LOCATING PRE-NATAL SEX SELECTION IN REALITY
Mapping the Adverse Child Sex Ratio in India
Child Sex Ratio

Calculated as the number of girls per 1000 boys in the 0-6 years age group
## Child Sex Ratio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>903</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Son Preference and Daughter Aversion

General Reasons

• Rooted in culture
  - dowry
  - family name
  - property
  - last rites
  - old-age support
Son Preference and Daughter Aversion

- Reasons for missing girls
  - Small families but not without sons
    According to NFHS-2 survey, in Delhi for an average ideal family size of 2.4, the desired number of sons is 1.2 and daughters 0.9 and 0.3 of either sex.
  - Access to technology

- Who is at the centre of this?
  - the aspiring middle class
  - the urban, the educated and the rich
Son Preference and Daughter Aversion

According to one micro-study conducted in some hospitals of Delhi:

Ratios are balanced when

• Parents have medium levels of education (high school education)
• Women are not only educated but also employed outside home
• When the difference between the incomes of the spouses is marginal
National Action on the Issue

Census:
Results released and problem highlighted (2001)

Law in place:
Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act and its amendment (2002)

Civil society action:
- through a Public Interest Litigation
- a partnership group set up by government
UNFPA Advocacy Role

Phase I: Initial Actions
• Release of the booklet – ‘Missing…’
• Recommendation of ICPD +10 consultations
• NGOs funded for grassroots advocacy

Phase II: Putting the issue on many more tables
• Raise the volume of public discourse
• Deepen the understanding of the issue
  – Targeting the middle class and opinion makers not just policy makers

Also, keep alive the larger debate on gender and rights issues in population and development
Intensified Advocacy

- Civil Society/NGOs
- Celebrities/role models
  (Rabbi)
- Political leaders
- Print Media/HT pace/TV/Radio/BBC
- Popular Culture
  MTV/Tantra
- Young People/Schools
- Faith based organizations
- Corporate partnerships – CII, FICCI

- they are the problem
- they are role models
Complementary programming work

- Sex selection partnership group (national advocacy strategy)
- Capacity-building of law implementers
- Support to NGOs: monitoring clinic records, mobilisation
- Mainstreaming within key government departments and programmes
- Initiating census data de-composition
Setting the Research Agenda

UNFPA brought together NGOs and researchers, scholars, academicians from different streams

Emerging Research Priorities

• Census data decomposition - single ages
• Correlating SRB and socio-economic variables
• Determinants and consequences of the decline
• Socio-economic impact on community at large
• Breaking myths (old-age support, last rites, etc.)
• Perceptions around pre-natal sex selection
• Impact of interventions and implementation of Act
Lessons and Challenges

• Lack of credible evidence and data
  Need systematic research

• No apparent opponent
  Resistance is hidden

• Supporting women
  Dilemma of standing by a woman eliminates her daughter

• Medical community
  Allies and adversaries at the same time

• Separating Abortion and Sex Selection
  How to draw the line?
Lessons and Challenges

• Ownership vs. Purity of Communication
  When many minds work, outcome unlikely to be uniform. Need to ‘let go’

• Positioning is important
  Fear - Guilt vs. Love-Value-Cherish

• Leveraging other’s resources
  Identifying and building synergy with existing initiatives – PSBT, BBC research, Population First

Celebrate her life
Where are we now?

• Issue on the table, part of public discourse
• Entry-point to other gender and rights issue
• Now move from Advocacy to Enabling Action
  - continued advocacy,
  - implementation of the Act
  - social mobilisation and behaviour change
• Have set a research agenda for a strong evidence base
The Road Ahead

• Implementation of the Act
  Uninterrupted goes the supply - Medical community remains the most challenging target segment
• Mainstreaming in government thinking
  Conceptualisation and programming
• Behaviour change remains fundamental
  Awareness, social mobilisation and grassroots action

Preserving ‘mindspace’ through continued advocacy
Research for generating evidence

patience, courage and persistence
The Journey Continues…