

Gender discriminatory practices... How to combat?

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Introduction

- There is mankind but no womankind.
- There is housewife but no house husband.
- There is house mother but no house father.
- There is kitchen maid but no kitchen man.
- The unmarried women cross the threshold from Bachelor Girl
To Spinster
To Old maid
But the unmarried man is always Bachelor.
- Gender is the concept used to identify a human being as male, female or intersexes. Usually it is used to highlight the social distinctions between men and women; for example the positions they occupy the roles they play and the social status they have are socially constructed and allocated. Gender is distinguished from sex, which is biologically determined. Because gender is socially constructed, it is affected by many factors.
- Woman and men do not have equal access to and control over resources such as:
Money Transport Time
Because their decision making power within the family is unequal, With men enjoying privileges that women are denied.
- Women access to health services is restricted
- Discrimination means treating one or more members of a specified group unfairly as compared with other people.
- Discrimination in any form hampers peaceful coexistence, progress and prosperity.
- A man needs a woman to make a family healthy. Coexistence based on mutual respect, regard, concern and love is indispensable for building a healthy family.
- Discrimination against girls and women in the developing world is a devastating reality. It results in millions of individual tragedies, which add up to lost potential for entire countries. Studies show there is a direct link between a country's attitude toward women and its progress socially and economically. The status of women is central to the health of a society. If one part suffers, so does the whole. Tragically, female children are most defenseless against the trauma of gender discrimination. The following obstacles are stark examples of what girls worldwide face. But the good news is that new generations of girls represent the most promising source of change for women and men in the developing world today.

Definition

According to (CEDAW) Convention on The Elimination of all forms of discrimination Against women (UN in 1979) defined as

" Any distinction, exclusive or restriction made on the basis of sex, which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women of human rights and fundamental freedom in the political, cultural, civil or any other field."

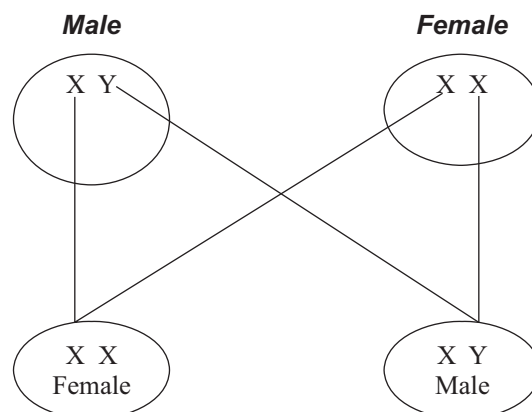
Practices of gender discriminatin

- Selective abortion of female foetuses
- Medical termination of pregnancy
- Female infanticide
- Differential feeding / lack of nutrition
- Lack of authority in health care decisions
- No say on sexuality and reproduction
- Domestic violence
- Commercial sex workers

1. Infanticide and selective abortion of female fetuses / MTP

Gender discrimination emanates from an ideology that favors men / boys and under values women / girls. It starts from the womb / conception by determining the sex of the child.

Determination of the sex



- Modern technology has now come to the aid of perpetuating the culture of discrimination without resorting to extreme forms such as infanticide.
- Every doctor / nurse / health worker has to be able to make aware to husbands that its their 'X' or 'Y' sperms that determine the sex of the child. This is simple health education that needs to be especially targeted to men.
- There is a suitable differences between "Wanting a Boy" and "Not Wanting a Girl".

Case presentation

Revathy (name changed) a 28 year old lady holding her new born baby jumped into a well in the early morning

just 12 days after her delivery. The baby died but the mother survived with a fractured calcaneum. Revathy had been educated till 12th standard in convent school, her husband had just studied up to 8th standard and a daily wage worker. This was the third (GIRL) child in the family and the husband had been threatening to remarry on this issue.

- Availability of prenatal diagnostic techniques like
 - Amniocentesis
 - Ultrasound scan

Made it possible to find out the sex of the child even before it is born and to selectively abort female fetuses.

- According to sample registration survey (SRS)
 - There are about 943 – 952 female births for every 1000 male births.
 - 2001 census found only 933 / 1000 with sole exception of Kerala 1058 / 1000 male.
- In extreme cases, parents make the horrific choice to end their baby girl's life. One woman named Lakshmi from Tamil Nadu, an impoverished region of India, fed her baby sap from an oleander bush mixed with castor oil until the girl bled from the nose and died. "A daughter is always liabilities. How can I bring up a second?" said Lakshmi to explain why she chose to end her baby's life. "Instead of her suffering the way I do, I thought it was better to get rid of her." Sex-selective abortions are even more common than infanticides in India. They are growing ever more frequent as technology makes it simple and cheap to determine a fetus' gender. In Jaipur, a Western Indian city of 2 million people, 3,500 sex-determined abortions are carried out every year. The gender ratio across India has dropped to an unnatural low of 927 females to 1,000 males due to infanticide and sex-based abortions.
- China has its own long legacy of female infanticide. In the last two decades, the government's infamous one-child policy has weakened the country's track record even more. By restricting household size to limit the population, the policy gives parents just one chance to produce a coveted son before being forced to pay heavy fines for additional children. In 1997, the World Health Organization declared, "...more than 50 million women were estimated to be 'missing' in China because of the institutionalized killing and neglect of girls due to Beijing's population control program." The Chinese government says that sex-selective abortion is one major explanation for the staggering number of Chinese girls who have simply vanished from the population in the last 20 years.

2. Domestic violence / Crime / Abuse

Domestic violence is an ongoing experience of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse faced by women within the household.

Surveys carried out throughout the world indicate that as many as 25 to 50% of all women in most societies have been physically assaulted by their intimate partner (WHO2002).

According to NFHS -2

- 21% of women in the reproductive age group (21–49 years) experienced some form of violence.
 - 11% experienced violence during previous 12 months
- There has been a phenomenal rise in the crime rate against

women. According to National Commission for women's rights based on data given by the ministry of women and child development.

- Every 26 minutes a women is molested.
- Every 54 minutes a rape takes place.
- Every 48 minutes an eve teasing incident occur.
- Every 4 minutes a women in kidnapped.
- Every 10 minutes a women is burnt to death over dowry.
- Every 33 minutes one act of cruelty
- Every 7 minutes one criminal offence.

Against women takes place in our country. Can we be proud of our advancement in technology, Education and social standards in the contract of the above truths.

3. Lack of authority to make health care decisions

- Women are bearers of children with no right to decide if, when and how many to have. The notion of preference further dehumanizes women to machines which have to produce children until the desired number of sons is reached.
- According to NFHS – 2, 50% of women in reproductive age group stated that they had no say in decision making regarding their health.

4. Differential feeding / Lack of nutrition

NFHS – 2 Indicate that

- Median duration of breastfeeding of girls was slightly lower (24.6 months) than boys (26.4 months).
- Large portion of female children were severely under weight (19.1%) than boys (16.9 %.)
- In Rajasthan, UP and many other parts of India it is usual for girls / women to eat less than boys / men and to have their meal after the men finished their meal.

5. Health care

- There is evidence that women wait longer than man to seek care for illness partly due to their unwillingness to disrupt household functioning until they become incapacitated.
- When they fell sick with diarrhea a smaller proportion of girls (61.9%) were taken to health facility as compared with boys (64.8%).
- Female child mortality is higher (36.7/1000) than male child (24.9/1000).
- More than half of women in reproductive age group were anemic.
- A study of STD clinic in 1992 indicates that 1/3 of women were infected by their husbands.
- While majority of the male patients were infected by commercial sex workers.
- Not a single man was infected by his wife.
- Women are almost often pushed into sex work by poverty, domestic violence and discrimination.

Measures for combating discriminatory practices

Elimination of discrimination is hard task unless the following measures are taken

- Adequate policies, programs and legislation by government

- The following are some of the Judiciary and Legislatures
- Immoral traffic prevention act (ITPA – 1986)
 - Protection from domestic violence bill 2001
 - Regulation and prevention of misuse act 1994 (prenatal diagnosis techniques)
 - Dowry prohibition act 1961
 - Political will to implement rules and laws.
 - Community should take a crucial steps to educate girls about their rights through community awareness, counseling and empowerment.
 - NGO's Should conduct awareness program in helping to change the public attitudes towards gender by taking up a campaign against discrimination.
 - Media can enlighten people in building public opinion against discriminatory practices.
 - Empowerment of women to
 - Instill self confidence
 - Sense of independence
 - Capability to resist discrimination imposed by male.
 - Serious action would need to be taken against medical professionals who are a party to sex selective abortion of female foetuses.

- Gender sensitization training is needed right down the line from decision makers and medical professionals to community health workers, opinion makers such as school teachers and community leaders.
- Targets for reduction of mortality and morbidity and for coverage of health services and nutritional supplementation programs should be specified by sex.
- Problem identification - By setting minimal indicators such as
 - Sex specific data on mortality
 - Morbidity
 - Nutritional status
 - Health care utilization etc.
- To incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- To establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective Protection of women against discrimination; and
- To ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, Organizations or enterprises.



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