

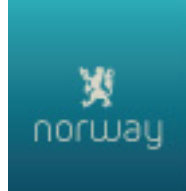
## Status of Women in India/Gender and NIPI

### Background:

- The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14). India has a long history of women's activism, and Indian women have been leaders in the emerging global women's movement. The gender paradox or gap in India is an interesting phenomenon. On the one hand several Indian women feature on the world list of most influential women (Sonia Gandhi, Indira Nooyi (Pepsico)) on the other hand many particularly in rural India remained subjugated, marginalized and disenfranchised. It has only been in the last 10 years, however, that this shift in thinking has begun to be felt within Indian society itself.
- India made dowry illegal in 1961. In the 1980s, the Indian government began to acknowledge women as key actors in development, instead of treating them only as welfare recipients. In 1985, it converted its Division for Women's Welfare into the Department of Women and Child Development. A range, of government programs has been launched to increase economic opportunity for women. Agitation began for a national-level reservation for women's participation at every level of the political system, resulting in one of the most important triumphs to date -- the reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj.
- In 1990s, grants from foreign donor agencies enabled the formation of new women-oriented NGOs. Self-help groups and NGOs such as Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) have played a major role in women's rights in India. Many women have emerged as leaders of local movements. For example, Medha Patkar of the Narmada Bachao Andolan.
- Norway (through the Embassy in New Delhi) has supported leadership of women in Local Democracy (Panchayati Raj) in 6 states through Institutional cooperation between Aagaz Foundation and Kommunenes sentralforbund (KS) in Norway. The main aim is to build the capacity of elected women representatives in order to be truly effective and empowered leaders. In addition the Royal Norwegian Embassy also supports a regional project that builds on exchange of experiences and networking within the South Asian region.

- **In males significantly outnumber females and this imbalance has increased over time.**
- **Every 6<sup>th</sup> infant death is due to gender discrimination**
- **Of 15 million girl babies 25% will not live to see their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday**
- **India's maternal mortality rates are among the world's highest in the global perspective, Indian accounts for 19 percent of all live births and 27 percent of all maternal deaths.**

### Major causes for gender inequality:



Looking through the lens of hunger and poverty, there are seven major areas of discrimination against women in India

- *Malnutrition* India has exceptionally high rates of child malnutrition. Girls are breast-fed less. Adult women consume approximately 1,000 fewer calories per day than men. Malnourished women give birth to malnourished children, perpetuating the cycle.
- *Poor Health* Females receive less health care than males. When sick, little girls are not taken to the doctor as frequently as are their brothers. Many women die in childbirth of easily prevented complications, pregnancy-related deaths account for one-quarter of all fatalities among women aged 15 to 29. Working conditions and environmental pollution further impairs women's health.
- *Lack of education* Families are far less likely to educate girls than boys, and far more likely to pull them out of school, either to help out at home or from fear of violence.
- *Overwork:* Women work longer hours and their work is more arduous than men's, yet their work is unrecognised.
- *Unskilled:* In women's primary employment sector - agriculture - extension services overlook women.
- *Mistreatment* In recent years, there has been an alarming rise in atrocities against women in India, in terms of rapes, assaults and dowry-related murders.
- *Powerlessness:* While women are guaranteed equality under the constitution, legal protection has little effect in the face of prevailing patriarchal traditions.

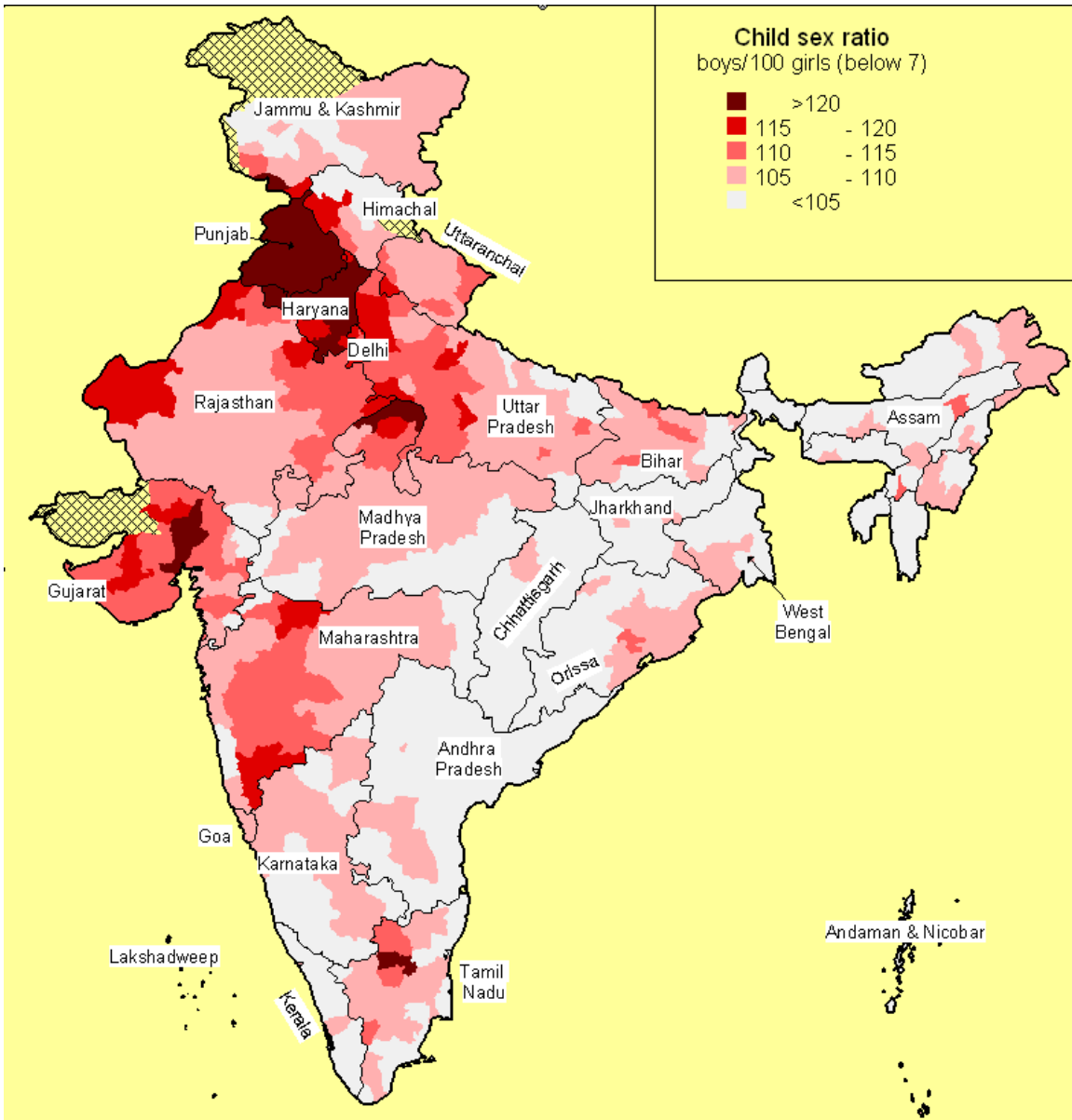
. “The highest national priority must be the unleashing of woman power in governance. That is the single most important source of societal energy that we have kept corked for half a century”.

--Mani Shankar Aiyar, cabinet minister Panchayati Raj

## GENDER RATIO IN NIPI STATES

| Census of India 2001                      |                | (India, States & Union territories) |                    |                    |             |
|---|----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| T 00-003: Population by sex and sex ratio |                |                                     |                    |                    |             |
| State Code                                | India/State/Ut | Persons                             | Males              | Females            | Sex ratio   |
|   | <b>India</b>   | <b>1,028,610,328</b>                | <b>532,156,772</b> | <b>496,453,556</b> | <b>933</b>  |
|   | Rajasthan      | 56,507,188                          | 29,420,011         | 27,087,177         | 921         |
|   | Uttar Pradesh  | 166,197,921                         | 87,565,369         | 78,632,552         | 898         |
|   | Bihar          | 82,998,509                          | 43,243,795         | 39,754,714         | 919         |
|   | Orissa         | 36,804,660                          | 18,660,570         | 18,144,090         | 972         |
|   | Madhya Pradesh | 60,348,023                          | 31,443,652         | 28,904,371         | 919         |
|   | <b>Kerala</b>  | <b>31,841,374</b>                   | <b>15,468,614</b>  | <b>16,372,760</b>  | <b>1058</b> |

Source: Primary Census Abstract : Census of India 2001



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