

***Using Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) Data
to Strengthen Tobacco Control Efforts:***

Guidance for Tobacco Control Advocates

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Introduction

The Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) is designed to monitor adult tobacco use and track a broad range of key tobacco control indicators. As a surveillance tool, GATS enhances a country's capacity to design, implement and evaluate tobacco control programs. Equally important, GATS provides data to highlight the extent of tobacco use in the country and draw attention to the need for action.

GATS is the newest component of the Global Tobacco Surveillance System (GTSS), which also assesses tobacco use among youth, school personnel and health professionals. GATS is a household survey of a representative sample of persons 15 years of age and older. It tracks respondents' background characteristics, tobacco use (smoking and smokeless), cessation, second-hand smoke exposure, economics, exposure to tobacco advertising and promotion, and knowledge, attitudes and perceptions towards tobacco use. It also assists countries in fulfilling their obligations under the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to generate comparable data within and across countries.¹

In most participating countries, the Ministry of Health (MOH) is the lead government agency responsible for coordination of the GATS survey; however, in some cases, this responsibility may be assumed by a different government agency. In this guide, the MOH is referred to as the lead agency. However, readers are advised to identify, contact and coordinate with the agency that is responsible for GATS in their country.

Two documents have been developed to assist with the dissemination of GATS.

The first, *Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) Data Dissemination: Guidance for the Initial Release of Data*, is written for the Ministry of Health or other agencies responsible for GATS data collection and analysis. The document provides guidance on the initial release of GATS through press conferences, media releases and other communication channels such as the Internet. This Guide may also be a useful resource for tobacco control advocates using the media in their policy work. To obtain a copy, go to:

<http://www.tobaccofreecenter.org/files/pdfs/en/GATS-data-dissemination-guidance.pdf>

This document, *Using Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) Data to Strengthen Tobacco Control Efforts: Guidance for Tobacco Control Advocates*, provides guidance to tobacco control advocates on how to use GATS data findings to draw attention to tobacco as an issue and advocate for effective tobacco control policy. The dissemination strategies described here should be considered general in nature. As organizations work to develop a data dissemination approach for their country, they are advised and encouraged to use strategies that complement and extend their policy campaigns, and to tailor them to the cultures and contexts in which they work.

In addition, the following documents inform the use of GATS in tobacco control advocacy efforts:

- **GATS Country Report** – This report details the country's tobacco burden in terms of prevalence of tobacco use, trends in use, the health and economic impacts of use, current tobacco control policies, GATS results and key findings, and recommendations for action. This document contains all of the

GATS data from the country survey. Contact the Ministry of Health or other government agency responsible for the release of the GATS results to obtain a copy of the report.

- **GATS Country Fact Sheet** – This fact sheet provides an overview of the survey and key findings. It features highlights of survey results on tobacco use, cessation, second-hand smoke, economics, media, and knowledge and attitudes about use. This fact sheet can be obtained from the Ministry of Health. (See template in Appendix A)
- **World Health Organization (WHO) Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, 2008 - The MPOWER Package** – This report presents a worldwide analysis of tobacco use and control efforts and provides countries with a roadmap to reverse the devastating global tobacco epidemic. The report outlines six evidence-based policies critical to a comprehensive approach to tobacco control. It can be found at: <http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/en/>
- **World Health Organization (WHO) Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic - Implementing Smoke-Free Environments, 2009** – This report provides an update to the 2008 global tobacco report and provides worldwide analysis of tobacco use and control efforts. The report focuses on progress on smoke-free policies around the world. It can be found at: <http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/en/>

Using GATS Data to advocate for strong Tobacco Control Policies

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is the world's first international health treaty and provides a foundation for countries to reduce the devastating health and economic impact of tobacco. As of December 2009, the FCTC had more than 160 Parties covering almost 90% of the world's population.

In 2008, the WHO introduced the MPOWER package to assist country-level implementation of six effective measures contained in the FCTC. GATS materials are organized to provide information on each of the six measures. The MPOWER measures to reduce the demand of tobacco are:

Monitor tobacco use and prevention policies

Protect people from tobacco smoke

Offer help to quit tobacco use

Warn about the dangers of tobacco

Enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship

Raise taxes on tobacco.

GATS provides data on the extent of tobacco use in a country, as well as the knowledge and attitudes of the general population about tobacco and aspects of the environment that influence use. This data can be used to demonstrate the need for tobacco control policies included in MPOWER and generate support for them among the public and policymakers.

Tobacco control advocates worldwide have learned that successful advocacy results from carefully crafted campaigns designed to stimulate that action. GATS data can be used in these campaigns to:

- 1) demonstrate to policymakers and the public that tobacco use is a serious problem;
- 2) communicate the extent of exposure to factors which increase use; and
- 3) build support among policymakers and the public for policies that work to reduce tobacco use.

This document provides guidance to advocates on how to effectively use GATS data for these purposes.

To effectively use GATS data, the data must be understood and interpreted for policymakers and advocates. The findings and key messages about their relevance and use must then be disseminated to the right audiences through effective communication vehicles. This requires the identification of target audiences, key messages, and clear modes of dissemination and communication.

Step 1. Understand the data

To optimally use GATS data, it is important to become familiar with it, to identify key findings, and to think about how the results can be used to advocate for effective tobacco control policy.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) or other government agency responsible for GATS will prepare and release a Country Report containing the GATS survey results and a Country Factsheet summarizing the key findings from the survey. Tobacco control advocates seeking to use the GATS data should obtain copies and review them to gain an understanding of the data.

When GATS is initially released, the MOH or other governmental agency responsible for its release will conduct a press conference or informational session to discuss the data. Ideally, tobacco control advocates will attend any press conferences or orientation sessions that are held to discuss the results.

Typically, tobacco control advocates come from and work with multiple organizations that have similar or complementary goals. In order to ensure that the use of GATS data will be coordinated, it is important to consider partnerships among organizations with similar goals and with the Ministry of Health. These types of partnerships can broaden the reach of dissemination and improve the overall effectiveness of communication efforts. Partnerships may also bring added credibility to dissemination efforts and “open doors” for communicating with a broader range of audiences.

An initial workshop or meeting might be planned for NGOs and partner organizations to educate participants about GATS and to strategize on how this new information might be of use in advocacy work. Representatives from the Ministry of Health and other researchers familiar with the GATS data could be invited to conduct an in-depth review of GATS and the country’s findings.

Step 2: Identify Target Audiences

Key Point: To effectively use GATS data to drive tobacco control efforts, you must know your audience.

Specific audiences for GATS data dissemination fall into four main categories:

1. **Policymakers and decision-makers** who have the authority or responsibility to set policies related to tobacco and health.
2. **Individuals and groups that have influence with policymakers.** These key opinion leaders can be particularly effective advocates for tobacco control because policymakers are more open to hearing from them and willing to accept that what they say is important.
3. **The general public.** The general public possesses a level of knowledge about tobacco-related health problems that could either limit their willingness to support tobacco control efforts or spur them to support efforts to reduce tobacco use.
4. **Media.** The media provides ongoing information and opinion to policymakers and the public that can dramatically shape their willingness to support tobacco control efforts or spur them to support efforts to reduce tobacco use.

Each of these audiences has different information needs for decision making. It is important for advocates to be knowledgeable about each target audience before beginning to draw attention to GATS data. This knowledge includes:

- The role the audience plays in reducing tobacco use.
- The type of information the audience needs to make decisions and take action.
- Particular attitudes or concerns that the audience may have about tobacco.
- Questions the audience is likely to have.
- The most effective ways to reach the audience.

Advocates should also anticipate that as data is released about specific tobacco-related topics, the audiences for receiving main messages may differ. For example, policymakers responsible for making decisions about treatment and cessation services may not be the same policymakers responsible for setting tobacco tax policy. Thus, the tasks of identifying target audiences and developing a firm understanding about them will be ongoing.

Step 3: Develop Key Messages

Key Point: Messages should be clear and concise, connect with the target audience, and increase their knowledge of the problem and the need for a solution. Key messages should motivate audiences to take action in support of tobacco control policies that you are advocating for.

Key messages are at the foundation of the effective use of data to drive policy change. Once you have determined what the GATS data says about tobacco in your country, these findings must be turned into key messages to be communicated to targeted audiences. Key messages should be tailored to each audience so the information is easily understandable, relevant, and tied to action.

An effective message should:

- **Be Clear and Concise** – Most audiences may have little time to read or listen to all the facts and information demonstrating that tobacco use is dangerous. As a result, it will be important to develop powerful messages that are also clear and concise. For example, if advocates want to generate policy action to motivate current smokers to quit, then three succinct but substantive messages for policymakers (a target audience) are:

GATS data indicate X% of current smokers attempted to quit in the past year.

Three out of four smokers who understand the dangers of tobacco want to quit.

Health warnings on tobacco products reach all smokers and motivate them to quit.

- **Connect** – A message should focus on connecting with the target audience and speaking to its interests. This is why it is important to know the audience. For instance, if information about exposure to second-hand smoke is being directed toward organizations that serve workers (a target audience), then the following linked messages could be compelling:

GATS found that X% of adults are exposed to tobacco smoke in the workplace.

Each year, about 200,000 workers die because of workplace exposure to second-hand smoke. Comprehensive smoke-free laws protect the health of workers.

- **Compel** – When developing messages, make sure you use information that will motivate your audience to support your tobacco control policies. One way to do this is to use a story or a comparison that makes the story “real”, versus only using facts and statistics. Personalizing data through a story or relating it to what is familiar to the audience can be a very effective way of gaining the audience’s attention and support. If support for a ban on tobacco advertising and promotion is needed, then highlighting GATS data that indicate that large segments of the population are being reached by advertising and marketing, especially youth, and linking this to rates of tobacco use can be used to make a compelling reason to ban advertising.

GATS data indicate that X% of people age 15 or older have seen tobacco product advertisements and promotions. Youth reported even higher levels of exposure. Among people under the age of 25, X% reported having seen tobacco ads and promotions in the last month. Research from around the world shows that youth that are exposed to higher levels of tobacco advertising are more likely to smoke.

Messages can and should be repeated over and over again. A strong campaign should be focused on a few key messages that can be repeated again and again.

Step 4: Package GATS Data

Key Point: GATS data and key messages must be synthesized and presented in easy-to read materials.

Most audiences like short, condensed, easy-to-read materials. Consider the ways in which each target audience uses information. Most people have limited time and limited knowledge of tobacco control so endeavor to convey your messages in plain language in a user-friendly format.

The MOH or other lead governmental agencies will release a comprehensive country report containing all the data findings from the GATS survey as well as a country fact sheet that summarizes the key findings (see Appendix A for template).

Key findings can be pulled from the country report, interpreted and presented in brief policy-oriented materials. Such materials could include fact sheets or short issue-specific reports. Data should also be incorporated into existing tobacco control materials that organizations already have developed.

The GATS Topic Fact Sheets contained in Appendix B provide an example of the types of fact sheets that can be prepared with GATS data. The fact sheets are templates for the display of survey results related to each of the five evidence-based policies for reducing tobacco use in the MPOWER model (smoke-free environments, cessation and treatment, warning labels, advertising, promotion, and sponsorship, and tax). Each fact sheet is

intended to provide data and information to support the need for a particular policy. These fact sheets note current country policies, cite numerous research studies confirming why specific stronger policies are effective, and include key messages about tobacco use and tobacco control policies.

To use the template fact sheets, advocates will need to insert country-specific GATS data from their Country Report into template tables and complete the section that highlights key findings. Advocates may also have access to additional data that has been gathered from other surveys, and they should include the findings from these data sources if they help build the case for a strong tobacco control policy.

Advocates need to fully understand the GATS results in order to develop reports and fact sheets and discuss the results with key audiences. Advocates should discuss the results with the Ministry of Health or other agencies involved in conducting the GATS survey in order to ensure they fully understand the results. Advocates will need to be strategic in what data they highlight in fact sheets and other reports and highlight data which is clear and compelling.

Step 5: Disseminate and Communicate GATS Data

Key Point: A multi-faceted approach to data dissemination and communication should be employed over time to effectively reach the variety of audiences.

The use of GATS data for advocacy purposes should not be seen as a discrete, one time effort. The process of creating new fact sheets and incorporating GATS data into existing materials will allow advocates to develop a good understanding of how GATS data can be used most effectively over time to achieve tobacco policy goals in their country.

Ultimately, the timing of the efforts to highlight different aspects of GATS data is a strategic one that must consider specific policy goals and timing within a country.

The initial release of GATS data provides immediate opportunities to disseminate, promote and discuss the GATS data and tobacco control-related policies. Once the data is released, advocates should begin to incorporate GATS data into all relevant policy activities. For example, advocates should consider timing the release of topic specific fact sheets as part of their advocacy campaigns for specific policies. For instance, if a campaign is being launched to secure a comprehensive ad ban in 6 months, the tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship fact sheet could be released as a part of such a campaign. Sequencing the release of the fact sheets over several months will ensure that public discussion on tobacco control policy is ongoing.

To effectively use GATS data to influence policy decisions, advocates will need to use a range of strategies to communicate their utility and promote their use. A brief discussion of potential strategies is included here.

1) Internet-based Communication

It is likely that the Ministry of Health or other governmental agency will post information about the GATS survey, data and finding on its website. Many tobacco control groups maintain a presence on the Internet, and these websites should also post GATS materials as they are developed and released. Also remember to update any data, factsheets, or other materials already posted on a website to include the most recent GATS findings.

Social networking sites established specifically for individuals and organizations with an interest in tobacco control or country health issues could also be an effective way to disseminate information about GATS and generate interest and support for changes in tobacco control policies.

2) Direct Advocacy to Policymakers

Partner organizations often talk directly to policymakers. The effectiveness of such communication for producing a desired action on the part of the policymaker is dependent on two factors -- the context in which the information is delivered as well as who would be the best person(s) to deliver the information (the spokespeople).

Face-to-Face Meetings: Face-to-face meetings, often called briefings, are perhaps the most effective way to provide policymakers and other key decision-makers with substantive information about tobacco use and strategies for reducing use.

First, identify the policymakers you wish to brief. Be clear about why each policymaker has been selected (e.g., past history of support of tobacco control), and what you would hope to achieve in a briefing (e.g., obtaining agreement that policymaker will support a particular policy or introduce new legislation if none exists).

Many people (and especially policymakers) have a limited amount of time to devote to learning about any issue. Consequently, it is important that the people involved in data dissemination develop presentations for policymakers that are highly focused and succinct. Policymakers are unlikely to be interested in reading through long reports or hearing about all the details of the GATS survey data. Key messages should be derived from the data based on what you hope to achieve in the meeting.

Briefings should also include succinct, well-written materials that can be left with audiences after completing the presentation or briefing. These materials could include one or more of the fact sheets, briefing papers that include the information, key messages and recommendations that are provided during the briefing or presentation, and paper copies of an electronic presentation.

Policy Workshops/Meetings: GATS data should be incorporated into all policy workshops or meetings with policymakers regarding tobacco control to highlight the burden of tobacco use in the country. Advocates can consider developing a GATS presentation highlighting key GATS data points that can be adapted and used at a variety of policy sessions. While no policymaker wants to see the same presentation over and over again, repetition of key messages is an essential part of good communication. Presentations can be adapted to meet the specific context of meetings and workshops over time.

3) Using the Media to Disseminate GATS data and Advocate for Policy Change

GATS data dissemination via the news media should be driven by strategic thinking. Every step of the process – from the decision to use the media in the first place to how to answer a specific question from a reporter – should be determined by what makes the most strategic sense given the dissemination goal. Decisions about media outreach efforts should be made from the target audience’s perspective, e.g. how newsworthy is the information.

Effective use of the media entails more than just responding to reporters. At its core, it is about echoing your key messages in the media to help drive policy change. A good media strategy aims to generate news coverage of an issue through a variety of activities, and create a positive environment for enacting strong tobacco control legislation. Activities should be tailored to your local norms and circumstances. Types of media coverage include:

- **Press Releases/ Media Statements** – A press release or media statement should be a one to two page document that highlights the main messages and timely, relevant news that an organization would like to distribute to the media. A press release provides reporters with the basics they need to develop a news story about GATS, while at the same time explaining how the data supports specific policy goals. Most press releases follow a specific format, including a headline, contact information and introduction paragraph that highlights the main news of the press release. Reporters are familiar with this format and it allows them to find the information they need quickly. An example of a press release and the correct format can be found in Appendix C.
- **Direct Communications with Journalists: Persuade them to write a story.** Once a press release or media statement has been drafted, an organization may begin to contact the media to persuade them to write a story on the GATS data and its implication on the policy goals which are being advocated by the organization. Contact can be made through email and phone calls. Before contacting the media, it is necessary to have a strong story and pitch to provide them, that can either supplement a story the reporter is already working on, or provide them the basis for a new story. Also, it is helpful to provide them with the press release and background materials they can reference as needed for additional information. It is best to have a media list to work off of when contacting the media, and to have already established contact with the reporter before asking them to write a story.
- **Media Events** – A media event is a public occasion or happening that is carefully planned and executed in order to attract the attention of multiple media outlets. A press conference is one example of a media event. A press conference should only be considered when there is significant or breaking news to present, and the decision to execute a press conference should be considered carefully. Factors to consider include the news value of the event, the number of available spokespeople, and the timing of the event. For example, it should not take place on a day when there is already important planned

national news taking place. Please see the companion Guide for advice on how to plan and implement a media event. For a copy go to: http://tobaccofreecenter.org/tobacco_epidemic/gats

- **Editorial Board Meetings** – In some countries, newspaper editorial boards determine what the paper will cover and how extensive the coverage should be. They often get their ideas for the subjects of their editorials from individuals or groups that meet with them to share their perspective on an issue. A meeting with an editorial board would provide an opportunity to educate influential decision makers within the media and possibly lead to the newspaper writing an editorial highlighting the problems caused by tobacco use or calling for actions to reduce use. Advocacy organizations that join forces for the purpose of securing or participating in an editorial board meeting might encounter greater success than if they sought participation on their own.
- **Letters to the Editor** – Letters to the editor are an excellent way to respond to a news article or local event, allowing the writer to frame or reframe a story to serve GATS-related interests. Good letters are short, focused, and timely, and reference the original news article or event that you are responding to. Credentials for the letter writer should be included, whether the writer is an expert or simply a concerned citizen. See Appendix D for a template that has been developed for use with advocacy efforts; specific country details and key messages can be inserted. Many newspapers have specific requirements for their letters to the editor, in particular the time frame in which a letter can be published after the original article appeared in print. Check each outlet for their specific requirements and make sure submitted letters meet those requirements.
- **Opinion Articles** – Newspapers in some countries will often accept opinion articles that take a different approach than their own editorial pages. Opinion articles can be a good way to communicate messages that help further your advocacy goals. They allow authors to have much more control over the message than the author would have if they were interviewed for a news story – as the news story will most likely have more than one point of view. Although opinion articles usually discuss a topic more in-depth than letters to the editor do, they still tend to keep to one theme and two to four main message points. A template is attached for use in connection with tobacco control advocacy efforts (Appendix E).

Opinion articles can be particularly effective at influencing the views of policymakers and other decision-makers who are more likely than the general public to read the editorial page. Opinion articles about GATS should be authored by well-known individuals because this will garner the attention of media gatekeepers and increase the likelihood that the article will be published. Such individuals may be more willing to agree to author an article if it is drafted for them. Newspapers may have specific requirements for the format and length of their opinion articles, so check prior to drafting.

Please see Appendix F for more detailed information about working with the media.

Conclusion

The Global Adult Tobacco Survey represents the first comprehensive examination of adult tobacco use patterns and related health issues in each of the countries in which it is administered. As such, survey findings should be shared with the individuals and entities that have the power and authority to act to reduce tobacco use. However, simply providing data to policymakers and key decision-makers will not be enough.

In order to make the most effective use of GATS data for strengthening tobacco control policy it will be necessary to integrate GATS data into ongoing tobacco control advocacy efforts long after the initial release of the GATS Country Report. GATS data should be used to develop a variety of messages about the policy areas you are addressing, with each message tailored to key audiences.

This guide has advised that GATS data be used to develop messages that will be communicated over time. Use the GATS data in the topic fact sheets and companion messages that are delivered via the Internet, in briefings with policymakers and partner organizations, and through various media communication strategies. These strategies will serve to keep discussion on the problem of tobacco use and its consequences before those with the power and authority to enact better tobacco control policy (policymakers) and those whose support will help make policy change easier (the general public, key opinion leaders, and the media).

Advocates should also remember that GATS data is available for use at any time to counter harmful or untruthful messages about the value of enacting better tobacco control policy. That is, regardless of what the plan may be concerning the release of topic fact sheets, GATS data can and should be used whenever it can be useful for informing public discussion and debate about tobacco control.

ENDNOTES

¹ The World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is a treaty adopted in 2003 that aims to “protect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke.” The WHO FCTC provides a framework of national, regional and international tobacco control measures, including the setting of broad limits on the production, sale, distribution, advertisement, taxation, and government policies towards tobacco.