

# Challenges of Tobacco Use Behavior in Central Development Region of Nepal: Global Youth Tobacco Survey, Nepal

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## 1. Summary:

*Objectives:* This report aims to describe the magnitude and extent of tobacco use as well as knowledge and attitudes of 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in Nepal regarding tobacco use, their exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) and cessation efforts, the extent to which they receive anti-tobacco instruction in schools and information from media and the extent of their exposure to pro-tobacco activities such as media/advertisement. It also describes the access and availability of tobacco products by the youth.

*Method:* This is a cross-sectional survey of students in grade 8-10, conducted in 49 secondary schools of Central Development Region (CDR) of Nepal in 2001. A two-stage cluster sample design was used to produce representative data for the region. At the first stage, schools were selected with probability proportional to enrollment size. At the second stage, classes were randomly selected and all students in selected classes were eligible to participate. A pre-tested, modified Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) questionnaire was used. The school response rate was 98%; students response rate was 86% and the overall response rate was 84.1%.

### *Results:*

Overall 16.3% of the students ever used tobacco product in any form (table 1). Percentage of current users of any form of tobacco product was 11.6% and the rate among boys was significantly higher (15.3%) than among girls (6.4%). The overall percentage of cigarette smoking was 4.1%. Majority, (77.7%) of the students were taught about the dangers of smoking, its effect as a part of lesson in the class (Table 2). Perhaps, as a consequence, a vast majority (76.8%) of the current smokers expressed their desire and also made an attempt (77.7%) to stop tobacco use (Table3).

A substantial proportion of non-smokers (44.7%) and current smokers (63.8%) were exposed to tobacco smoke from others outside their home in the past 7 days (Table 4). Boys were significantly highly exposed to secondhand smoke than girls. 72.9% never smokers and 59.7 % current smokers thought that the smoking should be banned from public places.

Similarly, the findings also suggested that the school students have unrestricted access to tobacco products. More than half (51.3%) of the current tobacco users purchased tobacco products in a store and 75% of them were not refused purchase because of their age.

44% of never tobacco users and 51.2% current tobacco users were exposed to tobacco advertisement in print media (Table 6b). A similar proportion of students were also exposed to pro-tobacco advertisements through TV, newspaper/magazine, social gatherings etc. Current smokers were more exposed to them. Thirty percent of current smokers even received free offer of cigarette or bidi or khaini gutka or panmasala from tobacco agents (Table 6a). Although, the tobacco users were more likely to get free gifts, 14.9% non-users also received such gifts.

The existence of wrong perception of school students about their smoking habits was also evident from the findings. More than one third (35.4%) never users and almost half (48.3%) current smokers thought that boys who smoke have more friends (Table 5a). Similarly, one-fifth (22.4%) never users and one-third (32.6%) current smokers thought that girls who smoke have more friends. About a similar proportion of students also thought that smoking makes them more attractive.