



# DISAPPEARING DAUGHTERS

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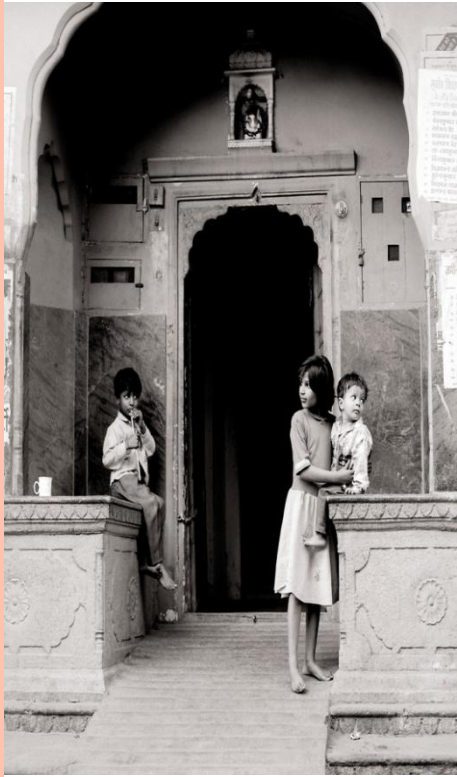


- South Asia has historically known to be a region where men outnumber women quite in contrast with most of the nations elsewhere.
- Certain pockets and certain caste groups were notorious in terms of containing the number of their daughters.
- Within the general north-south divide, the north-western India and the Rajput clans are cases in point.
- Authors have attributed the lower sex ratios to undervalue of women which has an eventual bearing on child sex ratios.



- Several hypotheses have been put forward for under-evaluation for women.
- The much talked about is by Miller who talks about the ‘work-worth’ association.
- If women are in economically gainful work, their status within the family goes up.
- Accordingly, it is argued that in wet-rice cultivation women are relatively more valued because of their participation in agricultural work as compared to wheat region.
- This proposition is not universally applicable in the India context as there are aberration to this general rule.





It is commonsensical to suggest that poverty would push women to economically gainful activities and consequently their worth.

And yet, this association is not straightforward.

Punjab and Haryana – the affluent states share with Bihar, which is at the bottom of economic prosperity, low workforce participation rates.

- In Maharashtra, women from ‘richer’ expenditure cohort have higher workforce participation rates as compared to the ‘poorest of poor’ in Bihar.
- In the absence of hypothesized inter-linkages, one can look at the potential effects of economic development on gender disparities as suggested by Amartya Sen.

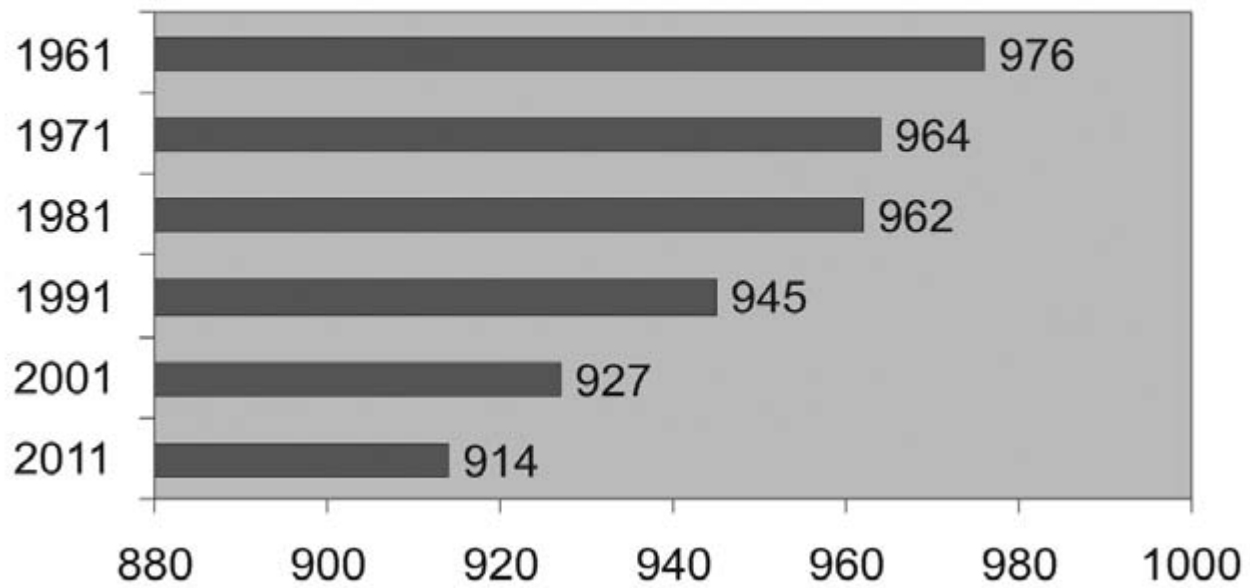


Following demographic 'explanations' were there in the initial stages:

- a) Selective undercount of girls, particularly in several parts of India;
- b) Fewer abortions and retention of male foetuses with improved reproductive health-care;
- c) Sex differentials in child mortality rates.



**Fig 1. Worsening child sex ratio (0-6)  
1961-2011**



- However, the recent decades have witnessed the CSRs becoming too skewed in favour of boys to be explained by any of the factors discussed so far.
- Moreover, low child sex ratios are no longer confined to a few pockets or communities.
- After initial denial and claims and counterclaims, the widespread awareness about the availability of and access to the pre-birth 'sex-determination technology' is seen as a major contributing factor.
- This have an unbalancing impact on the sex ratios at birth (SRB) which eventually reflect in CSRs.



## SEX RATIO AT BIRTH. . .

- SRB is conventionally expressed as number of male births per 100 female births; the birth of 105 boys to 100 girls is generally accepted as normal.
- Data and indirect estimates from Census, SRS and National Family Health Surveys differ on SRB.
- However, there is a general consensus that the in India SRB has progressively become more masculine in the early 1990s, declined somewhat and risen again after 2000.







- It was post 1991 -2001 skew that could no longer be disputed when the practice of 'female foeticide' or 'sex selective abortion', became a public issue.
- It is also from the 1990s onwards that child sex ratios and SRB started to grab more and more attention, distinct from overall sex ratios.
- Children ever born for relatively young women, say in the age group 20-29, would be recent births and the ratio based on these would give a reasonable picture of the recent SRB



### Estimates of SRB, India, 1981-2005

Years	SRS Estimate	Source and year	Estimate	
1982-84	109.8	<i>Based on:</i>  <i>children ever born to women(20-29)</i>		
1983-85	110.4			
1984-86	109.5			
1985-87	109.6		Census 1981	107.3
1986-88	109.8		Census 1991	107.4
1987-89	109.9		Census 2001	106.5
1988-90	109.8			
1989-91	110.3		<i>births last year</i>	
1990-92	111.1		Census 2001	110.4
1991-93	111.9			
1992-94	113.0		<i>births during the years preceding</i>	
1993-95	113.8			
1994-96	113.3		NFHS-1: 1992-93	105.2
1995-97	112.2		NFHS-2: 1998-99	107.0
1996-98	111.0			
1997-99		<i>births during</i>		
1998-2000	111.4	2007 SFMS 1998	111.2	
1999-2001	111.9			
2000-02	112.1			
2001-03	113.3			
2002-04	113.4			
2003-05	113.6			

Sources: P. M. Kulkarni



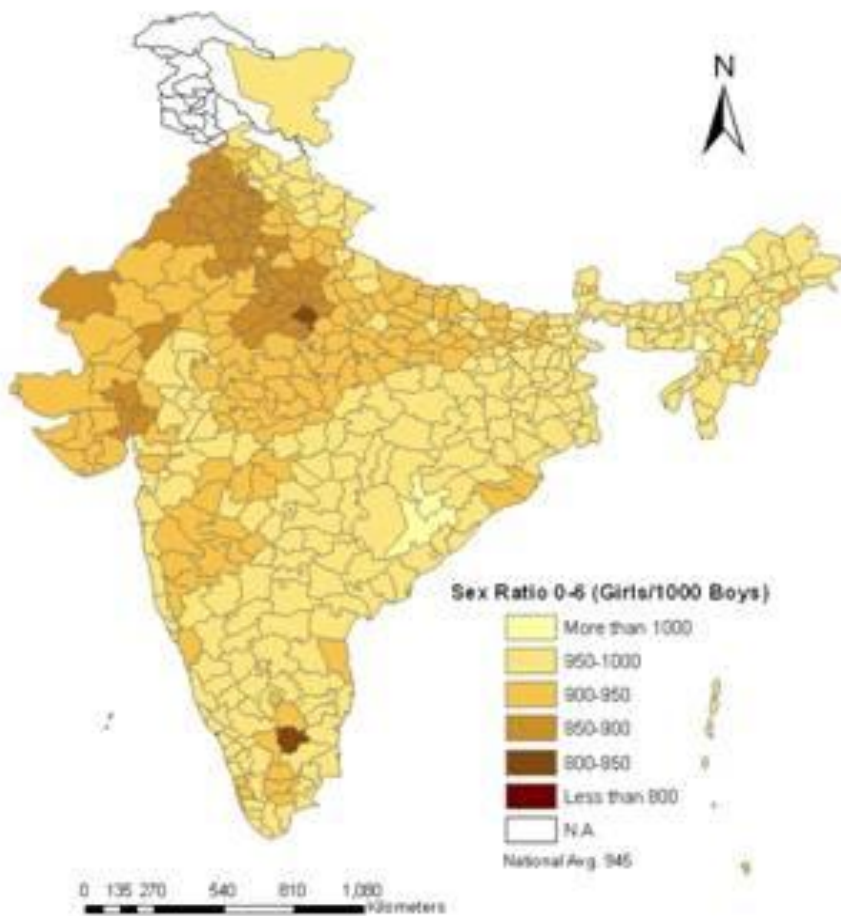
- In India, the ratio has risen considerably in the recent past. As per the data in the (SRS), SRB in the 1980s were generally close to 110.
- As of three years SRS average for 2005-2007, the SRB at the national level was 111 boys to 100 girls.
- The average conceals a large regional variation.
- For the same reference years, the SRB varies from 104.4 in Kerala to 119.5 in Punjab.



- In general, the north-western part of India always had higher SRBs as compared to other parts of India.
- Rising SRBs are relatively more recent phenomena in Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir.
- Although southern states are relatively better off, it can be seen that the north-south differentials are being rapidly obliterated

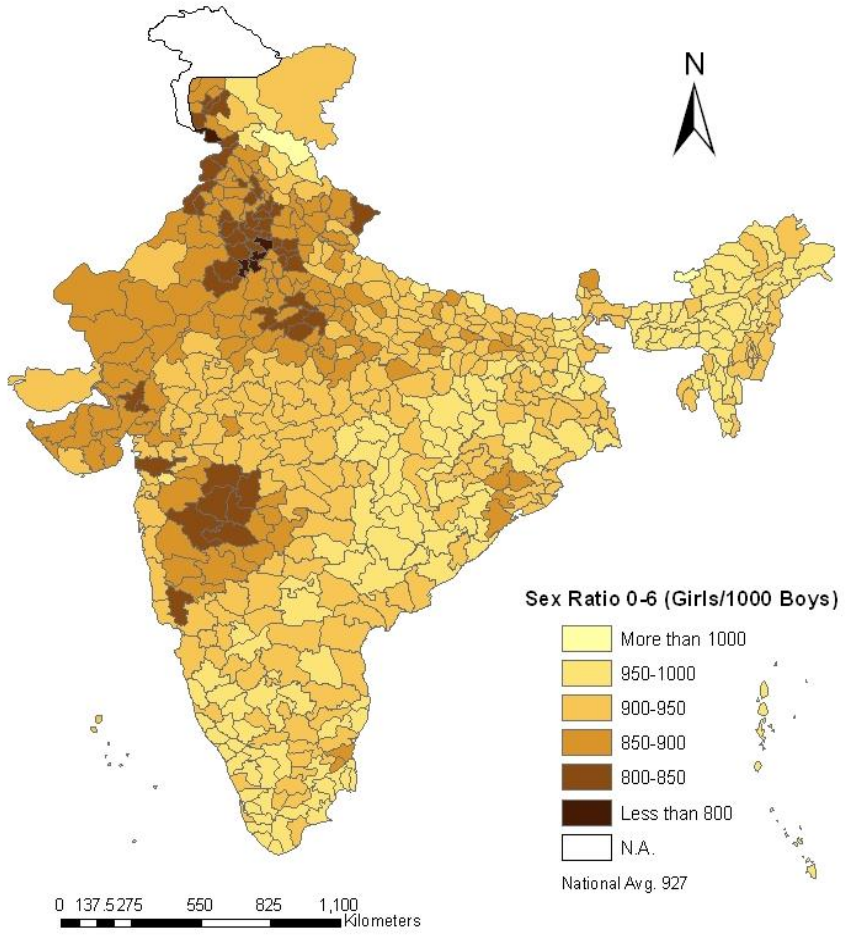


### DISTRICTWISE SEX RATIO (0-6 YEARS) 1991



Source: Census of India, 1991.

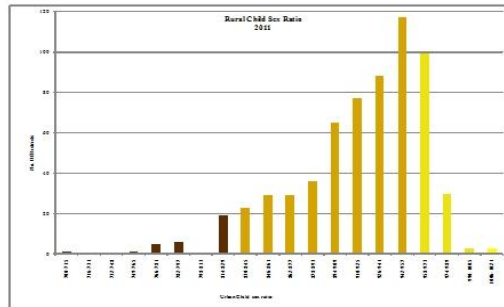
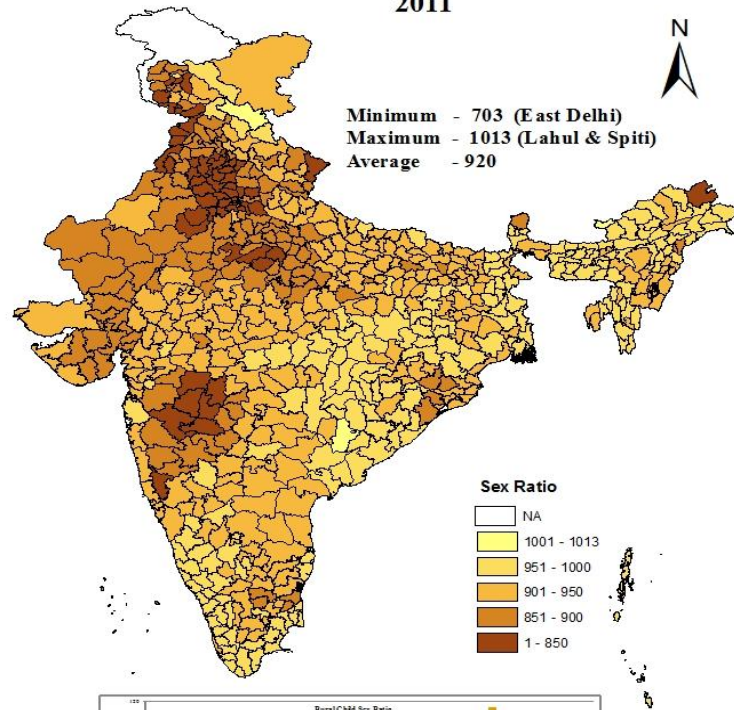
### DISTRICTWISE SEX RATIO (0-6 YEARS) 2001



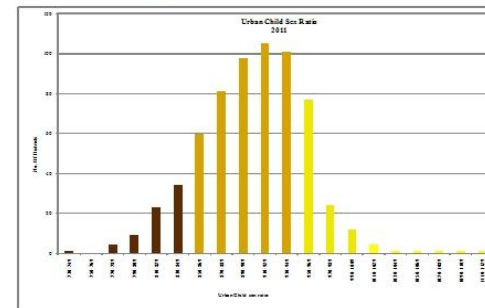
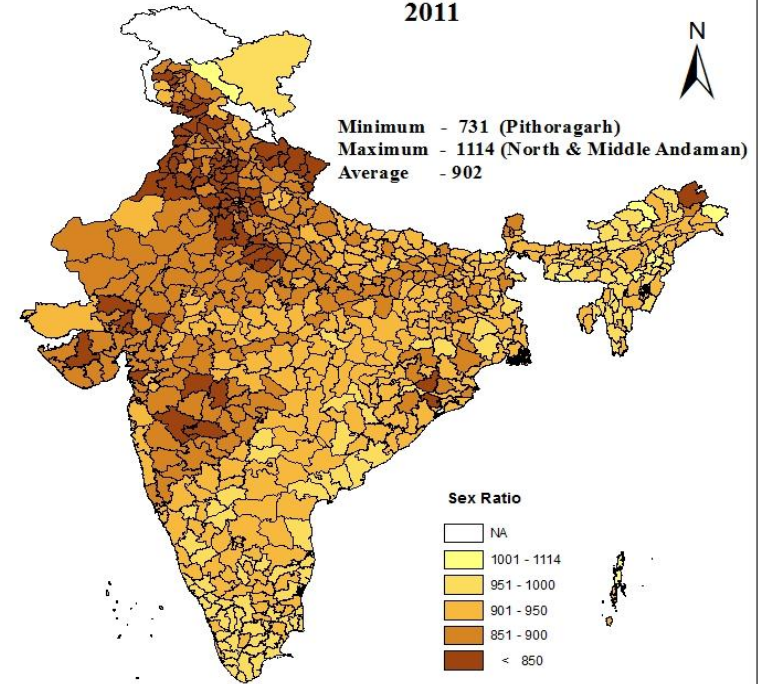
Source: Census of India, 2001.

# CHILD SEX RATIO (0-6 YEARS) 2011

**Rural Children Under Six:**  
How many girls for every 1,000 boys?  
2011



**Urban Children Under Six:**  
How many girls for every 1,000 boys?  
2011



## 850 BOTH IN 2001 AND 2011

- South and West Delhi -
- Mahesana, Gandhinagar (**Gujarat**)
- Ambala, Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Karnal, Panipat, Sonipat, Jind, Fatehabad, Hisar, Bhiwani, Rohtak, Jhajjar, Mahendragarh, Rewari (**Haryana**)
- Jammu, Kathua (**Jammu & Kashmir**)
- Morena, Bhind (**Madhya Pradesh**)
- Kolhapur (**Maharashtra**)
- Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Fatehgarh Sahib, Firozpur, Muktsar, Mansa, Sangrur, Patiala (**Punjab**)

**More Than 850 in 2001 Less Than 850 in 2011 (worsening)**

Jalgaon, Aurangabad, Buldana, Jalna, Bid Ahmadnagar  
(**Maharashtra**),

# FROM THE FIELD

## Collaborative research

- Five states: Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan Haryana to determine patterns and trends in CSRs :
- urban and rural sites
- Census 1991, 2001 for selection of survey sites
- Survey data 0-6 and 0-14 age groups
- By significant groups
  - Standard of living (using NFHS method)
  - Castes
- Birth Order
- Composition of families





# FROM THE FIELD

## Development: Comparative Demographic Indicators

	M.P.	Rajasth	H.P.	Haryan	Punjab
0–6 SR (Census 2001)	933	909	897	820	793
SRB Census 2001	106.2	108.9	108.9	115.7	117.5
SRS 1998–2000	110.3	114.0	110.9	125.5	126.3
Female literacy	50.28	44.34	68.08	56.31	63.55
Total fertility rate	3.31	3.78	2.14	2.88	2.21
IMR & Diff. Boy–Girl (India 4.0)	> India 9.0	> India 2.0	< India 11.0	< India –13.0	< India –16.0
MMR (SRS 2000)	498	670	–	103	199
Life Expectancy	57.2	62.0	66.8	65.8	69.8
Age at Marriage	18.0	18.3	22.1	19.8	22.1



## Development: Comparative Economic Indicators

	M.P.	Rajast	H.P.	Haryan	Punjab
Primary GER	102.94	83.81	80.83	82.98	81.71
Urbanisation	26.67	23.38	9.79	29.00	33.95
Income	14,011	14,748	24,903	29,963	27,851
Poverty	37.43	15.28	7.63	8.74	6.16
Male Workforce	51.5	50	54.6	50.3	53.6
Female Workforce	33.2	33.5	43.7	27.2	19.1
Primary sector	68.75	64.11	58.85	50.74	45.13



- Variations within sites and across time complex, but a few broad trends:
- In almost all sites, surveyed sex ratios (2003, 2005) worse than Census 2001 – the referent point then.
- High, medium and low site differences largely reduced; no “good” CSRs left.
- Comparison of (0-6) and (0-14) age groups: 0-6 worse in Himachal, Haryana and slightly better in Punjab. In M. P. and Rajasthan 0-14 also bad, long tradition.
- Caste specificities closing, i. e., scheduled Castes in Himachal and Haryana had the worst sex ratios;



- Knowledge about technology all pervasive although access varies; easier in prosperous states, but by no means absent in the less developed sites.
- In ‘developed’ states, resort to technological intervention early in the fertility history while poorer people do so later or simply cannot afford financially. Neglect then becomes the default option.
- Thus, Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh manage the sex-composition of their children primarily through sex-selective abortions while in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan it is through post-birth neglect of girls.



- Despite acknowledging daughters as more supportive and caring, the societal perception of sons as old-age support persists.
- Daughters perceived as ‘paraya dhan’ – literal translation ‘somebody else's property.’
- Technology cannot be squarely held responsible.
- Social changes are taking place in several parts of India which have access to technology for potential sex-selective abortions.



- And still, there are parts in the country – south, south-eastern and north-eastern - which have better CSRs.
- Clearly, technology operates in consonance with other existing norms and not in contextual isolation independent of socio-culturally entrenched values about the relative worth of girls' vis-à-vis boys, men and women.
- Son-preference and daughter aversion



Family size and composition: are these within  
the familial domain alone!



## WHY: DEVELOPMENTAL DILEMMA

- Higher age at marriage
- Spread of education
- Improved health & medical infrastructure
- Small family norm – sign of modernity ‘*Educated people ensure small families*’
- Agency and Choice paradigm

### On the other hand

- No decline in dowry because of segmented marriage market;
- Girls continue to be looked upon as ‘outgoings’ rather than ‘incomings’ and hence the focus is on not having them at all.
- Protecting the unattached sexuality





- The traditional rituals such as ‘Kanya-daan’ ‘Raksha-bandhan’ – institutionalised ways to ensure girls’ survival disappearing fast.
- Clear shift towards a more conscious use of modern technologies of sex determination and sex selection.
- Even if couples have availed of traditional technologies, in their minds, surety is guaranteed only by the ‘machine’.



## CHOICE AND AGENCY IN DECIDING FAMILY SIZE AND COMPOSITION

- Who decides? Woman, couple, mother-in-law, father-in-law, woman's parents, peer pressure.
- Who pays for sex determination, abortion, where does it take place?
- Who allows death of girl child through neglect – control of familial resources and their distribution?
- Modernity and the rhetoric of choice. Especially medical fraternity emphasizing women's choice – is it her choice?



- The direct and indirect pressure on women to produce male heirs is immense.
- The woman not only feels ashamed of producing girl child, but also loses her worth and regains it only after giving birth to sons.
- If she does not comply, the repercussions can be desertion, bringing a co-wife, physical, mental and emotional ill-treatment.



- The popular allegation that it is women who kill female fetuses and discriminate against girl children and other women.
- Reproduction, in the Indian case is not a sphere of individual decision- making and thus has to be looked at in the context of family and society.
- Agency in reproductive decision-making is also tied to agency in other areas – economic, work, education related.
- And yet the claim has to be legitimized socially.



# CONFLICTING VOICES

- “Today’s women do not have to make guesses. Ultrasound is the biggest of all guesses. You can get the clear report. No need to get involved in anything. Get your ultrasound done and you know what is there”. - a voice from Punjab.
- A voice from Himachal Pradesh- husband – “ we would have gone for abortions till we got a son”.
- On female feticide “Till a child is not born, killing ‘it’ is not a murder. If it is, then everyone is doing it. Now everyone gets a son by abortion only”.



## VOICES. . .

- Guddi had two abortions at Dr. B.Gs. clinic in Dhaulpur. She took her sister-in-law's help. Guddi said “ A mother wants to give birth to each child she conceives, but the circumstances were such that I had to compromise”.
- A Balmiki women's husband (HP) stood by her in giving birth to a female child despite pressure by parents to abort the child.
- The wife of an army man in MP was warned by the husband that a ‘girl should not be born’. (PNDT done at parents' place in Bhind).



- Another respondent from MP was helped once by her brother's wife to undergo a sex selective abortion at her own parent's home and once by her husband's sister in Morena— the husband had insisted on it.
- Many cases where there was contestation – between husband and wife, between couple and in-laws over family size and composition, and instances where the husband wanted to keep the girl child.



## WAYS TO OVERCOME . . .

- Although legal provisions are not the answers, they do provide recourse.
- However, public at large are unaware of most of the legal and institutional provisions that are now available.
- Overall secure environment for women and girls.
- State-support for age-old security.
- Some of the suggested steps are essentially long-term.
- The most immediate response has to be against the nexus between the medical fraternity, health workers and others in the system that makes sex-selective abortion an easy task.





- Although several cases of violations of PNDT Act are routinely reported, implementation is poor and prosecutions are rare.
- Undoubtedly, the complex and multi-layered nature of declining numbers of girls require multi-pronged and context specific responses.
- Non-negotiable social commitment at various levels and concerted efforts in a mission mode to avert this national shame has immediate urgency.

The complete report can be download: [www.cwds.ac.in/](http://www.cwds.ac.in/PlanningFamiliesPlanningGender.pdf)  
***PlanningFamilies Planning Gender.pdf***

