

# Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) Bhutan, 2019



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR

**World Health  
Organization**  
**South-East Asia**



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Globally, tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease, disability, and death. It is evident that one of the major risk factors for non-communicable diseases is tobacco consumption. In addition, it is also the source of severe implications on the quality of life of individuals, families and societies at large. Bhutan ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2004 joining the global community to fight the global tobacco epidemic. Therefore, it is important to periodically monitor the prevalence of tobacco use and position of tobacco control in our country.

It gives me immense pleasure to note the release of Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) Report, 2019. This latest GYTS follows four other such surveys conducted in the country in 2004, 2006, 2009 and 2013 with the purpose to track tobacco use among youth.

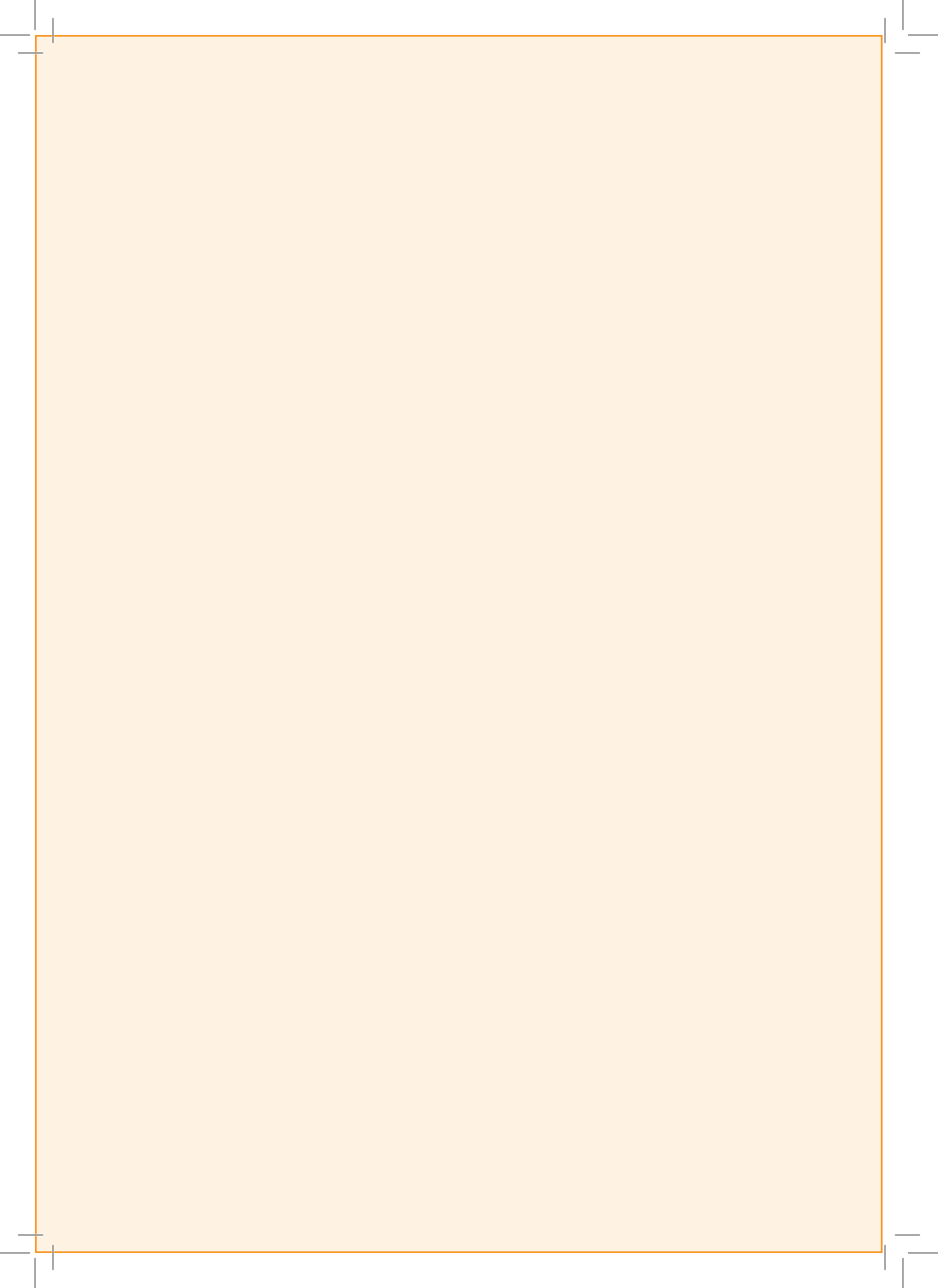
Protecting our youth from initiating tobacco use is a great challenge. Several rounds of GYTS conducted in the country have highlighted serious concerns. I am particularly drawn to the fact that prevalence of tobacco use among students in the country is higher than the regional average. These evidences reveal the need for proactive and sustained tobacco control initiatives in the country particularly targeted at youth and children. It also provides the basis for monitoring and evaluation of tobacco control initiatives towards, ultimately, achieving the goals outlined in the WHO FCTC. It also highlights the need to involve teachers and parents as role models and agents of change. The evidences and suggestions in the report need to be widely disseminated among school teachers and students and all other stakeholders to bring about awareness regarding serious and adverse health impact of tobacco.

I would like to express my gratitude and commend all those who have strived hard and relentlessly in bringing up this valuable report. I am especially thankful to the World Health Organization and Center for Disease Control for their continued and invaluable support in generating vital evidences. The cooperation rendered by Ministry of Education as well as those involved as survey administrators, staffs and students of schools are also immensely appreciated

The rich data contained in this report will be useful for programme managers, researchers, tobacco control advocates and other relevant stakeholders for generating credible evidence to promote tobacco control. Let us all combine our efforts to make Bhutan a tobacco-free nation and enable its citizens to improve and live healthier and happier lives without tobacco.

*Signature*

Ms. Dechen Wangmo  
**Minister**  
Ministry of Health, Bhutan



## Message from the Regional Director



Initiation of tobacco use during childhood and adolescence is closely associated with persistent tobacco use in adulthood and the many adverse health, social and economic effects chronic use of smoking and smokeless tobacco products cause. Preventing tobacco use initiation among children and youth and providing adequate tobacco cessation services to those who are addicted to tobacco is crucial to reduce the impact of tobacco products.

Only 1 in 3 countries monitors tobacco use by repeating nationally representative youth and adult surveys at least once every 5 years. Deciphering the trends in the prevalence of tobacco use – both smoking and smokeless – among youth enables policy-makers and public health administrators to more effectively and proactively target prevention resources. To decrease tobacco product use and susceptibility to tobacco use among youth, health authorities should vigorously implement supply- and demand-side provisions outlined in the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

The Royal Government of Bhutan deserves special recognition for its political commitment to controlling the tobacco epidemic by completely prohibiting all tobacco products vide the Tobacco Control Act of Bhutan 2010. The Tobacco Control Rules and Regulations 2013 specifically prohibit any minor from importing any tobacco or tobacco product, even for personal consumption. The fact that Bhutan has consistently monitored the prevalence of tobacco use among youth at regular intervals by conducting the Global Youth Tobacco Surveys (GYTS) is equally praiseworthy.

I note with appreciation that the GYTS Bhutan 2019 tracks the use of doma khamtog and areca nut among youth. Additionally, it also includes questions on the age of initiation of smokeless

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