

Tobacco Control Asia Pacific Monthly Bulletin

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Highlights

Myanmar Bans E-Cigarettes and Heated Tobacco Products to Protect Public Health

On 18 February 2026, the Ministry of Health (MOH) of Myanmar issued Order No. 8/2026 prohibiting electronic cigarettes, heated tobacco products, electronic shisha and all related devices and components nationwide. The products are designated as prohibited goods under the Essential Supplies and Services Law, reinforcing Myanmar's commitment to reducing tobacco use and safeguarding public health. This comprehensive measure

covers nicotine and non-nicotine e-liquids, flavorings, batteries, chargers, atomizers, mouthpieces, and other related accessories. The order bans the importation, exportation, sale, possession, storage, carrying, distribution, usage and consumption of these products across the country.



Example of No Vaping signage

Tobacco use in Myanmar remains alarmingly high. According to STEP Survey (2014), more than half of all adults (54.4%) use some form of tobacco. Overall, 26.1% of adults smoke tobacco (43.8% of men and 8.4% of women), while 43.2% use smokeless tobacco (62.2% of men and 24.1% of women). Among youth, according to GYTS (2016), 30% of boys use some form of tobacco, underscoring the urgent need to prevent initiation and protect younger generations from emerging nicotine products. The economic burden of tobacco is substantial. According to the 2018 FCTC Investment Case for Myanmar, the total cost of tobacco use was estimated at MMK 2.62 trillion (USD 1.87 billion), equivalent to 3.3% of Myanmar's GDP. This included MMK 307 billion (USD 219.3 million) in health care costs and more than MMK 2.3 trillion (USD 1.64 billion) in productivity losses due to premature deaths, absenteeism and reduced work performance. The burden falls disproportionately on the poor, with 28% of tobacco-related deaths occurring among the lowest income quintile, further deepening poverty and inequality.

Since 2012, Vital Strategies has supported Myanmar's tobacco control efforts through close partnership with the MOH. Support has included technical assistance, policy development and design, capacity building, generation of local evidence, sharing of international best practices, fostering national and subnational partnerships, and strengthening policy implementation. In less than a decade, this collaboration has contributed to key achievements: the introduction of 100% smoke-free regulations in 2014, pictorial health warnings in 2016, a code of conduct to prevent tobacco industry interference in 2020, and standardized tobacco packaging in 2021. The 2026 prohibition on electronic and heated tobacco products marks another important milestone in Myanmar's ongoing efforts to reduce tobacco use and protect future generations.

Protecting people from tobacco smoke

Indonesia: Palembang City continues to mobilize Community Health Centres to support enforcement activities. In February, 42 Community Health Centres conducted inspections across 1,227 venues.

Philippines: On 13–15 January 2026, Transcend conducted courtesy and documentation visits to local government units in Mountain Province and Kalinga, including Barlig, Paracelis, Sadanga, Sabangan, Bontoc, the Provincial Health Office of Mountain Province, and Rizal, Kalinga, to assess the status of smoke-free ordinances and review implementation practices. The visits provided an opportunity to examine policy provisions, enforcement mechanisms, and local innovations, supporting strengthened implementation and compliance across provinces.

During the Dinagyang Festival 2026, the Iloilo City Police Office conducted a ceremonial destruction of confiscated vapes, lighters, and cigarette packs seized at event entrances, demonstrating firm enforcement of smoke-free and vape-free policies. The action, undertaken in coordination with the Iloilo City Anti-Smoking Task Force, underscored a strong commitment to public safety and health, helping ensure a cleaner and more family-friendly festival environment.



Ceremonial destruction of confiscated vapes, lighters, and cigarette packs seized at Dinagyang Festival entrances in Iloilo City



Smoke-free and vape-free advocacy conducted by members of RTCN during the Ati-Atihan Festival

The 1st Regional Tobacco Control Network (RTCN) Meeting for 2026 was held on 18 January in Kalibo, Aklan, convening partners across Western Visayas to advance smoke-free and vape-free initiatives. The Department of Health outlined planned 2026 activities, while Transcend Western Visayas highlighted priorities to sustain tobacco control gains and strengthen LGU capacity. Following the meeting, partners jointly conducted smoke-free and vape-free advocacy during the Ati-Atihan Festival, promoting clean air policies and raising public awareness through strong multi-sectoral collaboration.

Vietnam: The forum “Green and Smoke-Free Ninh Binh Tourism” was held on 4 February 2026 in Ninh Binh with 50 tourism managers and government representatives to promote smoke-free environments in the tourism sector. As a result, 19 restaurants, hotels, and tourist sites signed commitments to implement smoke-free policies and will receive continued support and monitoring.



Delegates of “Green & Smoke-Free Ninh Binh Tourism” forum

Vital Strategies supported Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP) and Nghe An Center for Disease Control to conduct a training on 15 January for staff from six wards on implementing smoke-free government offices. The training improved participants’ knowledge of tobacco harms and tobacco control laws, and ward-level action plans were developed with ongoing technical support planned.

Offering help to quit tobacco use



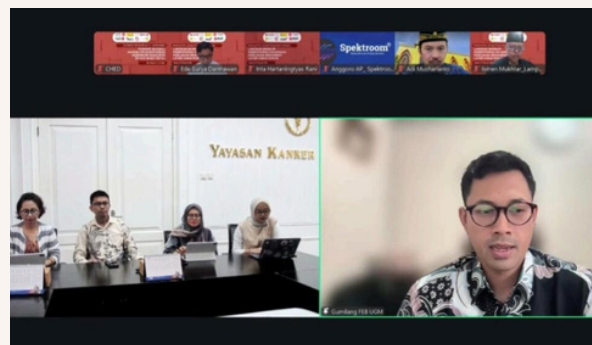
Workshop on the finalization of the guideline on tobacco cessation counseling for TB patients

Cambodia: National Centre for Health Promotion (NCHP) and National Center for Tuberculosis and Leprosy (CENAT) convened a workshop on 16 March 2026 with 20 participants from key health departments and facilities to finalize guidelines on tobacco cessation counseling for TB patients. The workshop reached agreement to integrate tobacco-use screening into routine TB services and include smoking status in TB patient cards, while also providing feedback to strengthen the clarity of counseling approaches (5A, 5R, 4D). The guideline is expected to be finalized by March 2026.

Philippines: The Ateneo School of Government and Vital Strategies, in collaboration with the Department of Health – Disease Prevention and Control Bureau, convened a public consultation on the draft National Tobacco Cessation Infrastructure Plan (NTCIP) 2030. The consultation brought together key stakeholders to review and refine the plan’s five priority result areas, strengthening the national framework for expanding and institutionalizing tobacco cessation services.

Raising taxes on tobacco

Indonesia: Vital Strategies' grantee Ahmad Dahlan University held a press conference in collaboration with civil society and universities expressing concerns over the Ministry of Finance's plan to introduce an additional layer in the Cigarette Excise (CHT) and Retail Selling Price (HJE) structure. Public health experts warned that the policy could increase the availability of cheaper cigarettes and undermine national health targets, and the event generated more than 18 media articles.



Press conference to raise concerns over the proposed cigarette excise and retail price policy changes

Novel tobacco and nicotine products



Live roundtable discussion on the national e-cigarette ban

Cambodia: The NCHP, Ministry of Health Cambodia, participated in a live roundtable discussion on the national e-cigarette ban on 21 February 2026 under the theme “Working Together to Prevent the Use of E-Cigarettes in Schools.” Broadcast from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on the National Radio of Cambodia (AM 918 KHz) and Wat Phnom Radio (FM 105.70 MHz), the program featured Dr. Ray Rany, Head of the Technical Bureau at NCHP, alongside Ms. Thim Lorn from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and Mr. So Thy, Principal of Chaktomuk Primary School, moderated by Mr. Thol Ngonthai. The discussion highlighted the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration to prevent e-cigarette use among students and reaffirmed the government's commitment to enforcing the comprehensive ban.

General Tobacco Control

Indonesia: Ministry of Health held a coordination meeting regarding draft Minister of Health Decree on prohibited additives in tobacco and electronic cigarette products with National Agency of Drug and Food Control (BPOM), Indonesian National Narcotics Agency (BNN), Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture and tobacco control experts.



Expert team and participants after the consultation on prohibited tobacco and e-cigarette additives



Meeting with the Vice Ministry of Health, Indonesia

Vital Strategies' grantee Association of Indonesia Subnational Health Authorities (ADINKES) met with the Vice Minister of Health and Acting Director General of Disease Control to discuss strategies for eliminating tuberculosis in Indonesia, emphasizing the importance of strengthening tobacco control as a key component of TB prevention and control efforts.

A Youth Creative Media Campaign for Tobacco Control workshop in Denpasar City engaged 50 junior and senior high school students, including student journalists and members of scientific writing clubs (KIR), to build their capacity to develop news articles and creative campaign media on tobacco control. The workshop also provided a platform for youth to interact with high-level city leadership, including the Secretary of Denpasar City. As a follow-up, students produced news articles and campaign materials shared through Udayana Central's Instagram account.



Youth Creative Media Campaign for Tobacco Control in Denpasar City

Vital Strategies' grantee PPPKMI held a meeting with the Head of the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Division of the Central Java Provincial Health Office to discuss integrating tobacco control into TB control systems, including plans for partner coordination and a case-control study in Semarang City to examine smoking as a risk factor among tuberculosis patients.



MPOWER Orientation and Enforcers' Training in Lambunao, Iloilo

Philippines: Transcend conducted an MPOWER Orientation and Enforcers' Training on 19–20 January 2026 in Lambunao, Iloilo, engaging 50 municipal personnel from various departments. The activity marked the initial rollout of the local tobacco control program and prepared participants for the official launch of the municipality's smoke-free and vape-free campaign.

Philippine Noncommunicable Disease Initiative supported provincial and municipal governments in La Union through policy coordination, preparatory ordinance review activities, and planning for 2026 implementation and capacity-building initiatives. Planned activities include benchmarking and inter-LGU learning exchanges to strengthen local tobacco control implementation.

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) intensified border-area tobacco control efforts through data collection workshops, barangay-level consultations, inspections, and coordination meetings with Pasig, Marikina, and Quezon City. Across 15 border barangays, MMDA supported local government units through ordinance review, task force engagement, preparatory compliance activities, and policy compliance studies, strengthening enforcement readiness and cross-city coordination.

Association of Department of Health Retired Employees, Philippines, Inc. (ADOHRE) hosted a two-day Post-Rapid Appraisal Writeshop in Metro Manila on 15–16 January 2026, bringing together Vital Strategies co-grantees, DISH (Data & Implementation Sciences for Health), and other multi-sector partners. The activity supported the finalization of the Department of Health's Co-Created Healthy Lifestyle Benefit Package for PhilHealth, advancing the Philippines' Open Government Partnership commitments through transparency, accountability, and inclusive collaboration, and helping strengthen access to non-communicable disease services at the local health system level.



Post-Rapid Appraisal Writeshop in Metro Manila



Ceremonial destruction of confiscated vapes, lighters, and cigarette packs seized at Dinagyang Festival entrances by the Iloilo City Police Office

For more information, please contact

Vital Strategies Singapore Office

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