

## Program Report

# Government's Accountability to Promote Tobacco Control in Nepal

## Interaction Program



International Union Against  
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease



# Government's Accountability to Promote Tobacco Control in Nepal

**Date** : Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2022

**Time** : 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM

**Venue**: Hotel Himalaya, Skyline Hall, Kupondole, Lalitpur

### Organizers:

Action Nepal, Health Journalists Forum Nepal (HJFN), International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union), Asia Pacific Cities Alliance for Health and Development (APCAT)

Action Nepal  
[www.actionnepal.net](http://www.actionnepal.net)  
15<sup>th</sup> October 2022

## ***Background***

The tobacco epidemic has emerged as one of the biggest public health challenges and is responsible for life-taking NCDs, such as cardiovascular diseases (CVD), chronic non-infectious respiratory diseases (like COPD), cancers, and diabetes. Hence, it is crucial to adopt the whole-of-government approach and multi-sectorial collaboration in no time to curb this epidemic.

The multi-sectoral interaction program entitled “*Government’s Accountability to Promote Tobacco Control in Nepal*” was held on Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2022 from 10 am to 12:30 pm at Hotel Himalaya, Skyline Hall, Kupondole, Lalitpur. The program was participated by over 50 participants, including government officials, speakers from the Union, APCAT, tobacco control advocates, civil society, and the media.

With the objective of identifying actions and responsibilities and gaining commitment in responding burden of tobacco use in Nepal, the program was jointly organized by Action Nepal, Health Journalists Forum Nepal (HJFN), International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union), and Asia Pacific Cities Alliance for Health and Development (APCAT). Mr. Bisha Kafle, *General Secretary of HJFN*, moderated the 2.30-hour interaction program.

The program was chaired by Mr. Ram Prasad Neupane (*President of Health Journalist Forum Nepal*), while Dr. Dipendra Raman Singh, *Director General (DG) of the Department of Health Services* was the chief guest of the program. In addition, Dr. Sangeeta Mishra, *Additional Health Secretary at the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP)*; Dr. Tara Singh Bam, *Director at International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union)*; Dr. Lonim Dixit, *WHO Nepal*; Dr. Bhakta Bahadur KC, *Senior Health Education Administrator, National Health Education, Information, and Communication Center (NHEICC)*; Mr. Ananda Bahadur Chand, *Chairperson at Action Nepal*; Dr. Arun Shahi, *Consultant/Lecturer of Medical Oncology, Patan Academy of Health Sciences*; Dr. Chuman Lal Das, *Director at Epidemiology and Disease Control Division (EDCD)*; and BP Giri, APCAT Member Singapore participated the program as special guests and speakers.

### ***Tobacco Epidemic: On of the Biggest Public Health Challenges***

Welcoming all the guests and participants, Mr. Ram Prasad Neupane, President of Health Journalist Forum Nepal (HJFN), highlighted the role played and efforts so far made by HJFN in advancing tobacco control in Nepal. He further stated the need for effective implementation of tobacco control laws in Nepal.

Dr. Arun Shahi, *Consultant / Lecturer of Medical Oncology, Patan Academy of Health Sciences*, presented the impact of tobacco on lung health. “Tobacco Contributes to chronic diseases, such as Cardiovascular disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease(COPD), Asthma, Lung Cancer and Other Cancers, and Diabetes Mellitus. Moreover, it kills approx. 28000 deaths per year in Nepal and it causes a significant financial burden on the overall health system. In Nepal, it has been estimated that about 5000 new cases of lung cancer and 4000 fatalities from the disease in 2022”, he presented. He added that the lung tissue becomes damaged, loses its elasticity, and no longer exchanges air effectively after years of exposure to cigarette smoke. Further elaborating on the impact of tobacco on lung health, Dr. Shahi said that smokers who started smoking at a young age may never reach their full potential in terms of lung size and function this is because young people's lungs are still developing, but the chemicals in cigarette smoke slow down lung growth. “Such damage is irreversible and raises the chance of developing COPD later in life”, he said. “Public awareness and education about the harmful effects of tobacco use are essential. More government involvement and action are also required. Public and private partnerships as a part of multi-sectorial efforts are also crucial to fight the tobacco epidemic”, he recommended.

Mr. Ananda Bahadur Chand, *Director at Action Nepal*, highlighted the tobacco control journey in Nepal and said that even though Nepal has comprehensive tobacco control laws, it still experiencing an increasing number of tobacco users and deaths due to poor implementation of tobacco control laws and directives. “Tobacco kills 74 people in a day in Nepal and the situation could be aggravated if e-cigarettes are not regulated and controlled. Currently, 14% of adults in Nepal are regular users of e-cigarettes and

the trend is increasing among the youth, particularly in urban areas”, Mr. Chand added. He further raised two major issues in relation to tobacco control promotion in Nepal. Firstly, he said that the Supreme Court had already issued a mandate to implement 90% PHW on the pack of tobacco and urged for immediate implementation of the supreme court’s decision stating the empirical evidence that the Larger pictorial health warnings are effective for smokers to reduce cigarettes smoked per day (smokers reduced from 11 cigarettes to 5 cigarettes per day after 75% PHW was implemented in Nepal). Secondly, he urged to block the tobacco industry’s interference at national and sub-national levels and to issue notice immediately to all 753 local-level governments for the comprehensive implementation of TC laws in Nepal, including rejecting the tobacco industry’s sponsorship in any form. Additionally, comparing deaths due to COVID-19 and Tobacco use, Mr. Chand said that *Tobacco* mortality is more than four times that of COVID-19. Hence, the government should seriously act to curb the tobacco epidemic in Nepal before it is too late.

### ***Tobacco Control Laws: Comprehensive Implementation is Still Lacking***

“Tobacco control laws have been not implemented in Nepal. There should be a heavy penalty for those who violate the laws. Consistent inspection and monitoring mechanisms should be developed and legal actions must be taken immediately” said Dr. Sangeeta Mishra, Additional Health Secretary at the Ministry of Health and Population. She further added that the government needed to take the initiative to create tobacco-free municipalities and provinces.

Dr. Lonim Dixit, WHO Nepal, presented the WHO best buys on tobacco control. She strongly suggested to implement the MPOWER measures to reduce both supply and demand for tobacco products. Particularly, she urged the government to increase tax on tobacco products as Nepal levies the lowest tobacco tax among the south Asian countries. “The world is heading towards plain packaging, therefore, Nepal must also initiate plain packaging on tobacco packs” she further suggested.

Dr. Bhakta Bahadur KC, *Senior Health Education Administrator, National Health Education, Information, and Communication Center (NHEICC)* presented the mechanism to implement the supreme court’s mandate to implement 90% PHW on tobacco packs. He also highlighted the current implementation status of 75% PHW and identified the need to empower tobacco control inspectors, such as assistant CDOs and chief administrative officers to monitor the market and confiscate tobacco products not complying with 90% PHW.

### ***One Question: Are tobacco control efforts on Track in Nepal? What could be the way forward?***

Dr. Tara Singh Bam, *Director of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union)*, raised the question of whether tobacco control efforts in Nepal are in the right direction or not. “In 2011 tobacco was responsible for 11000 deaths every year in Nepal. Sadly, tobacco-related deaths have increased to above 27000 annually in 2018 despite having strong tobacco control laws in the nation. Are we on the right track?” ironically he said. Dr. “In Nepal, 90% PHW has been not implemented comprehensively, Nepal still lacks a complete ban on smoking in public places, comprehensive TAPS ban has not been implemented fully, Nepal ranks lowest among south Asian countries in terms of tobacco tax, smoking cessation programs are not functional yet, and the high tobacco industry has been observed at the national and sub-national levels, then how tobacco epidemic can be curbed?”, he further asked the question. Adding to this, Dr. Bam said that it is sad that government officials regard the tobacco industry as the powerful than the government itself. But, this is not true. Government should take accountability and show high political commitment to implement the tobacco control laws comprehensively.

Dr. Dipendra Raman Singh, *Director General (DG) of the Department of Health Services*, made a commitment to do his best in advancing tobacco control in Nepal with the available resources and capacity. “It is already too late, but we can still take the initiation. We have to follow Whole-of-Government Approach and take immediate action. We should collaborate with all the 753 local level governments as well and urge them to create tobacco-free municipalities and tobacco-free houses”, he added. He further urged Dr. Bhakta

Bahadur KC to coordinate and issue a letter to all the 753 local-level governments to implement the tobacco control laws immediately. Dr. Singh said that the “*Tobacco-free House Campaign*” had already commenced from Madhesh Pradesh and we would expand the campaign to all 7 provinces as well. “Now Nepal has Public Health Act in place and the Act has now empowered us to move on in a systematic and holistic way. We expect that we will have measurable deliverables now”, he concluded.

### *What can be learned from tobacco control efforts in Singapore?*

BP Giri, *APCAT Member, Singapore*, shared his experience of tobacco control in Singapore. He said that in Singapore, licenses to sell tobacco products are mandatory, an identity card to buy tobacco products is mandatory, indoor smoking and smoking in public places are completely banned, Sisha and Hukka are fully banned, and there is a huge penalty for not complying with the laws. "We can learn from Singapore and implement it to get better outcomes in tobacco control in Nepal," he recommended.

### **Call to Action**

The approximately 2.5-hour interaction program was concluded by making commitments to act upon the major four activities immediately as below.

1. Implement the supreme court’s mandate on implementation of 90% PHW on the packs of tobacco
2. The Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) to issue a letter to all 753 local-level governments to implement tobacco control laws
3. Integrate tobacco-related data/information in the HMIS data system
4. Dispatch an attention letter to Nepal Airlines immediately for sponsoring the program initiated by Surya Nepal Pvt. Ltd. (Surya Nepal- Kalinga Literary Festival Kathmandu).

## News media published

### 1. प्रत्येक दिन सुर्तीजन्य पदार्थको सेवनले ७५ जनाको मृत्यु हुन्छ



सिर्जना खत्री, गोरखापत्र ताजा, स्वास्थ्य, २९ असोज २०७९, शनिबार

Link: <https://gorkhapatraonline.com/news/41649?>

### 2. सुर्तीजन्य पदार्थ नियन्त्रण सम्बन्धी कानून कार्यान्वयन नहुँदा नसर्ने रोगको जोखिम झन् बढ्यो 'नेपालको टोवाको कन्ट्रोल प्रोग्राम राइट ट्रयाकमा छैन' : डा. तारासिंह बम



नेपाली हेल्थ २०७९ असोज २९ गते २१:०४ 82Shares

Link: <https://www.nepalihealth.com/2022/10/15/72632/?>

### 3. विज्ञ भन्छन् (सुर्तीजन्य पदार्थ विरुद्धको कानून पूर्ण कार्यान्वयन नहुँदा नसर्ने रोगको जोखिम बढ्यो) हेल्थ टिभी अनलाइन 122 Views

Link: <https://healthyonline.com/health-news/2022/10/41970/?>

### 4. सुर्तीजन्य पदार्थ नियन्त्रण तथा नियमन ऐन कानून कार्यान्वयन गर्न कसले रोक्यो ?



हेल्थपाटी आश्विन २९, २०७९ १८:५९ मा प्रकाशित

Link: <https://healthpati.com/detail/41320221015190031.html?>

### 5. 'सुर्तीजन्य पदार्थ नियन्त्रण सम्बन्धी कानून कार्यान्वयनमा कमजोरी'



स्वास्थ्य स्वस्थखबर शनिबार, असोज २९, २०७९ २१:२७

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Link: <https://swasthyakhabar.com/story/48561?>

### 6. सुर्तीजन्य पदार्थ नियन्त्रण सम्बन्धी कानून उत्कृष्ट, कार्यान्वयन पक्ष कमजोर



मेडिकल पत्र २९ असोज, २०७९

Link: <https://medicalpatra.com/news-details/8303/2022-10-15?>

### 7. 'नेपालको सुर्ती जन्य पदार्थ नियन्त्रण कार्यक्रम सही बाटोमा गइ रहेको छैन : डा.तारा सिंह बम'



नेपाल हेल्थ प्रेस आईतबार, २०७९ असोज ३० गते

Link: <https://www.nepalhealthpress.com/health-news/1387/?fbclid=IwAR3EzW6lGnUOvCk12gWbiWF3o8OPM-U-sRu15CUmsBGESqolsXEdR4c8k>

### 8. सुर्तीजन्य पदार्थ सेवन र बिक्रीमा कडाई गर्न ध्यानाकर्षण / नया पत्रिका / काठमाडौँ, ३० असोज <https://www.nayapatrikadaily.com/epaper/17-10-2022>



## Program Speakers



**Dr. Arun Shahi**

*Consultant/ Lecturer of Medical Oncology  
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**Mr. Ananda Bahadur Chand**

*Chairperson  
Action Nepal*



**Dr. Bhakta Bahadur KC**

*Senior Health Education Administrator  
National Health Education, Information, and  
Communication Center (NHEICC)*



**Dr. Lonim Dixit**

*WHO Nepal*



**Dr. Tara Singh Bam**

*Director,  
International Union Against  
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease  
(The Union)*



**Dr. Sangeeta Mishra**

*Additional Secretary,  
Ministry of Health and Population  
(MoHP)*



**Dr. Chuman Lal Das**

*Director,  
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**Dr. Dipendra Raman Singh**

*Director General (DG)  
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(MoHP)*



**BP Giri**

*Asia Pacific Cities Alliance For*

**Program Participants list**

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Time: 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM						
Venue: Hotel Himalaya, Skyline Hall, Kupondole, Lalitpur						
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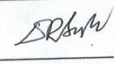


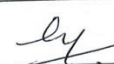

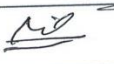


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# Program Photos:

