

## Emerging Trends on Smokeless Tobacco Use in Kenya

Kirwa Lelei\*, John Muteti<sup>1</sup>, Victor Okioma<sup>1</sup> and Adrian Njenga<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA), Kenya

### \*Corresponding Author:

Kirwa Lelei,

Directorate of Research and Policy Development,

National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA),

Kenya

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### Introduction

In Kenya, there is growing demand towards smokeless tobacco use especially among the youth and adolescents. Available data shows that 14.5% of secondary school students and 6.0% of primary school pupils in Kenya have ever use tobacco in their lifetime (NACADA, 2016; NACADA, 2018). Smokeless tobacco use is an emerging public health challenge with epidemiologic and laboratory evidence concluding that it causes oral cancer, esophageal cancer, and pancreatic cancer in humans (United Nations Population Fund, 2010; United Nations, 2011). In addition,

more than 30 carcinogens have been identified in smokeless tobacco products (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012). Further, smokeless tobacco products contain nicotine, and users demonstrate signs of dependence similar to those of cigarette smokers (Kyaing, 2004).

With the elaborate Government interventions to control smoking, smokeless tobacco may become an attractive alternative especially among the youth and adolescents. In this regard, NACADA conducted an assessment to establish emerging trends on smokeless tobacco use. Samples of smokeless tobacco were collected in the 8 regions of Kenya stratified across 18 purposively sampled counties. A total of 33 samples were collected and submitted to the Government Chemist for analysis and identification.

### Findings

Confirmatory results showed *snuff*, *tambo*, *ndovu*, nicotine pouches and kamath spit tobacco were the most prevalent forms of smokeless tobacco products being used in Kenya (Table 1). Laboratory analysis showed that all these products contain nicotine thereby confirming their risk for dependence among the users. In terms of the nicotine levels, snuff was more potent followed by *ndovu*, *tambo* and lastly nicotine pouches.

**Table 1: Laboratory analysis report for tobacco samples**

| No. | Sample No.    | Type of Sample | Nicotine Content | Source County |
|-----|---------------|----------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1.  | F/MISC/833/19 | Tambo          | 0.79%            | Nairobi       |
| 2.  | F/MISC/834/19 | Tambo          | 0.94%            | Nairobi       |
| 3.  | F/MISC/835/19 | Tambo          | 0.1%             | Nairobi       |
| 4.  | F/MISC/819/19 | Tambo          | 0.7%             | Kitale        |
| 5.  | F/MISC/805/19 | Snuff          | 1.16%            | Uasin Gishu   |

| No. | Sample No.    | Type of Sample      | Nicotine Content | Source County |
|-----|---------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 6.  | F/MISC/825/19 | Snuff               | 0.43%            | Nyeri         |
| 7.  | F/MISC/826/19 | Snuff               | 0.51%            | Nyeri         |
| 8.  | F/MISC/633/19 | Snuff               | 0.93%            | Nairobi       |
| 9.  | F/MISC/639/19 | Snuff               | 0.25%            | Nairobi       |
| 10. | F/MISC/649/19 | Snuff               | 0.4%             | Nairobi       |
| 11. | F/MISC/742/19 | Snuff               | 0.54%            | Nairobi       |
| 12. | F/MISC/720/19 | Snuff               | 1.19%            | Mombasa       |
| 13. | F/MISC/662/19 | Snuff               | 0.04%            | Meru          |
| 14. | F/MISC/658/19 | Snuff               | 0.269%           | Meru          |
| 15. | F/MISC/669/19 | Snuff               | 1.60%            | Makueni       |
| 16. | F/MISC/670/19 | Snuff               | 1.97%            | Makueni       |
| 17. | F/MISC/673/19 | Snuff               | 1.61%            | Makueni       |
| 18. | F/MISC/674/19 | Snuff               | 1.89%            | Makueni       |
| 19. | F/MISC/678/19 | Snuff               | 1.62%            | Makueni       |
| 20. | F/MISC/818/19 | Snuff               | 0.51%            | Kitale        |
| 21. | F/MISC/779/19 | Snuff               | 0.05%            | Kisumu        |
| 22. | F/MISC/799/19 | Snuff               | 0.28%            | Kisii         |
| 23. | F/MISC/703/19 | Snuff               | 1.58%            | Kilifi        |
| 24. | F/MISC/768/19 | Snuff               | 0.05%            | Busia         |
| 25. | F/MISC/769/19 | Snuff               | 0.0497%          | Busia         |
| 26. | F/MISC/770/19 | Snuff               | 0.11%            | Busia         |
| 27. | F/MISC/739/19 | Nicotine Pouches    | 0.62%            | Nairobi       |
| 28. | F/MISC/740/19 | Nicotine Pouches    | 0.34%            | Nairobi       |
| 29. | F/MISC/741/19 | Nicotine Pouches    | 0.31%            | Nairobi       |
| 30. | F/MISC/778/19 | Ndovu               | 0.7%             | Kisumu        |
| 31. | F/MISC/790/19 | Ndovu               | 1.53%            | Kisumu        |
| 32. | F/MISC/794/19 | Ndovu               | -                | Kisumu        |
| 33. | F/MISC/832/19 | Kamath Spit Tobacco | 1.19%            | Nairobi       |

One of the emerging challenges observed through the focus group discussions indicated that smokeless tobacco products were cheap, readily available and accessible even to the underage children. In addition, these products were non-compliant with the requirements of the Tobacco Control Act 2007.

## Recommendation

The current legal framework anchored under the Tobacco Control Act, 2007 provides for labeling, packaging, sale, distribution and promotion requirements for tobacco products with a bias on smoking. This therefore presents enforcement challenges towards the control of smokeless tobacco products. There was need for the Ministry of Health through the Tobacco Control Board to amend the Act to provide for the control of smokeless tobacco products.