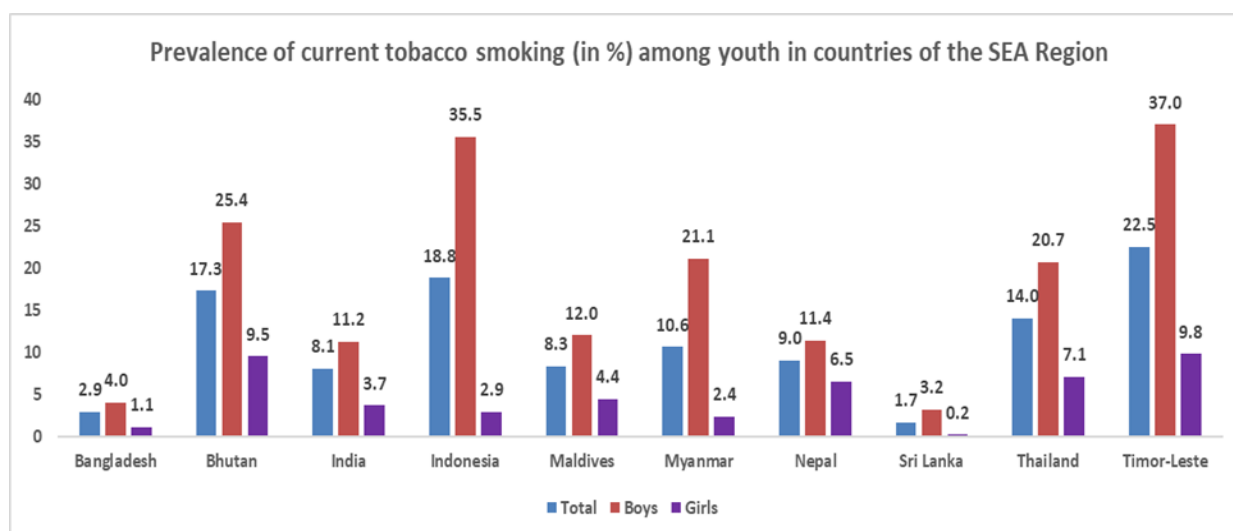
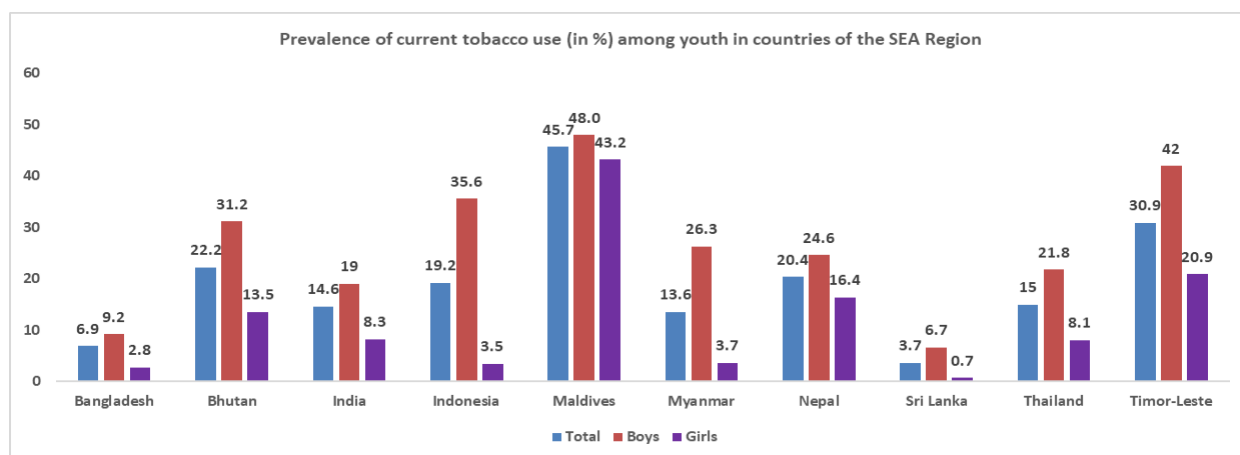


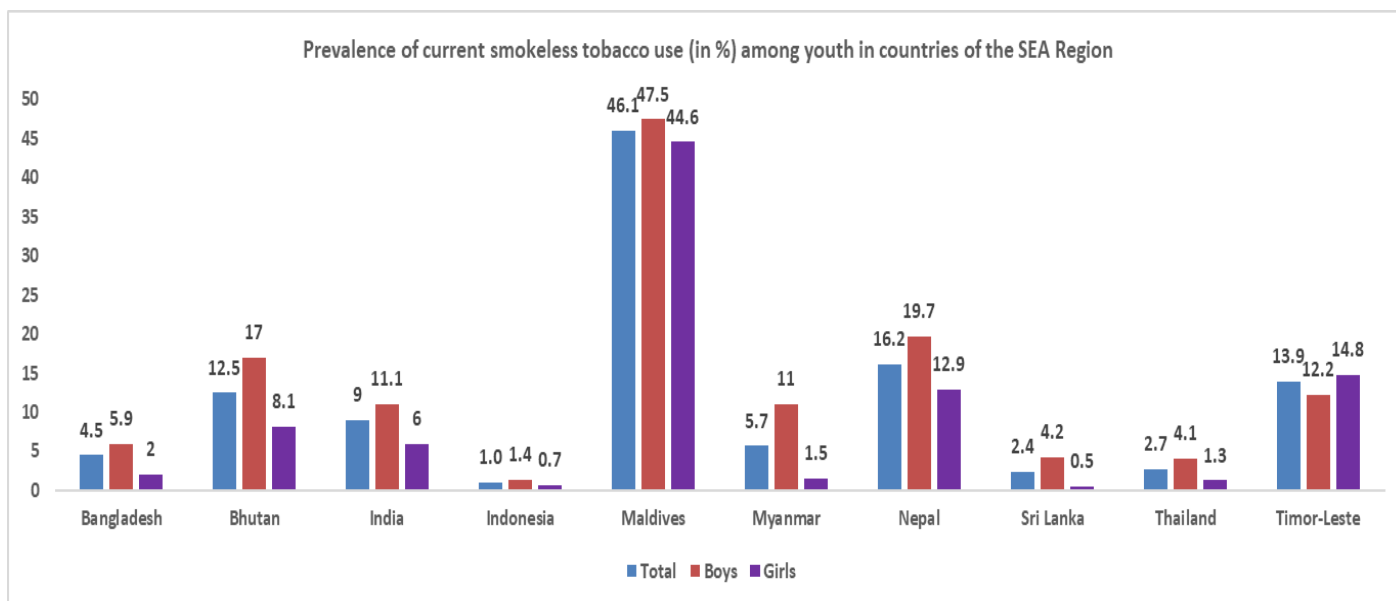
Youth- Tobacco Industry's new target

WHO World No Tobacco Day campaign in 2020 focused on protecting children and young people from exploitation by the tobacco and related industry. Every year the tobacco industry invests more than USD 9 billion to advertise its products. Increasingly, it is targeting young people with nicotine and tobacco products in a bid to replace the 8 million people who get killed every year as a result of tobacco use. To protect the health of the future generation, it is doubly important to protect children and youth from the evil influence of tobacco.

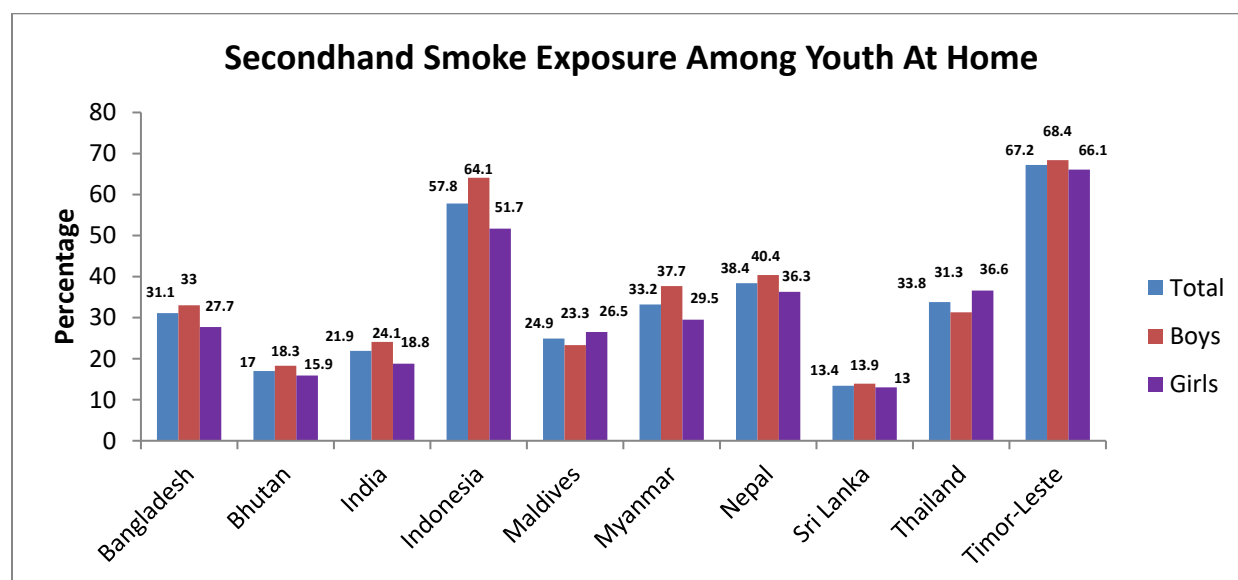
Global evidence suggests that most of the current adult tobacco users initiate tobacco use during adolescence, which continues into adulthood. As per the global estimates, nearly 9 out of 10 smokers start smoking before 18 years of age and 98% start smoking by the age of 26 years. About three out of four adolescent smokers become adult smokers. The higher sensitivity and vulnerability of children and adolescents to nicotine addiction implies that the earlier they start smoking, the more likely they are to become addicted.

Over 40 million young people aged 13-15 have already started to use tobacco. Over a third of these children come from the South-East Asia Region. At 7.3 percent the Region also has the world's highest prevalence of smokeless tobacco use among young people. Tobacco use prevalence is high among youth in Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Timor-Leste.





Surveys show that a high percentage of youth in India, Nepal and Timor-Leste were exposed to tobacco advertisements or promotion at point of sale/billboards in the past 30 days. Similarly, a large percentage of youth in India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste noticed pro-cigarette advertisements in print and entertainment media in the past 30 days. In some countries of the Region children from poor households are employed in tobacco farming to boost family income, exposing them to a number of health risks, including the "green tobacco sickness".



Youth and children of the Region are also highly exposed to the hazards of second-hand smoke. Nearly half of all children breathe air polluted by tobacco smoke and 65 000 children die each year due to illnesses related to

second-hand smoke. Smoking during pregnancy can lead to several life-long health conditions for babies. Worldwide second-hand smoke exposure has been implicated in adverse health outcomes, causing 1.2 million deaths annually.

Electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and electronic non-nicotine delivery systems (ENNDS), commonly referred to as e-cigarettes, are becoming increasingly popular among young people in some SEAR countries. E-cigarettes are devices which heat a liquid to create an aerosol which is inhaled. It may or may not contain nicotine but is harmful to health and unsafe. E-cigarettes are particularly risky when used by children and adolescents. Nicotine is highly addictive and young people's brains develop up to their mid-twenties. While there is still no clear evidence on the long-term impacts upon children and young people of using ENDS, it could lead to young people taking up more harmful forms of tobacco consumption. ENDS also tends to undermine tobacco control efforts implemented by countries.

Effective monitoring tracks the extent and character of the tobacco epidemic and indicates how best to implement policies. However, only 1 in 3 countries, representing 38% of the world's population, monitors tobacco use by repeating nationally representative youth and adult surveys at least once every 5 years.

Meanwhile, to reach out to the youth, WHO has launched a TikTok challenge #TobaccoExposed and welcomed social media partners like Pinterest, Tinder, YouTube and TikTok to amplify messaging.

WHO calls on all sectors to help stop tobacco and related industries from targeting children and young people:

- Schools refuse any form of sponsorship and prohibit representatives from nicotine and tobacco companies from speaking to students
- Celebrities and influencers reject all offers of sponsorship
- Television and streaming services stop showing tobacco or e-cigarette use on screen
- Social media platforms ban the marketing of tobacco and related products and prohibit influencer marketing
- Government and financial sector divest from tobacco and related industries
- Governments ban all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship

Countries can protect children from industry exploitation by putting in place strict tobacco control laws, including regulating products like e-cigarettes that have already begun to hook a new generation of young people. Educating youth is also vital because nearly 9 out of 10 smokers start before age 18.