

# Tobacco Control Success Story: Philippines



[The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids](#) and its local partners helped reduce smoking prevalence in the Philippines by 19.9% between 2009 and 2015. Exposure to secondhand smoke also fell significantly over the same period, dropping from 25.5% to 13.6% in government buildings and from 54.4% to 34.7% in homes.

Due to a series of tobacco tax reforms beginning in 2012, cigarette sales fell by 28.1% between 2012 and 2015, and the average price per cigarette pack jumped more than 78% by 2017. The tax increase is expected to reduce smoking prevalence to 15% by 2022, while also financing the country's Universal Health Care program by raising ₱14.9 billion (\$305M) in 2020 and ₱125.8 billion (\$2.6B) by 2024. This progress will significantly improve health and save the lives of Filipino people from tobacco-related diseases like cancer, heart disease and lung disease.

## THE CHALLENGE

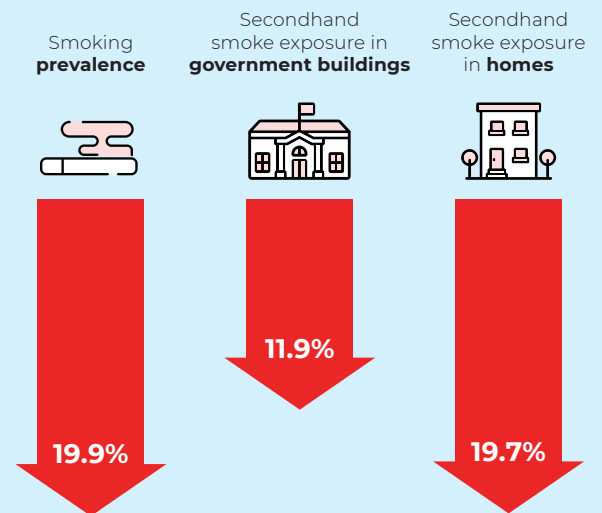
Every year, more than 100,000 Filipinos die from tobacco-related diseases. As of January 2019, 46% of adult men and 6% of adult women were smokers, with 23% of users consuming approximately 10 cigarettes per day. According to the 2015 Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS), about 16% of Filipino youth ages 13-15 regularly use tobacco products.

Despite strong tobacco control measures, the Philippines remains an attractive market for the tobacco industry due to growing incomes, a large youth population and gaps in implementation of the TC law. In 2018, more than 64 billion cigarettes were sold in the country.

The industry's aggressive interference in policymaking—both openly and through allies and front groups—poses an ongoing challenge to tobacco control. This interference often undermines tobacco control measures.

Senior government officials have attended social functions organized by the tobacco industry, and the country's former solicitor general is a counsel to the chairman of Philip Morris Fortune Tobacco International. The Philippine Tobacco Institute—an umbrella group representing the country's tobacco companies—has lodged legal challenges against subnational smoke-free policies. The Institute serves on a government committee tasked with implementing the Tobacco Regulation Act, a position that has allowed it to block progress on tobacco control measures. To influence policymakers and public opinion, the industry runs high-profile corporate social responsibility campaigns and uses innovative marketing tactics.

## Six Years of Progress, 2009-2015



## OUR ROLE

Tobacco-Free Kids supported the Philippines' tobacco control efforts in critical ways:

- Promoting media coverage** of the health harms of tobacco and e-cigarettes, as well as the urgent need to adopt and implement tobacco control laws. This was done through workshops, fellowships, press briefings, regular radio and TV interviews and the airing of public service announcements during high-rated TV and radio programs. Tobacco-Free Kids' media fellowship workshops educated a pool of journalists about tobacco policy issues and corruption, thereby ensuring tobacco control stories are covered in the press and remain on the national agenda;
- Creating robust civil society engagement** among youth, parents, farmers and public health groups. Tobacco-Free Kids supported the creation of the Youth for Sin Tax Movement, which led various youth organizations to push for a tobacco tax increase; Parents Against Vapes, a coalition of parents and citizens against smoking and vaping; and the Philippine Smoke-Free Movement, a broad coalition of residents and civil society organizations advocating for a smoke-free country;

- **Sharing our wealth of experience** to help national and local governments enact and implement strong laws, such as tax increases and smoke-free ordinances. Tobacco-Free Kids also strengthened its relationship with the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Department of Health and Civil Service Commission, which have both taken steps to strengthen tobacco control measures.
- **Promoting and documenting best practices, providing legal assistance and supporting implementation** among local partners, including health, local government and education sectors. Tobacco-Free Kids provided capacity development trainings to national government officials, documented best smoke-free practices and extended legal support to local governments whose policies were facing legal challenges;
- **Thwarting tobacco industry interference** by alerting government agencies of the tobacco industry's plan to engage with them;
- **Securing the support of key personalities**—including the first lady of the Philippines, several senators and members of Congress, media personalities and former health secretaries—to speak in favor of the tobacco tax increase and smoke-free policies.



## RESULTS

Through a decade-long advocacy movement and extensive media advocacy efforts by local advocates supported by Tobacco-Free Kids, smoking prevalence in the Philippines fell from 29.7% to 23.8% between 2009 and 2015. This decline is estimated to prevent more than three million smoking-related deaths in the country.

Tobacco-Free Kids helped strengthen capacity and broaden support for tobacco control across key government departments in the Philippines. As a result of these efforts, the Department of Finance increased sin taxes, the Department of Interior and Local Government implemented smoke-free policies and the Department of Education prohibited tobacco sales within 100 meters of schools.

By training and partnering with civil society groups, enforcement agencies, legislative staff and key stakeholders, we helped build a unified voice on tobacco policies, such as tax increases, smoke-free measures, designated smoking areas, removal of flavors from e-cigarettes and regulation of electronic nicotine delivery systems and electronic non-nicotine delivery systems.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Our work in the Philippines shows it is possible to achieve ambitious public health policy change by engaging civil society and mobilizing government officials through continued advocacy.

Some valuable lessons we have learned include:

- Establishing movements and coalitions, such as the Youth for Sin Tax Movement, Philippine Smoke-Free Movement and Parents Against Vapes, is an effective strategy for policy advocacy. After the launch of Parents Against Vapes, where the first lady agreed to be the spokesperson, the president issued Executive Order No. 106, which banned vaping in all public places.
- For best outcomes, policy advocacy must go hand-in-hand with media interventions.
- Establishing strong relationships with legislative staff gave Tobacco-Free Kids access to real-time updates on political developments, allowing us to act more proactively.
- Partnering with government significantly increases advocacy acceptance.
- Prohibiting tobacco ads in print and electronic media leads to more innovative advertising tactics. Regular monitoring of below-the-line marketing strategies is critical in understanding and responding to industry challenges in policymaking and implementation.

## ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids is the leading advocacy organization working to reduce tobacco use and its deadly consequences in the United States and around the world. Through strategic communications and policy advocacy campaigns, we promote the adoption of proven solutions that are most effective at reducing tobacco use and save the most lives.

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