

“SAVE THE GIRL CHILD” - AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY TO CREATE AWARENESS ABOUT THE VALUE OF GIRL CHILD IN Y.S.R. DISTRICT

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Introduction

India has a population of over one billion. India is one of the few countries where there are only 930 women for every 1000 men. Of the 15 million baby girls born each year, 25% don't live past their 15th birthday, number of deaths of young girls exceeds those of young boys by over 300,000 each year, and every 6th infant death is due to gender discrimination. These are just the statistics proving the actual cause. The actual problem is being the social attitude of society towards women. Dehumanization and marginalization of women is a global phenomenon where patriarchal systems are the norm and women just by the very nature of their being are treated inferior to men.

In countries like India, the situation is much worse. May you beget hundred sons is a blessing commonly bestowed on the young couple during the weddings. Some families consider Girls to be LAKSHMI (Indian Goddess of Wealth) but many feel and know that girls are an expensive burden as the parents of the girls in India have to pay a high dowry when their daughter gets married and run into debts rest of their lives. Currently, these social norms are so deeply integrated into the culture of the Indian society it's a herculean task to reverse them. We live in a society where girls are not wanted – at birth they are mourned, as children they are unwanted and as adults they are victimized.

From the modern perception of India in which women now work as engineers and police officers, and are increasingly found in state parliaments and other areas of public life but this clearly doesn't tell the whole story. The majority of Indian society generally places a lower value on girls and women. This leads to, among many issues, high drop-out rates for girls from school, widows seen as a burden, and the abortion of female fetuses.

At root it is a mind-set

Women's empowerment is one of the Millennium Development Goals and is considered a crucial step in reducing poverty, and establishing good governance and sustainable livelihoods. Words and ideas have power, but they need to find expression in practice. Deep rooted attitudes towards women in society is hampering the progress and reaching the millennium goals in spite of endless efforts made by Govt and non Government institutions.

Our goal is not just to address one symptom while neglecting the cause that leads to these symptoms but to eradicate the root cause of this evil by changing societal attitudes towards Girls and Women We work towards a goal where every woman can stand for herself and female children are treasured as much as their male equivalents and where every woman is valued and can hold up her head with dignity. Our goal is to see that the girl child sex ratio increases from 919 girls 1000 boys (2011 census) to 940 / 1000

The Objectives of the Study are:

- To sensitize communities, especially the parents of the girls' children the Importance of educating and empowering the girl children.
- To arrange different awareness activities for proper and effective Implementation of the PNDT ACT.
- To increase accountability of Appropriate Authorities through public pressure, Media advocacy etc.
- To conduct social mobilization activities to save the girl child and educating Society about the child rights and women rights.
- To Increase awareness about the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Act (PNDT), as well as its recent amendment passed by the Parliament that any form of sex selection tests are punishable.
- To sensitize communities, especially the diagnostic center owners on PNDT Act.

Methodology

The present study intends to create awareness about the Girl Child among the public. For this study Y.S.R. District (Kadapa) is selected in Andhra Pradesh. The study is based on secondary data collected from records of District Medical & Health Office, Chief Planning Office and websites.

Criteria used for Selection of the above mentioned district

Y.S.R. District, Andhra Pradesh is one of the drought prone districts of Andhra Pradesh. The recent census data of the district reveals that. There were total 313,455 children under age of 0-6 against 340,663 of 2001 census. Of total 313,455 male and female were 163,371 and 150,084 respectively. Child Sex Ratio as per census 2011 was

919 compared to 951 of census 2001. In 2011, Children under 0-6 formed 10.87 percent of YSR District compared to previous census of India. YSR District population constituted 3.41 percent of Andhra Pradesh population.

The below highlighted issues are taken as a major criteria for proposing the interventions about PC & PNDT Act and generating awareness about value of Girl Child in society.

Description	Year 2011
Actual Population	2,884,524
Male	1,454,136
Female	1,430,388
Population Growth	10.87%
Area Sq.Km	15,359
Density/km ²	188
Proportion to Andhra Pradesh Population	3.41%
Sex Ratio(Per 1000)	984
Child Sex Ratio(0-6 Age)	919
Average Literacy	67.88
Male Literacy	78.41
Female Literacy	57.26
Total Child Population(0-6)	313,455
Male Population (0-6)	163,371
Female Population (0-6 Age)	150,084
Total number of Literates	1,745,178
Male Literates	1,012,105
Female Literates	733,073
Child Proportion (0-6)	10.87%
Boys Proportion (0-6)	11.23%
Girls Proportion (0-6)	10.49%

Measures to be taken to empower

- **Mapping of the scanning Centers:** The activity will be undertaken by the interaction and meeting with Government Department, Community members.
- **Community awareness meetings:** Intensive meeting will be organized in slums as well as urban colonies on girl child empowerment and role of the communities in doing so.
- **Interface Meetings:** The meetings will be organized with Community / religious leaders, and government officials on PNDT Act , education of Girl children and economic independence of women. Meetings will be focused on motivating the leaders in taking up the intervention more effectively.

Awareness:

- i. To run outreach programs in an effort to educate the community by inspirational documentaries in Telugu and Urdu language about the value of the girl child.
- ii. To run a program called Women's Leadership Training. This involves identifying women who have the potential to become change leaders and training them via workshops. These women then spread the knowledge – of their rights and opportunities, as well as skills that they thus acquire in their communities.
- iii. To arrange numerous camps in collaboration with the National Commission of Women's Rights in colleges and villages and areas to spread awareness about the legal rights of women. To conduct various camps to provide information on medical and gynecological issues. More than 100,000 women in all have attended these camps and benefitted from them.

The following diagram shows our approach towards the issue of feticide and infanticide which is the worst form of gender discrimination. All the Acts like PNDT, Anti Dowry, domestic violence and equal rights to property brings awareness to the public regarding the importance of the girl child in our lives.

**Expected Outcome**

By following the above measures it is possible to create awareness in understanding levels of the community about the Girl Child dropouts, abortion of female fetuses and the like and to change the mindset of the public towards girls and women. The following is resulted after having a thorough glance on the above mentioned issues.

- Increase in understanding levels of community, civil society, Medical Professionals about the issue of Female Feticide and PNDT Act.
- Increase in Female Sex Ratio in targeted areas.
- Increased understanding levels of community, Civil Society, Medical Professionals about the social and legal rights of women and children.

References

1. Statistical reports from Chief Planning Office, Kadapa.
2. Records from District Medical & Health Office, Kadapa.
3. Websites.

