

This bulletin highlights the key activities, focusing on Tobacco Control and TB, carried out in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Timor-Leste and Vietnam during February 2023.

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INDONESIA

National-level

Supporting Ministry of Health to advance Tobacco Control measures in Indonesia

On 15 February 2023, The Union team, led by Dr Tara Singh Bam (Director, The Union Asia Pacific), met with HE Dr Dante Saksono Harbuwono (Vice-Minister, Ministry of Health Indonesia) and his team in Jakarta. The objectives of the meeting were to discuss the amendment of government regulation PP109, tobacco taxation, smoking cessation and new ways to advance tobacco control.



High-level meeting with HE Dante Saksono Harbuwono, Vice-Minister of Health

The Union team suggested that MoH can take the initiative to make a joint ministerial decree in collaboration with the Ministry of Communication and Information to ban tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS) in online media and with the MoF to ban the sale of single sticks of cigarettes.

The Union team also had a separate meeting with Dr Eva Susanti, the Director of NCDC, MoH, on 14 February to discuss comprehensive cessation support programs, developing national guidelines for smoke-free policy implementation and proceed ministerial decrees on banning of TAPS in online media and sale of single stick cigarettes.

While initiating the amendment process, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has faced challenges in reaching a consensus and opposition from the tobacco industry. However, the Vice-Minister of Health expressed the ministry's commitment to keep the tobacco control agenda as a priority and making a final push during the current administration. The Vice-Minister also mentioned that MoH has been advocating to the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to increase taxes on tobacco products.

During the meeting, the Vice-Minister of Health also instructed the Director of Non-Communicable Disease Control (NCDC) to develop a plan of action for improving smoking cessation programs in Indonesia, including conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the existing quit line program, exploring the possibility of creating a mobile application for m-Cessation services, integrating smoking cessation "brief advice" in primary health care, and mandating the provision of smoking status in medical record.



Meeting with Director of NCDC

Strengthening the collaboration between TB and Tobacco Control programs



Meeting with the Director of CDC

The Union team conducted a meeting with Dr Imran Prambudi, the Director of Communicable Disease Control (CDC), MoH, along with his team from the TB Control Program. As tobacco smoking is a significant risk factor in Indonesia contributing to the TB epidemic, they discussed the development of national guidelines for smoking cessation in the TB control program, revision of the TB basic recording and reporting form to ensure the mandatory recording and reporting of smoking status and cessation, and the implementation of these guidelines as a pilot program in selected provinces. The Union is also looking forward to collaborate with CDC in promoting and executing active case finding, MDR-TB management capacity building, and operational research initiatives.



Meeting with the Mayor of Palembang City

Working with Mayor of Palembang to strengthen smoke-free enforcement

The Union team, led by Dr Tara Singh Bam, met with the Mayor of Palembang City, Mr Harnojoyo, and his team to discuss the 2020 smoke-free compliance survey findings and the key actions to be taken immediately, including the issuance of a Mayor's instruction letter to ensure smoke-free implementation and banning of tobacco advertising and promotion, and sponsorship. The Mayor also agreed to print, distribute and display 10,000 no-smoking signs at all public places by mobilizing civil police and community. Another round of the compliance study will be carried out in July 2023, with the Mayor committed to achieving an 80% compliance rate by then.



Smoke-free Advocacy Meeting in Brebes District

Accelerate subnational smoke-free with seven Mayors

The Union, in collaboration with its partner organizations, including the Association of All Health Offices Indonesia (ADINKES), Muhammadiyah Tobacco Control Centre (MTCC), Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Home Affairs, organized seven high-level meetings with the Mayors of Subang, Brebes, North Minahasa, South Minahasa, Tomohon, and Purworejo. The Mayors of these cities have committed to adopting comprehensive smoke-free policies within the next six months.

Furthermore, additional cities and districts will be visited by The Union until May 2023. Currently, there are 41 cities and districts in Indonesia that have yet to adopt smoke-free policies. The Union's approach involves engaging with Mayors and facilitating dialogue between national and subnational policy makers to foster a commitment to prioritizing tobacco control.



Smoke-free Advocacy Meeting in Subang District



One-to-one Meeting with Mayor of Purworejo



Smoke-free Advocacy Meeting in Tomohon City

Over 375 government officials across 41 Indonesian cities and districts committed to smoke-free policies

The Union, in partnership with ADINKES and the Ministry of Home Affairs, organized a two-day workshop aimed at addressing the absence of smoke-free policies in 41 Indonesian cities. The workshop brought together 30 in-person participants and 347 online participants from legislation, legal, and health departments.



Hybrid Workshop on Enacting Tobacco Control at Subnational level

Making licensing mandatory for tobacco sales in Dhaka South City Corporation



Bangladesh Anti-tobacco Alliance's meeting with Mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation

Two meetings were held with the Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Barrister Fazle Noor Taposh to discuss the implementation of guidelines of local government institutions in tobacco control. One meeting was held with delegates of Bangladesh Anti-tobacco Alliance and another with the chairman of Mayor Alliance for Healthy Cities - MAHC, the Honorable Mayor of Cox's Bazar Municipality, Mujibur Rahman. As a result, Mayor Fazle Noor Taposh said he is committed to adopt a 'licensing' policy for the sale of tobacco products. He also said that Syedabad Bus Terminal will be made a smoke-free public place.

Taking initiative to make Dhamrai tobacco free

The Honorable Member of Parliament Mr Benazir Ahmed, the Honorable Mayor of Dhamrai Municipality Mr Golam Kabir, Upazila Executive Officers, Chairs of 16 Union Councils, representatives from civil society, and all Upazila officials participated in the monthly development coordination meeting. As a result of the meeting, it was decided that 16 Union Parishad offices would be designated as smoke-free zones. Promotional signboards will be installed in these institutions and the sale, use, and promotion of all tobacco products will be prohibited within 100 meters of educational institutions and healthcare centers under the Upazila.



Snapshot from Dhamrai Upazila monthly development coordination meeting

Manohardi and Dhamrai Municipalities witness participation of over 10,000 people in anti-tobacco rallies

Under the leadership of Honorable Mayor Mr Aminur Rashid Sujan of Manohardi Municipality, a massive anti-tobacco rally was held at the local government college ground. The event was attended by Honorable Industry Minister Mr Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun, Honorable Member of Parliament Mr Benazir Ahmed, the Chair of the Parliamentary Committee of the Ministry of Home Affairs, as well as Mayors from Savar, Tangail, Goland, Manohardi, and Singra municipalities, all leaders from the Mayor Alliance for Healthy Cities (MAHC). During their speeches, they pledged to work together on tobacco control policies to make Bangladesh tobacco-free before 2040. MAHC General Secretary Mayor Golam Kabir led the participants in reciting an oath to remain tobacco and drug-free. The public assembly had approximately 10,000 participants, including 3,000 students.



Awareness-raising cycle rally at Manohardi Municipality



Snapshot from awareness-raising rally in Dhamrai Municipality

Smoking prevalence decreases in Cambodia

Cambodia's National Adults Tobacco Survey (NATSC) 2021 results show that overall cigarette smoking prevalence reduced from 16.6% in 2014 to 13.04% in 2021. There was a 6.93% decrease in cigarette smoking prevalence among men (from 32.3% in 2014 to 25.37% in 2021). The cigarette smoking prevalence among women also reduced from 2.4% in 2014 to 2.05% in 2021. Attitudes of Cambodian people are also changing, with 95% of respondents supporting an increase in cigarette tax, and 95.75% supporting an increase in the price of tobacco products.

By comparing the 2014 and 2021 data, the percentage of people exposed to tobacco smoke at home and workplaces reduced from 65.6% to 27.36% and 48% to 24.6% respectively in 2021. However, the exposure to tobacco smoke in public transportation vehicles increased from 33.6% in 2014 to 62.03% in 2021.

Cambodia faces a major public health challenge due to the significant burden of disease and premature death caused by tobacco use. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in Cambodia, resulting in over 16,000 deaths annually. Additionally, the economic impact of tobacco use in Cambodia is substantial, with an estimated annual cost of over \$227 million due to healthcare expenditures and lost productivity.

However, there is still a lot to do as other results show a need for improvement in areas such as smoking cessation. NATSC results show that most tobacco smokers (62.41%) were not interested in quit smoking. More than one-third of males (34.72%) and females (37.79%) planned to quit someday – but not within the next 12 months. The dissemination workshops on NATSC 2021 survey findings were conducted in Phnom Penh and Kampot Province on 21 and 23 February respectively.

The Union has provided technical assistance and some financial support to deliver the NATSC, as well as encouraged WHO, WHO FCTC Secretariat and government to make this a priority. The Union has also been providing continued support to Cambodia in policy development, implementation, and enforcement of the comprehensive tobacco control law, expanding smoke-free environments, strengthening taxation and pricing policies, and developing innovative approaches to address emerging tobacco products and industry tactics.



Snapshot from Dissemination workshop of NATSC 2021 Survey in Phnom Penh



Dr. Tara Singh Bam of The Union at the Dissemination Workshop of NATSC 2021 Survey

Capacity building workshop on Taxation

The Ministry of Health's National Centre for Health Promotion in Cambodia organized a capacity building workshop aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Tobacco Control Committee and the Secretariat in promoting the advantages of increasing taxes and prices on tobacco products. The workshop was attended by 110 participants, including members from the tobacco control committee of 25 provinces, as well as stakeholders.



Capacity Building Workshop on Taxation

PHILIPPINES



Some examples of confiscated vapor products

Compliance monitoring of vape shops in Baguio City

The Union supported a joint inspection of vape shops with multiple government agencies including the Baguio City Government. The Baguio City Government has been enforcing the Local Smoke-Free Ordinance and the Vape Regulation Act (RA11900) and their respective regulations. Around 700,000 Philippine Peso worth of e-cigarettes and paraphernalia were confiscated. The inspection was composed of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Department of Trade and Industry, Food and Drug Administration, Permits and Licensing Division, Public Order and Safety Division, Baguio City Police Office, City Health Services Office, and the Public Information Office.

Partner meeting for ensuring smoke-free policy implementation

Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) organized a Partners Meeting to discuss the implementation of smoke-free environment policy in Metro Manila. Representatives from 16 Metro Manila local government units and four partner agencies (The Union, ASH Philippines, HealthJustice Philippines, and Metro Manila Center for Health Development) attended. MMDA inspected the 100-meter perimeter of 126 schools for stores selling cigarettes and ENDS, and posting of illegal tobacco advertisements. A total of 1,028 violations were documented.



Participants of Partners Meeting

Integration of tobacco control in TB Control

The Union conducted two meetings with local health offices to discuss about TB and Tobacco control, as follows:

- 1) The Union met with Dr Shelly Aral OIC-Local Health Support Division of Department of Health Cordillera Administrative Region to discuss their regional plans for tobacco control as well as the integration within existing health programs, such as the National TB Program.
- 2) A meeting with La Union Provincial Health Office was conducted at their office in San Fernando City. The meeting sought to understand the current strategies employed by the province for tobacco and TB prevention and control.



Meeting with Dr Shelly Aral in Baguio City



Meeting with La Union Provincial Health Office

TIMOR-LESTE

Timor-Leste increases taxes on tobacco products

In October 2022, The Union's partner National Alliance for Tobacco Control Timor-Leste (ANCT-TL) met with the Advisor and Head of Cabinet of the Ministry of Finance to discuss current tax policies and challenges in tobacco control. During the meeting ANCT-TL presented a taxation policy paper to the Head of Cabinet with the aim of supporting the Minister of Finance in raising tobacco taxes in 2023. As a result of this advocacy effort, the government and parliament raised the tobacco excise tax from \$50/kg to \$100/kg in 2023.



Meeting with Advisor and Head of Cabinet of Ministry of Finance



Talk show on Tatoli IP

Tobacco talk-show on national media

ANCT-TL organized a public engagement session through the national media outlet, Tatoli IP, to discuss ways of strengthening tobacco control policy and practice in Timor-Leste. During the session, ANCT-TL representatives presented the current status of tobacco control policy implementation and highlighted the challenges that need to be addressed. The ANCT-TL also proposed evidence-based solutions to tackle these challenges.

VIETNAM

Joint monitoring plan for tobacco control laws

A workshop was conducted by The Union's grantee CCIHP in collaboration with the gender-based violence prevention network to finalize a joint monitoring plan for Tobacco Control Law. The network agreed that five member organizations will conduct monitoring in 26 schools across 11 cities and districts in eight provinces in Vietnam. The monitoring is scheduled for March and April, and a consolidated report will be disseminated on World No Tobacco Day 2023.



Workshop with the gender-based violence prevention network

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