

# Tobacco Control Success Story: Russian Federation



[The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids](#) built strong relationships with key institutions to help the Russian Federation pass some of the most comprehensive tobacco control legislation in the world. A focused and flexible approach that maintained a flow of strategic information paved the way for a 23% smoking prevalence decline in Russia between 2008 and 2016.

## THE CHALLENGE

In 2009, Russia had one of the highest rates of tobacco use of all 22 countries surveyed by the [Global Adult Tobacco Survey](#), the global standard for monitoring adult tobacco use. Russia also does not have an active culture of civic advocacy, with the role of nongovernmental groups highly circumscribed. To address the realities on the ground, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids modified our usual practice of working with a large array of civil society groups. Instead, we identified a small team of health experts and public relations specialists who worked within the system to foster political will and commitment to policy change.

## OUR ROLE

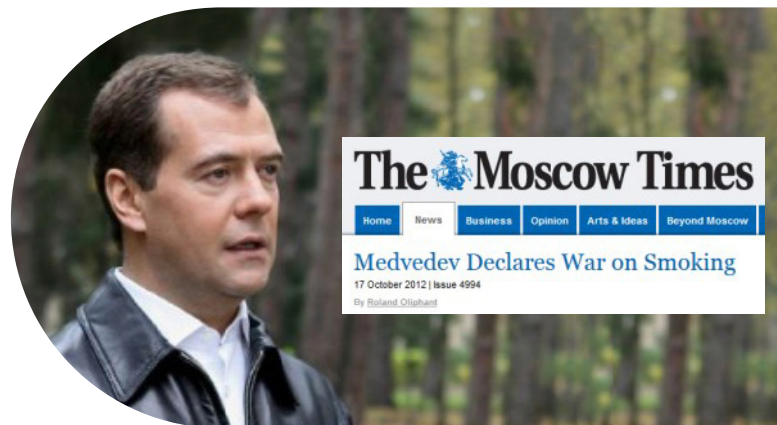
The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids provided expert and technical support to Russian tobacco control champions, sharing best practices, research and data, and success stories from other countries. We collaborated closely with multilaterals such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, think tanks such as the New Economic School, professional associations such as Business Russia, and a small but active set of nongovernmental organizations such as the International Confederation on Consumer Societies (KONFOP), Chuvashia Foundation, and Healthy Regions Association. Together, these partners interacted with officials and the media, conducted research, developed regional tobacco control programs, and built alliances with the business sector.

Our main strategy was to work with local partners to build a strong relationship with Russia's Ministry of Health (MOH), the implementing agency for the [WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#). We worked to ensure they became a trusted source of expertise, advising MOH on the best policies and strategies for passing tobacco control laws. This assistance helped MOH become a true champion of tobacco control policy.

Our in-country partners organized events that included participation from policymakers and generated media and coverage. As a result of this careful strategy, Veronika Skvortsova, the Russian Minister of Health, became an advocate for the law, and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev came out strongly for the bill in a 2012 speech that brought the legislation unprecedented, positive attention.

## RESULTS

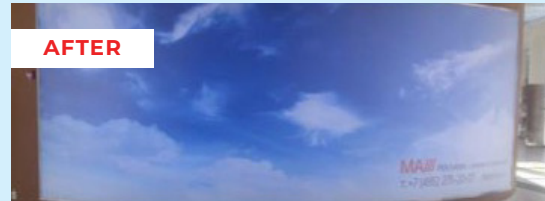
The Russian Federation passed the comprehensive tobacco control legislation in 2013, making it one of the first countries in the world to do so and setting a model for others. Along with additional policies, including a directive on packaging and labeling in the Eurasian Economic Union, Russia's Federal Tobacco Control Law requires 100% smoke-free public places; a full ban on all advertising, promotion and sponsorship; sales restrictions; larger pictorial pack warnings and other packaging rules; and increasing prices on tobacco products. Point of sale displays were removed from stores, and tobacco sales in kiosks disappeared from the streets. Thanks to these measures, Russia's smoking prevalence declined by 23% between 2008 and 2016.



## Point of Sale Displays Before and After



Tobacco advertisement billboard at Sheremetevo International Airport, Moscow



Cigarette sales and displays before and after they are banned in street kiosks



## LESSONS LEARNED

- 1 Know your policy environment.** Know how policy is made, who makes it, and where you and your allies can have the most positive impact in the process. By mapping Russia's policymaking process, our partners were able to anticipate next steps and advise decision making allies accordingly.
- 2 Cultivate strategic relationships.** It is vital to cultivate long-term, mutually reinforcing relationships with individuals whose commitment can lead to policy decisions. Our partners identified MOH as the essential policy champion in Russia and maintained a strong, trust-based relationship that spanned two presidential administrations and numerous personnel changes. They also cultivated important relationships with other executive and parliamentary leaders.
- 3 Know your bottom line.** Remain flexible and open to strategic changes, but make sure your policy objectives are clear and viable. Our partners' goal in Russia shifted from simply participating in policy discourse to ensuring passage of a specific set of legislative provisions. Their and our activities strictly aligned with the evolving objectives.
- 4 Stay plugged in.** Use all contacts and relationships to maintain a constant flow of information: tobacco industry actions and contacts, the progress of policy decisions and laws, which policy makers are in or out, and other opportunities or threats to the policy process. This helps to guide your own tactics, and provides actionable intelligence to strengthen the actions of allied decision makers.
- 5 Know the opposition.** Our partners kept a close eye on the tobacco industry throughout the policy process. They kept track of the industry's fronts, their tactics, and their arguments. They used that information to educate their allies on these tactics, strengthen key messages to discredit and nullify tobacco industry supporters, and even to publicly shame certain officials into dropping opposition to the bill.

## 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. For more information, please visit [tobaccofreekids.org](http://tobaccofreekids.org) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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