

## Empowering a Youth Group Against Tobacco Smoking Through Health Promotion Intervention at Yowunpura in Hambanthota

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Youth is the backbone of a nation. Means through which youth are assisted to succeed is called youth empowerment. There are 1.8 billion young people in the world today. Youth population in Sri Lanka is about 3,160,210. Tobacco smoking is the major cause for avoidable deaths in Sri Lanka today. Annually, 20000-25000 Sri Lankans die from tobacco smoking. Health Promotion is an approach which has been successfully practiced in empowering communities to address various health issues in their lives. The aim of the study was to empower the youth against tobacco consumption using health promotion intervention. This study was carried out with the youth participated at “Yowunpura-2019” in Hambanthota, Sri Lanka. Participants were divided into girls and boys purposely. Then they were grouped according to their district. Discussion was carried out by a facilitator. Physical appearance of the smokers was discussed using the “mirror tool”. In the mirror tool the face of a smoker and a non-smoker was given to compare and identify the smoker. The real harm of tobacco smoking was discussed including diseases, sexual impotence and economic harm with the active participation of them. At the end of the discussion, industrial strategies of promoting tobacco were discussed and a plan was made with them to be implemented in their villages to reduce smoking among the villagers. Data collection was done as pre- and post-assessment using the same questionnaire. Their comments were assessed thematically at the end. 222 (90%) of the participants had changed their attitudes and knowledge related to the attractiveness of smoking. 185 (75%) of the participated youth were empowered to get an action to reduce tobacco smoking. Therefore, Health Promotion which provides strategies to improve knowledge, change attitudes and develop skills is an effective approach to empower the youth against tobacco smoking.

**Keywords:** tobacco smoking, mirror tool, sexual impotence