

NO COUNTRY FOR YOUNG GIRLS?

*A film based guide for discussion
on the issue of gender biased sex selection*

October 2012



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Decline in the child sex ratio (children under six years) in India has been substantial and unabated over the last few decades. Census 2011 (provisional) has revealed that the declining trend is spreading to the regions hitherto unknown for sex selection. Gender-biased sex selection is emerging in almost all parts of the country as yet another manifestation of strong son preference and gender discriminatory practices, aided by the growing misuse of medical technology.

Considering the gravity of the long term consequences of increased gender imbalance in Indian society, there is an immediate need for action to stop sex selection. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) strives to address discriminatory practices that impede gender equality and impact on the reproductive health and well-being of women and girls. In order to address gender-biased sex selection, a multi-pronged approach has been adopted – *strengthening implementation of the Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PCPNDT Act); research for evidence generation; mindset change and environmental building* – to reach out to a wide spectrum of stakeholders.

To mobilize and engage with the community to take action to address the gender-biased sex selection, a resource kit has been developed comprising of the documentary film 'No Country for Young Girls?' and a facilitator's guide based on this film to aid community debate and discussion on the issue. The resource kit has been developed as part of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) project entitled 'Support to community mobilisation and people driven response in preventing sex selection and arresting child sex ratio decline.' With WomenPowerConnect (WPC) as the nodal agency, the project was implemented from 2008 to 2011. The valuable inputs from WPC Team (Dr N. Hamsa, Ms. Savita Sethi and Ms. Rachna Shanbog) and Breakthrough in the development of the resource kit is acknowledged.

The documentary 'No Country for Young Girls?' that accompanies this resource kit was produced by Television Trust for the Environment. Directed by Nupur Basu, the film was edited by Reena Mohan and Sotira Kyriacou. A part of the 'Life on the Edge' series featured for BBC World News, the series editor and consultant were Steve Bradshaw and Jenny Richards respectively. The support to use the film as a part of the resource kit by TVE (Mr. Chris Miller, Regional Coordinator, South Asia) is recognized.

The production of this resource kit would not have been possible without substantive technical inputs by UNFPA colleagues (Ms. Ena Singh, Ms. Dhanashri Brahme, Ms. Priyanka Ghosh and Mr. Sushil Chaudhary).

The rationale behind this kit was to use the medium of film to spark discussions on the issue of gender-biased sex selection and thereby catalyse community debate on the matter. It is hoped that the film, along with the facilitator's guide, would help unpack the complexity of the subject. It is envisaged that this kit would be a useful tool for advocacy and other civil society organisations, not just to engage with, but also contribute towards its efforts to own and address the issue of gender-biased sex selection. Relevant findings from various UNFPA publications have found their way into the information kit.



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INTRODUCTION

About WomenPowerConnect (WPC)

WomenPowerConnect (WPC) is a non-profit, non-government organisation (NGO) dedicated to gender justice and women's empowerment. With more than 1,400 members across 28 states, WPC serves as one of the largest advocacy bodies for women in India. It strives for active participation of women in policy outcomes. The priority issues for WPC include the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill; effective implementation of the Protection of Women Against Domestic Violence Act; putting into practice the gender budgeting process; tabling and advocating for the passage of the Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment Bill, arresting the declining child sex ratio and proper implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act.

WPC has been working in collaboration with the Government of India and UN organisations – more notably with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), National Commission for Women, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UN Women.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In an effort to comprehensively address the problem of gender-biased sex selection and foster collaboration between various stakeholders, WPC, with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) implemented a three year project titled, 'Support to community mobilisation and a people driven response in preventing sex selection and arresting child sex ratio decline' from July 2008. WPC served as the nodal agency for this intervention.

The project aimed to address diverse aspects of gender-biased sex selection through a network of partner agencies from target states. In order to implement this project, WPC followed a four-fold model. It consisted of the following components:

- Lobbying and advocating at the state and national levels
- Building capacity of existing and new community groups to take up this issue
- Creating a network of civil society organisations
- Institutionalising the process for sustainable interventions (community mobilisation)

WPC worked with 31 NGOs across 11 states (with adverse child sex ratios) as project implementing partners. For more information about the project, please visit: <http://www.womenpowerconnect.org>. The project ended in 2011; however, many of the partners continue to actively address the issue of gender-biased sex selection.

ABOUT THE ISSUE

The issue of gender-biased sex selection is not just about the misuse of technology. At the heart of the matter is the low status of women and girls, and deep-rooted prejudices that they face throughout their lives. The issue needs to be seen in the context of a male-dominated social and family structure and a value system that prefers and favours sons. Further, the practice of dowry and the tag of *paraya dhan* (another's wealth) translate into daughters being considered as liabilities.



Discrimination and neglect of girls could manifest in many forms such as inadequate nutrition, denial or limited access to education and health, and even domestic violence. In one of its worst forms, it leads to the complete rejection of girls, as practiced through gender-biased sex selection.

The practice of sex selection leads to an imbalance in sex ratio at birth which is seen to have adverse socio-cultural as well as health related consequences. Contrary to what many believe, fewer girls in a society will not enhance their status. Instead, it could lead to increased violence against women, rape, abduction, trafficking and a resurgence of malpractices such as polyandry. In some parts of the country, women are already being 'bought' as brides – an abhorrent practice that commodifies women.

ABOUT THE FILM 'NO COUNTRY FOR YOUNG GIRLS?'

'No Country for Young Girls?' is a powerful film that engages, provokes and promotes public dialogue on the issues related to gender-biased sex selection. It is useful in facilitating individual and community action on the issue by making them reflect upon their life and experiences. The film has been designed as an experiential learning tool to increase and extend the impact of NGOs and other social organisations in tackling the problem in partnership with community actors.

Storyline

The 27 year old protagonist Vaijanti's first born daughter was fondly named Shraddha. When she becomes pregnant a second time, her husband and in-laws force her to undergo a scan to determine the sex of the foetus. Subsequently, the pregnancy is terminated. The third time she becomes pregnant, assuming that she is carrying a girl child, they try to pressurise her into undergoing an abortion, and after a major argument she leaves and goes to her parents' home. Now she is living with her parents, and two young daughters – unsure about whether she can make it on her own, or whether she should return to her husband.

The film takes Vaijanti across India to see if things are as difficult for girls in the rest of the country as in her own life and community. After her journey, Vaijanti needs to arrive at a decision. Will she decide that India can indeed offer her and her daughters a fair and prosperous future? Or will she decide that India is not a country for young girls, and go back to her husband with that disturbing understanding?

About the facilitator's guide

It is proposed that this facilitator's guide accompanying the film 'No Country for Young Girls?' is used during community meetings or group discussions on the issue of gender-biased sex selection. The guide will be handy in promoting public dialogue on the issue.

The facilitator's guide will enable men and women in rural and urban communities to use the film 'No Country for Young Girls?' as a springboard for dialogue on a range of themes and issues related to gender-biased sex selection. The guide will support the screening of this film during community-based meetings, participatory training programmes and experiential learning processes. Irrespective of whether the person conducting the session is an experienced or a first time facilitator, it is hoped that this guide will encourage her/him to sensitise the participants on the issue of sex selection and child sex ratio decline in India.



The guide contains pointers and questions to enable a broad discussion on the film, and also offers scope for viewers to reflect and delve deeper into:

- ◉ The issue of gender-biased sex selection;
- ◉ Socio-economic and cultural notions affecting the practice;
- ◉ Possible consequences of gender-biased sex selection;
- ◉ The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 (PCPNDT Act);
- ◉ Pointers to mobilise opinion leaders and communities; and
- ◉ An indicative action plan on the prevention of gender-biased sex selection.

We encourage community based organisations (CBOs) and NGOs to enrich discussions on the issue with the help of this facilitator's guide, which includes steps on how to make the best use of discussion questions, themed resources, fact sheets, suggested action steps and more.

The guide is divided into five parts:

PART A

Generic Section on Using the Film

PART B

Tips for the Facilitator

PART C

Post Screening Discussions and Facilitator's Notes

PART D

Evaluation

PART E

Annexures
(Action Points for various stakeholders to address the issue of gender-biased sex selection and List of Appropriate Authorities under the PCPNDT Act)

PART A: USING THE FILM

How and when can the film be used? What steps should be kept in mind for the screening?

The preparation for the screening of the film should be such that it attempts to involve the community at large to discuss the issue and its implications. This film can be screened for rural/semi-urban/urban communities during meetings or can be included as a session during a workshop.

The primary target audience for this film includes members of the general public, and community groups living in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. The film is available in both Hindi and English.¹

The screening should be planned in advance. The film can be screened on the following occasions:

- Community meetings
- A session in a training programme
- Gram sabha/panchayat meetings
- Felicitations to celebrate the birth of a daughter or acknowledge academic excellence of meritorious girls
- Commemoration of important days
(For example; the National Girl Child Day on 24th January or the International Girl Child Day on 11th October or the International Women's Day on 8th March)

About the screening of the film and facilitation

There are various methodologies which have been used by different organisations and groups to address critical developmental issues. However, it has been widely observed that the screening of films is a popular tool to engage people. It offers scope for sensitive reflection using a layered approach. The idea is to start a dialogue at the level of general experiences and then move on to the specific subject. It is hoped that this film too will lead to discussions on many issues related to gender-biased sex selection, gender discrimination and gender based violence.

Moving from a level of general experience to specific issues is a convenient method of facilitation. With this film focusing on the issue of sex selection, it will provide a platform to initiate discussions with community members on various issues that are inter-related with the issue of gender-biased sex selection.

Topics and issues relevant to the film

- Issue of gender-biased sex selection – causes and consequences
- Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act
- Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act
- Declining child sex ratio
- Discrimination against girls

AS YOU PLAN THE EVENT

A screening of the film, 'No Country for Young Girls?' can be used to spark interest in any of the topics listed above, as well as to inspire individual and community action to address them. Using the checklist below will help ensure a high quality/high impact event.

Structure your event

As you plan your screening you might consider identifying eloquent speakers, panellists or discussants who have expertise in one or more of the above mentioned areas linked to the issue of gender-biased sex selection. Also, plan in advance for the number of people for whom you would be hosting the screening. A large audience is appropriate for information exchange. However, small groups allow for more intensive dialogue.



¹ In case some NGOs may want to have the film developed in regional languages, they can get in touch with TVE at tve@tve.org.uk

Arrange to involve all stakeholders

If it is a community meeting one must inform the expected participants well in advance and ensure the presence of key people/opinion leaders who can positively influence the discussion. Try to get representation from all the stakeholders to widen community reach.

Choose an accessible venue

Book the venue and date for your screening. The venue could be your local community hall or any other meeting space. Be sure to confirm all the basics, especially if the screening is not a part of an ongoing training programme or a workshop. Some pointers include:

- ⦿ Is the screen big enough for your audience?
- ⦿ Does the venue have a projector and compatible speaker system?
- ⦿ In case of panel discussions, are there enough microphones, tables and chairs?
- ⦿ Do you have adequate supply of reference material and cards containing action points for dissemination?

PRE-SCREENING DISCUSSIONS

Before the film is shown, the group/participants need to connect with the intent of the programme. The facilitator may speak briefly about the content of the film and the direct/indirect issues that the film would highlight. The facilitator must ensure that the introduction sets the tone for the screening and subsequent dialogue. The participants' responses are to be shared and not criticised. All views are valid. The focus should be on ensuring a healthy discussion with some thought to what the community or training participants would like to do to respond to the concerns surrounding the issue of gender-biased sex selection.

Allocate time for discussion and questions and answers

- ⦿ Follow the screening with a discussion. Encourage those present to participate in the discussion and give enough time for the issue to be examined and reflected upon. Build trust and comfort among the participants to enable them to share their own personal experiences in the broader context of gender related biases and stereotypes.
- ⦿ You may want to begin by sharing an example yourself. Ensure that at some point the participants gradually move from a personal experience to a close scrutiny of the socio-cultural reasons responsible for gender-biased sex selection and appreciate the current legal view on the matter. Facilitators might use the points elaborated in the Facilitator's Notes as handouts or for mini dialogues on the issue.
- ⦿ Discuss possible action points (refer to Annexure 1) to help participants identify appropriate measures to prevent and stop gender-biased sex selection in their own communities. Include both short and long-term actions that can provide participants with the opportunity to act on their convictions and understanding. Distribute the handouts with action points and ask the participants to refer to them along with the contact details of Appropriate Authorities institutionalised under the PCPNDT Act (Annexure 2.)

POST-SCREENING EVALUATION

- ◉ Encourage and involve participants to provide constructive feedback on the film. Keep records of all evaluations. This would help you integrate the learning and suggestions in the next screening and discussion. Having opportunities to express themselves helps participants clarify their thoughts and feelings. Some people will prefer written feedback, but remember to include verbal feedback as well.
- ◉ Facilitate the conclusion and closure of the discussion session. Based on the profile of the participants one could work out a written or oral feedback for sharing personal observations on the issues covered. This would include ways of translating the information or insight gained from the screening into tangible measures.
- ◉ Help sustain post-workshop motivation and action. Thank all the participants and establish some follow-up mechanisms by which they continue to consider themselves as resource persons for one another. They could jointly implement the action points given in the handout or come up with their own stance or action plan to take up the issue within their organisation and community. The plan of action should be drawn up keeping a stipulated time frame in mind.

PART B: TIPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

- ◉ The film is not intended to preach a set of messages; its aim is to bring out the diverse issues related to gender and gender-biased sex selection.
- ◉ The facilitator does not need to be an expert to use this film as a training or discussion tool. However, knowledge of the basics will help keep discussions on track and gently correct myths and misunderstandings about the issue. Prior to your event, take time to read the available resource material.²
- ◉ The facilitator is expected to remain neutral and steer discussions without imposing her or his view on the dialogue.
- ◉ The facilitator must see the film prior to the screening (this is important for planning purposes and assessing appropriateness). Viewing the film before the event would give you time to reflect. This would ensure that during the facilitation you are not dealing with your own opinions and ideas alongside those of the viewers.
- ◉ It is preferable that the film is shown without any breaks. However, during the discussion the facilitator can 'replay' certain parts of the film, which the participants may wish to refer.
- ◉ A number of post-screening discussion points are given; the facilitator may use her/his discretion to select appropriate/all points for discussion depending on the context and profile of the audience.
- ◉ The issues raised by the film need not focus solely on gender-biased sex selection and gender. The discussion may be extended to talk about the value of girls in society, the right to safe and legal abortion, supportive environment for girls, violence against women, etc.
- ◉ If possible, it would be helpful to record what the participants ask and say. This would be especially helpful in analysing the discussion and evaluating the overall impact of the screening at a later stage.
- ◉ Plan a strategy for preventing one or two people from dominating the discussion.
- ◉ Everyone in the audience may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film. Interestingly, all of them may be accurate.
- ◉ Do not be judgmental during the discussions.



PART C: POST-SCREENING DISCUSSIONS AND FACILITATOR'S NOTES

- ⦿ The screening of 'No Country for Young Girls?' along with the discussion session can be comfortably completed within 2 hours and 30 minutes. If time is limited, the facilitator can carefully select discussion points which best meet the objectives of the given session and the needs of the audience. It is important to allow people sufficient time to reflect and discuss. Ask the participants to reflect on the film and follow it up with a discussion. *(Note: The number of questions given here are more than can be covered in one session. They have been grouped by theme, and you may choose the stream of questions that may be most important to meet the set objectives, participants' background and their expectations. The facilitator can refer to the cues given as bullet points to steer the discussion constructively).*
- ⦿ Much of the learning on topics such as this will take place in the safe and secure space of people's minds, and some participants may not be comfortable opening up during discussions. Assure them of the privacy and confidentiality of the proceedings of the session. You can offer literate audiences or training participants some time to write notes/put down their observations if they want to. This is an important step to help them analyse their attitudes. If it is a community meeting, then questions about the cultural context and social norms can help to drive the analysis of the problem and community's attitudes towards girls.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

On the film

- I. **How did you feel while watching this film? Does it have any resonance with real life? If so, what?**
- II. **What do you think of the action and stance which Jasbeer or Vaijanti took? If you knew someone close to you in a similar situation would you have thought or recommended the same? Why/ Why not?**
- III. **What sort of challenges confronted Jasbeer or Vaijanti when they decided to walk out of the relationship?**

Facilitator's Notes

Some of the challenges could be

- ⦿ Social and family pressure – stigma and discrimination of having a failed marriage; safety and security issues of being a single mother; pressure to go back and adjust due to family honour; marriage potential of other siblings.
- ⦿ Struggle to be independent (financially, emotionally, and physically).
- ⦿ Lack of support and alternatives of shelter, job; monetary and emotional support not easily available.
- ⦿ Even while claiming their right to work, and custody of the children, some of the rights that Vaijanti or Jasbeer may still find difficult to access would be the right to maintenance; property and compensation.

IV. What helped Vaijanti and Jasbeer give birth and raise their girls? What are the options that women like Vaijanti have once they leave their marital homes?

Facilitator's Notes

- ◉ Women often feel they are responsible for failure – whether it is marriage or the fact that they do not bear sons or are not in a position to look after their families. This leads to a dilemma where they may learn to justify sex selection for the larger good of the family or to live up to family expectations – sometimes articulated, usually silent.
- ◉ The first step may often need to come from the woman herself; in the film too Jasbeer and Vaijanti took the initiative to stand up against the pressure being imposed upon them to opt for gender-biased sex selection.
- ◉ The family and community members can play a vital role in supporting women facing these kinds of pressures and dilemmas. For Vaijanti and Jasbeer too, their natal families or colleagues (and later the whole village itself in case of Jasbeer), offered support to enable them to lead a normal life.
- ◉ You can also support women like Vaijanti by staying connected, speaking out against the abuse and assisting her when she reaches out for help. Even small actions of support and connecting her with the right service providers can play a vital role in the woman's eventual decision to change her situation.

V. What (according to you) is the relevance/need for women from varied backgrounds to meet and discuss the issue of gender-biased sex selection as shown in the film?

Facilitator's Notes

- ◉ Gender-biased sex selection is an issue which cuts across all boundaries and is prevalent irrespective of caste, class or educational background and location.
- ◉ Women who are better educated, who are financially independent and have the support of their own families are more likely to make the choice to say no to sex selection. Yet, social pressure and traditional expectations from women to give birth to sons still makes it a very difficult choice, even for these women.
- ◉ Women without social or economic support find it doubly difficult to take a stand on this issue.
- ◉ Getting women from different backgrounds to share their perspective is a powerful way of sharing how everyone is capable of challenging norms and stereotypes in their own way. Gender-biased sex selection is not a personal choice or private matter; it has far reaching social implications. Therefore discussions around it must be encouraged promoted.

VI. What can be done to ensure equal opportunities for women and men?

Facilitator's Notes

Equality between men and women can truly exist only when families and communities provide both men and women with equal opportunities to:

- ◉ Education;
- ◉ Financial independence through work or through setting up businesses;
- ◉ Space to make choices and take decisions regarding education, marriage, sexuality, buying property, and political participation.



A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances so that women and girls are able to exercise autonomy in their lives.

On Sex Selection and Declining Child Sex Ratio

VII. What pressures can society (cultural/ traditional/religious/economic) exert on a woman to directly or indirectly compel her opt to for gender-biased sex selection? How justified are these apparent reasons for sex selection?

Facilitator's Notes

- ⦿ Gender based discrimination including gender-biased sex selection has its roots in many historical, social, political, economic, legal and cultural practices which led to the subordination of women and exclusion of their voices and rights. Women generally face deep-rooted prejudices throughout their lives.
- ⦿ India is a male dominated society and the family structure also follows these notions of male superiority. For example, property rights are passed down from father to son. A son is expected to care for his parents in their old age, carry on the family name and caste, and to bring in dowry when he marries. The need to give dowry for girls, and the ability to demand dowry for boys exerts considerable economic pressure on families who may use any means to avoid having girls, who are seen as liabilities, as they are seen not in a position to support the family or provide support in old age.
- ⦿ No reason justifies the practice of gender-biased sex selection. Sex selection is not a solution to dowry – the system of dowry will continue as long as people look upon daughters as a liability. What is important is to address the root cause for the subordinate status of women in society. The factors that lead to women being perceived as an economic liability can be changed with investment in their education and skills. Women and girls can be as independent as men and boys if given opportunity and support by their families.

VIII. Do you think gender-biased sex selection, violence and discriminatory practices against women and girls exist across all classes, castes, religion, region, location and varied education levels? Please explain.

Facilitator's Notes

- ⦿ Facilitators should highlight that there are certain misconceptions about gender-biased sex selection, such as the idea that only poor or illiterate women are forced to go for sex selection and that women who are professionally qualified do not suffer from this pressure. The reality is that sex selection can be seen across all classes and backgrounds as social pressures and traditional expectations from women remain the same across different sections of the society.
- ⦿ Worryingly, the trend is far stronger in urban rather than rural areas, and among the educated and the affluent. However, data from Census 2011 points to an intensification of the practice of sex selection and gender discrimination in rural and tribal areas as well. Such trends expose the myth that growing affluence and the spread of basic education alone will result in the erosion of gender discrimination. In India, education and wealth has not changed the attitude towards women, as sex selection is the highest among the urban educated and affluent class. As per the Sample Registration System (2008-2010), the sex ratio at birth in some of the most prosperous states – Punjab (832), Haryana (848), Rajasthan (877) and Delhi (884) – is deeply worrying.

IX. How is medical technology being misused?

Facilitator's Notes

- ⦿ The misuse of medical technology such as ultrasound has contributed to gender discrimination by promoting illegal sex selection. Studies have shown that the availability of technology is correlated to the practice of sex selection. A study by Gokhale Institute, Pune³ links the density of ultrasound machines in a particular area with the fall in child sex ratio in that area over time.

X. What is the impact of gender-biased sex selection on women?

Facilitator's Notes

- ⦿ An imbalance in child sex ratio is likely to have multiple consequences for the family, community and society. Most importantly, it will violate the rights of women and girls. Such consequences are already visible in areas facing a shortage of girls. In several districts of Punjab and Haryana, brides are being 'bought'. However, the lack of girls for marriage is not the only reason to take action against sex selection. Over time, this practice will violate the rights of girls as a community, increase violence against them, and may potentially lead to restrictions on their mobility. Fundamentally, sex selection is about discrimination and there is a definite need to fight such discrimination in the pursuit of gender equality.

On the law

XI. What does the law have to say on sex determination? What are the provisions under the PCPNDT Act?

Facilitator's Notes

- ⦿ The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act regulates sex selection, before or after conception. The law was first enacted in 1994 and amended in 2003. Its purpose is to prevent the misuse of technology such as ultrasound that enables the identification of the foetal sex. Acting on son preference through the misuse of medical technology is a clear violation of the PCPNDT Act.
- ⦿ Anyone who contravenes the provisions of this Act is punishable with imprisonment, which may extend to three years and a fine of up to Rs. 10,000 and on any subsequent conviction, with imprisonment which may extend to five years and with fine which may extend to Rs. 50,000. The facilitator is encouraged to read and understand the key points of the Act prior to the discussion.
- ⦿ The legislation for the prevention of sex determination needs strict implementation, alongside the launching of programmes aimed at altering discriminatory attitudes towards girls.

XII. Do you think you have the right to complain if an incident of gender-biased sex determination comes to your notice, and to whom?

Facilitator's Notes

- ⦿ You have every right to complain if you come across cases of illegal sex determination. As a complainant you can approach the designated Appropriate Authority of the state or district. The Appropriate Authority at the state level is usually the Director, Department of Health and Family Welfare. At the district level you can lodge a complaint with the Appropriate Authority, i.e. the District Collector or District Magistrate and also with the Civil Surgeon or the Chief Medical Officer of the Civil Hospital of the given district.
- ⦿ Violating the provisions of the Act can lead to a fine of Rs 10,000 and up to three years imprisonment for a first offence, with greater fines and longer terms of imprisonment for repeat offenders. Asking and



communicating the sex of the foetus verbally or in any other way, as well as advertising for sex determination or assurance of sons is illegal. The Appropriate Authority directs the Central or State Medical Council to take action against the medical professionals engaged in sex selection, leading to the suspension of the licenses of practitioners found guilty of contravening the provisions of the Act ⁴.

XIII. When is abortion legal?

Facilitator's Notes

- ⦿ In India, abortion is legal under circumstances as defined by the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971. These reasons are, for example, danger to the mother's life, foetal abnormality, and rape or contraceptive failure. However, the law does not permit abortion for the reasons of gender-biased sex selection. It is important to recognise this fact and not consider abortion per se as illegal. A woman needs to have rightful access to safe and legal abortion services as per the MTP Act.
- ⦿ From the perspective of gender equality, sex selection is a reflection of discrimination against girls and subordination of women as a group. It is equally important to remember that not providing women access to safe abortion services for legally valid reasons further increases their subordination. Access to safe and legal abortion is also necessary to prevent maternal mortality and morbidity.

XIV. Does a mother have the right to choose the sex of her future child?

Facilitator's Notes

- ⦿ Fear of violence and desertion, and also the desire to establish one's value in the family may mean that women often feel pressured to have sons and therefore opt for gender-biased sex selection. This can hardly be considered the mother's choice. In fact, there are many women who have refused to opt for sex determination, even though this might mean desertion, rejection or violence by the family.
- ⦿ In 2005, a couple appealed to the Mumbai High Court to allow sex selection as a matter of the constitutional right to life and personal liberty. The High Court ruled that the right to bring into existence a life in the future with a choice to determine the sex of that life cannot itself be a right. The case was dismissed with the court upholding the view that sex selection cannot be treated as a matter of right and choice as it promotes discrimination. The court also confirmed that right to personal liberty cannot be expanded to determine the sex of the child which may come into existence in the future.

XV. What can each one of us do to address gender biased sex selection?

Refer to suggested action points given in Annexure 1.

PART D: EVALUATION

Measuring the Impact

After the film screening and discussions, it is recommended that an impact evaluation be carried out. This evaluation is also intended to provide some closure to the community members in terms of what they are taking back from the discussion. The facilitator should highlight the fact that feedback is an important part of the session to assess the key learning of the participants and to improve/strengthen the inputs provided in the course of the sessions.

⁴ For additional information on the law, please refer to 'Handbook on Pre-conception & Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994 and Rules with Amendments' and 'Answers to Frequently Asked Questions – A Handbook for Medical Professionals, Implementing Bodies and the Public', available on the UNFPA India website: <http://india.unfpa.org/>

Evaluation is useful for several reasons:

- To give facilitators instant feedback, both positive and critical, to improve the present and future sessions;
- To demonstrate that the participants' views are valued; and
- It gives a chance to look at what the participants have learnt or unlearned; what they have perceived and whether they have understood themselves or the issue better, what they feel about the issues that were raised in the film, what they would do about them and the possible changes they see in their sphere of influence.

Share that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to the questions and that their feedback should be on the basis of their experience and learning from the session.

The facilitator elicits responses from some of the participants on the film and post-screening discussion. She/he thanks all the participants for their inputs. Finally she/he summarises some of the positive learning from the day and encapsulates key action points for an individual or a community to prevent gender-biased sex selection.

Feedback session for audiences who are not literate

(These questions may be used for taking feedback from the community as well)

The evaluation can be conducted as a group discussion and/or the participants can be invited to narrate their experiences. Some of the key questions that would help capture the impact include:

- What are the images, characters, scenes, dialogues, and statements that struck you most in the film and why?
- What did you like or find useful about the film?
- Did you identify with any character or issue in the film?
- If you were in Vaijanti's or Jasbeer's position, what would you have done?
- What can your group or community do to help women like Vaijanti?
- Have there been any real life observations /incidents involving you, your family, your friends and your neighbours, which you are able to see in a different light after today's discussion?
- Name some ways in which you can help reduce discrimination against girls.
- Describe some ways through which you might change yourself, your attitude, behaviour and relationships based on your experience of the film and the discussion.

Linking issues: The facilitator can develop additional questions depending on the issues highlighted during the community meeting.

Feedback session for literate audience

(These questions should be used for taking feedback from the participants who attended the session in training workshops where the film was screened as one of the sessions)

1. What was your key learning from the film?
2. Did you draw parallels between the film and any event in your surroundings? If so, please elaborate.
3. If you were in Vaijanti's or Jasbeer's position, what would you have done?
4. How can you use legal provisions within the PCPNDT Act to prevent sex determination?
5. What are the ways in which you, individually and collectively, can discourage people from going for sex determination and help women like Vaijanti?
6. Other comments.

PART E: ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE I: ACT NOW TO PREVENT GENDER-BIASED SEX SELECTION

At a personal level

- ⦿ Talk to your family and people in your locality about the issue of gender-biased sex selection.
- ⦿ Be socially responsible, make others aware and spread the message about the illegality of the practice of sex determination and the implications of such a practice.
- ⦿ Take a pledge to fight gender-biased sex selection and engage with community members as a part of this process.
- ⦿ Raise your voice against the misuse of medical technology.
- ⦿ Fight to stop discrimination against women and girls, be it dowry, domestic violence or lack of equal opportunity within an environment.
- ⦿ Create an enabling environment for promoting the value and dignity of women and girls.

At a community level

- ⦿ Conduct a survey/poll to analyse the status of girls in your community and the different roles community members can play to help make things better.
- ⦿ Invite an expert/activist to address your community on the issue.
- ⦿ Run an 'awareness campaign' against practices such as dowry, and ensure strict implementation of the PCPNDT Act. Use posters, the Internet, community radio, wall paintings, notice boards, films, local magazines, newspapers and cable television to spread the message.
- ⦿ Ensure that messaging is appropriate and does not inadvertently miscommunicate about the legality of abortion through visuals or written material. Consistently, use the terminology of sex selection or gender-biased sex selection (*Ling Jaanch, Ling Chayan or Ling Nirdharan*) and emphasize the discrimination behind this practice. Avoid terms such as female foeticide, *Bhrun Hatya* and similar other terms that miscommunicate about abortion and its legality.
- ⦿ Ensure that no member of the medical profession in your community is encouraging and/or abetting illegal sex determination.
- ⦿ Distribute materials, handouts and pamphlets on the issue.
- ⦿ Create an award to celebrate the achievements of someone who has been a champion of women's rights and especially, recognise the achievement of the girls of your community.
- ⦿ Take a collective pledge to not opt for gender-biased sex selection or take dowry.
- ⦿ Host celebrations on the birth of girls, encourage panchayats to ensure birth registration, display birth data for girls and boys and better enrolment and retention of girls in schools.
- ⦿ Make efforts to address violence against women. Inculcate the value that the safety and security of girls and women is a shared responsibility of all members of the community.
- ⦿ Encourage community debates on practices such as last rites, daughters as *paraya dhan* and support in old age and equal inheritance and property rights for daughters and women in general.



At an organisational level

- ⦿ Be the connecting link between the community and the government. Disseminate information about the schemes available for girls and the sources from where these can be accessed.
- ⦿ Create an understanding of the sex ratio at birth and the use of birth data to track trends indicating the practice of gender-biased sex selection.
- ⦿ Encourage advocates of the issue to use birth registration data from the civil registration system available at the district level.
- ⦿ Raise the issue in the media, highlighting the scale and seriousness of the practice of gender-biased sex selection. Sensitise the media on the nuances surrounding the issue and the use of right terminology to talk about the issue
- ⦿ Advocate for a strong ethical code of conduct among medical professionals in your area, and undertake awareness/orientation programmes for undergraduate medical students.
- ⦿ If possible, try to be a part of the District Advisory Committee instituted under the PCPNDT Act or else monitor the work of the District Advisory Committee and the Appropriate Authority in the effective implementation of the Act. For instance, keep a watch for any form of advertisements or other violations under the Act pertaining to the registration of clinics or facilities, submission of F forms etc.
- ⦿ Build community pressure so as to generate political will to work on this issue. Do involve the local Member of Parliament/State Legislative Assembly/panchayat in the campaign against gender-biased sex selection.
- ⦿ Conduct awareness programmes/workshops through rallies, interactive game stalls, folk art, film screenings, festivals, fetes, public meetings etc.
- ⦿ Spread public messages against gender-biased sex selection at places like bus stands, railway stations, metro stations, and market places through street theatre, posters and billboards.
- ⦿ Ensure that the visual or written communication on gender-biased sex selection does not inadvertently portray the medical termination of pregnancy as being illegal. Avoid negative language such as *hatya*, murder, sin etc. and the use of 'blood and dagger' imagery.
- ⦿ Engage in dialogue with the medical practitioners as well as with the community at large on the nuances and critical objectives of the MTP and PCPNDT Acts.
- ⦿ Integrate a response to address gender-biased sex selection within the priority areas of the organisation and mainstream the issue in the organisation's work on gender and women's empowerment.
- ⦿ Inculcate a strong ethical code of conduct amongst the staff of the organisation in such a way that they themselves refrain from the malpractice of gender-biased sex selection.

At the panchayat level

- ⦿ Conduct regular assessments of the indicators of the status of girls and women in your area, such as sex disaggregated birth data, literacy, female mortality etc. Display these indicators clearly outside panchayat offices and update them regularly.
- ⦿ Conduct awareness raising activities against discriminatory practices leading to gender-biased sex selection in the Mahila Gram Sabha and other Gram Sabha meetings.
- ⦿ Organise a community celebration on the occasion of the birth of girls in your area.

- ⦿ Put up a hoarding at the entrance of the village and outside the panchayat office with a message to stop gender-biased sex selection.
- ⦿ Promote the effective implementation of schemes meant for the welfare and empowerment of girls , including those for their education and make them accessible to the community.
- ⦿ Dedicate a portion of the panchayat funds for felicitating girls and women who have performed well in life and have challenged gender stereotypes. Use such resources to encourage girls from poor households to attend school.
- ⦿ Provide a safe, secure and violence free environment for women and girls, including safe environment in schools, which in itself will enhance their value and help address the discrimination they face.
- ⦿ Resolve to uphold women’s concerns and address them as central to other development concerns for the panchayat. Place these matters on a priority on the panchayat agenda or as a listed item for all panchayat meetings.
- ⦿ Commit to being a women-friendly panchayat, driven by principles of fairness/impartiality and equality.
- ⦿ Ensure the development of, and access to, good health care services in your locality, especially for women and girls.
- ⦿ Ensure that every birth and marriage is registered (this is important for record keeping which would come handy when accessing the schemes).
- ⦿ Keep a vigil on illegal ultrasound services in your areas, including the use of portable machines.
- ⦿ If you identify a violation under the PCPNDT Act in your area, lodge a complaint with the Appropriate Authority of your district (listed in Annexure 2) with evidence.

Lodge a complaint with the Appropriate Authority

- ⦿ Lodge a complaint with the Appropriate Authority along with necessary evidence, if any doctor, radiologist, laboratory, clinic or any other person is misusing medical technology to practice sex selection or if any of the rules are violated as per the provisions under the PCPNDT Act.
- ⦿ UNFPA collaborated with some of the state governments and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to design and develop an application for a website that allows online reporting of violations of the PCPNDT Act. Once a complaint is lodged, a unique complaint registration number is allotted. Simultaneously, an auto-generated intimation is emailed by the software to the concerned district Appropriate Authority and reports are generated to help senior officials at the state level to monitor the action taken. The complainant may use the electronically generated number to check the status of action taken. States with active reporting websites include:

Rajasthan : <http://www.hamaribeti.nic.in/>

Punjab : <http://sadibeti.org/>

Maharashtra : <http://www.amchimulgi.in/>

Madhya Pradesh : <http://www.hamaribitiya.nic.in/>

Gujarat : <http://www.pcpndtfariyad.com/>

To understand the various provisions under the Act a self-learning online course is available at a dedicated website: <http://www.pcpndtactlearning.in/>

Please remember the following

1. Any place where ultrasonography is done should display the following disclaimer prominently in English and a local language.

'Disclosure of the sex of the foetus is prohibited under law.'

2. Registered centres/clinics/laboratories must display their certificate of registration as well as the message that sex selection is illegal. Registration once given is valid only for five years and renewal is mandatory. The clinic/centre should have a copy of the PCPNDT Act readily available.
3. A declaration form has to be signed by the pregnant woman stating that she is not interested in knowing the sex of the foetus when undergoing non-invasive techniques such as ultrasound scan. The medical practitioner too has to sign a similar declaration.
4. Records like *Form F, forms of consent for invasive procedures (Form G), laboratory results and sonographic plates or slides, patient register and recommendations and letters from the referring doctor* are to be maintained, giving details of each patient visiting the clinic for ultrasound.

If any of the above is missing, it is an offence under the PCPNDT Act.

It is only by a combination of education campaigns, community mobilisation, effective policy measures and implementation of the law that the deep-seated discriminatory attitudes and practices contributing to gender-biased sex selection can be changed.

ANNEXURE II: LIST OF APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES FOR PCPNDT ACT (AS OF OCTOBER 2012)

Sl. No.	State/ UTs	Name, Designation and Postal Address	Contact No.	E-mail ID
1.	Andhra Pradesh	State Appropriate Authority for PNDT and Joint Director of MCH & State EPI Officer, O/o Commissionerate of FW, DM&HS Campus, Sultan Bazar Hyderabad-500 095	040-24606378 2465 0365 2465 3771 2465 2267 (F) 0984990221	jdfw_cfw@yahoo.com cfwhyd@yahoo.com
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	Joint DHS (FW) Directorate of Health Services Government of Arunachal Pradesh Naharlagun – 791 110	0360-2351036 2248129 2244178 (F)	drbasar@hotmail.com md-ar-nrhm@nic.in
3.	Assam	Director (Family Welfare) Directorate of Family Welfare Hengrabari Government of Assam Guwahati – 781 006	0361-2224196 (T/F) 24651063	dirfamassam123@rediffmail.com
4.	Bihar	Joint Director, DHS Dept. of Health/Med. Ed./FW Vikas Bhawan, New Secretariat Government of Bihar Patna – 800 001	0612-22176 2532982 (F)	pndt@statehealthsocietybihar.org
5.	Chhattisgarh	Director of Health Services Secretariat, D. K. Bhawan Government of Chhattisgarh Raipur – 492 001	0771-2234832 (T/F) 2221621 (F)	dhs.cg@nic.in
6.	Gujarat	Deputy Secretary (Family Welfare) & State Appropriate Authority (PCPNDT) Block No. 7, 8th Floor, Sector-10, Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar, Gujarat	079-23251428 9375229149	fp.gujarat2010@gmail.com cohealth@gujarat.gov.in gshah2609@gmail.com
7.	Himachal Pradesh	Director (Family Welfare) Directorate of Health Services Government of Himachal Pradesh B - 6, SDA Complex, Shimla – 171009	0177-2622508 2621424 2620661 (F)	vashiraj@gmail.com
8.	Goa	Principal Secretary (Health) Government of Goa, Secretariat, Porvorim Goa – 403 001	0832-2225976 2225837 2222319 0832-2419407	sfwbgoa@hotmail.com parimalrai@nic.in
9.	Haryana	O/o Director General, Health Services, Haryana, Sector-6 Panchkula	0172-2585505 2584549 2585189 2584549 09876027130	dhs.ddpndt@hry.nic.in dhs.dghs@hry.nic.in

Sl. No.	State/ UTs	Name, Designation and Postal Address	Contact No.	E-mail ID
10.	Jammu & Kashmir	Jammu Division: The Director, Health Services Directorate Health Services, Near MLA Hostel, Jammu Kashmir Division: The Director, Health Services Directorate Health Services, Old Secretariat, Srinagar	0191-2546338 2549632 (F) 0194-2452052	dhsjammu@rediffmail.com mdnrhmjk@gmail.com dirhk2011@gmail.com
11.	Jharkhand	Additional Director, Health Services,GOJ RCH Building, GVI Campus Namkum, Ranchi – 834010	0651-2261000 2261002 09470978262	mdnrhmjharkhand@gmail.com drvidyagupta@gmail.com
12.	Kerala	Director of Health Services Directorate of Health Services Thiruvananthapuram – 695 037	0471-2303025 2304712	addldirfw@gmail.com
13.	Karnataka	Director (Health & FW) Directorate of Health & F W Services Anandarao Circle Bangalore – 560 009 Joint Director (RCH) Directorate of Health & F W Services Anandarao Circle Bangalore– 560 009	080-22201980 9448155009 22201813 (F) 9341239645	ddfwwkar@gmail.com
14.	Maharashtra	Commissioner (FW) & Mission Director NRHM Arogya Bhavan, 3rd floor St. George Hospital Compound P.D'Mello Road Mumbai – 400001	(022) 22620235 919930154999	mdnrhm.mumbai@gmail.com
15.	Madhya Pradesh	Director (Public Health & Family Welfare) Directorate of Health Services Satpura Bhawan, 5th Floor Bhopal – 462 016	0755-2552958 2550193 2552958 (F)	bnchauhan@mp.nic.in kkthassu@mp.nic.in
16.	Meghalaya	Joint Director of Health Services (MCH& FW) Directorate of Health Services Red Hill Compound Shillong – 793001	0364-2228493 (T/F) 2224354 (T)	nongbriarnold13@rediffmail.com
17.	Manipur	Director, (FW) Family Welfare Services BT Road Imphal – 795004	0385-2220973 2441852	arunkumar@gmail.com
18.	Mizoram	Director (FW), Dte. of FW Services Government of Mizoram Aizwal – 796 001	0389-2324719 (TF)	blalramzauva@yahoo.com

Sl. No.	State/ UTs	Name, Designation and Postal Address	Contact No.	E-mail ID
19.	Nagaland	Director (Family Welfare) Directorate of Family Welfare Services Govt. of Nagaland PR Hills, Kohima – 791 001 Addl. Director Health Services Government of Nagaland P R Hills, Kohima – 791 001	0370-2224699 (F) 2222626 2243595 0370-2222626 2241401 2243595 (T) 2224699 (T/F)	saotunni@yahoo.co.in
20	Orissa	Director (Family Welfare) Directorate of Family Welfare Head of the Department Building Government of Orissa Bhubaneshwar – 751 001	0674-2402490 24071129 (F)	pndtorissa@gmail.com
21	Punjab	Director Health Services (FW) Punjab Directorate Health Services, Punjab, Parivar Kalyan Bhawan Sector 34-A Chandigarh	0172-2603611 2609142 (F) 0172-5085184, 5059284 8872090050	ddfwpunjab@gmail.com dhsfwchd@yahoo.com
22.	Rajasthan	Director (FW) Directorate Medical, Health & FW Services Government of Rajasthan Tilak Marg, Jaipur– 302 001,	0141-2228707 (T) 222865 (F)	directorfw-rj@nic.in
23	Sikkim	Additional Director, FW State Appropriate Authority (PNDT) Dept. of Health & Family Welfare Govt. of Sikkim Gangtok – 747101	03592-220345 (T/F)	mdnrhmsikkim@gmail.com
24.	Tamil Nadu	Joint Director of Public Health & Preventive Medicine (Imm) State Appropriate Authority (PNDT) Office of the Director of Public Health & Preventive Medicine Government of Tamil Nadu 359 Anna Salai, Chennai – 600 006	044-24336674 (T/F)	dr.n.raja.d.m.s@gmail.com doc.rajadcw@gmail.com
25.	Tripura	Director (FW & PH) Directorate of FW & PH, Government of Tripura Health Directorate Building 2nd Floor, Pandit Nehru Complex Agartala – 700 006	0381-2226602	shfws_tripura@yahoo.co.in
26.	Uttarakhand	Director General Medical Health & FW Services Directorate of Medical Health & F W Services Government of Uttaranchal Chandra Nagar, Dehradun	0135-2720311 272- 9888897 (F)	adnrhmuk@gmail.com



Sl. No.	State/ UTs	Name, Designation and Postal Address	Contact No.	E-mail ID
27.	Uttar Pradesh	Director General, Family Welfare Directorate of Family Welfare Government of Uttar Pradesh Jagat Narayan Road (Near Silver Jubilee Maternity Hospital) Lucknow – 226001	0522-2256628 (T/F)	jointdirectorfw@gmail.com dgfwup@gmail.com
28.	West Bengal	Director, Health Services Directorate of Health & FW Government of West Bengal CIT Building, 5th Floor P-16, India Exchange Place Extn. Kolkata – 700 073	033-23577904 (F)	sfwo@wbhealth.gov.in ddhs_fp@wbhealth.gov.in
29.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Director of Health Services Directorate of Health Services A & N Administration Andaman and Nicobar Islands Port Blair – 744 104	0312-232723 (T) 233331 (T/F) 23210 (F)	jsrch2010@yahoo.com
30.	Chandigarh	Director, Family Welfare Health Centre, Old Building Sector – 22 Chandigarh Administration Chandigarh – 160 022	0172-2710644 (T/F)	dhs_ut@yahoo.co.in dfwochd@yahoo.co.in
31.	Daman & Diu	Director, Medical & Health Services Directorate of Medical & Health Services, Community Health Centre, Fort Area, Moti Daman-396220	0260-2230470 09978930867	Kysultan64@yahoo.com
32.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	Director (M&HS)/ Mission Director 2nd Floor, Office of the DMHS, VBCH Campus, D&NH, Silvassa - 396230	0260-2642061 09909619521	md-dd-nrh@nic.in cmodnh@gmail.com, nrhmdnh@gmail.com
33.	Lakshadweep	Director of Medical Services Directorate of Medical Services UT of Lakshadweep Kavaratti Island – 682 555 via Head Post Office, Kochi	04896-262316 262819 (F) 262 817 (T)	rchlakshadweep@gmail.com
34.	Delhi	Director of Family Welfare Vikas Bhavan 11 , 7th floor , B wing, Civil Lines New Delhi	011-23813221 9868394872	cmopndt@gmail.com dsmcho@gmail.com
35.	Pondicherry	Director of Health and FW Services Directorate of Family Welfare Services 99 Mission Street Pondicherry – 605 001	0413-2336172 2336192 2332033 2249357	md-pdy-nrh@nic.in dms@pondy.nic.in