



The Girl Child Delhi Post

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Newsletter on the response to Girl Child issues

“Capital city needs to take the lead in halting the declining sex ratio”

Dr. Satish B. Agnihotri, Expert on Child Survival and Nutrition, calls for stronger enforcement of the PCPNDT Act, 100% civil registration of all pregnancies and their outcome and greater participation of girls in all activities

If we compare the CSR figures for the districts of Delhi in Census 2001 and Census 2011, what are the three or four things that stand out?

The first thing that stands out in Delhi is that the child sex ratio has been very low since 2001 and it registered a decline even in 2011. The ratio in South West is the worst in Delhi (836) while South Delhi has shown a decline by 10 points. It is a matter of concern and shame that Delhi, which is the national capital, is showing such disregard towards the survival of the girl child. Finally, even if we take consolation in the fact that the decline appears to have been arrested (868 in 2001 and 866 in 2011); we cannot justify the plateauing of the child sex ratio at such a low level.

What should a public campaign to curb and prevent sex determination



and sex selection focus on? What are the key messages that we need to put out?

The public campaign must strive for strong enforcement of the PCPNDT Act, 100% civil registration of all pregnancies

and their outcome, safety of women in public spaces and greater participation of girls in all activities. Delhi has to lead by example. The campaign should also project the success stories of girls who have broken barriers and provided inspiration to others as role models and change agents.

If we decide to forge a city-level or Delhi Network on this issue, what should be the mandate of the Network?

The city level Network should create a support network that has a 24x7 counseling, rescue and legal support system. It should also create a network on the 2D connect line where parents with two daughters can exchange notes and extend mutual support. Similarly a

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Women message on safe pregnancy



“I was busy doing my household chores, when a neighbor asked me to accompany her to a meeting in our gali. I hesitated to go because I had to feed my

one year old daughter. Moreover, I was in my seventh month of pregnancy and I knew it would be difficult for me to sit for long in a meeting. But she insisted so I accompanied her.”

“When we reached the meeting 10-12 pregnant women were chatting with Chandrakanti Didi. She was talking to them about the importance of

institutional delivery and birth registration. She also spoke of the decline in the child sex ratio in Delhi.”

“I then spoke of how my first child was born in a hospital but this time I was not able to get an ANC card and go for routine ANC check-ups because there was no one in the family who could accompany me to the hospital. A few days later Chandrakanti Didi came home and explained the importance of an ANC check-up and institutional delivery and the government schemes for a girl child. My husband was convinced and assured Didi that he would take me to the dispensary for an ANC card. But when we visited the dispensary in our locality we were told that I could not get it

because I was already in the seventh month of my pregnancy.”

“So I registered with a private nursing home and had a baby girl on December 15, 2011. My family, particularly my husband, is very happy. He completed the formalities for the birth registration within 21-days of our daughter's birth and we are now waiting for the birth certificate.” □

Testimony by Ritu, Geetanjali Park, South West Delhi

Between April and December 2011 the CFAR Team had reached out to 140 pregnant women in Ward No. 178 and 183 in South District and Ward No. 110 and 131 in South West district. Under the “Let Girls Be Born” project of Plan India. 72 children were born through institutional delivery.



Galvanizing the city ...

Over the last three months there has been numerous capacity building workshops, camps and celebrations to create awareness among communities on issue concerning the girl child.

Public education at mega camps

The Delhi Government has been undertaking various initiatives through Mission Convergence to reach out to marginalized and underprivileged communities in the city. One such

South district emphasized that the "Main objective of the Mega Camps is to bring various departments onto one platform and ensuring that the services get converged and integrated so that the community benefits.



Sensitizing visitors on gender discrimination in South West district

initiative is the Mega Camps that the Mission has been organizing every quarter across Delhi. The second mega camps in South Delhi and South West Delhi on 16th October, 2011.

Girija Sahu, District Programme Manager, District Resource Centre,

Pramod Chauhan, Project Manager, CFAR added that, "these two camps provided CFAR with an opportunity to set up an educational stall on the issue of declining child sex ratio in these two districts."

Community representatives shouldered the major responsibility of mobilizing their peers to attend the camp.

As Kanchan of Khajan Basti said "By participating in the mega camp we got an opportunity to meet and talk directly to officials in-charge of the issue, learn from each other and identify common ways of improving our situation."

An interactive quiz show called "*khel*

khel mein gyan badhayen, sahi jawab dene par inaam paye" proved to be a big draw. The visitors who participated in this event were asked questions relating to: the child sex ratio in their districts, birth registration and the rights of the girl child. People who answered correctly were given prizes.

These activities proved to be an eye-opener for many. Dinesh, a Class XII student in Sangam Vihar said, "We will face many problems in the future if there are fewer girls. For one thing discrimination towards girls will increase. We have to take up this issue as a mission to change people's mindset."

The stall also encouraged visitors to speak on the status of the girl child and related issues. Lakshmi resident of G-Block, Sangam Vihar said, "I have two daughters and a son. As a mother I have observed that daughters are extremely caring and sensible. When I return home my daughters bring water or tea for me and enquire about my day." This prompted 17-year-old Sheeba, a resident of Sangam Vihar to added, "Still girls are not treated on an equal footing." □

"A girl can also do what a boy can do"

"The message I am taking back is that one should not go for sex determination, sex selection or home delivery. All of them can prove detrimental to everyone, particularly women." **Asmita of Gali No. 6, Geetanjali Park**

"After watching the play I realized that girls should be given equal opportunities. They should not feel demoralized and marginalized because of the lack of opportunities to grow and evolve." **Pushpa, Madangir**

These are some of the feedback received after the performance of a street play "Daadi Maan Gayi", on the issue of gender discrimination by the Sappler Group that was organized by CFAR with support from Plan India.



Sappler group performing in a community

In the play Kamini, a young girl is very disturbed after she comes across an incident of injustice in her locality. This incident makes her reflect on her own journey of neglect and discrimination that she faced at different stages of life and how she had overcome. Now supporting her family.

The play educated the audience and also motivated the performers. Sharing her experience, Roly from Padam Basti said, "Earlier I could not talk in public but after participating in this play I have overcome my shyness and have the confidence to perform in public. My parents are very proud on me. The audiences are agreeing that girl child rights must be upheld and the notion that girls are a burden must be given up."

"The street play has helped me to realize that a girl can also do what a boy can do. Education is a tool that can empower a girl." added Pallavi of East Sagarpur.

Harish Joshwa of Mobile Crèches who was the trainer said, "The girls themselves came forward. They have an understanding of the issue." □

... Rallying for inclusion

Celebrations and felicitations

2011 was in many ways different for residents of Old Nangal in South West and Madangir in South District. The highlight of the year was the celebration of International Girl Child Day on 24 September in Old Nangal and Children's Day on 14 November in Madangir by the community.

International Girl Child Day

"Such celebrations enthuse the community and helps us to work together for the betterment of the girl child" remarked Poonam, an ASHA worker of Old Nangal, after attending the International Girl Child Day function. Echoing the same sentiment, Asha a community representative added that "If we need to take this issue of the rights of girl child and pregnant women forward, we need such social and cultural events to communicate to people."

The event was organized by the members of the self help group, the Mahila Panchayat, adolescent group and civil society organizations.

Various cultural forms were used to highlight the importance of birth registration and immunization and a rally was taken through the galis of Old

Nangal to galvanize the men and influential members of the community. The rally ended with the community taking a collective pledge to nurture and protect the girl child and prevent bias and discrimination against her.



Twenty-four mothers of girls between 0-1 years were also felicitated in a Balika Janamotsva. Pummy, mother of a 5-month-old-girl child said "I am very happy to have a daughter. I will educate her and give her as many opportunities as I would have given my son."

Even boys and young men who have never been associated in such activities participated in the event.

Children's Day

Several community based organizations of South district came together to celebrate Children's Day.

Around 100 children in the 6-18 age group were part of the celebrations which included drawing and slogan writing competitions and a street play.

The rally saw children enthusiastically marching ahead with banners and raising slogans on the rights of the girl child. Mahek, a youth group of Dakshinpuri performed a street play on the importance and necessity of birth registration. Jayanti, a resident of Dakshinpuri said that play was very timely because they were not able to get her daughter admitted into any school. "Now we realize the importance of getting the birth registration certificate as this has become a major stumbling block for us. We suffered because there was no one to tell us about it. This play has certainly educated us about how to go about getting the birth registration certificate."

Sappler, an adolescent group from South West district, did a street play "Dadi Maan Gayi" on gender discrimination. The street play attracted a large number of people from around the area. □

Networking across the city

"We had a group of 15 children and we used to build awareness on issues like early marriage, early pregnancy and sex determination. We found that the community tends to have their own belief and mindset on many of these issues and the discussion often ends up by them insisting that they should at least have one boy." Niyazmin, of Gyanlok, peer educator with Mamta.

This observation was made during a capacity building workshop held on 2nd December 2011 for civil society organization on the rights of girl child, declining child sex ratio and birth registration. The workshop brought together 15 like-minded organizations to develop a consensus on how best to

respond to the issue of the "missing girl child" in Delhi.

In his response to this statement, Rizwan Khan from CEQUIN said that in the context of Gender Resource Centre the best they can do is "to make everyone associated with the programme aware of the issue and the immediate and long term repercussions the declining child sex ratio is likely to have on human development and women in particular. Through this process they must train the community mobilisers to constantly raise people's consciousness about the issue and change their mindset."

Ms. Bijalyaxmi Nanda, Member State Supervisory Board, Delhi, felt that given the challenges in Delhi it is imperative

that civil society organizations "work together for the effective implementation of the PCPNDT Act."

Taking this forward Ms. Nalini Abraham said, "we must focus on community managed programmes rather than looking towards the government for solutions regarding this issue."

The 15 organizations that came together decided to take forward the networking they are doing on the issue and integrate this issue into their rights-based activities. It was also decided that they will hold fortnightly meetings at which the NGOs will focus on strengthening the knowledge, understanding and capacity to work on the issue. Update each other on local developments and ensure a coordinated response at the ward and district level. □



Community champions

On how they are strengthening public awareness on the girl child and what it has meant to them

Priyanka: “These activities have given us confidence and helped us to realize our strengths”

“Our association with the “Let Girls Be Born” (LGBB) team started seven months ago when Chandrakanti didi came to our community and talked to the girls about the declining child sex ratio and female foeticide. She also asked if we were willing to contribute in some way to build awareness on this issue and we suggested that we could sensitize people through posters, slogans, career melas and nukkad natak.

“So we formed a group called “Sappler” consisting of young and adolescent girls and made posters, wrote slogans and even prepared a nukkad natak. Initially, there was stiff resistance from the parents because they feared their daughters would be misled. Safety and security was

also a major concern because they were afraid their daughters would be exploited and teased by anti-social elements in the area.

“However by using different modes of persuasion, including one-to-one interactions, the team succeeded in persuading the parents to permit them to participate. The performance of the play at the Independence Day celebrations organized by Resident Welfare Association (RWA) made our parents happy and they realized that their children can also do many things. Now we are getting support from our families and taking part in nukkad natak, rallies and exhibitions and creating awareness on the issue.



“Earlier our lives were limited to school and home. These activities have given us confidence and helped us to realize our strengths and think about what is good for us.” □

“Declining sex ratio”...

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'swayamsiddha' network can be put in place to provide support to single women or women in difficult situations. The network should focus on getting women their dues and fight legal battles for them through a network of lawyers. The Media should also do its bit to advance the rights of the girl child by highlighting gender based inequalities and prevailing upon all stakeholders including the government to address the gap.

In the present context, what should the Government do to address the declining child sex ratio?

Today, the aim should be to restore the child sex ratio and any plan that is drawn to address the issue must be ambitious, to say the least. To begin with, the National Commission for Women must be mandated to come out with a Gender Inequality Report every year and wherever the child sex ratio is seen as declining we should do an Audit of the budget utilized in delivering services across vital indicators. This can range from birth weight and registration to immunization, morbidity, development and nutrition, schooling, environment to children requiring special attention. □

Salwant Kaur: “I learnt sex determination is a crime”



“It was during a community meeting held in front of my house by Chandrakanti didi that I first got detailed information about female foeticide and learned that sex determination is a crime. Prior to this I had no information about it.

“After attending the meeting I realized. If I had known earlier I wouldn't have gone

for sex determination. I feel that by joining the programme I may be able to save some daughters. Through this initiative, I would like to tell society to let the girl child be born and give them proper education.

“I am also a member of Mahila Panchayat and people come to me with their problems. One day a woman came to me at 9 O'clock in the night and told me that her friend, who already has a daughter and was in the third month of her pregnancy would like to go for an abortion.

I counseled her that she should not to go for an abortion and told her about the ill-effects of abortion on women. I also gave her information about the various Government programmes and schemes for pregnant women. I have handled two-three similar cases.” □

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