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Saying No to Tobacco

Eliminating tobacco consumption is a gradual process and people trying to quit this habit need a lot of support and encouragement. ACF, through its health programme, endeavours to create a tobacco-free society. In Chandrapur, ACF staff and Sakhis have been passionately working to help people quit tobacco. Till date 6 villages and 11 schools in ACF's programme area, have already become tobacco-free. May 31 is observed as World No Tobacco Day. We bring you some inspiring stories from the field on how ACF's anti-tobacco drive is yielding results.

Stay happy and healthy. Cheers!

Strong determination is all you need

Sandhya's mother could not understand her daughter's distress as she came back crying from school one fine day. She did panic initially, but soon found the reason behind all the commotion. It was the awareness drive organized in Sandhya's school in Deolaguda village that aimed to sensitize children and staff members about the lethal effects of tobacco.

The impact of the event was so high that the 7-year old Sandhya demanded her parents to immediately stop chewing tobacco. She did not even eat her meals for the next three days which extremely worried her parents. Upset

with the whole situation, both her parents, decided to meet the school Principal. Sandhya's parents discussed their concern for Sandhya with the Principal. Incidentally, the village *Sakhi* was also sitting in the office and took this opportunity to explain to them about the dangers of tobacco. Sandhya's parents also realized how this habit of theirs is soon going to influence their daughter that might expose her to similar risks. Sandhya's parents were deeply affected with the entire discussion and vowed never to touch tobacco again. Their efforts have been really commendable and in last two years, both of them have led a completely tobacco-free life.



Rally organized in the school



Sandhya with her mother



Sunil (extreme left) with his mother and brother



A glimpse of village anti-tobacco drive

Sita – our star sakhi

When Sita Rathore, the ACF *Sakhi* joined the anti-tobacco drive in her village Loldoh, she was concerned about her own 20-year old nephew Sunil, who was severely addicted to tobacco. Sita was sure that unless her own family members and relatives practice a tobacco-free lifestyle, none of the other villagers would trust her. Determined to eliminate tobacco from her village, Sita decided to help Sunil and his family first.

Sunil lived with his parents, younger brother and two sisters. His parents and brother, too consumed tobacco, just like him. Sheer ignorance of the ill-effects of this habit and dependence on tobacco was heavily damaging their health and financial condition. The entire family was spending close to Rs 5000 every month only to purchase tobacco and cigarettes, which is a significant amount for a rural household.

Sita took it as a personal mission and regularly counselled Sunil and other family members. Due to sensitization and respect for Sita, the family decreased tobacco consumption. However, this was not enough to mitigate the

health risks they all were exposed to. Sita did not give up and continued counselling the family members.

The turning point for the whole family was when Sunil once developed mouth ulcers that seriously started affecting his routine life. On Sita's advice, he visited the village health camp organized by ACF where the doctor cautioned him to immediately quit tobacco since he was at the threshold of developing oral cancer. The doctor also showed some videos and posters displaying different stages and symptoms of various problems caused by tobacco and smoking. On realizing the health damage already caused by tobacco, Sunil and his family members were very scared. They promised the doctor and Sita to completely get rid of this habit.

It's been almost five years since Sita, our *Sakhi* has been striving to eliminate tobacco from village Loldoh and feels extremely proud that her efforts finally paid off. Today, Loldoh village is one of the tobacco free villages in Chandrapur district. Beginning with Sunil, many more youngsters have ditched tobacco and have chosen to lead healthy lives. ***