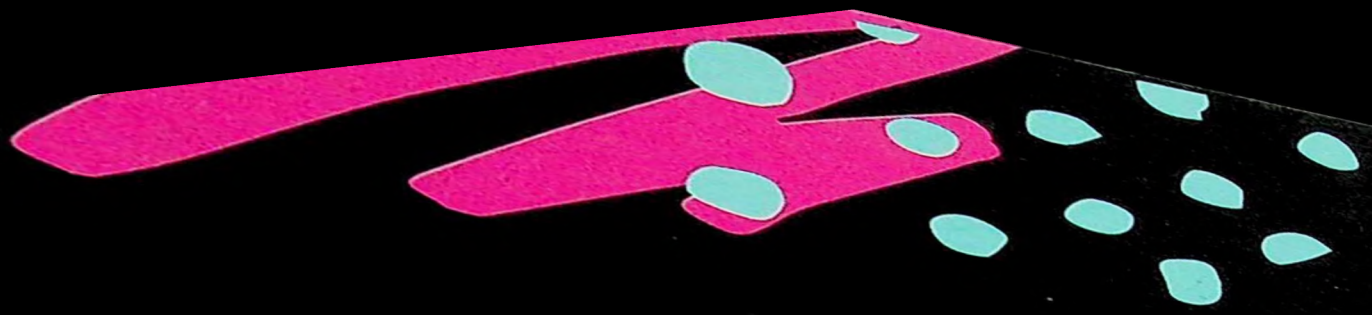


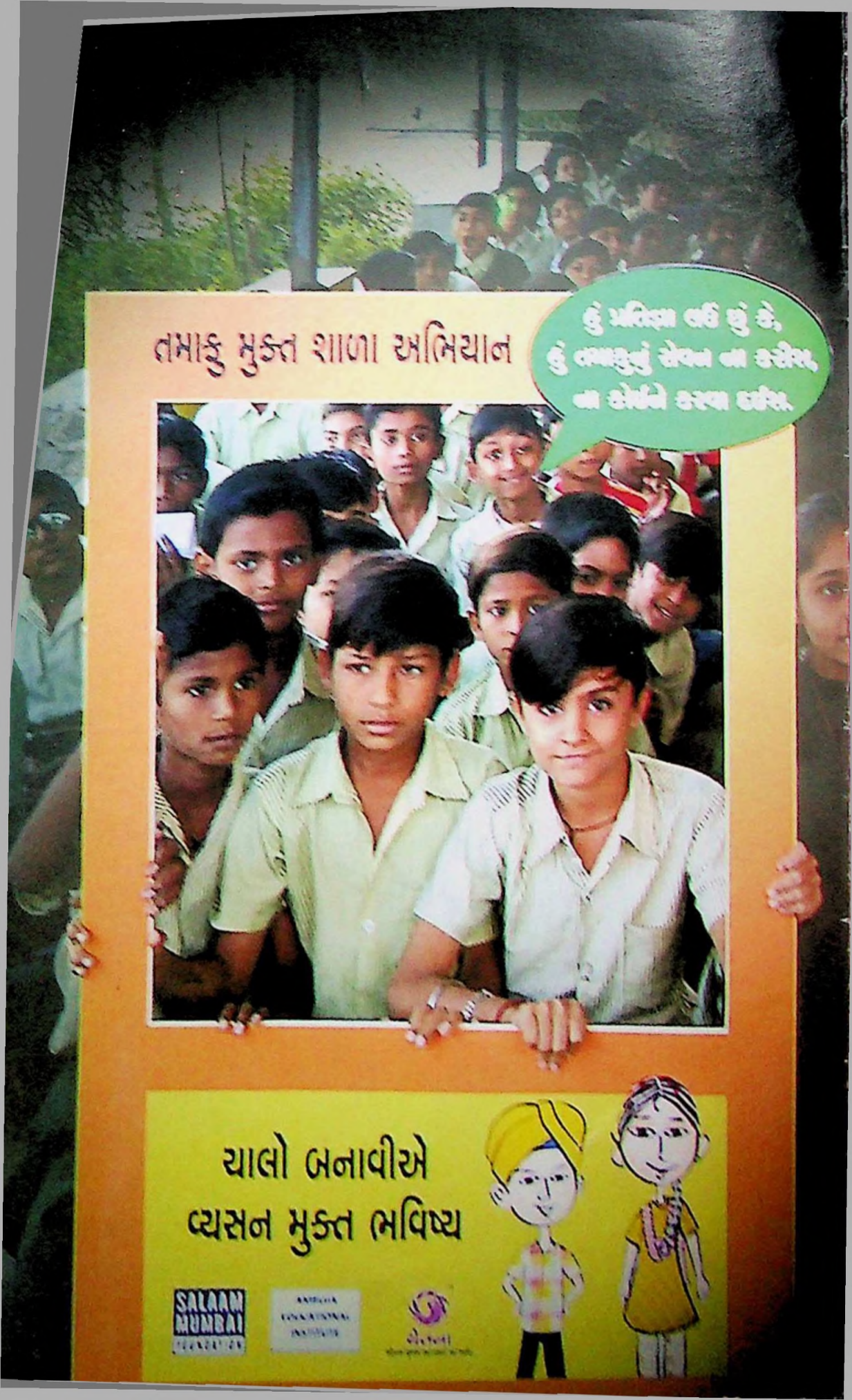
Striding towards Tobacco Free Schools:

Footprints of CHETNA's Efforts

CHETNA

Women Young people Children




તમાકુ મુક્ત શાળા અભિયાન
હું પ્રતિજ્ઞા લઉં છું કે,
હું તમાકુનું સેવન ના કરીશ,
ના કોઈને કરવા દઈશ.
ચાલો બનાવીએ
વ્યસન મુક્ત ભવિષ્ય
SALAAM MUMBAI

Introduction

Across the world, tobacco use is a serious public health concern affecting the youth. A vast majority of tobacco users start using tobacco well before the age of 18, which has enormous psychosocial and adversarial health effects. Tobacco use in children and adolescents is reaching pandemic levels. The World Bank has reported that between 80,000 and 90,000 children and adolescents across the world begin smoking each day. As a public health threat, it leads not only to loss of lives but also has heavy social and economic costs.

According to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey India, 2016-17 nearly 267 million adults (15 years and above) are users of tobacco.

The most prevalent form of tobacco use in India is smokeless or the chewing variety. The most commonly used products are khaini, gutkha, betel leaf with tobacco and zarda. Smoking forms of tobacco used are bidi, cigarette and hookah.

According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) (2019-20), in Gujarat **41.1**% of all men above the age **15** (two of five) used tobacco in some form. In rural Gujarat, this percentage is **46.7**% which is higher than the national average in the same category, which stands at **42.7**%.

Tobacco Control Efforts

The Government of India enacted its comprehensive tobacco control law - The Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA 2003) - in 2004, with a view to make provisions to effect reduction in tobacco use.

Under the COTPA Act of 2003, there are Legal Guidelines for Making Tobacco Free Educational Institutions (ToFEI) including Schools. There are specific criteria to make schools tobacco free zone. Each criteria is given specific weightage.

Number	Criteria	Weightage Points
1	Display of 'Tobacco Free Area' Signage inside the premise of Educational Institute at all prominent place(s)	10 (Mandatory)
	The name/designation/contact number are mentioned / updated in the signage	10 (Mandatory)
2	Display of "Tobacco Free Education Institution" signage at entrance/ boundary wall of Educational Institute	10 (Mandatory)
	The name/designation/contact number are mentioned / updated in the signage	10 (Mandatory)
3	Designation of Tobacco Monitors and their names, designations, and contact number are mentioned on the signages	9
4	No evidence of use of tobacco products inside the premise i.e. cigarette/beedi butts or discarded gutka/tobacco pouches, spitting spots.	10 (Mandatory)
5	Poster or other awareness materials on harms of tobacco displayed in the premise.	9
6	Poster or other awareness materials on harms of tobacco displayed in the premise.	9
7	Inclusion of "No Tobacco Use" norm in the EI's code of conduct guidelines	9
8	Marking of 100 yards area from the outer limit of boundary wall / fence of the EI.	7
9	No shops selling tobacco products within 100 yards of the Educational Institute.	7

CHETNA's efforts to make rural schools tobacco free

CHETNA, in collaboration with the district education department and the District Tobacco Control Cell in Ahmedabad, worked in 823 rural schools in 9 blocks (talukas) of Ahmedabad district to make them tobacco free.

Criteria 1-2

1. Display of 'Tobacco Free Area' Signage inside the premise of school at all prominent place(s)
2. Display of "Tobacco Free Education Institution" signage at entrance/ boundary wall of school

As per the guidelines set down by the COTPA Act of 2003, schools must display "Tobacco Free Educational Institution" signage and a "Tobacco Free Area" signage of 60X45 cm outside the institution. The signage should be displayed in the language of instruction of the school and also in the local language.

CHETNA advocated with the Tobacco Control Cell Ahmedabad and Ahmedabad District Education Department to make both the signages available in all the 823 schools. The same was made available in the Gujarati language as well. We ensured that the signage of "Tobacco Free Area" was displayed prominently outside the principal's office and the Tobacco Free Educational Institute" sign was displayed on the outer wall of the school, immediately next to the main entrance.



Criteria 3



Designation of Tobacco Monitors and their names, designations, and contact number are mentioned on the signages

As per the guideline, schools need to designate Tobacco Monitor(s) from their teacher or a student representative (the student from class IX onwards). The name, designation and phone number of the Tobacco Monitor(s) should also be mentioned on these signages. The guideline also states that multiple Tobacco Monitors can be designated for one institution.

CHETNA laid emphasis on and encouraged schools to appoint a teacher and several students as Tobacco Monitors for each class. It was difficult to ensure that tobacco users are not designated as Tobacco Monitors, as a majority of teachers themselves were found to be tobacco users. It was ensured that students who were similarly selected, were also not those using tobacco.



Of the selected teachers, 54 were then trained as District level Master Trainers. They went through one day of training wherein they were sensitised and made aware about the ill effects of tobacco, harmful chemicals contained in tobacco products, COTPA-2003, benefits of quitting tobacco and the 9 criteria prescribed by the Government of India to make schools, 'Tobacco Free'. These trained trainers (teachers), then organised training at the block level and trained 658 other teachers.

All teachers were equipped with the 'Educational Kit' to facilitate awareness sessions with students.



Criteria 4

No evidence of use of tobacco products inside the school premise i.e. cigarette/beedi butts or discarded gutka/tobacco pouches, spitting spots.

As per the guidelines, Tobacco Monitors need to ensure that tobacco products are not used inside the school premises. The Tobacco Monitors were trained on their roles and responsibilities, one of which is to regularly observe the school premises, preferably in the evening, for evidence of tobacco use, in the form of discarded pouches or butts of cigarettes or bidis, an indication of tobacco use on campus. The students further hold specific responsibility to review the same in their own classes.

Criteria 5



Poster or other awareness materials on harms of tobacco displayed in the premise.

CHETNA designed printed material and distributed it to all schools. A dated calendar along with initially 11 and now 9 criteria to make schools tobacco free and posters with messages about the ill effects of tobacco were displayed at prominent places across the schools. A booklet with messages about the ill effects of tobacco on different organs of the body, impact of passive smoking, effect of smoking during pregnancy, COTPA 2003, statistical information about the ill effects of tobacco use, criteria of tobacco free school, etc. were given to all the schools.

Stickers with various messages were applied on the daily registers of each class - a daily reminder of the quit tobacco message - for teachers and students alike.



Criteria 6

Organisation of at least one tobacco control activity in the previous 6 months

CHETNA encouraged all the schools to organise one anti-tobacco activity every 6 months in their campuses. Some of the activities organised were:

- Students and teachers taking a pledge against tobacco use during assembly
- Drawing competition, quiz, debate, etc, on different topics related to harmful effects of tobacco.



- Students were also encouraged to take initiatives to spread anti-tobacco messages at the community level. Rallies and exhibitions were organised to sensitise community members.
- Students who had taken initiative beyond their role and function, were given certificates of appreciation or a mug with anti-tobacco messages.
- Across the district, all walls of block health office were painted with messages pertaining to the ill-effects of tobacco on different parts of the body.

May 31, which is commemorated as World No Tobacco Day, saw the organisation of various activities like drawing competition, quiz, street play, debate and rallies in all the schools.

Special efforts done jointly by CHETNA, Government Health Department and schools to create public awareness about harmful effect of Tobacco

- On World No Tobacco Day block level rallies, wall paintings and awareness sessions for the health department staff and school students on harmful effect of tobacco use on human body and ToFEI were organised.
- During Covid-19 pandemic period virtual trainings were organised for teachers to explain correlation between covid-19 infection and tobacco consumption.
- As part of school health programme CHETNA advocated to the Ahmedabad District Health Department to conduct oral check-up of the students with special emphasis use of tobacco. Out of the 823 schools 30000 students were screened. The children consuming tobacco were referred to the PHC for further check up and if required treatment.





Criteria 7

Inclusion of "No Tobacco Use" norm in the EI's code of conduct guidelines

To implement this criteria in each school, principals circulated notices of "No Tobacco Use" in the school premises and around the school along with a copy of the COTPA 2003. All school teachers signed and endorsed the document. The same was also displayed on the notice board of the educational institutions.





Criteria 8

Marking of 100-yard area from the outer limit of boundary wall / fence of the EI as Tobacco Free Zone

School also took the initiative to mark yellow lines as a boundary of 100 yards from the outer limit of the school wall as Tobacco Free Zones. However, this turned out to be a difficult exercise because the markings kept getting wiped off since there are no proper roads in many villages, just dirt tracks. Markings on houses were also lost when they were painted over by owners.

To reach out youth a special social media campaign was initiated on various platforms - #StandStrongAgainstTobacco.





'Tobacco Free Navratri' During Navratri majority of young people in Gujarat, are outdoors for long hours without parental supervision and are susceptible to initiate tobacco under peer influence. CHETNA initiated a Tobacco Free Navratri on social media. Every day during 9 days of Navratri one criteria of ToFEI was uploaded on social media by the district authority to reachout all the 823 schools of Ahmedabad district. Teachers of the schools discussed the criteria to make tobacco free schools and harmful effects of tobacco during school assembly with all the students during the 9 days of Navaratri.





Criteria 9

No shops selling tobacco products within 100 yards of schools.

The implementation of this criteria proved to be most difficult. It is expected that the school management should make efforts to stop the sale of tobacco within 100 yards of the school premises by acting with the help of community members, including parents, panchayat members, Self Help Group leaders and local law enforcement authorities. As per the Act, school principals are authorized to collect fines for violation of section 6(b) of COTPA 2003, sale of tobacco products within 100 yards of school. CHETNA has been able to ensure implementation of this criterion in 30% of the schools.



Follow-up & Monitoring:

- To make schools tobacco free was challenging as it demands behavioural change at several levels - individual, institutional and community.

- Regular monitoring visits of schools were conducted by several CHETNA team to ensure that there is no backtracking of efforts and progress is not diluted.

- Repeated efforts were made to involve the community and implement requirements laid to make "Tobacco-Free School".

- ToFEI criteria were monitored regularly and necessary guidance was provided to all stakeholders.

ToFEI Award



As per the ToFEI Award Scheme, if a school scores 90% and above marks against the 9 criteria, which is measured on a half-yearly basis, it gets certified as a tobacco free school. The district authority in the year 2021, declared 75 schools in Ahmedabad district, as tobacco free institutions. These schools received awards and certificates during the state consultation organised by CHETNA in May 2022.

In 2022, CHETNA celebrated 'World No Tobacco Day' by organizing state level consultation with various stakeholders in Gujarat state. More than 65 participants from concerned government departments (Health, Education, Tobacco Control Cell, Police, Food & Drugs, medical fraternity and Non-Government Organizations and National Service Scheme (NSS) attended the consultation. The objective was to sensitize stakeholders to the need for timely action to make schools tobacco free. The 75 schools who achieved tobacco free certification, were felicitated at the consultation.



Recommendations

- Convergence between different government departments - Health, ICDS, Transport, Information and Broadcasting, Agriculture, Food and Drugs as well as Police - is one of the non-negotiable recommendations to ensure a tobacco-free generation.
- There is a need to allocate funds for mass awareness about the ill-effects of use of tobacco use and the provisions of COTPA 2003.
- Yearly refresher training/review meetings for stakeholder department personnel for experience sharing and future strategies planning on COTPA 2003 implementation and Tobacco Free School criteria.
- Formation of Ward/Village/Cluster monitoring committee to regularly review the implementation of COTPA 2003, which includes NGOs, CBOs, and Representatives from Government departments.
- Strict punishment for vendors selling tobacco to persons under the age of 18 years, as well as for persons smoking tobacco in public places.
- The fines collected from violations of COTPA 2003 need to be used for the establishment of de-addiction centres.
- Ensure that no shop sells tobacco products within a 100-yard radius of any educational institution.
- Information about COTPA 2003 must be included in teacher's training curriculum at all levels.
- Every teacher must sign the code of conduct rules and regulations of Tobacco Free Schools / Educational Institutions before joining duty and strict punishment must follow, if these rules are violated.
- Restriction on the use of Tobacco companies logos on their Fast-moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) or any other non-tobacco products. This will stop surrogate advertisements.

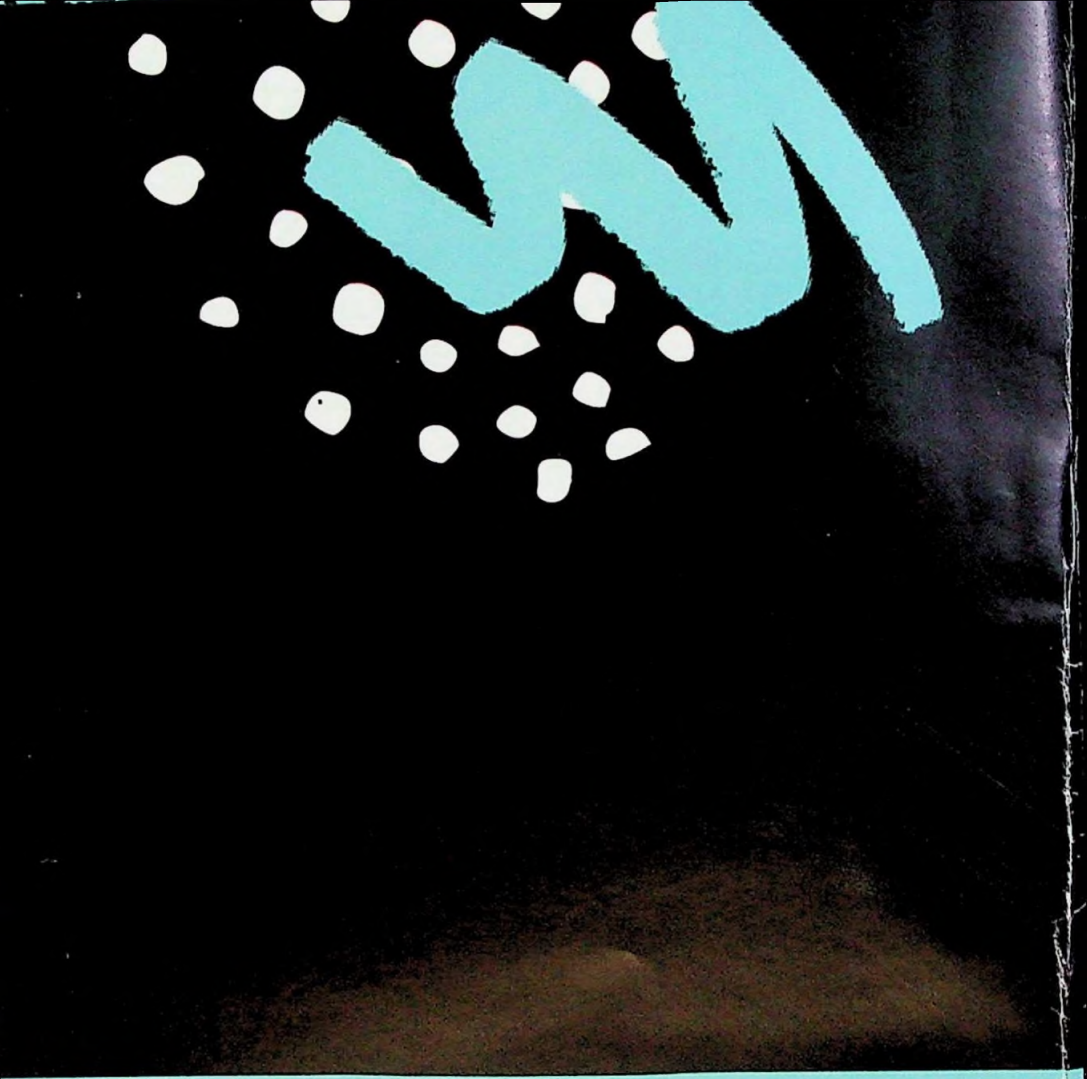
તમાકુ મુક્ત શાળા અભિયાન

હું અને અમે અમારા પરિવારને તમાકુ મુક્ત રાખીશ



ચાલો બનાવીએ
તમાકુ મુક્ત અમદાવાદ





CHETNA

For Women Young people Children

Centre for Health, Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness

Block-B, 3rd Floor, Supath-II, Opp. Vadaj Bus Terminus, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad- 380013, Gujarat.

Phone: 079-27559976/77, Email: chetna@chetnaindia.org

Website: www.chetnaindia.org https://linktr.ee/CHETNA_Ngo

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