

## **Introduction**

Tobacco use is considered by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be the chief preventable cause of death in the world. WHO estimates that there are currently 4 million deaths each year from tobacco use. And if nothing is done, this figure is expected to rise to about 10 million by 2030. By that date, one third of those deaths will occur in developing countries. In the Americas almost 1 million people die from tobacco use every year. Recent trends indicate that the smoking prevalence rate among adolescents is rising and the age of initiation is becoming younger. If these patterns continue, tobacco use will result in the deaths of 250 millions children and young people living today, many of them in developing countries.

The situation in Haiti is not well known. There is only one study conducted in the Universite Notre Dame D'Haiti in 1999. The prevalence of smoking was among students, teachers and administrative personnel. Since May 2000, this university has been declared non smoking and without smoker institution.

This paper contains the main findings from the WHO / CDC / Global Youth Tobacco Survey project (GYTS) carried out on young students from 7<sup>th</sup> , 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades of schools in September –October 2000. The survey was administered by the Association de Sante Publique d'Haiti (ASPHA).

GYTS is an international surveillance project that generates comparisons of tobacco use between countries with the aim to enhance the capacity of the countries to monitor tobacco use and to evaluate preventive programs.

Objectives of the survey:

- To document and monitor the prevalence of tobacco-use including: cigarette smoking, and current use of smokeless tobacco, cigars or pipes.
- To obtain an improved understanding of and to assess learners' attitudes, knowledge and behaviors related to tobacco-use and its health impact including: cessation, environmental tobacco smoke, media and advertising, young people's access, and school curriculum.
- To provide information to guide programming and advocacy work addressing youth tobacco use.

## **Methods**

### *Sampling*

The Haiti GYTS is a school-based survey which employed a two-stage cluster sample design to produce a representative sample of students in grades 9, 10 and 11 in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. The first stage sampling frame consisted of all regular schools containing any grades 9, 10 and 11. Schools were selected with probability proportional to school enrollment size. Twenty five schools were selected.

The second sampling stage consisted of systematic equal probability sampling (with a random start) of classes from each school that participated in the survey. All classes in the selected school were included in the sampling frame. All students in the selected classes were eligible to participate in the survey.

A weighting g factor was applied to each student record to adjust for non response and for the varying probability of selection. For this survey, questionnaires were completed in 20 schools. The schools response rate was 80% and the student response rate was ... %. The overall response rate was >>> %. SUDAAN and Epi Info were used to compute 95% confidence interval for estimates.

### *Questionnaire development*

The Haiti version of the questionnaire consisted of 57 questions: 51 core questions and 6 additional questions in order to take into account local tobacco-using behavior and the psycho-social, cultural and contextual determinants thereof.

The questionnaire was in French, one of the two official languages of the country.

#### *Data collection*

From the list of existing schools in Haiti, Port-au-Prince schools were selected, the number of students by schools were added. This list was forwarded to CDC where the sample was drawn.

Data collection in the 25 selected schools took place in March 2001.

### **Results**

#### *Response*

The school response was 80%, only five schools refused to participate.

#### *Prevalence:*

Students who had ever smoked cigarettes represent a 23.7% of the sample, 18.5% of the students were currently smoking any tobacco product, 12% were currently smoking cigarettes and 10% were smoking other tobacco products. More than 1 in 5 students (22.3%) never smoke.

#### *School curriculum*

More than half of the students reported having been taught in school about danger of cigarettes smoking. And 29.7% of the students declared they had discussed why people of their age smoked.

#### *Access:*

Students who currently smoke were asked where they usually smoked, 58% said in their home.

Of the surveyed students, 28% purchased cigarettes in a store and 61% said they were not refused because of their age..

#### *Cessation*

Over 75% of the current smokers (83%) indicated that they wanted to stop smoking now, and 81% indicated that in the pass year they try to quit smoking.

#### *Media and advertising anti-tobacco smoking*

60 % of the students saw anti-smoking media messages. The same percentage of never smokers and current smokers saw the pro-tobacco messages in newspapers and magazines. 37% of the current smokers and 18% never smokers had objects with a cigarette brand logo on it. And male current smokers had more objects than male never smokers. One in 10 never smokers and 1 in 5 current smokers had been offered free cigarettes by a tobacco company.

#### *Environmental tobacco smoking*

More than half of the current smokers and one in 5 never smokers are exposed to smoke from others in their home. Current smokers are more exposed to smoke from others in public places than never smokers.

There is no difference in the percentage of current smokers and never smokers who think smoking should be banned from public places.

56% of never smokers and 40% of the current smokers think smoke from others is harmful to them.

#### *Knowledge and attitudes*

Smoking is associated to some attitudes and perceptions: 16.5% of never smokers and 16.2% of current smokers think boys who smoked have more friends; 15.1% of never smokers and 15.8 % of current smokers thinks girls who smoked have more friends and 26.9% of never smokers and 23.6% of current smokers think boys who smoked look more attractive; 27.0% of never smokers and 21.2 % of current smokers thinks girls who smoked look more attractive.