

SMOKE-FREE
III WORLD NOMAD GAMES, 2018:
KYRGYZSTAN'S EXPERIENCE



Abstract

The World Nomad Games (the Games) is a celebration of the culture and traditions of nomadic peoples. The III World Nomad Games, attracting over 70 000 spectators from across the world and participants from 74 countries, were held in Kyrgyzstan on 2–8 September 2018. For the first time, it was decided to make the Games smoke-free, as part of wider measures to reduce tobacco consumption in Kyrgyzstan. Close cooperation involving the Government of Kyrgyzstan, the Secretariat of the World Nomad Games, the Ministry of Health, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan and village health committees put in place measures such as banning smoking in public places and advertising of tobacco products, and providing information and access to quit-smoking support for spectators. The smoke-free Games policy was a success. Observers confirmed that the sports facilities were smoke-free zones, and highlighted the vital input of trained volunteers and civil activists. This report outlines the rationale, implementation and outcomes of the smoke-free Games initiative.

Keywords

TOBACCO CONTROL
SMOKE FREE
PUBLIC PLACES
LEGISLATION
NOMAD GAMES
KYRGYZSTAN

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UN City, Marmorvej 51

DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark

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Acknowledgements

The report was prepared by a working group of the Ministry of Health of Kyrgyzstan, in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan through the biennial collaborative agreement for 2018–2019 between the Ministry of Health of Kyrgyzstan and WHO.

The smoke-free III World Nomad Games in Kyrgyzstan were implemented under the overall guidance of Jarno Habicht, WHO Representative, WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan, and Kristina Mauer-Stender, Programme Manager, Tobacco Control, Division of Noncommunicable Diseases and Promoting Health through the Life-course, WHO Regional Office for Europe. Technical support was provided by Angela Ciobanu, Technical Officer, WHO Regional Office for Europe, and Aliina Altymysheva, National Professional Officer, WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe would like to offer special thanks to Saamai Abilova, Kyrgyz Medical Academy, and Aichurek Tolebaeva, Kyrgyz–Russian Slavic University, for their involvement in the preparation of the report.

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The report was edited by Alex Mathieson, freelance writer and editor.

1.The World Nomad Games

The World Nomad Games (the Games) is a celebration of the culture and traditions of nomadic peoples. The Games provide opportunities not only for sporting competition, but also for social and cultural events, with athletes from across the world coming together with artists, craft workers and other guests to mark their unique cultural heritage.

The first Games were held in Cholpon-Ata, Issyk-Kul oblast, Kyrgyzstan on 9–14 September 2014, and the second on 3–8 September 2016. Neither event placed any restrictions on tobacco use. People in the stands at the opening and closing ceremony and during competitions smoked and consumed nasvay freely.

In 2018, for the first time, it was decided to make the Games smoke-free, as part of wider measures to reduce tobacco consumption in Kyrgyzstan.

2.The 2018 Games, Kyrgyzstan

The III World Nomad Games were held at the picturesque Lake Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan on 2–8 September 2018. Over 70 000 spectators from across the world joined around 3000 athletes and participants from 74 countries to celebrate the Games. More than 600 media personnel covered the events, broadcasting live to 60 countries, and guests included representatives of international partners and sports organizations, and diplomats.

The Games present a unique opportunity to showcase nomadic culture and traditions to the world. The sporting events, based on the traditional games of the historic nomadic peoples of central Asia that have existed for thousands of years, were complemented by

cultural activity, including a programme of events around the theme of “The golden age of the nomads” in the Kyrchin jailoo, to which more than 150 000 people attended. The ethnic festival “The world of nomads” also ran concurrently with the Games, attracting over 30 creative teams from different parts of the world.



3. Tobacco use in Kyrgyzstan

Here are some facts about tobacco use in general.

Tobacco kills up to half of its users. In 2017, more than 8 million people died for reasons related to tobacco use. Over 7 million of those deaths are caused by direct tobacco use, while around 1.2 million resulted from non-smokers being exposed to secondary smoke.

There is no safe level of exposure to secondary smoke. Tobacco smoke contains more than 7000 chemicals, of which at least 250 are known to be harmful and more than 50 cause cancer.

Cigarette smoking harms almost every organ in the human body. Smoking causes many diseases and impairs the smoker's general health.

WHO STEPS survey results show that 25.7% of people in Kyrgyzstan smoke (48.2% of men and 2.7% of women). Just over 86% of smokers smoke daily, and one third of the population uses tobacco products. Passive smoking affects 28.2% of women at home and 36.7% of men at work.

Comparison of results of the Global Youth Survey on Tobacco Use from 2004, 2008 and 2014 shows increasing prevalence among young people in Kyrgyzstan, from 7.2% in 2004 and 2008 to 8.2% in 2014 (12.3% among boys). Prevalence of students receiving help to quit smoking decreased significantly, from 74.9% in 2008 to 24.1% in 2014. This increasing trend of tobacco use among younger people is an important predictor of its growth among the adult

population in the near future, with use of smokeless tobacco products also increasing.

- Kyrgyzstan ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) in 2006 and adopted that same year the law on "Protection of the health of citizens against harmful effects of tobacco and its consumption". Government health officials and country leaders continue their efforts to strengthen tobacco control legislation and to create smoke-free environments, but by September 2018 only a few measures aimed at reducing consumption of tobacco products have been implemented effectively. These are:
- pictorial health warnings about the dangers of smoking on both sides of cigarette packs;
- indicating the phone number and website for support in quitting smoking on packs;
- limiting advertising of tobacco products in the media and through outdoor advertising;
- setting up a government-financed hot-line on smoking cessation; and
- developing a procedure for determining the smoking status of people seeking medical care.

Only partial restrictions on smoking in public places exist, meaning spectators at sporting and cultural events are not protected from exposure to tobacco smoke.

¹ The WHO STEPwise approach to Surveillance (STEPS) is a simple, standardized method for collecting, analysing and disseminating data in WHO Member States.

4. Making the 2018 Games smoke-free

All the main players in the Games bought into the idea of making them smoke-free. Local residents, spectators and guests, athletes and tourists all supported the initiative. This buy-in is a vital component of running a successful smoke-free event. As one spectator put it: "Smoking is alien to us, it is better to watch the competition without inhaling toxic substances. I support this initiative."

Close cooperation involving the Government of Kyrgyzstan, the Secretariat of the World Nomad Games, the Ministry of Health, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan and village health committees ensured that the III World Nomad Games could be declared smoke-free. Declaring the Games smoke-free meant that:

- smoking was not allowed at any Games locations, except for designated and marked outdoor spaces;
- selling and advertising tobacco products on the territory of all Games locations were banned, in accordance with the current law and the WHO FCTC;
- sponsorship by tobacco companies was banned;
- Games symbols were prohibited from appearing on tobacco and smoking-related products (such as lighters); and information materials and access to

- the free hotline number for those wanting counselling on quitting tobacco were available at all Games locations.

4.1 Preparing to make the Games smoke-free

WHO initiated the preparations for making the Games smoke-free. The WHO Country Office started negotiations with relevant Government ministers, sharing experience of how occasions such as the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in 2017 were run as a smoke-free event. This example provided a basic model of how to create a smoke-free environment at sporting events.

By the end of 2017, the Ministry of Health was on board with the idea of introducing a smoke-free policy for the Games and wrote to the Vice-Prime Minister, emphasizing the importance of creating smoke-free environments during this prestigious event. The Vice-Prime Minister supported the idea and agreed to promote it.

The Organizing Committee of the Games, supported by WHO Country Office and the Ministry of Health, developed the proposal for a smoke-free Games in July 2018. This was approved in August 2018, and the Games were officially designated as smoke-free.

4.2 Implementing the smoke-free Games

Local authority involvement

An intersectoral meeting in the Issyk-Kul rayon akimat ensured all local government bodies were involved in implementing a smoke-free Games. Roles and responsibilities for all were defined, in compliance with the agreed anti-tobacco measures. The Government invited all village councils to support and promote the Games as a smoke-free event.

Training

The first stage involved the WHO Country Office and Ministry of Health training the Games Secretariat on the importance of creating smoke-free environments and the health consequences of inhaling secondary smoke. Training for volunteer coordinators was also provided at the location sites, focusing on delivering counselling on smoking harms and promoting healthy lifestyles, and how to respond when confronted with spectators who continued to smoke despite the ban.



The Department of Internal Affairs of Issyk-Kul oblast and the WHO Country Office organized training for Department of Internal Affairs staff that centred on key legal acts on tobacco control. The chief law-enforcement officer of the rayon was responsible for training police. Staff of the Issyk-Kul oblast Centre for Family Medicine were trained by WHO Country Office on brief counselling for tobacco addiction. Representatives of five village's health committees and the Health Promotion Office participated in all training activities and cooperated as much as possible with local authorities.

Staff of the hospitality sector (bars, restaurants, hotels, rest homes and boarding houses) attended information seminars delivered by the Coordinator of the Sanitary and Epidemiological Service. The seminars reflected the need to develop staff members' capacity to handle issues around tobacco control and prevention of noncommunicable diseases, and to teach them how politely to ask smokers to stop, citing the policy of promoting a smoke-free Games. Ignored warnings would mean that the smoker could be sanctioned under the law. The Coordinator of the Sanitary and Epidemiological Service was responsible for ensuring 100% observance of smoke-free environments in the catering points.

Survey

A survey was organized with the Health Promotion Office of the Issyk-Kul regional Centre for Family Medicine. The survey included inspecting the five Games locations in the Issyk-Kul rayon, with the chief architect of the rayon and the Games' chief artist identifying sites for location of the smoking area, banners and "No Smoking" signs. The Games' Artistic Expert Board was consulted on the design of banners, signs and materials for each location, resulting in a recommendation for environmentally friendly materials (white felt) and archaic design to be used for those in the outdoor activities centre of the Kyrchyn Gorge on the north shore of Lake Issyk-Kul.

Awareness-raising

The information campaign implemented during the Games included:

- radio coverage reminding people of the anti-smoking policy in the Hippodrome in Cholpon-Ata;
- inclusion of an anti-tobacco message in the video for the Games, which was broadcast on television and on screens at the Games venues;



- welcome screens in Manas Airport carrying a message in three languages about the smoke-free status of the Games;
- local Issyk-Kul rayon TV channels running text developed by the Centre for Family Medicine on the prohibition of smoking during the Games;
- "No Smoking" signs being placed inside the shuttle buses that delivered spectators and participants to the Games venues;
- and the Centre for Family Medicine designing no-smoking badges for the five representatives of village health committees.

Information on the smoke-free status of the Games was conveyed via:

- sports federations of the invited countries;
- transport companies involved in taking tourists to all Games locations;
- and the Internet, with information available on the websites of the Organizing Committee, Ministry of Health, national TV and radio channels, international tourist sites and the WHO Country Office, and through social media.

The Ministry of Health, Republican Centre for Health Promotion and the WHO Country Office also organized an information campaign through local media promoting the Games' smoke-free status.

Visual materials on the harmful consequences of smoking with recommendations on healthy lifestyles were prepared and posted in the five Games locations – the Hippodrome, the Sports and Recreation Facility, the Kyrchyn Gorge location, the Eurasia Hotel and the Nomad Amphitheatre. Volunteers from the civil sector helped to identify specific sites to place “No Smoking” signs in all locations.

The Hippodrome had banners in Russian and Kyrgyz languages highlighting the smoking ban at the entrance of the arena, in the sales area and near catering points. A banner was also placed opposite the main stand. “No Smoking” signs were placed on litter bins, in the stands, inside the toilets and on stairways. A special smoking area was created outside the Hippodrome, away from the entrances, with containers for tobacco waste. The smoking area displayed posters describing the first signs of a heart attack and a stroke, the hazards of secondary smoke, and first aid for acute myocardial infarction and stroke. A sign was posted, stating: “Smoking area. Smoking outside this area is prohibited. Smokers will be held responsible for violations.”

Employees of the Sports and Recreation Facility requested that signs stating “Coaches do not smoke!” and “No Smoking” be placed in the toilets, stands and stairways, with stickers attached to litter bins. Roll-up banners emphasizing the harm of passive smoking and describing the first signs of acute myocardial infarction and stroke were placed at both sides of the entrance to the sports complex and in the stairways.

“No Smoking” signs in the Kyrchyn Gorge location were made from white felt. They were fixed above the entrance to each yurt and all over the territory in which the outdoor games were conducted. Wooden guide plates and “No Smoking” signs were attached to bridges and wooden gates. Signs were installed near the stands, by the entrance to and inside the ethnic bazaar, and in the food court area and toilets. The Health Promotion Centre developed and distributed leaflets and brochures to participants highlighting harms from smoking and the first signs of myocardial infarction and stroke. Promotion materials available within the area indicated the hotline number for free advice on how to quit smoking.

The Eurasia Hotel hosted the board games. “No Smoking” signs and roll-up banners explaining the dangers of secondary smoke were placed throughout the hotel.

The Nomad Amphitheatre, the site for cultural activities, protected participants of the ethnic fashion shows, musical and creative groups and audiences from tobacco smoke. Special warning signs about smoking were placed at both sides of the stage, all around the area, on litter bins, and in toilets and on stairways.

4.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Issyk-Kul rayon health officials, the Coordinator of the Sanitary and Epidemiological Service and representatives of the Health Promotion Office and the Centre for Family Medicine inspected all Games locations. They created monitoring groups comprising representatives of village health committees, with one person cited with specific responsibility for each location.

The inspectors checked the awareness of employees in each location of the smoke-free nature of the Games, availability of “No Smoking” signs and the allocation of a special area for smoking placed outside the Hippodrome. All sites were checked for preparedness to hold smoke-free Games.

Independent observers from village health committees who worked at all locations reported that the sports facilities were smoke-free zones. This was supported by numerous information signs prohibiting smoking, and the efforts of trained volunteers, health workers, law enforcement officers and civil society activists. The smoke-free policy was a success, with just a few cases of smoking observed at venues. Volunteers stopped isolated cases of smoking observed in the grounds of jailoo Kyrchyn and at the entrance to the Hippodrome. The violators responded positively to the reprimands and without resistance. As one volunteer from a village health committee explained:

[The smoke-free Games] is a great idea, we like it, we are happy to keep order. The majority of village health committee members are women. We politely reprimand the young people, ask them to stop smoking, and refer them to the smoking area [outside the Hippodrome]. Many people support us because there are a lot of children around.

Commenting on the spirit of cooperation that led to the successful achievement of a smoke-free Games, Jarno Habicht, the WHO Representative to Kyrgyzstan between 2015 and 2018 said:



For the public health community and WHO, it has been a ground-breaking opportunity to work with the Government of Kyrgyzstan and the organizers of the Games to be smoke-free. The efforts, from the idea to implementation, were enormous, and needed many stakeholders to work together to provide the competitors and people with a chance to follow nomadic culture and sport in a fresh environment. I hope this is a positive example and experience towards the tobacco-free world.



5. Summary

The observers' confirmation that the sports facilities were smoke-free zones highlights the importance of having numerous information signs prohibiting smoking – such signs promote compliance – and securing the input of trained volunteers and others. The involvement of civil activists was invaluable.

Training of the volunteers and others also played an important role in boosting support for the initiative and ensuring compliance with the smoke-free ethos of the Games. Fatima Nurmahamadova, a volunteer at the Games, made the following comment.

On behalf of the volunteers of the Games, I would like to express my gratitude for the cooperation in the volunteer training and for organization of the smoke-free Games. The lecture on tobacco hazards helped us to realize the importance of preventing smoking in public places. That urged us to take a more responsible approach to compliance with the anti-tobacco measures during the Games. We were therefore able to contribute to upholding the law on protecting people against the harmful effects of tobacco. We still use the new knowledge we acquired during the training.

It was found that law enforcement officers and staff of the Sanitary and Epidemiological Service needed capacity-building in the area of tobacco control. To increase their knowledge of the legal framework and regulation on tobacco

control, appropriate training for core staff and personnel from the regions commenced early in 2019.

Advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products were banned; volunteers and civic activists, along with the local authorities and police, actively promoted the ban on the sale of tobacco products. The volunteers persistently reminded people that smoking in the sports facilities was prohibited and encouraged healthy lifestyles, building on their training. Spectators, guests and participants welcomed the concept of a smoke-free Games and were able to enjoy the clean and fresh mountain air.

Local government leaders widely supported the smoke-free initiative, which they considered to be socially important and attractive. The Government, ministries and agencies of health, culture, education, sports and youth are continuing to improve information on tobacco use and promote healthy lifestyles and habits during mass events at rayon, oblast and national levels. The State Agency for Youth, Sport and Physical Culture has declared that from 2018, all sports facilities and major sporting events will be tobacco-free. Measures such as these will help to improve implementation of the WHO FCTC at country level.

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