

## Vital Strategies in Myanmar— Spotlight on Chewing Tobacco “Avoid Betel Chewing So You Don’t Regret Your Life Choices”

The People’s Health Foundation Myanmar and Vital Strategies, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Sports, designed, implemented and evaluated a mass media campaign to discourage smokeless tobacco use in Myanmar in 2018. This campaign is a continuation of the successfully implemented 2017 mass media campaign with the same name, “Avoid Betel Chewing So You Don’t Regret Your Life Choices.”

The main objective of this smokeless tobacco campaign was to generate positive changes in the behavior of current smokeless tobacco users, motivating quit attempts and preventing nonusers from starting. A secondary objective was to raise awareness about smokeless tobacco use in Myanmar and its health harms, in order to reduce social acceptability.

The campaign, which aired in October and November 2018, included three testimonial public service announcements (PSAs) of 30 seconds each (two TV messages and one radio message), featuring real people suffering the health effects of using smokeless tobacco. The ads aired for six weeks on television and radio and appeared on social media and posters.

In an evaluation of the campaign, 81% of respondents overall and 89% in urban areas recalled any of the PSAs (either on TV, social media or radio) when prompted. Seven out of 10 correctly remembered the campaign’s message. The messages resonated particularly strongly with smokeless tobacco users, those who live in urban areas, men, and those in middle and older age groups.

The campaign on Facebook (#StopBetelMyanmar) scored an engagement of 11.38%. This is far above the Facebook overall average of 0.16%. Total reach of the campaign on Facebook was 5.1 million, registering a total of 1.1 million video views.

The campaign to discourage smokeless tobacco use was highly successful. Nearly 23 million people between the ages of 18 to 55 were reached during the campaign period. Among those who recalled the campaign, there was almost universal concern for the health effects of smokeless tobacco, and many people reported attempting to quit as a result of the ads. A strong majority said they were also willing to participate in advocacy campaigns to control smokeless tobacco use.



### Population

54 million

### Smoking Prevalence

44% of men, 8.4% of women, 21% of boys, and 2% of girls currently smoke tobacco<sup>1</sup>.

### Tobacco Control Policies

Smoking is prohibited in most indoor public places, indoor workplaces, and on public transportation. Since September 2016, graphic health warnings are required to cover the top 75% of the front and back surfaces of tobacco product packaging. The sale and use of e-cigarettes is permitted.

### Milestone

Among low-income countries, Myanmar holds the highest death toll from smokeless tobacco. In 2018, the Ministry of Health and Sports implemented the first national media campaign to address this significant health burden.

<sup>1</sup>Global Adult Tobacco Survey, 2016



*Young flash-mob dancer supporting the StopBetelMyanmar-campaign/Photo by YoungGuns Media*

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.