of local governance in advancing tobacco control.

A two-day National Workshop on Nepal Tobacco Control & Regulation was held on 2–3 February 2026, under the theme “Strengthening Tobacco Control through MPOWER.” The workshop brought together 50 participants, including representatives from NHEICC, the Ministry of Health and Population, provincial public health officers, legal experts, NGOs, and other key stakeholders. Discussions focused on policy enforcement, youth prevention, cessation services, and advocacy, providing a platform to align national and provincial efforts and reinforce commitment to stronger MPOWER implementation in Nepal.



National Workshop on Nepal Tobacco Control & Regulation

- **Philippines:** In Metro Manila, MMDA Authority facilitated MPOWER courses and strategic meetings with local government units, including in Muntinlupa City and Pateros Municipality, to support the rollout of amended work plans and provide technical assistance on ordinance development, enforcement, and monitoring.



MPOWER training in Muntinlupa City



MPOWER training in Pateros Municipality



Project planning workshop conducted in Ninh Binh

Vietnam: On 11 November, the CCIHP and the Ninh Binh CDC convened a project planning workshop with 33 representatives from the Department of Health, Department of Tourism, local police, and People's Committees. Participants reviewed implementation progress over the past year and discussed plans for the upcoming project period, including detailed inspection strategies and the role of local authorities. Provincial leaders reaffirmed their commitment to promoting and enforcing the Law on Tobacco Control, strengthening coordination across provincial, ward, and community levels.

Timor-Leste: The Ministry of Health, together with key ministries, national institutions, civil society, and development partners, signed a Joint Declaration establishing a National Multisectoral Taskforce for Tobacco Control to strengthen implementation of Decree-Law No. 14/2016. The Taskforce unites government agencies, the President of the Health and Development Authority (APAS), non-governmental organizations, media authorities, and religious leaders to enhance coordinated action. A National Action Plan and dedicated Secretariat will be created to guide implementation and reinforce the Government's commitment to stronger enforcement and public health protection nationwide.



Meeting to establish National Multisectoral Taskforce for Tobacco Control



Vital Strategies meeting with Dr. Bima Arya Sugiarto, Vice Minister of Home Affairs

For more information, please contact

Vital Strategies Singapore Office

6A SHENTON WAY, #04-01, OUE DOWNTOWN GALLERY,
SINGAPORE 068815