



Combating the Issue of

Gender Imbalance

in Uttar Pradesh





All individuals deserve equal opportunities. However, there are huge challenges in achieving equality. Society's expectations for girls and women can limit their opportunities across social, economic, reproductive and political life. Across the globe, women and girls still have lower status, fewer opportunities and lower income, less control over resources, and less power than men and boys.

Persistence of gender-biases within the health sector, in terms of health policies, budgets, education, human resources, and service delivery is one amongst the important reasons for the persistence of gender inequalities in health. In this context, it is essential to strengthen accountability of health policy makers, managers, providers and funding organizations to reduce gender inequalities in health, as well as address gender-specific health needs and rights of women.



An important indicator to measure gender equity is sex ratio. The rapidly decreasing sex ratio in UP is likely to create severe gender imbalance that can destroy the social fabric. The comparative data on sex ratio as shown in the table indicates that Uttar Pradesh has continuously performed below the national average in sex ratio which is expressed as number of females per thousand males.

Table: Sex Ratio for Uttar Pradesh and India in last three decades

Year	India		Uttar Pradesh	
	Population Sex Ration	Child Sex Ration (0-6)	Population Sex Ration	Child Sex Ration (0-6)
1991	927	945	876	927
2001	933	927	898	916
2011	940	919	912	902

Sources : Census of India



Improving the 'status of women' has become part of the vocabulary of Indian population policy documents. Unfortunately, little attention has been paid to the content of this well-meaning phrase. The Govt of India Act on Prevention and Control of Pre Natal Diagnosis Test (PCPNDT) aims to improve the sex ratio at birth by regulating misuse of medical technology for sex determination. However the enforcement of this Act has generally been weak due to inappropriate accountability mechanism.

The Sample Registration Survey (2013) showed that the sex ratio of Uttar Pradesh was estimated to be as low as 878 girls per 1000 boys at birth, plummeting to 868 by the age of 4 years, showing a large number of girls are either being killed through sex selective abortions or dying prematurely due to negligence and lack of appropriate care. Preference for a male child and the appalling sex ratio are the consequences of the age old discriminatory socio-cultural traditions and economic practices resulting in female infanticide and foeticide, affecting women's reproductive life, with serious implications on their health and survival.

Several programmatic attempts are being made by the Govt of India and many state governments to curb the menace of sex selective abortion and infanticide. 'Beti Bachao Beti Parhao' campaign has been one such attempt, which is bringing visible public awareness around these issues.

Endeavouring to bring about behavioral change in the community towards gender discrimination, create awareness in the community on the issue of declining sex ratio and stipulations of PCPNDT Act through frontline health workers, SIFPSA implemented an intensive project in 2015, holding more than 80 sensitization workshops in 60 blocks of 20 high priority districts viz. Agra, Baghpat, Bulandsahar, G.B.Nagar, Ghaziabad, Meerut, Muzaffar Nagar, Jhansi, Hathras, Hardoi, Bijnor, Etawah, Kanpur Nagar, Shrawasti, Mathura, Varanasi, Badaun, Auraiya, Faizabad and Firozabad, with recorded low sex ratio. More than 2300 grassroot/frontline workers were sensitized for creating an enabling environment for gender equality and women empowerment in the community. The project activities involved developing training modules and handbooks for ToT and for orientation of district level trainers for conducting workshops involving the frontline health workers, preparing them to play the role of change agents in the community by sensitizing them on gender issues, transitioning towards gender equity.



The success of the project led to its extension in 2016 in 10 additional districts with low sex ratio - Ballia, Banda, Chitrakoot, Gazipur, Jalaun, Kanpur Dehat, Kasganj, Shahjahanpur, Hamirpur and Etah, successfully holding 40 sensitization workshops in 30 blocks. The workshops were participated by more than 1200 people, including ASHAs, Aanganwadi workers, ANMs, Pradhans, local NGO representatives and religious leaders.



The project also included a popular folk media campaign titled 'Lok Geeton Mei Beti', a musical drama celebrating the birth of a girl child, weaving girl child issues in popular folk songs, addressing various concerns like right age at marriage, female foeticide and infanticide, rights of girls etc. attempting to fight the issue of gender bias and daughter deficit in the state. Lok Geeton Mei Beti was presented in more than 1000 villages, directly sensitizing more than 100000 people. The most remarkable feature of this folk drama was the introduction of Sohar (celebratory song sung on

the occasion of the birth of a male child in India), sung in celebration of the birth of a girl child, that garnered a lot of attention and positive reactions from the village community.

Gender is one of the most important determinants of public health, gender inequality affecting the overall health and well being of women. The initiative taken by SIFPSA to sensitize the frontline health workers and the community will go a long way in addressing the issue of gender discrimination in the state.



सोहर

जन्मी है बिटिया सुधर धन लच्छमी, कि मंगल गावौ सुभ सोहर हो
 एहो पारबती रूपधर सुरसति रूपधर आई हो लक्ष्मी आयी हो
 एहो जन्मी है बिटिया हमार, सहेलियाँ मंगल गावौ सहेलियाँ सोहर गावौ
 लच्छमी रूप धर आयी मोरी बिटिया, सुभ धन भाग लै आयी मोरी बिटिया
 हमरी बिटिया कै नजर उतार, सहेलियाँ मंगल गावौ सोहर गावौ
 गौरा रूप धर आयी मोरी बिटिया, पारबती सी सुहायी मेरी बिटिया
 एहि बिटिया कै राई लोन उतार, सहेलियाँ मंगल गावौ सहेलियाँ सोहर गावौ
 सुर सति रूपधर आयी मोरी बिटिया, मन कै तार इनकायी मोरी बिटिया
 बेटी रानी पे जावौ बलिहार, सहेलियाँ मंगल गावौ सहेलियाँ सोहर गावौ
 सकल दे उता आसिस देवे, कमलाई कहै ई जुग जुग जीवै एहि करि है जगत उजियार
 सहेलियाँ मंगल गावौ सहेलियाँ सोहर गावौ



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