Recommendations:

- Urgent action required from the Government agencies to stop tobacco companies from targeting children from aggressive advertising & selling tobacco products around schools.
- Stricter enforcement of COTPA rules prohibiting the selling and advertising of tobacco products within 100 yards of educational institutions.
- Regulating tobacco vendors to aid COTPA enforcement. COTPA compliance should be a condition of all vendor licenses.

Background:

- According to The Global Adult Tobacco Survey; India (2016-17), by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), nearly 28.6% of adults (15 years and above, use tobacco products.
- According to The Global Youth Tobacco Survey India, 14.6% of 13 -15 year old students in India use tobacco. As many as 11% of all male students surveyed were found to be users of smoking or smokeless tobacco, while 6% of female students used smokeless tobacco and 3.7% smoked tobacco.
- Nearly 37% children in India initiate smoking before the age of 10, and each day 5500 children begin tobacco use and consequently may become addicted.
- India was among the first countries to ratify the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2004. Indian enacted comprehensive tobacco control legislation, entitled, “The Cigarette and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003” (COTPA).
- As per Section 6 of the Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA), there is a ban on the sale of tobacco to and by minors.
- Under Section 6 (b) of COTPA, the sale of tobacco products is prohibited in an area within a radius of 100 yards of any educational institutions and mandatory signage in this regard should be displayed prominently near the main gate and on the boundary wall of the educational institute.
- Under COTPA tobacco advertising and promotion and tobacco product display is completely banned.
- A Ministry of Health & Family Welfare advisory letter dated 21st September, 2017 recommends the licensing of tobacco vendors through municipal authorities. The advisory observes that it would be appropriate to include in the authorization, a condition of provision that the shops permitted to sell tobacco products cannot sell non-tobacco products such as toffees, candies, chips, biscuits, soft drinks, among others, which are meant for the non-user-particularly children.
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on 25th September, 2018 has issued a similar advisory to states for licensing of tobacco vendors.
- Section 77 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 additionally criminalizes the distribution of tobacco products to children.

About Big Tobacco: Tiny Targets Study

Big Tobacco: Tiny Targets study aims to expose the strategies being used by the tobacco companies/industries’ products marketing to children and youths around schools; help provide them with tobacco free learning environments through documenting tobacco marketing near schools and playgrounds; mobilize educators and students to take action, and urge Government to enact and implement comprehensive tobacco control laws.

In India, Consumer Voice conducted a Tiny Targets study to determine the extent of tobacco products being marketed and sold around schools in India. A total sample of 243 schools and 487 points of sale were closely surveyed during this study in 20 cities. (See Details below). In the state of Madhay Pradesh the study was conducted in association with local partner National Centre for Human Settlements & Environment (NCHSE).
Field investigators were equipped with a mobile reporting form to document instances of tobacco companies advertising, selling, displaying, or incentivizing the sale of tobacco products within 100-meter radius. (Although India prohibits sales around schools within a radius of 100 yards, Kobo Toolbox used 100 meters as a standard. (A yard has been defined as exactly 0.9144 meters).)

Vendors use sales techniques such as discounting products and distributing free samples. (Investigators documented that, of the 225 tobacco points of sale observed, 37.5% offered price discounts and 32.5% offered free tobacco products.)

Vendors display tobacco products in ways that are appealing to children and youth. (Investigators observed 72 tobacco advertisements at school premises, beside candy, sweets and toys – items marketed to children.)

Vendors sell cigarettes and bidis via single sticks, making these products cheap and accessible to children and youth. (Investigators observed single stick sales in 90.9% of the 225 tobacco points of sale observed.)

Vendors sell tobacco products. (Investigators observed 225 points of sale selling tobacco products out of the 487 surveyed around schools. Street vendors were the most common form of vendors at 56.6% of the 225 tobacco points of sale observed.)

Multinational tobacco companies sell tobacco products around schools. (Investigators documented that, of the 225 tobacco points of sale observed, 52.2% carried British American Tobacco brands and 25.3% carried ITC brands.)

Vendors advertise tobacco products around schools. (Investigators observed tobacco advertising at 34% of the 225 tobacco points of sale observed.)

Vendors display tobacco products in ways that are appealing to children and youth. (Investigators documented that, of the 225 tobacco points of sale observed, 91% of displays were at 1 meter – a child’s eye level; 54% of the points of sale had no visible health warning; and 90% of displays were beside candy, sweets and toys – items marketed to children.)

Vendors use sales techniques such as discounting products and distributing free samples. (Investigators documented that, of the 225 tobacco points of sale observed, 37.5% offered price discounts and 32.5% offered free tobacco products.)

Key Findings of MADHAY PRADESH

- Significant decrease in smoking by 6.7%, smokeless by 3.3%; any tobacco use by 5.3% from 39.5% in GATS 1 to 34.2% in GATS 2. from GATS 5
- Gutka and khaini use among adults has increased from 13.7% to 17% (in %age)
- Alarmingly, tobacco use among persons aged 15-17 increased from 12.3% in GATS 1 to 13.1% in GATS 2.
- The mean age of initiation of tobacco use has increased from 17.6 years in GATS 1 to 18.3 years in GATS 2.
- 86.0% of cigarette smokers and 53.6% of bidi smokers thought of quitting smoking because of warning label.
- 49.6% of smokeless tobacco users thought of quitting smokeless tobacco use because of warning label.