

Helpdesk Research Report: Interventions to tackle sex selection in Asia

Date: 16.11.12

Query: What works as an effective brake on sex selection? Please provide examples of successful approaches, policies and practices that have eliminated or reduced the incidence of sex selection in Asia.

Enquirer: DFID

Authors: Jenny Birchall (j.birchall@ids.ac.uk) and Sumedh Rao (sumedh@gsdrc.org)

Contents

1. Overview
2. Selected Literature
3. Additional Information

1. Overview

This report identifies initiatives and approaches that have demonstrated some success in reducing or preventing sex selection in Asia. The key finding of the literature is that the most effective strategies address social norms and beliefs, as well as providing technical solutions. Strategies need to take into account the specific drivers and expressions of sex selection in each context.

The effective interventions identified are:

- **Restricting the use of sex-selection methods:** Restricting technology and services, specifically those which help identify and terminate female foetuses (e.g. OCHR et al, 2011). This can, however, be harmful to women if social norms are not addressed: women may undertake clandestine, unregulated procedures instead (OCHR et al, 2011).
- **Reproductive health services:** Providing services covering family planning and reproductive health throughout women and men's lifetimes (Li 2007).
- **Media and advocacy:** Using well-targeted media and other advocacy measures to address issues such as dowry, women's education and women's political participation (Joseph 2007; UNFPA 2011; Li 2007), while also preventing sex selection technologies from being publicised (UNFPA 2011).

- **Judicial reform:** Changing legislation to: allow women to own land, to inherit and to access employment and pensions (UNFPA 2011); and to prohibit or restrict the use of technology for sex selection (Gilles and Feldman-Jacobs 2012). In addition, prosecuting practitioners who undertake such measures (UNFPA 2011).
- **Incentive-based schemes:** Providing financial rewards for compliance with girls' birth registration, school enrolment, immunisation, etc., with the goal of promoting long-term behaviour change towards girls and women (Sekher 2010).
- **Baby refuges:** Providing refuges, where parents can take unwanted female babies, to discourage infanticide (Srinivisan and Bedi 2010).

In addition, economic development, urbanisation, changes in employment and education can change norms and attitudes relating to girls (Chung and Das Gupta 2007).

2. Selected Literature

OHCHR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO (2011) *Preventing gender-biased sex selection: an interagency statement*. World Health Organisation
http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/gender_rights/9789241501460/en/

This interagency statement is intended to reaffirm the commitment of UN agencies to encourage and support efforts to address the problem of imbalanced sex ratios caused by sex selection, and to highlight the public health and human rights implications of the problem. It has a section on lessons learnt from current responses, which is divided into the following sub sections:

- *Legal measures – prohibition*
 Over the last three decades, legal restrictions on the use of technology for sex selection purposes have been put into place in China, India, Nepal, South Korea and Vietnam. These restrictions include laws to prohibit determination/disclosure of the sex of the foetus, laws to ban abortion on the grounds of sex selection, and prohibitions on advertising related to sex determination. However, it is difficult to provide the proof needed to implement some of these legal measures; for example proving that an abortion was done on the grounds of sex selection is very difficult. In addition, restricting the use of technology and services can have harmful effects for women; it is important to ensure that restrictions on women's access to abortion do not impede their human and reproductive health rights. The statement argues that "restricting access to technologies and services without addressing the social norms and structures that determine their use is likely to result in greater demand for clandestine procedures which fall outside regulations, protocols and monitoring" (2011:6).
- *Legal and policy measures supportive of girls and women*
 These measures are aimed at addressing the deep seated gender inequalities behind sex selection. Examples of these types of interventions include the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2004 in India, which allows daughters to inherit property in the same way as sons, and the Maintenance and Welfare of Senior Citizens Act 2007, also in India, which requires both sons and daughters to be responsible for the care of parents (in order to inherit property). In China, the Care for Girls campaign seeks to

promote recognition of the value of girls, by providing financial incentives to parents, encouraging matrilineal marriages, and broadcasting positive messages about girls. However, a recent unpublished evaluation of the campaign showed that in some counties the campaign's policies contradicted existing policies around land and inheritance, and so did not get local support. This "highlights the need for a more unified system of social policy, and for sustainable and long term approaches rather than short term measures" (2011:7).

- *Advocacy and awareness activities*

These activities are designed to change mindsets and attitudes, to increase recognition of girls' and women's value in society and to raise awareness on gender equality issues. The statement argues that these types of efforts are most effective when using information from trusted sources to stimulate debate at local and national level. "Empowering education" is used to help participants share and examine complex and conflicting attitudes and feelings around sensitive issues. Examples of communication activities from India include radio and TV dramas, which have been used extensively as a setting to promote discussion around sex selection within the context of family dynamics between generations and between husbands and wives. In the Republic of Korea, a 'Love your Daughter' media campaign was combined with legal and policy measures to help achieve great improvements in the country's sex ratio by 2007.

The statement concludes with a number of recommendations:

- More reliable data are needed on: the magnitude of gender biased sex selection; determinants and health and social consequences of sex selection; and the impact of interventions, including the development of indicators for tracking change and methodologies for evaluating impact.
- Technology is not the root cause of sex selection, therefore policies and guidelines on the ethical use of technology should be developed.
- Supportive measures for girls and women are needed in order to tackle the root causes of sex selection, increase the perceived value of girls, and encourage long term solutions.
- Enabling policies and legislative frameworks are needed to tackle the inequalities that drive sex selection. Active participation from civil society should be sought in implementing these.
- It is vital to support advocacy, communication and community mobilisation initiatives in order to change the social norms that surround son preference.

Joseph, J. (2007) *Reflections on the campaign against sex selection and exploring ways forward*. CYDA/UNFPA <http://india.unfpa.org/?publications=345>

This report was commissioned by UNFPA as an assessment of its work on sex selection in India from 2004 onwards. The objectives of the assessment were to: map the reasons for the continuation of the unequal child sex ratio in the country; review the efforts of stakeholders working on the issue, pull out strengths and limitations; and explore ways forward, suggesting future strategies for UNFPA work in this area. In the section on 'interventions, experiences and lessons learnt in addressing CSR decline', three types of interventions are discussed:

- *Efforts to influence the 'demand side'*

These initiatives seek to influence those who seek to use sex determination services.

They employ strategies around awareness building and community mobilisation, and might involve:

- Posters, print advertisements and films
- Reports and research studies
- Village displays
- Workshops and small group discussions
- Interactions with youth
- Celebrations of special days related to the girl child
- Use of electronic and mass media
- 'Pressurising' or interactive methods in communities
- Interactions with religious leaders
- Sting/decoy operations
- Monitoring pregnancies
- Incentive schemes
- Networking

When considering the strengths and weaknesses of these types of interventions, the report states that volume and intensity can sometimes be an issue; large number of printed materials can be developed but without the capacity to disseminate these and to engage with recipients in interactive ways, impact can be limited. In addition, materials are not always culture specific or presented in engaging ways. Inappropriate or confusing messages can be found in the materials (for example arguing that more girl children are needed to satisfy the marital requirements of men, or depicting the mothers of aborted female foetuses as murderers). Selecting recipients of information and participants in activities is highlighted as important; there has been success in engaging with youth groups, and group sessions initiated by local leaders rather than 'outsiders', and giving active roles to community members, also yield better results. The importance of avoiding the promotion of 'quick fix' solutions, and instead encouraging a more nuanced understanding of the patriarchal structures behind sex selection is emphasised, as is the importance of recognising new social trends around consumerism and individual choice.

- *Efforts to influence or control the 'supply side'*
These initiatives seek to motivate the medical community, ensuring that nurses, doctors and other health workers don't take part in sex selection practices. They are focused on two areas: 'catching' medical staff who violate legislation on sex selection by auditing hospital/clinic records and making surprise visits; and efforts to sensitise medical staff, for example via campaigns by the Indian Medical Association. The report points out that very few audits have taken place, and despite surprise visits to clinics by a range of actors including civil society activists, and significant resulting media coverage, convictions have been few and far between. In this section the report also analyses the efforts of a range of medical societies (such as Doctors Against Sex Determination) to change attitudes among their peers. It notes that significant further work is needed to get medical associations on board and committed to weeding out 'black sheep'.
- *Efforts to sensitise and pressurise the state to fulfil its role*
These initiatives emphasise the importance of political will to address sex selection head on. Examples discussed are the efforts of the 'Forum Against Sex Determination and Sex Pre Selection' in Maharashtra, and the work of UNFPA and Plan to include legislators and policy makers in workshops and conferences on the issue. It also discusses efforts to work with the administrative agencies for sex

selection legislation, and to sensitise and educate judicial staff. Work to strengthen civil society participation in implementing legislation is mentioned, as is the importance of campaigns and networks to strengthen implementation such as the 'Campaign Against Sex Selective Abortions' led by the Society for Rural Development in Madurai, the 'Campaign Against Pre Birth Elimination of Females' in Delhi, and the 'People's Health Assembly', which is a global initiative involving at least 1200 organisations in India. The report notes some barriers that these initiatives experienced, including conflicts of interest within administrative agencies, lack of clarity in the law and the need for amendments, the lack of a supporting environment for campaigns and networks, and the differing roles of bodies set up to implement legislation.

In the section on 'looking forward: suggestions for future strategies' the report makes some suggestions to strengthen the campaign against sex selection in India. These include:

- *The importance of recognising the wider context*
Sex selection campaigns must necessarily take into account other gender equality issues, including dowry and domestic violence, trafficking of women, and HIV/AIDS. They also need to recognise socioeconomic factors including the move towards privatisation of health care, medical and technological advances, trends towards individualism and personal choice, and the rise of consumerism.
- *The importance of a central strategy for all the actors working in the area*
This strategy will need to encompass ideological issues and leadership, legal support, networking and capacity building, and constant collection and updating of data.
- *The importance of particular strategies for work in the area*
These strategies should cover: challenging gender stereotypes and promoting affirmative action to encourage the girl child; methods for lodging complaints (such as help lines); methods to keep track of legal efforts, local interventions, complaints and progress; ways of drawing in other actors and influencers; communication methods; and policy advocacy. Strategies should also be developed to build capacity on implementing legislation and to co-opt and sensitise the medical community. At the community level, strategies are needed on working with community leaders and groups, working with youth, and promoting understanding of the law.

UNFPA (2011) Report of the international workshop on skewed sex ratios at birth: addressing the issue and the way forward. UNFPA

<https://www.unfpa.org/public/home/publications/pid/9143>

This report describes a workshop organised by the UNFPA and the Vietnam Ministry of Health in Hanoi, October 2011. The purpose of the event was to address imbalances in the sex ratio at birth, and more specifically to take stock of geographic trends and country situations, share experiences, and lay groundwork for South-South cooperation on the issue. The report sets out the key points from each workshop session. In session three on country experiences from eastern Asia, a range of responses to sex selection in Vietnam were discussed. These include public advocacy, management of technology and the publicising of sex selection technologies, and the prosecution of practitioners. While the upward trend towards males in sex ratios at birth had halted, evidence was not yet available to assess if this was as a result of the interventions mentioned. In the same session China's experiences were explored. Here the trend towards multi sector approaches was mentioned, involving a

range of comprehensive campaigns focusing on social and economic policy; information, communication and education; health services; and law enforcement. In 2011 six government ministries took part in joint action, but research on the impact of these efforts is still ongoing. In session four on country experiences from south Asia, the possibilities of reducing unequal sex ratios through broader gender equality measures focusing on dowries, political participation, land ownership law, employment and pensions for women, were stressed. The Himachal Pradesh experience was mentioned as a success story (see Sekher 2010). During session nine on the way forward, one breakout group focused on policies and programmes. The group identified several focal points for action, including laws on unethical use of technology, promotion of women's enterprise, education, employment, inheritance and participation in politics, and reversing cultural and traditional practices through incentives and communication activities.

Sekher, T. (2010) *Special financial incentive schemes for the girl child in India: a review of select schemes*. The Planning Commission of India and UNFPA

http://www.unfpa.org/gender/docs/sexselection/UNFPA_Publication-39772.pdf

This review was commissioned by the UNFPA and the Planning Commission of India to help increase understanding on how conditional cash transfer schemes can help to improve girls' status and reduce distorted sex ratios at birth. It provides details on a number of interventions in India considered successful in this respect. These incentive-based financial schemes aim to improve the value of girl children because in order to take part, families have to comply with requirements such as registration at birth, school enrolment and retention, immunisation and delaying marriage beyond the age of 18. The idea is that meeting these requirements will lead to longer term behaviour change. 15 schemes are considered in the review, with primary objectives of ensuring birth of female children, promoting delayed marriage, education and wellbeing of females, and overall family planning. The schemes with objectives related to sex selection which are deemed to have had some success are:

- *The 'Dhan Lakshmi' scheme in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab*
This scheme, run by India's ministry of women and child development, provides staggered financial incentives designed to get families to keep girl children. The scheme is popular and more beneficiaries are being enrolled, but better monitoring practices and more transparent processes are needed.
- *The 'Ladli Lakshmi Yojana' scheme in Madhya Pradesh*
This scheme was set up in 2007 by the state government. It hopes to improve the gender ratio by providing conditional financial rewards for couples with up to two children. In 2007, 40,000 girls benefitted from the scheme, which has proved very popular. However, improvements in processes and formalities are needed to further increase access.
- *The 'Girl Child Protection' scheme in Andhra Pradesh*
This is one of the longest running incentive schemes in India, beginning in 1996, and it has attracted large numbers of beneficiaries. It seeks to promote small families and the holistic development of the girl child.
- *The 'Ladhu' scheme in Delhi*
This scheme began in 2008 and provides financial assistance at the time of a girl child's birth, and during her schooling. It has been credited with helping to improve female birth registrations in Delhi, and between 2008 and 2010 275,651 girls were

registered under the scheme. To further improve its implementation, simplification of enrolment procedures is needed.

- *The 'Beti Hai Anmol' scheme in Himachal Pradesh*
This scheme replaced its predecessor, the 'Balika Samridhi Yojana' scheme which ran from 1997-2010 and attracted over two million beneficiaries a year. The new scheme provides a post birth grant that the girl can withdraw when she reaches 18. She also receives annual scholarships for her schooling. Data on impact since the scheme's inception in 2010 is not yet available.
- *The 'Ladli scheme' in Haryana*
This initiative aims to combat female foeticide and restore a balanced sex ratio. It provides incentives for five to ten years after the birth of a second daughter. It has simple eligibility conditions, meaning that parents of all incomes can apply. Critics argue eligibility should be focused more on poorer families.
- *The Mukhya Mantrikanya Surakshayojana scheme in Bihar*
The aim of this scheme is to improve the sex ratio and increase registration of female births. Parents of up to two girls receive financial incentives, and the girl receives a payment at age 18. Critics argue that a condition on delaying marriage until 18 should be introduced.
- *The Indira Ghandibalika Surakshayojana scheme in Himachal Pradesh*
The objectives of this scheme are to improve the deteriorating sex ratio, encourage small families and promote gender equality. 700 girls have benefitted from the funds so far, and there is a need for better publicity to improve access.

On the whole, the review struggled with a lack of monitoring information to help measure the schemes' impacts. Overall, it seems that schemes such as these can help girls to survive and receive better care once they are born, but clear evidence is not yet available on whether they influence sex selection before birth, or improve long term attitudes towards the value of girls. There is some concern about the conditions involved in some of the schemes; for example in some cases if families have male children they are not eligible, and in other families may be required to undergo voluntary sterilisation in order to meet eligibility criteria.

Srinivasan, S. and Bedi, A. (2010) *Daughter elimination and the Cradle Baby scheme in Tamil Nadu. Economic and Political Weekly (23)*

http://www.unfpa.org/gender/docs/sexselection/indiapublishedpapers/UNFPA_Publication-39835.pdf

This article introduces the debates around the 'Cradle Baby' scheme, which allows parents to hand over unwanted female babies to the Indian government for adoption, and summarises findings from more in depth research done by the authors. The scheme was first begun in 1992 and was introduced as part of a range of multi pronged measures to tackle sex selection and infanticide, including the Girl Child Protection scheme (see Sekher 2010) and legal action against perpetrators of infanticide. The 'Cradle Baby' scheme has attracted significant amounts of criticism from civil society, because it is seen as absolving parents of their responsibilities toward their daughters, and of promoting son preference. Several times the scheme has been closed, but then opened again due to reports of babies abandoned in unsafe places and increased infanticide. The authors of the report recognise the scheme's limitations and agree that it is no substitute for addressing sex selection and creating an

environment suitable for daughters. But they argue that when accompanied by other measures to change attitudes and support families to keep female children, the scheme provides an important last resort. Their research indicates that the scheme may have directly accounted for 14% of the reduction in post birth daughter deficit between 1996 and 1999 in Tamil Nadu.

Chung, W. and Das Gupta, M. (2007) *Why is son preference declining in South Korea? The role of development and public policy and the implications for China and India.* World Bank Policy Research Paper 4374

http://www.unfpa.org/gender/docs/sexselection/indiapublishedpapers/UNFPA_Publication-39869.pdf

This article considers the cultural underpinnings of son preference in preindustrial Korea, and looks at what happened to these understandings with the onset of industrialisation, urbanisation and development. It argues that economic development in South Korea brought a range of changes in norms and attitudes around the patriarchal family, which in turn had an impact on child sex ratios. Interestingly, until as late as 1989 state policies are argued to have reinforced ideas around patriarchal lineage, kinship and inheritance that in turn support male child preference. In the late 1990s law reform began which gave women more rights within the family, and legal male family headship was abolished. Urbanisation, along with changes in employment and education, brought different ways of living and of caring for family members, and the customary rules of inheritance by gender began to shift. The authors argue that “decades of cumulative social change associated with the above trends seem to have relaxed the pressure to bear sons” (2007:6). They assert that the greatest contributor to Korea’s progress in reversing the trend in child sex ratios has been changes in social norms and attitudes within society as a whole. These changes “occurred *despite* state policies seeking to bolster the traditional systems” (2007:13). The message of the article is that the South Korean case is quite unique because of this mixture of laws and policies set up by military regimes which kept women and girls marginalised from mainstream public life, and rapid economic development which raised women’s education and workforce participation. For this reason the authors argue that the change in child sex ratios would have occurred sooner had these countervailing policies not been in place. This, they state, is good news for China and India, who are adopting the right approach, “through a wide range of interventions to aimed at changing people’s perception that girls are less desirable than boys, as well as bringing women firmly into public life” (2007:14).

Gilles, K. and Feldman-Jacobs, C. (2012) *When technology and tradition collide: from gender bias to sex selection.* Population Reference Bureau

<http://www.prb.org/pdf12/gender-bias-sex-selection.pdf>

This policy brief considers the motivations and mechanisms behind the prenatal sex selection. It discusses the regions and countries that have unequal sex ratios at birth and it explores the negative social, economic, and development effects that sex selection can have on individuals, communities, societies, and countries. It also has a section on promising approaches to tackling sex selection. It divides interventions into the following sections:

- *Discouraging the misuse of technology*
These ‘supply side’ types of interventions can include legal restrictions on medical technology, and partnerships with medical staff. India, China, Nepal, South Korea and Vietnam have introduced legislation prohibiting or restricting the use of technology for

sex selection. Some medical organisations in these countries have set up codes of conduct for medical professionals working in the area. The Doctors as Partners and Advocates initiative was set up in India by UNFPA and the Indian Medical Association (IMA) as part of the 'Doctors for Daughters' campaign. This campaign sought to "help doctors and other medical professionals understand India's laws against sex selection, change gender norms and attitudes, and create champions of girls' and women's rights within the medical community" (2012:4). The campaign included several elements: an IMA resolution against sex selection; workshops to train and sensitise doctors; a toolkit for the medical community on combating sex selection; and modules developed by the WHO for use in undergraduate and graduate classes.

- *Setting up a policy framework that supports women's rights*
Some examples of laws and policies that help decrease the 'demand side' of sex selection include:
 - Policies that provide financial incentives to parents of girl children, such as the 'Ladli' scheme in Delhi which began in 2008 and reached 135,645 girls in the first year and 140,006 in the second (see Sekher 2010).
 - Legislation on inheritance and property rights which aims to strengthen women's social, economic, political, health and human rights, as well as shift cultural standards towards gender equality, such as the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act of 2005 and the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007 in India (see OHCHR et al 2011).

- *Instituting awareness and advocacy campaigns to change cultural norms*
Examples of mass media campaigns and community based programmes focusing on gender equality and sex selection issues include *Atmajaa ("Born from the Soul")* - a television drama series that began in India in 2004, covering the issue of sex selection in both an urban, upper-middle class Indian family and in a rural village. The series looked at women's rights, the value of the girl child, and the negative consequences of sex selection, and it explored the gender discrimination and traditional values that drive sex selection. An evaluation conducted after the first part of the series found that young women were the most receptive to the messages of the show.

The briefing concludes with five recommendations:

- Strengthen data collection and evaluation to improve understanding of the problem and the most effective responses.
- Promote appropriate use of medical technology.
- Evaluate and reform laws to promote gender equality.
- Support couples who have daughters and encourage women's participation in public life.
- Work with a diverse network of partners.

The authors of the briefing argue that short term solutions which focus on, for example, restricting the use of technology to determine foetus' sex will not be successful in isolation. Rather, "the most effective strategies are multifaceted and take into account the specific drivers and expressions of son preference" (2012:3).

Li, S. (2007) *Imbalanced sex ratio at birth and comprehensive intervention in China*. UNFPA and the Institution for Population and Development Studies, China
<http://www.unfpa.org/gender/docs/studies/china.pdf>

This paper was produced for the 4th Asia Pacific conference on reproductive and sexual health and rights, which took place in Hyderabad, India in 2007. It reviews studies on girl child survival in China and considers the activities and interventions made by the Chinese government to tackle the skewed sex ratio. Activities and interventions are split into three areas:

Policy evolution

- *Laws and regulations to promote gender equality*
The paper argues that the Chinese government's efforts to improve women's economic and political status have been an important factor in tackling imbalanced sex ratios. School enrolment for girls and boys has almost equalised and women make up around 44% of employees.
- *Regulations and policies against gender discrimination and sex selective abortion*
Active regulations against pre natal sex selection and sex selective abortion have been introduced, although some families with son preference use illegal methods to counteract these measures.

Strategic action

A campaign to tackle imbalanced birth sex ratios and improve girl children's survival began in 2000. It had three stages:

- *The Chaohu experimental zone for improving girl child survival*
This experimental zone was set up by the Anhui Provincial Population and Family Planning Commission and the Chaohu government to establish a favourable survival environment for girls in the province. It was supported by the Ford Foundation and UNICEF and involved both direct and indirect intervention in reproductive health training and social development activities. Within three years, significant improvements in the birth sex ratio were observed.
- *Piloting the Care for Girls campaign in 24 counties*
Based on the success of the Chaohu project, a 'Care for Girls' scheme was rolled out to 24 provinces with a highly skewed birth sex ratio. The broad ranging scheme covered: fighting foetal sex identification and sex-selective abortion; 'whole-course' services covering family planning and reproductive health services throughout women and men's lifetimes; communications and advocacy; the use of incentive policies to reward families that engage in family planning; management and evaluation; and organising and leadership. The project has succeeded in reducing skewed sex ratios in the 24 provinces, but there is still some imbalance, possibly caused by some rural parents' (who are allowed two children) practice of aborting second girl children.
- *Scaling up Care for Girls to the whole country*
In 2006 the campaign was extended to the whole of China, with the aim of achieving normal sex ratio at birth levels within 15 years. Elements of the national campaign include an action plan and intervention framework, a series of training workshops,

and a range of advocacy activities to change son preference behaviour and ideologies.

Civil society

- *International/civilian organisations, research institutes and NGOs*
The paper notes that government efforts alone are not enough to succeed in achieving a more balanced sex ratio. Many international and national organisations are working with the Chinese government. These include UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM, the Ford Foundation, Plan International and the Asia Foundation, and national institutes and universities such as the China Academy of Social Sciences, Renmin University of China, Beijing University and Xi'an Jiaotong University. The All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) and the Population and Family Planning Association (PFPAC), also play an important role in contributing to policy making.
- *Mass media*
The Chinese media has also played an important part in highlighting issues of sex selection and birth sex ratios. The experimental zone and 'Care for Girls' projects in particular have benefitted from print and online media coverage.

The paper ends with a gap analysis; there is still a significant difference between the ideal situation set out in policies and plans on gender equality and sex ratios, and the reality on sex ratio imbalance. The author argues that this gap is due to a number of factors, including: a lack of gender sensitivity in both content and implementation of the country's relevant laws and policies; the conflict between such laws and policies and the cultural and social environments in which they are applied; difficulties in collecting evidence of sex selection and in implementing regulations; restrictions on civil society's power to influence policy; and weaknesses in the implementation and evaluation of interventions. The author concludes by saying that China's record so far shows that it is possible to improve the survival chances of girl children, but changing traditional culture and achieving gender equality are vital long-term aspects of the process. Continuing the work that has begun will mean that imbalanced sex ratios continue in the near future, but will eventually decline and reach a relatively normal level.

3. Additional information

See also

Haider, H. (2012). *Sex selection: micro-level drivers and enabling/preventive factors* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report). Birmingham, UK: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham.
<http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HDQ855.pdf>

Selected websites visited

BRIDGE, Eldis, UNFPA, UNFPA India, UNICEF, WHO, Population Reference Bureau, International Planned Parenthood Federation, UN Women, Gendercide Watch, Action Aid, Plan, Asian MetaCentre for Population and Sustainable Development Analysis, Chaitanya, IDRC, Research Institute of Asian Women, Open Democracy

Contributors

Evelyn Bazalgette, independent consultant
Paola Brambilla, IDS
BRIDGE International Advisory Committee members

Andrea Cornwall, University of Sussex
Naila Kabeer, SOAS
Shanti Mahendra, independent consultant

Suggested citation:

Birchall, J. and Rao., S. (2012) Interventions to tackle sex selection in Asia (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report). Birmingham, UK: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham.

About Helpdesk research reports: Helpdesk reports are based on 3 days of desk-based research. They are designed to provide a brief overview of the key issues; and a summary of some of the best literature available. Experts are contacted during the course of the research, and those able to provide input within the short time-frame are acknowledged.