Tobacco Control

at The Union

The Union’s Department of Tobacco Control is a global leader in the fight against tobacco use. Since 2007 we have worked in 50 countries, impacting two-thirds of the world’s smokers.

Our experts work with governments and civil society to develop the policies, legislation and infrastructure proven to reduce tobacco use.

Our goal is to advance the World Health Organization’s [WHO] Framework Convention on Tobacco Control [FCTC] – an international health treaty that provides a coordinated strategy to reduce tobacco use. Our work centres on the WHO’s MPOWER – a package of evidence-based measures designed to help countries effectively implement the FCTC.

Since 2007 The Union has been a partner in the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use [BI]. With Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, The Union has co-managed the BI grants programme, which awards funds for high-impact tobacco control interventions, based on MPOWER. To date 556 grants worth US$ 109 million have been awarded.

The Union’s tobacco control headquarters is in Edinburgh, UK, and we have experts based in every continent across the globe. Our team has specialised knowledge in the legal, economic, policy development, management, training and communications aspects of tobacco control.

About The Union

For nearly 100 years, The Union has been working to advance solutions to the most pressing public health challenges facing people in poverty around the world.

We began as an alliance of experts working to cure tuberculosis, and have since extended our remit to related public health challenges with a focus on serving low- and middle-income populations.

The Department of Tobacco Control is one of four technical departments – the others focus on TB and HIV, lung health and non-communicable diseases, and research.

As well as being a scientific institute, The Union is also a federation, with more than 20,000 members and subscribers active in 146 countries. We are united by our commitment to a shared vision: health solutions for the poor.

Our membership forms a global network of experts – individuals and organisations – collaborating to create and share new research and to build capacity for increasing the quality and success of our work to improve public health.

Tobacco use is a leading risk factor for chronic lung diseases, as well as cancers, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes – tobacco control is therefore vital to the Union’s mission.
Implementing MPOWER policies

The Union is preventing the advance of the tobacco epidemic

Rates of tobacco use continue to rise in low- and middle-income countries, while high-income countries have seen rates drop considerably over the last 20 years.

Evidence demonstrates that with effective implementation of high-impact tobacco control measures, such as the WHO’s MPOWER, as many as 200 million lives could be saved by the year 2050. Sustained commitment and funding will be needed to achieve this.

We work in low-and middle-income countries around the world, prioritising 11 with the highest rates of tobacco use: China, India, Indonesia, Russia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, Pakistan, Philippines and Vietnam.
Creating smokefree zones
The Union has worked with 30 countries to help develop and implement smokefree legislation, protecting 5 billion people from second-hand smoke.

Critical mass moves China towards a national smokefree law
The success of smokefree laws in four major cities – Tianjin, Shanghai, Harbin and Guangzhou – set the stage for development of national legislation.
The Union provided technical assistance during creation of these city-level laws, and since 2013 has worked with the State Council and National Health and Family Planning Commission to assist with developing a national policy.
This new law will protect 1.4 billion, from the harms of second-hand smoke. Without intervention China’s annual smoking-related death toll is estimated to reach three million by 2050.

Raising tobacco taxes
The Union has worked with 9 countries, offering legal and economic expertise to support tobacco tax increases.

Pakistan raises tobacco taxes to save lives and increase revenues for tobacco control
Pakistan has increased tobacco taxes to reduce tobacco use and implemented a system that ensures rates rise with inflation.
Support for the increase was sparked by a report launched by The Union and partners indicating that raising tobacco taxes could lead 500,000 to quit cigarettes and increase revenues by 27.2 billion rupees.
A Union expert joined Pakistan’s tobacco taxation working group, which aims to earmark the new revenues for sustainable tobacco control.
Banning tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship

Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship activities are banned or limited in 17 countries that are home to 4 billion people.

Mobile courts mete out on-the-spot justice to violators of Bangladesh’s tobacco control laws

Violators of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship bans face on-the-spot justice from ‘mobile courts’ in Bangladesh.

Illegal displays of tobacco are destroyed and vendors fined by magistrates during random checks by tobacco control taskforces.

Because they involve local government, magistrates, law enforcers and civil society, these taskforces have proven highly effective.

The Union provided grants and advice on management and infrastructure to support the development of this unique approach.

Standardising tobacco labelling and packaging

15 countries use graphic health warnings to warn people about tobacco’s dangers – and deter new users.

South East Asia emerges as a global leader with strongest graphic health warnings on tobacco pack surfaces

India’s strong move to triple the size of graphic health warnings on tobacco packs in 2014 began a regional movement.

Now laws in both India and Pakistan require the high-impact warnings to cover 85% of the surface area. Nepal requires 90% coverage.

The Union provided the scientific and legal evidence needed to back these trend-setting laws and to withstand the resulting legal challenges from the tobacco industry successfully.
Preventing tobacco industry interference

6 countries have taken steps to prevent tobacco industry interference in their national policies and laws.

Tobacco industry tackled head on in The Philippines
The tobacco industry’s persistent efforts to derail life-saving policies have been halted by loophole-closing legal reforms in The Philippines. All public officials must sign conflict-of-interest statements; industry representatives are blocked from policymaking debates; and corporate social responsibility donations from the tobacco industry to government have been outlawed.

The Union advised The Philippines on anti-corruption policies and provided comprehensive technical advice on implementing what is now the global gold standard for preventing tobacco industry interference, as required by Article 5.3 of the WHO-FCTC.

Creating sustainable funding for tobacco control

9 countries now provide sustainable funding for their tobacco control activities.

Vietnam’s sustainable tobacco control fund set to become an international exemplar
The future of Vietnam’s tobacco control programme has been secured - with a dedicated flow of funding from tobacco tax revenues.
Run collaboratively by the ministries of health and finance, the fund’s infrastructure includes data sharing between departments and surveillance to monitor disbursement of funds from the new tax system.
Union economic experts liaised with both ministries to help finalise the fund’s legal and financial mechanisms.
Both individuals and organisations join, in order to get involved in global public health activities, and to take advantage of the opportunities that membership offers:

- A global and active network of tobacco control experts
- Access to the latest Union research, resources and news
- Option to join expert working groups tackling specific and emerging tobacco control issues
- Reduced rates for the annual Union World Conference on Lung Health
- Free subscription to the International Journal on Tuberculosis and Lung Disease
- Membership begins at 20 Euros per year. Special rates are available to students and those from low-income countries.

Find out more at www.theunion.org or contact: membership@theunion.org
"KNOW. SHARE. ACT. THESE PRINCIPLES HAVE DRIVEN THE UNION’S WORK SINCE ITS FOUNDING NEARLY 100 YEARS AGO."

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