

Preface

Nothing is more disheartening than seeing a young person lighting up. The global rise in the trend of tobacco use among youth is particularly worrisome. Over the past thirty years of renaissance in Oman, the country became increasingly open to the world markets. Unfortunately, the tobacco companies took this opportunity to market their deadly products to the youth.

As seen in the “Voice of Truth”, a recently released report of the World Health Organization on tobacco industry activities in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, through out the 1980s and 1990s, tobacco companies have hired market researchers to ask adolescents as young as 13 about their buying and leisure time habits and media consumption. I call upon all decision makers and tobacco control advocates to review this comprehensive report as it not only presents compelling evidence of the strategies adopted by the tobacco industry in the region, but also provides strong arguments to tackle the tobacco problem

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) a WHO/UNICEF supported project on youth and tobacco has provided an important insight into the perception of children towards smoking. The results of this survey has shown a high prevalence of tobacco use among the Omani youth (13-15 years) which is very alarming. What is even more daunting is the use of other forms of tobacco such as Shishah (water pipe) and chewing smokeless tobacco.

The national tobacco control committee is working hand in hand with other ministries, organizations and individuals to address the different aspects of the tobacco epidemic. This study has provided the necessary knowledge for evaluating the comprehensive tobacco control programme and redirecting national tobacco control plans to include evidence based activities aimed at saving young people from the health hazards of tobacco.

I would like to thank the Ministry of Education for their cooperation and efforts in facilitating the study in schools all over the Sultanate. I would also like to thank the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta and WHO and the Eastern Mediterranean region for their valuable support through out the survey. Finally, I applaud the efforts of the Departments of School Health and Non Communicable Disease Surveillance and Control for completing the survey and final report in a timely manner.

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