



# The Girl Child Delhi Post

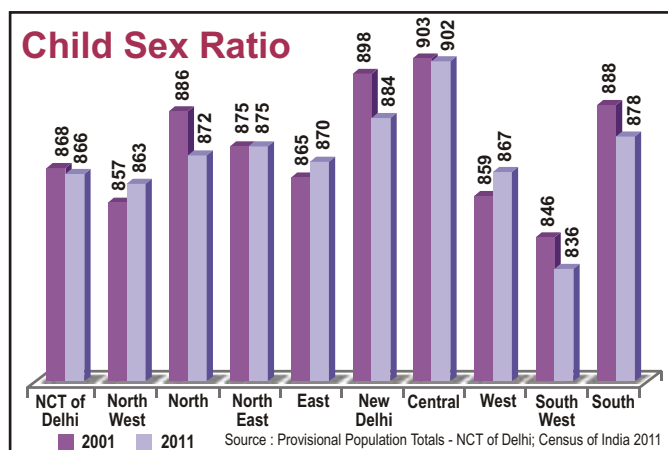
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Newsletter on the response to Girl Child issues

## Declining CSR : Who is responsible?

Delhi's gender development indicators have always shown marked contrasts. Census 2011 data has, for instance, shown a very definite increase in women's literacy. But at the same time the child sex ratio (CSR) is a low 866:1000 against the national average of 914:1000. The worst hit districts being South West, South and New Delhi with a CSR of 836, 878 and 870 respectively. Interestingly, South West & South districts have large populations and a huge rural belt. South West district also falls between Punjab and Haryana, which have the lowest CSR in the country. The question here is; who should be held responsible for this decline?

Dr. Kalyani Jha, a Gynecologist in South West district, opined that it was because, "The PCPNDT Act is not implemented properly. So families who want a male child can easily undergo sex determination tests. Doctors have also developed different types of symbols through which they indicate the sex of the child during ultrasound." While agreeing with this opinion, Sh. Ramjilal, Vice-



Principal, Rajkiya Madhyamik Bal Vidyalaya, Madangir said, "Though there is a law banning sex determination, the practice continues. Somewhere the social mindset is responsible for this. The other reason is dowry. People spend huge amounts on their daughters' weddings even if they cannot afford it because others are doing so."

Those working with the community also have varied explanations for the decline

in CSR. Beena Gupta, an Anganwadi worker in Geetanjali Park, felt that it was because, "Poverty has increased as also the incidence of crimes against women. People are scared to have daughters at such a time. Girls are also seen as an economic burden while sons are seen as a source of income for the family. Somewhere I feel that technology is promoting it because people now have easy access to sex determination tests." Deepali, an Asha Worker from Sagarpur, while agreeing with Beena said, "People are certainly very concerned about the safety of girls. They also see daughters as a burden and feel that they can avoid such responsibilities by not having daughters."

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## Is having daughters becoming a cause for increasing violence against women?

Domestic violence has many dimensions and not all of them are noticed or registered. Research has, for instance, revealed that women who only bear daughters are more likely to be the targets of domestic violence. Though it may be a little known fact, it was amply substantiated by women during a recent community meeting in South District.

One among them was Leela Devi, who spoke of the mental and physical torture she was subjected to because she gave



Women at a community meeting

birth to daughters. "My health suffered a lot after I gave birth to seven daughters. My neighbors used to pass comments and my mother-in-law felt so frustrated answering their questions that she in turn started pressurizing me. I was also abused on several occasions. In despair I decided to take another chance in god's name. Now I have a son but all my teeth have gone. I avoid going anywhere because I feel so ashamed."

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### Responding to the Census data

## Ensuring accountability and effective action

Following the release of Census 2011, several steps have been taken at the state and national level to ensure the implementation of the PCPNDT Act and accountability on the issue. At the Central level, this has resulted in the reconstitution of the Central Supervisory Board and the empowerment of the National Inspection and Monitoring Committee so that effective action is taken against clinics/facilities for violations of provisions of the PCPNDT Act.

Having been empowered by these measures, the State Supervisory Board has increased the number of inspections and follow-ups of court cases. Some of the other steps being initiated to regulate the Act are:

- Banning the mobility of stand-alone ultrasound centers
- Availability of a toll free number to record complaints and problems
- Drop boxes in public places for anonymous complaints on violations of the Act
- Online filing of Form-F by ultrasound clinics

Meanwhile, the regulatory body at the district level, the District Advisory Committees (DAC) has started conducting regular meetings and inspections. In East district, the Deputy Commissioner has made it mandatory for the DAC to conduct 4 inspections and do follow ups of ultrasound clinics every month. And in South West district, the

DAC meeting on 25th April'11 concluded with the decision to create awareness through handbill, pamphlets, nukkad nataks, paintings, slogan competitions and surprise visits to ultrasound clinics in the evening.

Ms. Neera Arora, member of District Advisory Committee, South West district has however pointed out that, "We are awaiting budget clearance for taking forward those activities that was decided in a meeting held on 25th April. So no progress has taken place yet."

While these are positive steps in the effort to halt the skewed CSR in Delhi, the questions is how will these decisions be implemented and monitored? We will have to watch and see how these initiatives are implemented. □

### Impacting Others...

## Making life better for the Girl Child

Anupama Triparthi, may be the Vice President of Delhi Cantonment Board but she also belongs to Old Nangal Community in South West district and has personally experienced discrimination, negligence and eve teasing at various levels.

So she is using her official capacity to promote girl child development, by initiating various initiatives to spread formal/non-formal education and health benefits. These include Kishori clinics, a mobile dispensary and the extension of vocational training programmes by aligning them with schools and NGOs in the cantonment area to help in making life better for the girl child.

When asked to comment on the declining CSR of the district, she attributed it "to the mindset of people". Adding, "They also don't give any priority to girls' growth and development." But she did



*Anupama Triparthi*

add that she had, "observed a wave of change in the area following the launch of these initiatives with parents increasingly promoting rather than resisting their daughter's education. But there is still a lack of awareness on important issues like the right to birth and gender equality. Dissemination of information on these topics to the adolescents can have a great impact on the imbalance that persists in society." □

### Is having daughters ...

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Snehalata, a field coordinator added that, "Women face violence in every phase of life; as a daughter, wife or mother. Many women in the community have spoken of the violence and beatings they are subjected to, by the family for having more than two daughters. Policy makers and concerned stakeholders must respond to this issue".

On the positive side, the growing incidence of violence against women is motivating women in South West District to build a collective response at the community level by forming groups, setting up a referral system for women seeking legal and other assistance and creating a support system for women in the community.

For instance, Meena, a victim of domestic violence, was able to bring back her child from her husband's house with the assistance of the Jahangirpuri Police Station and the support of the women in the community. □



## Adolescent girls take the lead

Young girls in the South West district have taken the initiative of bringing the community together, by facilitating one to one and group discussions on reducing discrimination against women. Such interactions have in turn prompted many in the community to reflect and recognize their own strengths and interests.

As Kajal from the Sappler group remarked, "I always wanted to do something good, but it was not possible to do it alone. But if one is part of a group we can do so many things together. We never got such opportunities before. The best part of all this is that we are also contributing to improve our society. Our group has decided to work on spreading

The formation of the Sappler group has, for instance, provided its members with opportunities to use their talents and ideas constructively and develop information and communication material (posters, poems and slogans), stage street theatres, conduct rallies etc.

They even staged a street play at an Independence Day programme organized by the Sarvodaya Resident Welfare Association. The script which was written by the girls themselves focused on the importance of the girl child and issue of the declining child sex ratio.

Mr. Vinay Kumar Mishra, Congress Youth Minister, West Delhi, spoke of how, "Children in our society have become knowledgeable and they are educating all of us on important issues through their street plays." Parents are also welcoming their daughter's initiative "I was not aware that

my daughter is so talented. I am very happy to know this. Their mothers can also be involved in it." opined Priyanka's father. □



*Sappler Group performs a play at community meeting*

### Declining CSR...

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Community women meanwhile spoke of how they were pressured to have sons and the fact that they have no say in decisions concerning their reproductive health. Seema, from Madangir spoke of how, "Soon after my marriage, I started getting blessings from the elders in my family to have a son. I also received indirect messages from them that daughters are a curse. The older generation should be educated on the adverse effects that the elimination of the girl child can have on society." Rekha, also from Madangir, added that, "The male members in families should be educated on the importance of having a girl child. If this is done this issue will get resolved." Monica, in Tigri, was of the opinion that, "Women are their own worst enemies. Most of us are pressurized by our mothers in laws, mothers and sisters to bear sons. I know so many women who has been abused and beaten by their in laws for having daughters." □



*Rally organised on International Girl Child Day at Old Nangal*

awareness." Others said that working as a team had inspired them to come up with innovative thoughts and ideas on how they could reach out to the community.

**Himanshu, C1 Block, Madangir:** The Newsletter is a very good medium for spreading the message about the girl child in our community. It can help in creating a conducive environment for women to survive in the community. Generally we don't take time out to think about such things.

**Meenu, Anganwadi worker, Tigri:** I think the Newsletter is a good way of promoting the welfare of the girl child and discouraging sex determination. This evidence will help us to educate the

### Readers Feedback

community. The stories on the back were encouraging and provided strength to other women.

**Jyoti, Kamala Park, South West District:** After reading the stories of women with 2 or 3 daughters, I feel I should also go for family planning. I have three daughters and I don't need another child. After reading about these women I hope that my story will appear in the next

time of the Newsletter.

**Deep Chand Meena, MTP Dealing Assistant, South West District:** I think copies of this Newsletter should be given to clinic people, to make them realize the kind of responsibilities they have. It should also be forwarded to state authorities, who blindly assume that this is not happening in Delhi.

**Mr. Billo Ji Bhatt, Manav Parapkari Sansthan:** This Newsletter can serve as a good medium to show how girls are progressing in every field. □



## Daughters : setting new benchmarks

### Kavita, 28 years (South West District)

“When my first and second sisters were born, there was joy and celebration. But after my third sister was born people in the village started saying, 'this family is



*Kavita : “We are no less”*

not blessed with a son. It is cursed with daughters'. But my parents never pay any heed to such remarks and had no regrets about having seven daughters. They never stopped us from studying because my father being a lawyer feels education is vital for a person's growth and development.

“When we attained the age of marriage, several proposals was received but they all raised the issue that we don't have a brother and lack wealth. We used to wonder whether they came to marry us or our brother and wealth. At the time of my eldest sister's marriage, the same things were said but my brother-in-law said that he would only marry this girl because someone has to take the initiative. He is a very nice person and is like a son for our family. All of us together look after our mother. We believe that girls can do everything that a boy can do.

“When my father died, the issue of lighting the pyre came up. We waited for our cousin brother but he could not come due to some reason. So we decided we would do the last rites and we did everything that was needed to be done, but for lighting the pyre which was done by my brother-in-law because the priest insisted that Hindus customs did not allow a girl to do it. I believe that we can do all that boys do. Why do people consider us less than boys? We are no less.” □

### Ratna (Name Changed), 19 Years (South District)

“My father is an alcoholic and my brother has also started drinking. My mother is too scared to say anything to them and on many occasions she has stood helplessly and watched me being beaten like a dog by my brother. One day I just ran away from my house and thought I would never return. But the outside world is not safe and I had no place to stay. I also did not want to leave my mother in that hell so I decided to go back and face the situation with courage. I also realized that the only way I could overcome this situation was by a getting good education and earning for myself.

“After completing my education I started working as a teacher in a local school. I feel so good that I am earning and learning as well. Now my family problems do not bother me as much as before. The only reason I stay at home is because of my mother, I love her and I have decided to support her financially as much as I can. Now that I have my own money, my father and brother do not try to control me like they used to. I also have the courageous to speak up and defend myself.” □

### Vidya, 55 years (South west)

“I am the eldest of six sisters. Though we have a brother I took the responsibility for my sisters and my husband and I along with my father got all of them married.

“I don't believe that only boys can take care of their family and parents. Women can also do it as I did for my family. I am still doing so and my youngest sister's marriage was done totally by me and my husband.

“And when her marriage did not work out I bought her back to my place. She is now staying with me and we have filed a case against her husband. He had also forcibly



*Vidya : We can do exerting that society consider to a man's job”*

taken away her son but we filed a case and got him back.

“My brother is a nice person but he is not up to taking on these responsibilities. So I take care of my family with my husband's support. Who says that daughters cannot be a support to their family? I believe that we can be equally good at taking care of our parents and do everything that society considers to be a man's job.” □



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