

Program Report

Exposing and Resisting the Tobacco Industry's Dangerous Nexus: Charting a Strategic Path Forward for Collective Action

Action Nepal

www.actionnepal.net

12th December 2025

Action Nepal on 12 December 2025 organized a workshop on “*Exposing and Resisting the Tobacco Industry's Dangerous Nexus: Charting a Strategic Path Forward for Collective Action.*” The basic purpose of the program was to have an interaction on Tobacco Industry's linkages with different branches of government, its impact on tobacco related policy making and to chart out strategies to jointly resist TII, strengthen tobacco control measures, and make the government more accountable in this regard.

Most of the speakers in the program said that the tobacco industry has taken the politically volatile situation of the country as an opportunity to further their interests. They also accused the current government of having ministers and high-ranking officials as its supporters.

Speaking at the program, Dr. Tara Singh Bam, Director of Vital Strategies Asia Pacific, said that even though the number of deaths due to tobacco consumption in Nepal is increasing every year, the government is not serious about it. He said that a study conducted by the Ministry of Health in 2023 showed that there were more than 14,000 deaths compared to the previous study in a four-year period, but the government is ignoring it. Dr. Bam said that although some laws have been made in Nepal to control and regulate tobacco products, the government itself is indifferent to their implementation. According to him, most countries in South Asia have taken good steps towards tobacco control, but Nepal has only made laws and left them. If they are implemented, the number of complex diseases such as cancer and TB caused by tobacco consumption in Nepal will decrease. However, at every step, the tobacco industries are influencing government officials, and it is also seen that people from the Ministry of Health itself are in favor of the tobacco industries.

Jyoti Baniya, President of the Consumer Protection Forum, said that it is unfortunate that instead of implementing the 100% PHW on tobacco products, there is a move to open industries and increase their sales and distribution. He said that new tobacco industries are still being opened in connection with the government and drew the attention of stakeholders towards it. He said that due to the current collusion between those in the policy level and those operating industries in Nepal, the production and sale of tobacco products have increased widely in Nepal. He further said that the trade in vape and e-cigarettes is increasing in Nepal. It is imported from China and smuggled from Nepal to India.

Upendra Dhungana, Senior Public Health Administrator at the National Health Education, Information and Communication Center (NHEICC), said that since the tobacco industry is working

in a planned manner, government mechanisms should be activated to stop it. He said tobacco manufacturing industries are one step ahead of the government and are systematically mobilizing various mechanisms to pursue their interests. So, it is necessary for the ministries of industry, finance, and health to work together to stop their interference.

Gopikrishna Regmi, Undersecretary for Law at the Ministry of Health and Population, said that tobacco and vape manufacturers and suppliers have been carrying out addictive programs targeting youth, and the ministry will monitor this. “Tobacco industries are taking advantage of the loopholes in the law, and they are also trying to get youth to start consuming tobacco products, which is very negative,” he said.

He also said that the tobacco industries have been misleading in the issue of tobacco tax and are in the forefront to brand themselves as a responsible corporate house, all-party cooperation is needed to stop TIs misleading claim. Regmi further stated that he had learned the Ministry of Industry is currently doing homework on opening a cigarette factory in Janakpur, and that the Ministry of Health and Population would write to the Ministry of Industry against this.

Action Nepal's Research Officer Dr. Pamir Gautam said that the tobacco industry has now gained access to the power center and policy-making, and they have tried to interpret the law in their favor by spreading false information. Noting that those who said the tobacco industry should be opened have become ministers in the GenZ government and expressed concern that this will cause problems in the law related to tobacco control and its implementation.

Health journalist Ram Prasad Neupane said that Nepali media and media personnel have been continuously alerting against the interference of the tobacco industry, and said that in the current situation, we need to be more vigilant.

After hearing everyone's views, Dr. Radhika Thapaliya, Director of the NHEICC, express her opinion, saying that there is a tradition in Nepal of making laws but not implementing them, and in the current situation, there is no option but to break that tradition and move forward. She emphasized that the campaign against tobacco products should also start from schools. She said that the law enacted by the Nepal government to control tobacco is considered the best in the world and that all-round support is needed for its implementation. She informed that there is a plan to move forward by linking tobacco control programs to the mental health awareness campaign.

Media Published:

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Program Participants List:

Exposing and Resisting the Tobacco Industry's Dangerous Nexus: Charting a Strategic Path Forward for Collective Action Organized by: Action Nepal in Coordination with NHEICC Date: 12 December 2025, Friday Time: 8 AM to 12:00 PM Venue: Alfa House Banquet, Alfa Beta Complex, Baneshwor, Kathmandu Attendance Sheet						
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