

# Introducing the Campaign for Gender Equality and Safe Abortion

---

Medha Gandhi

Ipas

[gandhim@ipas.org](mailto:gandhim@ipas.org)

CommonHealth General Member's Meeting

March 22, 2013

Vadodara

# THE CHALLENGE

## Census of India 2011: Child sex ratio drops to lowest since Independence

PTI | Mar 31, 2011, 11:17pm IST

1

8



Tweet

Recommend

Submit

**Tags:** [Population of India](#) | [India population](#) | [India census 2011](#) | [India census](#) | [India](#) | [Child Development](#)

NEW DELHI: Indicating a continuing preference for boys in society, the child sex ratio in India has dropped to 914 females against 1,000 males - the lowest since Independence - in the provisional 2011 Census report released today.

Despite a slew of laws to prevent female foeticide and schemes to encourage families to have girl child, the ratio has declined from 927 females against 1,000 males in 2001 to 914, which was described as a "matter of grave concern" by Census Commissioner of India C Chandramauli.

# SHIFT IN FOCUS



# AT THE STATE LEVEL

**mumbai**

## State wants to ban sale of abortion pills

Sayli Udas Mankikar, Hindustan Times  
Mumbai, October 31, 2011

email print

The state, which is known for the sale of abortion pills...

### Treat abortion as murder: Maharashtra govt to Centre

Aug 29, 2012 - TEENA THACKER (DC) New Delhi

Tags: Abortion Abortions Female Foeticide Maharashtra

Share Like One person likes this.

Actor Aamir Khan whose first episode Satyamev Jayate focused on the issue of sex selective abortions, will be happy to hear this.

The Maharashtra government has decided to crack a whip and has urged the Union health ministry to treat the act of sex selective abortions as 'murder' by making it punishable under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

According to Section 302 of IPC, whoever commits murder shall be punished with death or imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine.

In their recent communication to the health ministry, the state government of Maharashtra has proposed the government to treat the act of sex selective abortions as murder by way of making amendments to the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (prohibition of sex selection) Act, 1994.

## Surya Clinic's license is hanging by a thread

■ Staff Reporter

LICENSE of Surya clinic which was cancelled for excess abortions of women in the city about ten days ago will not be renewed by the district Health authorities, besides the district Health authorities have decided to take stern action against this clinic. The Health Department is not in a mood to give some relief to Surya Clinic in near future and there are remote chances of allowing this clinic to perform abortions.

Dr Pankaj Shukla, Chief Medical & Health Officer (CMHO) in a meeting of the senior doctors, took decision of not renewing license of Surya clinic. Such decision was taken on the study report of clinic's documents that had incomplete information about the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) in the proformas prescribed by the Health Department.

A senior Government doctor said that Surya clinic doctors did not properly maintain MTP record and they had failed to tell the exact reasons of why doctors needed abortions of women in such large numbers. The clinic had more than 8000 abortions in last year, record abortions in the city.

It had performed an excessive of 8000 abortions in a year

Doctors referred women for abortions from different districts, at Surya clinic to be issued notices by CMHO

The CMHO is understood to have decided to issue notices to those doctors who had referred women to this Clinic for abortions and if they fail to give proper reply, the recommendations to cancel their registration with State Medical Council may be made.

Another decision taken in the meeting regarding Surya clinic was to count the birth of children aborted by the doctors.

(Contd on page 2)





# THE BACKLASH

## Beed: Docs go on indefinite strike against CS letter

Last Updated: Sunday, July 29, 2012, 20:09



Share Tweet 0

Beed

## Chemists in city refuse to stock abortion pills

Prachi Pinglay, Hindustan Times  
Mumbai, July 06, 2012

email print



Email to Author

First Published: 02:06 IST(6/7/2012)  
Last Updated: 02:07 IST(6/7/2012)

0 Comments

Tweet

share f in g + more

When a four-month pregnant 21-year-old went for a routine scan, the foetus was diagnosed with anencephaly, a condition that recommended an abortion and prescribed an abortion.



She visited chemists. "I finally referred her said the doctor, who Gynaecologists in the

## Abortions may go underground

Mumbai, Sunday, July, 08 2012 : While one of the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) strategy is to crack down on chemists illegally selling the abortion pill, the ham-handed manner in which led to an undesired effect. Chemists are afraid to even legally stock the pill, making it scarce. It led to an unhealthy situation. "If the pill is not available or there are too many restrictions, there is an underground," feared Dr Suchitra Dalvie of the Asia Safe Abortion Partnership. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) kit, whose sales have dropped 65% in Mumbai, end an unwanted pregnancy. Noting the danger in its non-availability, health minister Suresh stores not stocking the kit even as the crackdown continues on selling it without proper prescription. But on Friday, a day after the state said it would take action against retailers not stocking reluctant to stock it. "The FDA reports us directly to the police for not keeping paperwork. Is retailer He said many chemists prefer to not get into the tangle.

## Doctors wary of conducting abortions after 12 weeks

Menaka Rao, Hindustan Times  
Mumbai, July 06, 2012

email print



Email to Author

First Published: 02:08 IST(6/7/2012)  
Last Updated: 02:09 IST(6/7/2012)

0 Comments

Tweet

more

Four-and-a-half months pregnant 18-year-old unmarried girl from Mankhurd, has been terminated her pregnancy. "Two doctors have refused. I am also scared of the girl has been referred. The doctor now plans to write to the

# IMPACT AT ALL LEVELS

## Policy

- Demands to make the law restrictive
- Amendment process stopped
- Recommendations impinging rights

## Bureaucracy

- Regulating abortion and not sex determination
- Adhoc measures restricting access to abortions

## Media

- Sex determination co-mingled with abortion
- Reports focused on abortion
- Abortion presented as the primary problem

## Providers

- Scared to provide abortion services
- Refusal of services
- Secret service provision – no records

## Community

- Increased misconception that abortion is illegal
- Added stigma against abortions

# WHAT IS OUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

*Maintaining a conducive environment for abortion  
access while addressing gender biased sex  
selection*

*and ... holding on to what we have!*

---

# PRESERVING ACCESS TO SAFE ABORTION WHILE ADDRESSING SEX SELECTION IN INDIA

Who are the stakeholder?

Demystifying the issue

Identifying allies



Facilitator?



# THE MEETING

- Representatives from 22 organizations

Advocates against sex selection	4
Donors	2
Coalitions	3
International NGOs	6
NGOs	5
Professional associations	2

- Consensus on
  - Need for collective action
  - Need for a loose network/ campaign
  - Key areas for intervention identified

Ipas nominated by group to serve as secretariat

# WHAT WE AGREED TO DO



- Position abortion and sex selection as women's issues
- Gender equality and rights approach
- Strategic priorities for the Campaign
  - Public messages on legal abortion and gender equality
  - Clarification of the Acts
  - Introduce MA for First Trimester in public health facilities
  - Expand allies among development partners

# WHY CAMPAIGN

- Targeted intervention with a defined goal
- Fixed timeframe of 3 years
- Not rigid and strictly structured like a consortium or network
- Campaign
  - Offers flexibility
  - Flat structure
  - No campaign chair
  - Strength in numbers
  - Secretariat not the sole representative of the members

# NEXT STEPS

- Finalizing the ToRs for the campaign and 4 working groups
  - Campaign branding
  - Launch strategy and launch date – possibly 28<sup>th</sup> May
  - Meeting to finalize the immediate next steps
-

# CAMPAIGNERS

