

**GUYANA'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WHO STEPWISE APPROACH TO
NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASE RISK FACTOR SURVEILLANCE
(STEPS) SURVEY**

The growing endemic of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) continues to attract more attention from the Government of Guyana as steps are being taken to reduce the number of deaths caused by such illnesses each year. The four main non communicable diseases are cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory disease which accounts for the highest burden on mortality and morbidity. NCDs account for 70% of all deaths occurring in Guyana and are the number one cause of premature deaths (before the age of 70 years). These diseases are totally preventable by the simple modification of four risk factors, namely, harmful tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol.

The Ministry of Public Health, in collaboration with the Bureau of Statistics, will be conducting a STEPwise Approach Population Based Survey from July to October 2016 in its efforts to combat NCDs.

For many years, Guyana has been utilizing estimated statistics to account for the population at risk of developing NCDs and for those who are already living with these diseases. This approach will now be changed.

Upon the completion of the STEPS survey, statistics will be acquired and Guyana will now have baseline data on NCDs. This will allow the Ministry of Public Health to closely monitor the population, develop and implement appropriate interventions to treat and prevent chronic non communicable diseases. The survey will also give the Ministry of Public Health a better chance to be able to properly forecast and procure the right type of medications in sufficient quantities, hence preventing drug shortages in the country.

The STEPS survey is a totally voluntary survey. All participants will be notified of their results at the end of the assessment. A total of 3456 households will be randomly chosen to participate in the STEPS survey. One person (within the household) between the ages of 18 to 69 years will be asked to participate in the interview which comprises of 3 parts:

- ✓ **STEP 1-** Responding to basic questions pertaining to demographics, habits and lifestyle practices as it relates to the risk factors of NCDs.
- ✓ **STEP 2-** The person participating will be required to have their weight, height and blood pressure checked and recorded by the officer conducting the survey.
- ✓ **STEP 3-** This is the final stage and it involves taking a small venous blood sample from the participant's arm to test for blood sugar, cholesterol, sickle cell and thalassemia which are two common blood disorders found in Guyana. This step involves the participant fasting overnight.

The STEPS Survey requires the prior listing of households in randomly selected Enumeration Districts (EDs), or Enumeration Areas (EAs), which are the smallest geographical statistical unit created for the housing and population census. For example, an ED can be a city block, a village or part of a village or a group of small villages. The Ed carries well-defined boundaries identified on a map. The number of households per ED is generally small enough to be covered by one enumerator during the census or a survey.

The listing stage entails listers approaching households in the randomly selected parts of Guyana (EDs) to determine their eligibility for selection to the survey which would follow.

The Bureau of Statistics STEPS Survey Listing Process commenced on Thursday, July 14 and will conclude on Thursday, July 28 2016. It will be executed in all the regions of Guyana except the interior regions (1, 7, 8 and 9) which would be listed at the time of execution of the STEPS Survey.

A kind request is extended to the communities across Guyana to offer their full support to the Bureau of Statistics' officers as they embark on the listing process.

Kindly contact Dr. Kavita Singh, Coordinator Chronic Diseases Unit of the Ministry of Public Health on telephone number 223 7355 or Mr. Ian Manifold, Head of the Surveys Department, Bureau of Statistics on telephone number 225-9063 if more information is required.