

## Vital Strategies in China: China hears its first *Voice of a Victim*

Vital Strategies has been supporting the government of China on national and subnational tobacco control mass media campaigns since 2008, when the 29th Olympic Games were held in Beijing. From the first *Smoke Free Olympics* campaign, Vital Strategies has contributed to more than 40 evidence-based campaigns to support passage or implementation of smoke-free policies and other policy efforts.

Seeking to personalize the relevance of tobacco-related harms in a new way in China, Vital undertook an initiative in 2018 with the Tobacco Control Office of China CDC, to seek out a person who was affected by tobacco harms and was willing to tell their story on national television. This search was diligently undertaken through CDC's network of hospitals and doctors. This was to be the first national campaign to bring the personal voice of a victim of tobacco harm to television screens inside China's households. The *Voice of Tobacco Victims* campaign was launched in December 2018 and re-launched around World No Tobacco Day 2019 through China Central Television (CCTV), provincial satellite television stations and across social media platforms. The campaign sought to increase public understanding and recognition of the harms of smoking in a new and personal way, and to build support for government efforts toward introduction of smoke-free legislation.

The victim campaign television public service announcement told the story of Mr Li Xiang, a smoker who experienced cardiac arrest while on a train journey with his wife and children, and how he was fortunate to be treated by an experienced doctor who was also travelling on the train. Li Xiang's story was filmed, edited and refined through message-testing research with smokers to maximize engagement with his story and effectively communicate key messages about tobacco harms to smokers and their families. The campaign incorporated an integrated media strategy by combining mass media, earned media, social media, and new digital media communication. It also tapped the wisdom of a well-recognized doctor who treated Li Xiang on the train.



### Population

1.3 billion

### Smoking Prevalence

50.5% of men, 2.1% of women, 11.2% of boys, and 2.2% of girls currently use tobacco<sup>1</sup>.

### Tobacco Control Policies

A total of 13 cities in China, representing 111 million people, are protected by comprehensive smoke-free policies. By 2019, six cities including Nanning, Hangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhangjiakou, Qinhuangdao and Wuhan included the use of e-cigarettes into their smoke-free laws. Advertising tobacco products is also banned in mass media, public places and on the internet.

### Milestone

The Healthy China 2030 plan highlights tobacco control as a key priority, with the goals of reducing the prevalence of smoking to less than 20% by 2030 and ensuring that more than 80% of the country's population is protected by comprehensive smoke-free legislation in the same year.

<sup>1</sup> Global Adult Tobacco Survey, 2018



*A screenshot from the Voice of Tobacco Victims campaign.*

According to Nielsen media data, the *Voice of Tobacco Victims* campaign reached approximately 600 million people over a one-month period through CCTV and provincial satellite television stations, supported by an impressive social media effort.

This effective collaboration between Vital Strategies, China CDC and CCTV was critical to achieving a massive reach for tobacco control communication in China. The campaign offers an effective model for future national collaborations to support government efforts to pass and implement smoke-free legislation in cities and provinces across China, to prompt quitting amongst smokers, and to help meet the goals of *Healthy China 2030*.

This case study is part of a series highlighting our work with the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use in priority countries.

### **About Vital Strategies**

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by a strong public health system. We work with governments and civil society in more than 70 countries to design and implement evidence-based strategies that tackle their most pressing public health problems. Our goal is to see governments adopt promising interventions at scale as rapidly as possible. To find out more, please visit [www.vitalstrategies.org](http://www.vitalstrategies.org) or Twitter @VitalStrat.