When will the Sun Rise for Daughters in India?  
Enabling individual and community action towards preventing sex selection in Ahmedabad city, Gujarat State

Activity Report  
July 2015

Project by

CHETNA
For Women Young people Children
Centre for Health, Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness

Supported by

National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) under Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India
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Acknowledgement

India is home to the largest number of children in the world. Ironically, India is also being a country bearing the burden of being a nation of disappearing daughters with as many as 36 million missing girls!! Discrimination against the girl child starts even before she is born with the shocking practice of sex selective elimination. The decline in Child Sex Ratio (CSR) has been a matter of great concern for women’s rights.

Realising the urgency of the issue, the Government in India has been making serious efforts; the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) launched on January 25, 2015 being the latest and comprehensive scheme, linked with several other government programmes designed for the welfare of the girl child.

CHETNA’s initiative, based on its efforts since 2001 towards curbing the evil practice of gender biased sex selection made a headway when the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW), Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India awarded a project entitled “When will the Sun Rise for Daughters in India? Enabling Individual and Community Action towards Preventing Sex Selection” in Gujarat State. During April 2014-June 2015, CHETNA has been able to reach out to a large number of people across the stakeholders; sensitizing them on the heinous practice of sex selection and the horrendous socio-cultural impact it is creating which is evident in the form of violence against girls and women and motivating them for contributing towards creating enabling environment where girls are valued. However, it would not have been possible without the encouraging guidance and warm support of several individuals and organizations.

We would like to extend our special gratitude and sincere thanks to-

- National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW), Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India for entrusting CHETNA to undertake the crucial intervention towards the issue which is the critical concern for the nation.
- Ms. Anandiben Patel, Hon. Chief Minister of Gujarath state
- Prof. Vasuben Trivedi, Hon. Minister of Women and Child Development, Gujarat
- Ms. Leelaben Ankolia, Chairperson, Women’s Commission, Gujarat
- Mr. Nitin Patel Hon. Minister of Health, Gujarat
- Mr. Kirit Somaiya, Hon. M.P. and MLA of Mumbai, Maharashtra
- Ms. Meenaxiben Patel, Hon. Mayor, Ahmadabad city
- Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Municipal Councillors of Ahmadabad city, especially Mr. Vallabhbhai Kakadiya
- Ms. Anuradha Mall, Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Gujarat
CHETNA

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- Child Rights Collective Gujarat (CRCG), CHETNA integrated the Girl child component in the celebration of Child Rights Week to commemorate completion of 25 years of United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

- Dr. N B. Patel, Head of Department and Principal of C.U.Shah College, Prof. Heena Shukla and Prof. Deepa Dalal, Women’s Development Cell Conveners and Dr. Subhash Pandar, Programme Officer, National Service Scheme (NSS)

- Dr. Arun Gandhi, NSS Coordinator, Gujarat Vidyaapeeth, Dr. Natubhai Verma, NSS-Coordinator, Gujarat University, Mr. Kamalkumar Kar, Youth Officer, NSS, Government of India

- Dr. H.C. Patel, Registrar, Gujarat University, Dr. M.N. Patel, Vice Chancellor, Gujarat University

- Mr. Drupad Joshi, Coordinator, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), Ahmedabad District

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- Corporate sector; Khushi Marketing for organising public awareness event at Himalaya Mall

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Ms. Minaxi Shukla, Additional Director, CHETNA
**Project Title:**

When will the Sun Rise for Daughters in India? Enabling Individual and Community Action towards Preventing Sex Selection in Gujarat State

**Project Period:** April 2014 to March 2015 Extended up to June 30, 2015 due to Swine Flu outbreak in Gujarat during January-March 2015

**Background:**

Declining child sex ratio could have far-reaching adverse social consequences. Evidence from regions with sex ratio imbalance indicate that it contributes to increased violence against women, trafficking, increase in practices such as polyandry, oppressive and limiting gender norms and increase in crimes.

The Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in the age group of 0-6 years has been on rapid decline since 1981 in India, indicating a continued discrimination against the girl child. In 2001 Census, the child sex ratio stood at 927 girls for every 1000 boys in the country, which dropped to 918 girls by 2011.

Gujarat state is among the states having lowest sex ratio. The CSR is 890 as per 2011 census. Sixteen out of 26 districts in Gujarat have CSR below 900, the lowest being Surat (836). The districts with low sex ratio are Mehsana (845), Gandhinagar (847) and Ahmedabad (859). The data suggests that saving the Girl Child issue needs to be addressed as a State emergency in Gujarat.

Looking into the prevalent emergent issue of declining sex ratio in the state of Gujarat, CHETNA with support from the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) under Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India initiated the efforts on addressing the issue of gender-biased sex determination in the Ahmedabad City. The Project aimed on facilitating convergent action towards creating enabling environment where girls are valued, with special focus on mobilizing individual and community action towards preventing sex selection in Ahmedabad city, Gujarat State. The key strategy was evolving approaches for community awareness through active involvement of the local elected leaders; Municipal Counselors, Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Members of Parliament (MP) to take action against the gender biased sex determination.

**Objectives:**

1. To sensitize and mobilize elected members (Members of Parliament, Legislative Assembly, Municipal Corporation) in Ahmedabad city to facilitate community mobilization on the issue of gender biased sex determination and socio-economic and cultural notions affecting the practice
2. To mobilize and enable community, especially youth to take action against sex determination

3. To create an enabling environment for public dialogue and convergent action for reducing gender biased sex determination in Ahmedabad city, Gujarat state

Activities:

Getting girls’ concerns on political agenda
The project began in April 2014. Due to the General elections (Polling was scheduled on April 30, 2014 in Gujarat) and the Code of conduct, it was not possible to approach, meet or interact with the political leaders. CHETNA used this opportunity to review the Manifestos\(^1\) of various parties to assess inclusion of issues concerning children. It was satisfying to note that all the parties have included the issue of sex selection in their manifestos.

Situational analysis
In order to identify the extent, pattern and socio-economic and cultural factors affecting the practice of sex selection, CHETNA reviewed Census and other data, especially of various districts of Gujarat, Ahmedabad district as a whole and Ahmedabad city in particular to find wards/areas with lowest sex ratio. We consulted the Chief District Health Officer (CDHO), Ahmedabad District, Deputy Commissioner, Health of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) and other concerned officials for data on ward-wise live births and selecting the wards for intervention. List of the areas/wards with low sex ratio was prepared in consultation with concerned District officials and Municipal Commissioner/Dy. Commissioner-Health. In addition, a detailed mapping for information and ward wise stakeholders; MLAs/MPs/Counselors was undertaken. This helped in identifying forums; schools, colleges, women/youth groups, business groups (later we approached the Women’s wing of Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industries

Analysis showed that while 2011 Census reported Ahmadabad district child sex ratio in the 0-6 year’s category to be 859 girls against 1000 boys, in Ahmedabad city there are 825 girls per 1000 boys. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation birth and death register revealed a dismal picture. A closer look at the ward-wise breakup of the sex ratio at birth however a stiff dip in sex ratio in several wards of the city. Ahmedabad City, a hub for vibrant industrial, educational activities presents a dismal scenario in caring its daughters. In 2013, sixteen wards of Ahmedabad city\(^2\), had sex ratio at birth below 820, needing special attention looking at the frightening social implications of missing girls.

\(^1\) CHETNA, as a part of its efforts towards promoting rights of children, especially the girl child earlier contributed at state and national level to the development and drafting of demands and charters for children, especially girls’ rights that could be included in to Election manifestos of various political parties.

\(^2\) Female birth per 1000 males: Ward wise live births for 2013, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation
CHETNA

We had one-to-one and focus group meetings with communities in some identified areas; Saijpur, Naroda, Kubernagar, Girdharnagar, Bapunagar etc. having low sex ratio. The discussions and dialogue revealed a grim picture of deep-rooted patriarchy and poor social status of girls and women. Assessment and analysis of socio-cultural issues for low sex ratio, community awareness about health system and accessibility to services for sex selection and elimination of female fetuses showed that the poor status of women and girls is the main reason for gender based violence, which manifests in sex selection leading to skewed sex ratio.

The deep-rooted patriarchal social norms, prevailing views of daughter aversion and sex ratios and gender biased sex selection, the dowry-related link and the general sense of insecurity in light of high prevalence rates of gender-based violence is fueling a significant drop in female births.

The key reasons for undergoing sex determination tests and subsequent abortion were – dowry, safety of daughter, already having one or more daughter/s, or desire only one child in the family; a boy. These pose greater challenges in prevention of the gender-biased sex selection. The incidence of sex determination tests is higher in joint families as compared to nuclear families; however it is the same across the caste groups. Majority of the families, who go for sex selection, go to private clinics to ascertain the sex of the foetus.

Conceptualization, development and dissemination of information, education and communication (IEC) material

The team reviewed the learning resource material developed by CHETNA over the years as well as material available from other sources; the Government of Gujarat. There were several posters, leaflets etc. available with generic messages on the girl child issues, slogans of Beti bachao etc.

Interaction with families having daughters
We conducted a needs assessment for material development. We interacted with various stakeholders including families, ICDS/Health functionaries and youth. We also discussed the issues with the media persons and artists; composer and graphic artist. Based on these, and in order to optimize the value of edutainment, CHETNA conceptualized, designed, developed and disseminated several material using different media; a Garba Booklet, Garba CD, Posters (3 posters addressing Youth, Citizens/leaders and Families), Quickie (Participants dancing on Girl Child Garba and Participants interviews), fact sheets, leaflets, pledge card, kites (with messages of welcoming the “Girl Child”) etc. CHETNA team conducted needs assessment and the social survey to identify families with one/two or more number of daughters, no daughter etc. The posters have the real life pictures of individual, families or groups.

Garba is a popular folk song in Gujarat and sung in praise of goddesses, especially during the Navratri Festival (a public festival when people from all walks of life dance for nine consecutive nights). We composed the girl child garbas with incorporating lyrics on issues concerning girl child; gender biased sex selection, nutrition, health, education and development for public awareness and motivate action. We printed 1000 copies but looking at the demand, we had to reprint the Garba booklet and CDs.

Similarly we developed a set of three posters. The posters are addressed to citizens and civil society, Youth and family members appealing them not to indulge in gender biased sex selection, celebrate the birth of a girl child.

The leaflets highlight the adverse impact the gender imbalance creates and need for providing equal opportunities to daughters for health and development. The copies were provided (50-100 copies each) to the MLAs/counselors for further dissemination by them.

We disseminated the material; 2052 copies of the booklet and 1000 CDs, 1500 sets of posters (Three posters in a set); thus about 4500 posters and 5000 leaflets to different stakeholders to general public and youth, elected members, Government officials and media persons.
We disseminated the marital across various stakeholders!

Poster addressing Youth
“Hu ling parikshan karavish nahi and karva daish nahi” (I will never opt for Sex determination, and would not allow anybody else to do it)

Poster for families and General Public
“Dikari Jaanai eno Garv chhe, Aje amara angane Parv chhe”. (Today we are very proud and is a festival for us all as a daughter is born in our house) we will ensure optimum nutrition, education and make herself reliant.

Poster for Citizens
As enlightened citizens, we will not let any citizen to do gender biased sex determination. We ensure stringent enforcement of PCPNDT Act. – In Gujarat there are 4,53,506 girls missing.

Kite: With the Messages of “Welcoming the “Girl Child”
Garba Booklet: “Welcoming the Girl Child
Garba CD “Welcoming the “Girl Child”

Ms. Mayaben Tripathi
Ahmedabad
Study Action Group

Ms Tanushree Gangopadhyay
Freelance Journalist

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Mobilising political will; sensitization and mobilization of MLAs, MPs and Ahmedabad Municipal Counselors

Elected leaders as peoples' representatives can play a positive role in sensitizing and facilitating community awareness on the issue of gender biased sex determination as they are aware about socio-economic and cultural notions affecting such practices. In view of this fact, CHETNA had discussions and dialogue with newly elected (General elections 2014) MLAs of Ahmedabad City. Please refer Annexure-1 for the list of MLAs

First, we contacted Mr. Ganpat Vasava, Hon. Speaker, Gujarat Assembly, Mr. Pankajbhai, Dandak, Gujarat Assembly to facilitate our meeting with the Members of Parliament (MP) and members of Gujarat State Assembly. We planned to have a dialogue with them during the Assembly session in February 2015 and to orient them on the issue of gender biased sex selection and declining sex ratio so that the momentum created by the national movement of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao launched in January 2015 as well as the ongoing Beti Bachao Abhiyan (Save the Girl Child Campaign) of the Government of Gujarat is continued to achieve positive results towards gender just society. However due to busy schedule, meeting the MLAs and MPs together could not materialize. Following this we had one-to-one meetings with the leaders.
During the meetings we appraised the leaders about the declining sex ratio and the serious consequences it can bring. We discussed about the poor status of girls and women leading to malnutrition especially anaemia, lack of education; life skills, low self esteem and decision making abilities leading to neglect, violence and declining sex ratio; the worst form of violation of her right to survival. Thus the current situation of girls and women throughout the life cycle is serious and need urgent action. We also stated the crucial role they as leaders can play to curb the heinous practice. Emphasizing the need for community awareness on the issue, we mobilized them to support in organising community awareness campaign in their respective constituencies. Orientation and sensitization of MLA/MPs/Counselors about the issue of pre birth sex selection and implications of gender imbalance in the society and proposed intervention. This focused on building perspective, enhancing knowledge/information and communication skills to be able to facilitate interaction, dialogue and awareness activities regarding sex selection in particular and gender disparities and its implications on the lives of women, on families, communities, society and a nation at large.

Regular dialogue with concerned MLAs/MPs to mobilize and assist them to organize community awareness meetings, conventions in their respective constituencies as well as monitor and support the action for integration of sex selection issues in health, education and youth programmes at her/his constituency. Regular dialogue with sensitised MLAs/MPs/Counselors to mobilise and assist them to organise at-least two community awareness meetings and conventions in their respective constituencies

As planned action, we organized community awareness conference “CHALO DIKRINA JANM NE VADHAVIYE” (Let us celebrate the birth of a girl child) on June 5, 2015, the World Environment Day. About 350 Anganwadi workers, helpers, supervisors and mothers participated.

The conference was organized with support from Mr. Vallabhbhai Kakdiya, MLA, Bapunagar and Hardasbapu Patelwadi Organization to create awareness towards the issues concerning girls and women. An exhibition of material on the issue was inaugurated by the MLA and three AMC Counsellors; Mr. Mukesh Parmar, Mr. Mansukh Savalia of Bapunagar and Mr. Gautam Katharia, Counselor, India Colony. The participating women were led by two supervisors in reciting the Garbas from the booklet disseminated by CHETNA. CHETNA representatives facilitated the discussion on the content and meaning of the lyrics linking to the status of girls and women in the society and motivating the participants to take the messages to the community at large. In addition all the participants were provided with the kit containing posters, Garba booklet and CD, Pamphlets on girl child as well as other nutrition and health topics, which they can use in their regular ICDS related education.

Ms. Bijal Bangdiwala provided information on girls and women’s entitlements and Government schemes
Mr. Vallabhbhai Kakadia appreciated the efforts towards the most important social issues and said that reducing the number of girls will lead to very serious and scary social environment and challenged the citizens, especially women to take lead in curbing such social evils. Towards the concluding session, all the participants took the pledge about not indulging in sex selection and discriminatory practices against the girls.

Similarly, with support from the local leaders and ICDS team we organised mothers’ group (Matru mandal) consultation in Girdharnagar on June 10th 2015 to sensitize mothers. About 45 mothers were informed about the adverse social effect of the imbalance created due to elimination of the female foetuses, Pre-Conception Pre Natal Diagnostic Technique (PCPNDT) Act. The consultation proved useful in understanding their thoughts towards this issue, provided platform for sharing their experiences and concerns. They expressed firm desire for protest against sex selection. Discussing about the possible solutions, it was shared that investing in girls’ education and supporting her to become self-reliant is crucial. At the end of consultation all the participants took the pledge about not indulging in sex selection and discriminatory practices against the girls.
Dialogue with Prof. Vasuben Trivedi, Hon. Minister, Women and Child Development, Gujarat

Three meetings with Prof. Vasuben Trivedi, Hon. Minister, Women and Child Development, Government of Gujarat was extremely encouraging and enriching. We appraised her on the current status of the child sex ratio in Ahmedabad city, efforts made by the Ministry of Women and Child Development through the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW). We shared the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material developed by CHETNA under the Valuing the Girl Child Project. We provided the detailed strategy and activities of the project initiated by CHETNA in collaboration with the NMEW and sought her support for the community awareness campaign. She provided some excellent suggestions to increase Youth involvement and ensuring commitment in terms of taking a pledge for not indulging in sex selection. She said that the Girl child Garbas should be included in District and State level Garba Competitions and Youth Festivals.

We shared the Garba Booklet, CD, Posters and other IEC material with Ms. Anandiben Patel, Hon. Chief Minister, Gujarat. She appreciated the material and sent an extremely encouraging letter.

At the City level, we reached out to the Ms. Meenaxi Patel, Hon. Mayor of Ahmedabad City. She provided support in facilitating the meetings with the Standing Committee members of Women and Child Development, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) and other counselors. She appreciated and forwarded the Garba Booklet on Girl child developed by CHETNA.

We had a meeting with Ms. Savitaben H. Shrimali, Women and Child Development and Welfare Committee, and organized a special orientation session with the members of the Standing Committee members of Women and Child Development on the issue of gender biased sex selection and state of girls in Ahmedabad city. We disseminated the ICE material, sang some of the Garbas specially highlighting the nutrition, health, education and development concerns affecting the girls.
We also had discussions with Ms. D. Thara, Municipal Commissioner, Mr. G. Mahapatra, former AMC Commissioner, the Health Officer, AMC and Mr. K.C. Rathod, Secretary AMC Corporations’ Association. Chairpersons of Standing Committees, especially Ms. Savitaben H. Shrimali, Women and Child Development and Welfare Committee, Shri Shanbhubhai R. Batalia, Health and Solid Waste Management Committee, Dr. Jagdishbhai Bhavsar, Municipal School Board Committee, Ms. Kusumben Joshi, Recreational Committee and AMC Counselors. The other AMC Counselors we had meetings with include: Dr. Krishna Thaker, Ms. Kalababen Yadav, Mr. Mukesh Parmar, Mr. Ashvinbhai Pethani, Mr. Gautambhai Kathiriya, Ms. Sadhna Joshi and more for giving them awareness of their area’s condition specially issuing in low Child Sex Ratio and providing them with IEC materials for utilization of their area for further awareness by them.

Over 80 Medical officers of Ahmadabad municipal corporation Health Department were oriented on the issue and their role in curbing the practice and improving the child sex ratio in favour of girls. They expressed their concern over the dismal child sex ratio, which is a clear indication of mindset of the communities represented by the educated, economically well off people. They were of the opinion that it is a clear case of demand and supply; because people are ready to go for sex selection, they find the ways to do it. However it was very important to ensure the effective enforcement of the PCPNDT and other laws that favour girls and women. All shared their experiences and expressed concern for the situation where girls are not brought forward for medical treatment in time of illness. One of medical officers gave suggestion that community sensitization through use of IEC material should be the department’s priority. The group also suggested providing regular training to the Doctors and para-medical staff, technicians. The doctors said that we can counsel the people that son and daughters are equal, we can create more and more female role models for positive image of girls, small family in middle class and upper middle class also responsible for discrimination. Protection of girls is very necessary, last distributed IEC materials and Garba’s book and CD.

Orientation for enhancing involvement of the Government Officials
Government plays a critical role in safeguarding the spaces and promoting the conducive environment where girls and women are able to attain their optimum health and development potential. In this context we had meetings and dialogue with Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) at various levels of officials starting from Hon Minister Prof. Vasuben Trivedi, Ms. Anuradha Mall, Commissioner, DWCD and Principal Secretary; Dr. Dinesh Kapadia, Director, Gender Resource Centre (GRC) and Additional Commissioner In-charge, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Gujarat and the GRC team; Director, ICDS, District Programme Officer, ICDS, CDPOs, Supervisors of Urban ICDS-Ahmedabad. We shared the material with Mr. Nitin Patel, Hon. Minister, Health, Gujarat. We received continued support from AMC Health Department in receiving the data of child birth in Ahmedabad, organizing meetings and orientation trainings with the Urban ICDS staff; Child Development Project Officers, Lady Supervisors, Nutrition Facilitators and Medical Officers from Dr. Bhavin Solanki, Medical Officer, Health, Dr. Amit Begda, Superintendent of Vaccination and Registrar (Birth and Death), Dr. Bharat Bodat, Asst. Health Officer (AP, Malaria and ICDS), Department of Health, Dr. Kinnari Mehta, Family Welfare Officer, AMC. At the orientation trainings, it was discussed that as the programme aims to encourage early registration of pregnancy, ICDS can play a key role in tracing
the pregnant women throughout the pregnancy till the child birth. The Anganwadi worker can counsel the pregnant women and family members about the gender equality and importance of the girl child for the balanced society. We discussed about the current situation of girls and brainstormed ideas for further action for valuing the girl child. The IEC material was disseminated.

As a follow up of the orientation training, we organised meetings with CDPOs, Supervisors and Anganwadi workers as well as community women of areas of Ahmedabad City where the sex ratio is dismal; i.e. Kubernagar, Meghaninagar, Bapunagar and India Colony.

The group discussions focused on understanding the reasons for such discrimination against girls. The discussion revealed that in this area most people hail from feudal states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar where the practice of dowry, early marriage, low level of education among girls are prevalent. Communities view daughters as a liability so they avoid girl child and practise sex determination followed by elimination of the female foetus. Most of them go to Surat and out of Gujarat for the sex determination and abortion. In Ahmedabad city too there are some private hospitals which provide such services. At the end of discussion all the participants took the pledge to not indulging in sex selection and discriminatory practices against the girls.

**Integrating the Girl child component in Orientation Training of District and Block IEC Officers and NGO representatives of Gujarat**

In order to appraise and orient the District and Block level IEC officers about the sex selection and implications of gender discrimination against girls and women, CHETNA team participated in a state level meeting at GMERS-Medical College on November 15, 2014 and disseminated the Garba booklets and CDs to 26 District level Information Education Communication Officers (DIECOs) of RMNCH+A programme. Later the girl child module was integrated in to the RMNCH +A training.
During February-March 2015, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Gujarat CHETNA trained 155 Government and NGO representatives from 19 districts of Gujarat as trainers for planning and executing IEC Campaign based awareness to bring behaviour change through effective communication processes on health of women, children and adolescent girls. The issues concerning gender discrimination and its impact on health and development of women were integrated in the training module that focused on Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A). The participants planned the campaign to address the gender biased sex selection issues in their respective areas.

**Public awareness Campaign**

Various Outreach events and Utsavas – *Celebrating Birth of a daughter during Navratri, kite flying festivals* were organised for public awareness about the gender discrimination and its implication on the lives of girls and women and the society at large with the help of personal interactions, interviews, training sessions, games and folk art-Girl Child Garba. The events were appreciated by all. We shared IEC material including Garba booklets and CDs) for facilitating discussions and discourses on the sex selection issue. We received a very positive response and support from corporate sector; Khushi Marketing in getting space for Public awareness event at Himalaya Mall.

Through these activities we learnt about peoples’ perspective and understanding on the issue, which helped us in firming future strategies. Events for the general public were organized at the places where there was larger accumulation of people; Malls, Party plots, River Front, Schools/colleges, Institutions and on the Road. Folk dances, Rallies, Road shows, exhibitions, debates and elocutions motivated participation from people across the society. During these events we explained people about the current scenario of the Girl Child, with the help of games, personal interaction, posters, leaflets, Kites with messages on welcoming and valuing the girl child etc. Women, men and children danced at the tune of Girl child Garbas. CDs and Booklets were given to those who participated in quiz, personal interaction and Games.

**Dikari na Ovarana-Welcoming and blessing the girl child**
Garba is a popular folk song in Gujarat and sung in praise of goddesses, especially during the Navratri Festival (a public festival when people from all walk of life dance for nine consecutive
nights). We composed the girl child garbas with incorporating lyrics on issues concerning girl child; gender biased sex selection, nutrition, health, education and development for public awareness and motivate action.

To commemorate Navratri festival, CHETNA organized a public awareness programme on October 8, 2014 i.e. on Sharad Poornima, a day towards conclusion of Navratri festival at Himalaya Mall, Ahmedabad. The main objective of the event was to reach out to general public and sensitise them about the issue of gender discrimination and Impact of gender biased sex selection and distorted balance in the Society. The event was facilitated by CHETNA team.

Ms. Kusumber Joshi; Chairperson (Recreational Committee-Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation), Dr. Amar Vyas; Founder-The Young Citizen of India Charitable Trust provided information about the seriousness if the girls are missing at the current rate. About 600 people as well as media persons interacted, participated and contributed in various activities.

CHETNA team initiated the event with the music and lyrics of garba’s (Welcoming songs for the Girl child which is beautifully weaved in the famous folk songs) especially written to “bless and welcome the Girl child” at home. We also played musical chair on the same garba’s song to sensitize the public on the issue of “gender discrimination”; sex determination and pre-birth elimination of female foetus with the use of sonography (A technological boon utilizes to conduct a shameful crime) and also tried to sensitise the public that girls have equal right to avail quality food, education and development opportunities unlike a male child in the families.

We also interviewed few youngsters and families (Parents having one or more daughters) to collate their opinion on the issue of decline in the child sex ratio and gender discrimination prevalent in the society. The interaction focused on: number of girls-boys-the majority of them were not aware about the Child Sex Ratio of Ahmedabad city. But, they were aware of that there is less number of female child as compared to male child.

When asked about gender discrimination against girls, all of them responded: yes, gender discrimination occurs with girls inside and outside family. There are families who don’t allow girls to study and even they are not allowed to use mobile phones.
When asked; do you know there is less number of girls in the society? How we could address this issue? The participants responded: accepted that there is less number of girls in the society due to pre-birth sex determination and elimination of female foetuses, neglect by family for their nutrition and during their illness. With regard to the reasons for such gender discrimination and declining child sex ratio the participants shared that there is strong preference for male child to fulfill social and religious norms and girls at home are treated as burdensome as people believe that daughters are “Parayaa Dhan”. One of the respondents said that the safety of the girl child is itself a huge responsibility for them so they don’t like to have daughter.

Parents who had one or more than two daughters actively participated in the event and came forward to be interviewed by CHETNA representatives to convey their message’s “To value the girl child and their potential to move ahead in every sphere If given chance and opportunities” to Ahmedabad public.

All of them wanted to convey some message to other parents in the city: they said, “Girl child should be given chance to live, survive and grow, pre-birth elimination by parents should be stopped and government should take strict action against whosoever conducts such heinous crime”.

“My brother in-law who is a Doctor by profession was asked by his mother for sex determination when my sister got pregnant few months back; but he remained firm with his whole family and said that I am a Doctor how could I do that? We will accept the child irrespective of gender”. A participant at the Mall

People related their personal lives with the serious prevalent issue and shared that they will try at their own level to stop gender discrimination inside and outside their homes too. We also took the signatures of the participants and gathered public on the three written statements on a chart paper to fight with this issue. The statements were as follows:

1. I/We will stop the practice of gender biased sex selection. It is possible form me/us.
2. I/We will try to stop the practice of gender-biased sex selection.
3. It is not possible for me/us.
Looking at the charts we found that 60% of the participants committed to stop the practice of gender biased sex selection, and expressed their confidence that it is possible for them. Whereas 40% committed that “I/We will try to stop the practice of gender-biased sex selection”. There was no signature on the chart saying “It is not possible for me/us”.

About 600 people from all walks of life; individuals and families; women, men young people and children; home managers, professionals, media as well as the shop keepers participated and expressed keen interest, sought information and data to know about this issue. Many came forward offering their help and expertise in supporting the cause. The programme concluded with people curiously joining in taking a pledge to contribute towards creating conducive environment where daughters are welcomed and valued. During Navratri festival we appealed the folk singers and orchestra to integrate Girl child garbas in their programme.

Folk singers sang Girl child garbas during Navratri

During the public events we observed that some participants were curious to know and understand the issue other came to us just for inquiry. Participants enjoyed dancing on the garba beats, and “Sanedo” was a big hit. Events Orchestra/Singer singing Garba from the CHETNA’s Garba Booklet held in halls and bus terminal had people approaching about the issue, whereas on roads there was walking public which came and went as the traffic lights turned green. On roads it was difficult to make them stand and explain about the issue.

Every right for every child, Girls first!!

CHETNA as a member of various state and national level networks made efforts to promote and integrate the issue of Valuing the girl child in the action and advocacy agenda of these networks. In this regard, as a Core group member of the Child Rights Collective Gujarat (CRCG), CHETNA integrated the Girl child component in the celebration of Child Rights Week to commemorate completion of 25 years of United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. The week-long campaign from November 14-20, 2014 included 18 district level events across 25 districts of Gujarat during which rallies, exhibitions, workshops, focus group discussions with children, parents, teachers and community members were organized at various locations around the state.
CHETNA facilitated planning and organizing the campaign activities for the entire week. The campaign provided an opportunity to bring together several key stakeholders; parents and community leaders, teachers, and children’s groups as well as partner organizations working on issues concerning child rights. For CHETNA this was a perfect opportunity to integrate the concerns affecting the girl child, gender discrimination and declining sex ratio, a worst form of violence against the girl child.
Similarly CHETNA was invited as a resource to interact with disadvantaged children associated with formal and non-formal schools, including schools for children with special abilities at Sabarmati Riverfront to celebrate International Children’s Day on November 14, 2014.

Through a dramatic enactment where all the children, teachers and volunteers joined, the story of a tiny little bird who was bullied by a tiger and how the courage and collective strength of the birds defeated a mighty tiger, children learnt many lessons. They enjoyed the dramatic story-telling method of learning and teachers shared that they will incorporate such learning method in their centers. Later the discussion focused on relating the story with the situation of girls in our society. Mr. Arvind Vegda, Popular folk artist appreciated the novel idea of integrating girl child issues in popular garbas.

All the participants, including Mr. Arvind Vegda, a Popular Pop Folk artist danced on the tune of girl child garbas.

Children Dance on the Girl Child Garba with Dancer Jimmy
Public awareness event at Balvantrai Hall, Kankaria, Ahmedabad

Participants: Children (School going, Non School Going) and NGO’s of Ahmedabad, Street Hawkers, Walking Public, Traffic Police and Media people.

Approach: Participatory (Garba, Games, Personal Interaction and Discussion)
Realizing the potential of youth in addressing social issues, CHETNA focused its intervention with youth through mainstream academic institutions; colleges through Women’s empowerment Cells and National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuka Kendra Sagathan (NYKS).

We initiated the discussion with institutions such as Gujarat Vidhyapith, Gujarat University and some NGOs. We also met the principals of colleges and the college based Coordinators of Women’s Empowerment Cell and NSS to plan the seminars.

On September 12, 2014 CHETNA, in collaboration with the Women Empowerment Cell and National Service Scheme (NSS) organized two youth seminars at C. U. Shah Commerce College and C.U. Shah Science College, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad.

The aim was to create an awareness and sensitivity about the declining sex ratio in the Ahmedabad City and reason behind gender biased sex selection and elimination of female foetus. Total number of students (Including NSS volunteers) who actively participated in this awareness programme was 150 students from Commerce discipline and 144 students from science discipline. Also 12 faculty members including NSS Coordinator from college actively participated in the programme.

Head of Department and Principal of the College Dr. N B. Patel said that “gender discrimination is deep rooted in the society and it begins since the moment a girl child is conceived. Gender equality is necessary and it will be possible only when young population would be sensitised of such type of discrimination and behavior in the society. Prof. Heena Shukla and Prof. Deepa Dalal, Women Development Cell Conveners coordinated the programme at college level.
Ms. Minaxi Shukla, Additional Director – CHETNA and Ms. Sejal Joshi (Trainer on gender awareness and sensitivity) facilitated the session with the youth in an interactive manner and inspired their commitment with a common pledge that they will take action towards preventing the heinous act of sex selection, pre-birth elimination of female foetus and gender discrimination in our society. The dialogue was initiated with inviting everyone to close their eyes and imagine a world without girls, women. The responses were loud and clear that women are the backbone of the society and it is crucial to welcome the birth of daughters and nurture them to ensure that they get the best nutrition, health, education and developmental opportunities throughout life. The facilitators emphasized how girls are missing with every census year since 1961 due to pre-birth sex selection and elimination of female foetus and gender discrimination more specifically by urban educated families as there is a tendency to simply repeat the usual list for son preference in matrilineal and patriarchal societies – as security in old age, for carrying on the family name, for lighting the funeral pyre and so on, compared to an equally generic view of daughters as a burden.

The students expressing their serious concern said that if such practice is continued for long, a time will come where the society will face grave problems, violence, trafficking and crime against women will increase. Other participants responded that if pre-birth sex selection practice is continued then crime rate against women will be high and women’s security on road will be at stake in the society… They felt that change in thinking pattern and mindset is required to create gender equality in family and at society level. The discussion was further carried out on other serious implications if girls continue to disappear.

At the end of the session the faculty members inspired girls to study well and aim high so that they could become economically independent and self reliant to set an example that they could stand firmly against gender discrimination at their own home and at society level too.

*We have to make sure that girls become empowered to confront patriarchy and gender-based discrimination and evolve into human beings capable of making a choice without any fear about the quality of life.*

CHETNA team members concluded the programme with a pledge where the students and faculty members from college vowed that they will not indulge in to any discriminatory practice, including
pre-birth sex selection, gender discrimination, dowry exchange during marriage in their personal lives and they will make efforts to eradicate such heinous practices from their families and society as well.

The session was concluded with inviting the participants to share their preparedness towards concrete action to curb the practice. A large majority (80%) of participants opted for taking action for stopping the practice of gender biased sex selection and said that they will initiate action and extend support in bringing out the solution for the current social issue, where as 20% said that they agree for action and they will try to bring a solution on the issue.

After the programme, CHETNA team members had discussion with the Principal and faculty members who participated in the programme. They said that they would like to conduct such activities on a continuous basis in future as it is a part of their extra curriculum activities for extension learning for their students. They suggested conducting such awareness programmes at all the colleges of Ahmedabad city with NSS students. They requested CHETNA to provide such training to NSS Coordinators, who can in turn train their NSS students and volunteers.

Further, CHETNA contacted and coordinated with Dr. Arun Gandhi, NSS Coordinator of Gujarat Vidyapeeth and Dr. Natubhai Verma, NSS-Coordinator of Gujarat University, Mr. Kamalkumar Kar, Youth Officer, Government of India, NSS Dr. H.C. Patel, Registrar, Gujarat University, Dr. M.N. Patel, Vice Chancellor, Gujarat University and to conduct training programme for all the Programme Officers of National Service Scheme (NSS) so that they could further sensitishe the students and volunteers of NSS on this issue.
A training programme for NSS Programme Officers was organized on February 7, 2015 at Gujarat Vidhyapith Training Centre, Sadra, where 21 NSS Programme Officers from 10 Universities of Gujarat were oriented on the issue of gender discrimination and declining sex ratio. They integrated to take up the issue in all NSS trainings and Social activities of students.

**Collaborating with Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) to reach out to Youth**

In collaboration with NYSK, CHETNA facilitated several programmes to sensitize youth on the issue of gender biased violence, especially the sex selection.

On January 6th 2015, at a national Youth meet organized in Ahmedabad, CHETNA sensitized 250 young girls and boys from 10 states\(^3\) of India and 33 districts of Gujarat on Save the Girl Child and Action against Violence. Ms. Minaxi Shukla and Ms. Palak Chitalia facilitated the session with discussion on the present scenario, reasons for lesser number of girls and action to be taken to bring the equilibrium in the society. Statements related to the issue were given to the participants; for example; Daughter can take care of parents in old age, only the son can perform the last rites of parents, girls cannot move around out of home late night, a man can cook and look after house, while a woman can be an earner in the family. For their better understanding, each statement was explained by the facilitator with the help of examples. They had to listen carefully to the statement and react. If the statement was correct, they had to clap and if wrong, they had to stamp their feet. An explanation was asked for each given answer from the participants.

Interaction with the youth revealed the patriarchal mindset due to limited exposure. Region wise mindset was observed; some of the northern states- Rajasthan, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh had the same patriarchal mindset towards girls. They thought girls to be burdensome. But Youth groups from Mumbai, Goa and Mehsana were observed thinking differently and sensitively towards girls/women. Youth were enthusiastic and full of energy, but needed direction.

*Youth are powerhouses of energy and we should find the right way to utilize this energy. It is extremely crucial to change the perception and mindset of young people.*

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\(^3\) Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Goa, Maharashtra, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Selvas, Diu and Gujarat
Material Distribution:

Garba CD’s and Kites were distributed (930 kites and 50 CD’s)

Celebrating kite festival

January 14th is celebrated as Uttarayan-the kite flying festival in Gujarat, especially Ahmedabad city. The sky is full of colourful kites and people of all ages, from across the society fly kites. CHETNA took this opportunity and prepared kites with messages on welcoming and valuing the Girl child. More than 2000 kites were distributed among organizations; Gender Resource Centre and others working with young people and children. Gender Resource Centre (GRC), distributed kites in State Resource Centre for Women (SRCW) and Police Station based Support Centre. They said, “It’s an excellent idea to send the message across.

- Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan distributed kites to the youth from 10 states of India and 33 districts of Gujarat. Few kites were given to the leading Youth Leaders of Ahmedabad, few in the remand home, Mehsana and the remaining were given in deaf and dumb school, Mehsana. They liked the concept of sending messages across through kites. They said, “Vicharo ne aveg malshe, jaan Jagruti felashe”. (Thoughts will be well received, creating awareness). Youth from Gujarat understood the message and asked many topic related questions. However Youth from other states were not able to read Gujarati text. They were explained about “Valuing the Girl Child” Project, the importance of Kite festival and the Girl Child messages were discussed with them in an open forum.

- Samvedna is an Ahmedabad based NGO. They planned to celebrate the festival of kites with the slum children. Children loved the kites provided by CHETNA and enjoyed an flying them. At the end they danced to the Garba tunes specially made for the project. Nida, Coordinator from samvedna said that “it’s an excellent idea for wider outreach of messages”.

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CHETNA

Capacity building of youth volunteers of NYKS and Ahmedabad (Urban) ICDS officials; CDPOs, nutrition facilitators and supervisors

CHETNA organized a Seminar on June 3, 2015 on the Issue of low birth ratio of daughters in Ahmadabad City, More than 70 Boys and Girls, who work as youth volunteers for community awareness on various issues from Gujarat and ICDS officials participated. The discussions focused on Violence against Women, Adolescent education and Malnutrition. Apart from perspective building and knowledge on the issues, efforts were also made to learn about communication methods for creating awareness in the society for these issues. The emphasis was more on sensitization of young people to enable them to play the role of change agents. At the end of seminar all the participants took the pledge about not indulging in sex selection and discriminatory practices against the girls.

In collaboration with National Service Scheme (NSS) and Women’s Empowerment Cell existing in Colleges, CHETNA organized Seminars on the Girl Child for youth in different colleges and Trainings, wherein they were made aware and sensitized about the issue. The medium of games was used for the easy and better understanding of the “Girl Child” Issue. Posters, Kites, CD’s and Booklet’s were disseminated to the participants. At the concluding session, all the participants took the pledge about not indulging in sex selection and discriminatory practices against the girls.
The team with support from CHARKHA—a development media interface network approached and interacted with media persons; one to one meeting with them to brief them about the project objectives, social issue and support required from media to promote the campaign. Media persons were invited to all the training and awareness events and provided with data, case stories and information. The local newspapers gave a wide coverage to the Garba events and the innovative approach of weaving in the issues of girls in popular-traditional folk songs of Gujarat.

- The Public Awareness event on Sharad Poonima Day at Himalaya Mall also received coverage in English and Gujarati newspapers as well as electronic media
- Doordarshan invited CHETNA to be on a panel along with Dr. Dinesh Kapadia, Director, Gender Resource Centre and Dr. Darshana Thakkar, Gynecologist for the live show “Apani Vaat”-Our Issue, Our Talk on September 18, 2014
- All India Radio invited Ms. Minaxi Shukla for a live interview and discussion on Dikri na Vadhamana –welcoming the daughter. In addition, live event coverage were given by media during significant day’s celebration like national/International girl child day celebration.
- All India Radio, Door Darshan (National Television) and Articles related to the Public Awareness. Campaign and awareness events were published in DNA, TOI and Indian Express, Gujarat Samachar local news papers—English as well as vernacular dailies
Celebrating International Women’s Day!!
Ms. Indu Capoor, Founder Director, CHETNA and Director, CHETNA Outreach and Ms. Minaxi Shukla – Additional Director, CHETNA participated at the celebration on March 8, 2015. (Date: 10 March, 2015 – Ahmedabad Mirror)
Conclusion and way forward

The declining child sex ratio is a grave concern. It creates a serious imbalance in the society and give rise to violence and crime against girls and women. Urgent and sustained efforts are required to curb the practice, focusing on educating and empowering girls and women; at the same time sensitizing the various stakeholders is crucial. CHETNA with financial support from NMEW, MoWCD piloted a project towards sensitization and received very positive and welcoming response from academic institutions; colleges and youth groups. The NSS students particularly expressed a lot of enthusiasm and willingness to join the campaign. A need was expressed to use information technology; face book, whatsapp etc. more as young people use them highly. At the same time the response to the traditional folk media was tremendous. The garbas were appreciated and used by everyone across the society.

Meeting the elected leaders together was challenging. Facilitating joint meetings among MLAs/MPs/Counselors was challenging. However we had fruitful discussions and dialogues with them on one-to-one basis. They all showed concern over the issues of gender biased sex selection however were complacent with the Beti Bachao Abhiyan launched by Government of Gujarat. Often they denied the problem and said that they do talk about the sex selection in their discourses and assembly sessions, so what is the need for converting the converted? They casually asked us to organise a meeting with women leaders. However when requested to take up special and stringent action to stop the practice, with statistical evidence depicting dismal state of affairs, they listened to us and supported the awareness activities. With such lukewarm response, we decided to do something which can have a human interest component. That gave us the idea of edutainment; composing songs; rather using folk media for reaching our message. We identified popular Garbas and using the same catchy tunes but changed the lyrics with issues concerning survival, health and nutrition, education and overall wellbeing and development of girls. It really worked!! We also had dialogue with concerned officials from the departments of Health, Education and Youth Development programmes for integration of sex selection issues in their respective programmes.

“Edutainment” helped us in reaching women, Children, individuals, especially young people. “Edutainment”, Education- Entertainment strategy designed and implemented a message to both entertain and educate. It helped us in creating an enabling environment for public dialogue, sensitising the target audience and enable community, especially youth to take action against Sex Selection. Approximately 111090 people were reached out to; about 12000 people; leaders, youth, Government and NGO representatives, teachers/professors, children, families; men, women, elderly, shop keepers, vendors in homes, neighbourhood, roads, parks, schools/colleges, Malls and markets took a pledge to contribute in creating conducive environment where daughters are welcomed and valued, their optimum nutrition, health, education and developmental needs are fulfilled. Such initiative has contributed a sustainable and replicable approach which could serve as a potential model for welcoming the “Girl Child”

On the whole we could reach out to a large number of people across the city of Ahmedabad and other parts of the Gujarat state through our material. A momentum is created, which needs stronger efforts to sustain. With Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, national campaign launched in January
2015, we can take the movement ahead. CHETNA will be pleased to engage with the Government initiatives to create the cities, states and the country where girls are valued!!

We pledge to welcome the birth of a girl child and create a society where girls are valued!!
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<td>3</td>
<td>Mr. Kishorsinh Chauhan</td>
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Annexure -2 Ward-wise Sex ratio at birth Ahmedabad city

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About CHETNA

CHETNA* meaning “awareness” in several Indian languages and an acronym for Centre for Health, Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness, is a non-government support organisation based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

Initiated its work in 1980, CHETNA was established in 1984, CHETNA addresses issues of women’s health and development in different stages of their lives from a “Rights” perspective.

CHETNA supports Government and Non-Government Organisations (GO and NGOs) through building the management capacities of educationists/health practitioners/supervisors/managers enabling them to implement their programmes related to children, young people and women from a holistic and gender perspective and advocates for people centred policies. Our core activities are capacity building, forging partnership and advocacy at local, regional and national level. CHETNA also develops and disseminates need based gender sensitive behavior change communication (BCC) material. CHETNA works primarily in Gujarat and Rajasthan States.

Identified as a Regional Resource Centre (RRC) for Gujarat State and the Union Territories of Daman, Diu and Dadra Nagar Haveli to provide technical assistance to NGOs to improve Reproductive and Child Health(RCH), facilitate GO-NGO partnership, document and disseminate successful approaches and provide inputs to Government of India to ensure effective implementation of policies. In 2014, the Government of Gujarat recognised CHETNA as a NGO support organisation.

In 2014, CHETNA is designated as State Training and Resource Centre (STRC) for Gujarat, Daman and Div and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, to support NGOs in implementing targeted interventions programme related to HIV/AIDS.

*CHETNA means consciousness in several languages and dialects in India. CHETNA started its work in 1980 as an activity of the Nehru Foundation for Development which is registered under the Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950.