

## Executive Summary

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with the United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, was conducted in Saint Lucia during the months of May and June 2001.

The GYTS is a school-based survey of students aged 13 to 15 years. It is designed to gather information about smoking prevalence, knowledge and attitudes, media and advertising, young people's access to tobacco products; price of tobacco products; tobacco use prevention education in the school curriculum; exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and tobacco cessation. The information obtained from the survey would be used in decision making and to develop strategies to prevent and control tobacco use among young people.

The objectives of the GYTS in St. Lucia were to:

1. document and monitor the prevalence of tobacco use including: cigarette smoking and current use of smokeless tobacco and cigars or pipes.
2. obtain an improved understanding of and to assess students' attitudes, knowledge and behaviours related to tobacco use and its health impact.
3. provide information to guide programming and advocacy work addressing youth tobacco use.

The purpose of the GYTS was to collect data on the level of tobacco use, age at initiation of cigarette use, the levels of susceptibility to become cigarette smokers, exposure to tobacco advertising and to identify intervening variables such as attitudes and beliefs on behavioural norms with regard to tobacco use which can be used to inform prevention and control programmes.

The Saint Lucia GYTS collected data on the prevalence of cigarette and other tobacco use, as well as information on six (6) related factors namely - knowledge and attitudes; access/availability and price; environmental tobacco smoke exposure; cessation; media and advertising; and school curriculum.

The Saint Lucia GYTS was conducted among students in grades 6-9 and forms 1-4.

A two-stage cluster sample design was used to produce representative data for all of Saint Lucia. At the first stage, schools were selected with probability proportional to enrolment size. At the second stage, classes were randomly selected and all students in selected classes were eligible to participate.

The schools' response rate was 100 %. Student response rate was 86.2%, and the overall response rate was 86.2%. A total of 1737 students participated in the survey.

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education collaborated in collecting data. Health and Family Life educators distributed questionnaires to students.

The questionnaire was self-administered. It consisted of 71 questions which were close ended and addressed the variables mentioned above.

The results of the survey showed that 35.5% of students had ever smoked cigarettes and male students were more likely to smoke than females. Smoking initiation began before age 10 among 29.2% of the students and 13% of non-smokers were susceptible to initiating smoking within the next 12 months. One in three students who had never smoked felt that boys who smoked had more friends.

A small percentage of students who were smokers perceived that boys and girls who smoked had more friends. Students smoked at home and elsewhere, but female students were more likely to smoke at home. With regards to purchasing cigarettes in a store, students had no difficulty.

Students who were non-smokers, as well as current smokers were exposed to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) at home and in Public places. Among current smokers 75.7% of students had a desire to stop smoking. A small amount of students, 5.5%, however, had attempted to stop smoking during the course of the year. Exposure to media and advertising messages both pro and con can be considered high. Almost half of the students were taught in school about the dangers of smoking and a smaller number had discussed the reasons why people their age smoked.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. A comprehensive tobacco control programme should be developed, implemented and evaluated, including:
  - (a) legislation banning

- smoking in public places
- the sale of tobacco products to minors and single cigarettes
- advertising and promotion of tobacco products in all media

(b) development and implementation of a youth cessation programme.

2. Progressive taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products.
3. The GYTS Survey should be repeated every three years to ascertain trends and effectiveness of tobacco control initiatives.