A Comparative Study of Son Preference in India and China: Assessing Policy Interventions to Address Discrimination against Girls

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Country: India and China
Research Institution: Primary Institution- International Center for Research on Women, Asia Regional Office, India
Partner- Nankai University, China
Address: International Center for Research on Women
Asia Regional Office
C-139, Defence Colony
New Delhi- 110024
India
Research Team Members:
India Team- Priya Nanda, Aprajita Mukherjee, Sonvi Kapoor, Manveen Kohli, Susan Lee-Rife, Rohini Pande
China Team- Tan Lin, Wu Fan, Zhou Yao

Contact Information: Priya Nanda, Ph. D
Director, Social & Economic Development Group
Email: pnanda@icrw.org

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Abstract
This report summarizes the objectives, processes and accomplishments of the ‘Counting Girls’ Project, Phase I. The first phase, which spanned duration of twelve months beginning February 2008, was funded by IDRC for a total of $132,740. Through this project we aim to conduct a comparative study of policies that address daughter discrimination in India and China. To achieve this objective, in the first phase we researched and fully situated the problem of son preference- its dimensions, causes and consequences- in India and China. We also mapped policy initiatives that seek to address the issue in each country, and conducted a preliminary analysis of the design of select policy initiatives, which seem to have the potential to impact. Of these analysed policy initiatives, one or a few need to be pursued on the ground to assess their implementation and impact in the second phase of the study. A consultation meeting of experts on the issue from India, China and the US, was held to facilitate discussion around what policy initiatives must be carried to the next phase for further analysis, and what methodologies must be adopted for the same. Through this phase of the study we found that both India and China have similar types of policy initiatives in place. Several are well-crafted, pay attention to the context of son preference, and directly address son preference and daughter discrimination. However, contradictions and tensions between aims of different policies and laws, poor implementation, and limited evaluation weaken the scope of otherwise sound policies to be effective. Based on these findings and inputs received at the consultation meeting, we have developed a concept note for ‘Counting Girls, Phase II, which is presently under review by IDRC.

Keywords: Daughter Discrimination, Policy Interventions, Son Preference Ideology
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1. The Research Problem

India and China have manifested strong son preference and discrimination against girls, for centuries. In both countries millions of girls are killed before they are born or at birth, and many of those who are born face neglect during infancy and early childhood which can lead to a life-time disadvantage for girls in nutrition and health. These discriminatory practices not only affect girls’ ability to live a life free of violence and coercion, and to realize rights and freedoms starting from birth, but these also affect the broader demographic structures and social, cultural, and political life of both India and China. While governments of both countries enacted laws to combat childhood gender-based discrimination as early as the 1990s, daughter discrimination has increased. The situation continues to worsen despite economic growth and improvements in other realms of gender equality, such as a narrowing gender gap in education.

Both India and China have similar patterns of discrimination, similar patriarchal kinship systems and are experimenting with relatively similar policy approaches. Yet, there is little systematic analysis to examine how policies in these countries have tried to address this issue and why discrimination against girls has increased despite these efforts. Such a comparative analysis may lead to more effective solutions by providing an opportunity to learn from each other’s successes and failures.

The Counting Girls project addresses these gaps by conducting a comparative analysis of policies that seek to address discrimination against girls in India and China, through a two-phase study. In the first phase we specifically tried to understand the issues, map all policy interventions that sought to address daughter discrimination in each country, and shortlisted those with the maximum potential to impact the issue. We also conducted a preliminary analysis to explore the dynamics around the conceptualisation and documentation of these shortlisted policies. In the second phase of the study we will follow one or two of these policies on the ground to assess their implementation and outreach to target groups.

2. Objectives

The overall objective of the research project is to undertake a systematic analysis of policy initiatives addressing daughter discrimination. Through this policy analysis we seek to identify and recommend to civil society leaders and policymakers concrete steps to improve policy design and implementation, in order to redress the problem of son preference and resulting gender discrimination in India and China. In the first phase, we specifically sought to achieve the objectives mentioned below.

- To document and fully situate the problems of discrimination against girls, including sex selective abortions and female infanticide, in India and China
and daughter discrimination manifests itself, and captures the interaction between the ideological and empirical determinants of the problem. We also prepared an issues brief which fully situates the problem of son preference and daughter discrimination in the specific contexts of India and China.

- **To build a network of Chinese and Indian experts working on the issue from a wide variety of fields who will provide input into relevant policy processes to analyze, and be critical stakeholders and partners in applying the results of a subsequent Phase II policy analysis in each country**
  We built a network of over 35 Indian and Chinese experts on the issue through our stakeholder engagement during the course of this phase and through the consultation meeting the marked its culmination. These experts include researchers and academicians, policymakers and implementers, donors, activists, legal experts and the medical fraternity.

- **To determine the content of this subsequent Phase II, specifically, (a) identify policies in each country to be analyzed, and (b) develop appropriate analytical methodologies**
  The Consultation Meeting served as the forum for discussing with experts what policies or types of policies must be pursued on the ground, in the second phase of the project. The meeting comprised presentations from experts on the issue; presentations from the India and China project teams on their understanding of the policy scenario in their respective countries along with a preliminary analysis of policies with the maximum potential to address daughter discrimination; and a final discussion on what goals the project’s second phase must seek to achieve and the methodologies to be used for the same.

- **To submit a proposal to IDRC for a Phase II in-depth comparative analysis of policy interventions and actionable policy recommendations based on the analyses of Phases I and II, so as to address forms of discrimination against girls in India and China**
  The concept note for Counting Girls, Phase II has been submitted to IDRC. We will begin work on the full proposal soon after reviews on the concept note have been received.

### 3. Methodology

To achieve the objectives of situating the problem of daughter discrimination in the specific contexts of India and China, and of mapping and analyzing policy interventions with potential to address the issue, we primarily undertook a review of existing published and grey literature, as well as engagement with experts on the issue. Based on our learning’s from these activities, we developed tools to facilitate analysis of background literature and policies, to help us achieve project goals for this phase.
**Literature Review**

We conducted a review of existing published and grey literature on son preference and daughter discrimination, in order to fully situate the problem- its determinants and consequences- in the specific sites of India and China. Findings from this literature were documented in a matrix to show, at a glance, the type of discrimination that is most researched in the literature and what variables are more frequently documented as determinants of son preference and daughter discrimination.

Government policies, legislations, and schemes/programmes that aim to address the problem, were also primarily mapped by surveying websites of the Ministry for Women and Child Development, Health and Family Welfare, Human Resource Development, Law and Justice, and Labour, as well as by reviewing published and grey literature. For the analysis of shortlisted policy interventions too we conducted a reading of literature that discussed the general policy discourse around the issue in each country as well as discourse around the particular intervention, documents from international events that might have impacted the issue in both/either country, in addition to the policy documents and any existing reviews of the selected interventions.

In this project we used the Endnotes software to catalogue all literature. This software makes all literature accessible in one on-line library, and facilitates referencing.

**Stakeholder Engagement**

Engagement with stakeholders was another methodology used during the study both to gain insights into the issue and the policy discourse around it, as well as to get reviews on our work at different stages of this phase. These stakeholders included researchers and academicians, policymakers and implementers, donors, activists, legal experts and the medical fraternity. Our engagement with these experts comprised personal interviews, a brainstorming session to discuss the policy analysis methodology we developed, and the final consultation meeting.

To contextualize the problem of daughter discrimination in both India and China, we conducted stakeholder interviews in addition to our review of existing literature. For these interviews we developed a questionnaire which aimed to capture an understanding of the causes for increasing daughter discrimination, of the shift in focus from sex selective abortion to daughter discrimination, and of the main actors influencing the issue at the conceptual as well as policy levels.

In order to gain sharper insights into the policy discourse around the issue, we developed four short questionnaires to be used for interviewing policymakers, policy implementers, academicians, as well as the NGO and donor community. The questionnaires mainly tried to capture opinions of different groups on the relevance of normative issues like son preference to the government, their understanding of the government’s role vis-à-vis the same, their critique of the existing government response as well as their inputs on a more adequate response to the problem.
We also sought suggestions for developing a methodology for policy review and analysis which could facilitate the making of recommendations to the government on such normative issues. Stakeholders emphasized on analyzing policies not only in terms of what a policy document states as the intention but also the environment within which policies were conceptualized and articulated. They also stressed the need to examine the political will to successfully address the problem of son preference and daughter discrimination.

The policy screening and analysis methodology that was developed following these activities was then presented in a brainstorming session with key stakeholders to gain their feedback on the same. The policy analysis methodology was largely approved and suggestions were given for improving it further.

Finally, we held a two-day consultation meeting which primarily aimed at bringing together experts from India and China to exchange information and experiences on existing policy interventions addressing daughter discrimination. Specifically, we sought to discuss the processes and outcomes of the project’s first phase and gain inputs on what policies to analyze and which methodologies to use in the second phase.

The meeting was organized into six sessions, each comprising of a presentation on both India and China. These sessions covered aspects of the problem ranging from its underlying causes to the policy response in India and China, the policy analysis conducted during the ‘Counting Girls’ project, and an in-depth discussion of specific types of policy responses to the problem.

These sessions were followed by a final discussion aimed at identifying a set of key policies that would influence or potentially have a strong influence in addressing the issue of daughter discrimination. The discussion brought up many suggestions on what policies or types of policies could be selected for the study’s second phase, and the methodologies that could be adopted for studying the potential and implementation of these on the ground. All inputs received were documented in a report that was circulated in our network of stakeholders. Suggestions from the meeting have also been incorporated into the Phase II concept note submitted to IDRC.

Our engagement with stakeholders, throughout this phase of the study, enabled us to stay abreast with the thinking of various groups on this issue, and also helped us get the reviews as well as buy-in of these experts for our study.

**Conceptual Framework**

Based on our learnings from these activities we developed a conceptual framework that lays out the various levels of the problem of son preference and daughter discrimination. We also benefitted from an internal peer review discussion of the conceptual framework, and adapted it based on the peer group’s comments and suggestions.
Our conceptual framework underscores the distinction between ideology and practices where it is the ideology of son preference that motivates and results in the practices of discrimination against girls. A preference for sons arises due to gender-in equitable norms, beliefs and customs that result in a lower value for girls and women. As the ideology is translated into practices, there is a resultant, observable impact on demographic outcomes such as the sex ratio at birth.

The overarching structure of patriarchy is arguably the pivot, which anchors and supports the ideology of son preference, and is in turn, reinforced by the same. We argue that, even within patriarchy, the kinship system, with its emphasis on lineage and patrilocality makes investments in daughters less attractive to their natal families. On the other hand, these kinship norms offer various social and economic benefits to parents with sons; thereby, ensuring that parents prefer to bear sons and eliminate daughters. In addition to the pivotal kinship structure, there are customs and practices that support the patriarchal structure and provide additional incentives to those who bear and rear sons.

Besides patriarchy and the ideology of son preference, there are other ‘influencers’ that affect whether ideology does manifest into practices or not. These are the individual-level and structural determinants of the problem. Individual-level determinants are attributed to individual choice and/or decisions, although these are also affected by structural
determinants. For instance, preferred family size, level of education and family structure (nuclear or joint) are all examples of individual-level determinants. On the other hand, structural determinants include those factors that are beyond the individual, and are attributable to structural forces. Examples include external forces like legislation, media, globalization and urbanization. Both these set of determinants interact and influence the ideology of son preference either in a positive or negative way. While the personal decision of a family to have no more than one child while at the same time wishing for a son as their only child reinforces the ideology of son preference, government legislation like the PC-PNDT Act discourages the manifestations of the ideology. In addition, the individual and structural determinants are not mutually exclusive categories. They mutually interact with each other to either encourage or discourage practices of daughter discrimination.

The practices of daughter discrimination in the Indian and Chinese context have broadly been categorized as female feticide, female infanticide and daughter neglect. These practices result in social and demographic outcomes like skewed sex ratios, poor health and nutrition among girl children, bride selling, restricted opportunities for girls, etc.

Not only did this framework help us situate the problem of son preference and daughter discrimination conceptually, but also demonstrated that in order to develop sound public policies and initiatives to counter practices of daughter discrimination, it is important to locate practices within the context of the ideology, the determinants and the structures of patriarchy. We used this framework as a yardstick to assess the conceptual soundness of mapped policies that sought to address the issue, and if they were intervening the problem at the level most likely to create an impact. We learnt that what is most amenable to change through policy stimulus, may not be the most effective in influencing the desired change. While most policies address the practices of daughter discrimination, only a few aims at making changes in the patriarchal structure that is pivotal to the problem.

**Methodology for Policy Selection and Analysis**

**India Study**

Policies with the potential to address daughter discrimination were selected in four stages. First, we identified all policies, acts, and schemes that were likely to influence the issue of son preference and daughter neglect, and that targeted women, children or both. As mentioned above, these policies were identified and selected based on a review of policy documents, published and unpublished literature, interviews with stakeholders and NGO representatives active in women’s issues more broadly and in daughter discrimination specifically. This generated a total of 67 policy initiatives.

The second stage further narrowed the range of relevant policies based on two criteria: those that mentioned the girl child as a specific target group, and those that included language to address structural changes in gender and social norms, as identified in our
conceptual framework. This level of sorting further narrowed initiatives to be mapped from 67 to 32.

In stage three, these 32 policy initiatives were shortlisted to be included in the fourth stage if they met three criteria:

- The policy initiative must directly or indirectly address daughter discrimination, that is, it must address at least one of the underlying factors of the problem, included in our conceptual framework
- The initiative should have been in existence for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 15 years
- The initiative must exclusively target women, girls or both. Women and girls must not be only one amongst the many groups targeted by the policy initiative

These criteria narrowed the list to 23 policy initiatives that were included in the fourth stage of the selection procedure. At this stage, the 23 shortlisted initiatives were stratified by approach (incentive-based or punitive); level of implementation (national, state or district level); the exact group of women or girls targeted; and the issues targeted. These target issues included gender and social structure, women’s empowerment, education, employment, sex-selection or female infanticide, poverty alleviation or economic growth, formation of women’s collectives, facilitating women’s or girls’ control over resources and productive assets, political participation, population, reproductive health, nutrition and health.

Of these stratified policy initiatives, we selected those for analysis that had stand-alone potential to reduce daughter discrimination and did not just have the potential to influence the issue with support from other initiatives. A total of 10 policy initiatives with stand-alone potential to address daughter discrimination were selected for review and analysis.

With regard to analytics, we developed a policy analysis matrix to screen and assess the 10 selected policy initiatives along three broad parameters: conceptualization; articulation and implementation.

Conceptualization included an analysis of the objectives of a policy and its stated intent. We tested this against our understanding of the larger set of issues that surround and affect the aspect of the problem of daughter discrimination that the policy professed to address. These issues, as layered within a conceptual framework are classified as: structural factors that affect the ideology of son preference; determinants that mediate and affect the different practices of daughter discrimination; and directly observable outcomes of these practices. A policy can then be situated at the levels of the structure, determinants or outcomes, depending on which aspect it addresses. This conceptualization allows for a policymaker to recognize the level at which a policy is
situated and, accordingly, the factors at other levels of this structure that could influence the success of the policy.

This conceptualization also examines the environment in which policies are made. Specific indicators that constitute the environment are priorities, perspective and motivations of the ministry leading the policy intervention in question, and the philosophy of the government in power at the time of policy making. Given the federal nature of the Indian state with different political parties in power at the centre and the state that might have varied perspectives and priorities on an issue, the environment also includes the response of states to federal policies.

The stakeholder interviews, examination of relevant literature, and discussion with NGO representatives had emphasized the important role that non-state actors play in the development of policy initiatives. In order to understand how non-state actors influence policymaking and the discourse around it, the review matrix also intended to examine their role against each mapped initiative.

Articulation of a policy initiative clearly suggested deconstruction and analysis of the language of each policy initiative in order to determine the actual motivations underlying the same. Key words or phrases were followed in the policy document to better understand any bias or progressive understanding, the context in which the key words were used. In addition, the execution plan provided for in the initiative was mapped against the ‘stated intent’ of the policy i.e. did the initiative provide for adequate structure to enable fulfillment of the initiative’s stated objectives. Again, the conceptual framework served to be an important filter through which ‘articulation’ was assessed as a key parameter of analysis.

Implementation included an analysis of what factors and processes made policies implementable- the human resources allocated towards implementation, the budget and the implementation structure (whether it was complex, easy etc). These categories were incorporated into the policy matrix. In addition, a secondary criterion that influences implementation, whether policy initiatives were communicated or disseminated well, was also reviewed. Another factor that influences implementation is its access potential. The access potential factor was introduced to the matrix to understand whether the policy initiative had particular relevance to the targeted group and whether the target group had potential access and awareness of the policy or seemingly identified with potential benefits from the policy.

After analyzing these 10 policy initiatives we shortlisted 4, that seemed to have the maximum potential to address daughter discrimination. The analysis of these 4 initiatives was shared with experts during the consultation. We also proposed these initiatives as those we could pursue on the ground, in the second phase of the study.
China Study

The China study mapped policy initiatives at the macro, Meta and micro level. Policy initiatives at each of these levels were then analyzed according to policy goals at that level of intervention, target group, policy content, and tools of policy implementation.

Policy goals at the three levels of intervention are as follows:

- **Macro Level Policy Goals** - To reduce son preference, empower women, and establish a social environment of gender equality in development.
- **Meta Level Policy Goals** - To operationalise and implement macro goals taking into account provincial level needs and constraints.
- **Micro Level Policy Goals** - To operationalise specific aspects of micro and meta level policy initiatives which are relevant to a particular village or town.

The study also sorted policy initiatives according to the groups they target: all people; Women at all ages; Couples at reproductive ages; Families with one-child & two-girls; Family planning professionals. The review highlighted if policy initiatives at each level were targeting the specific and correct groups or if there focus was indistinct.

The content or type of policy initiative was another criterion for policy review. Policy initiative could target empowerment, be welfare-oriented, punitive or incentive-based. Finally, policy initiatives were strategized according to the tools or approach they adopted for policy implementation. These approaches to policy implementation included the economic, legal, administrative or IEC approach, as well as the tools of service delivery.

Based on this analysis of policies at all three levels, the study recommended that in order to strengthen the policy response to the issue in China, there is need to: strengthen policies that seek to empower women and change people’s attitudes towards the value of the girl child; define target populations and responsible authorities more clearly; improve the understanding and inclusion of gender in the policy content; refine the policy tools used to achieve policy goals.

Preparing for Consultation Meeting

The project teams in India and China began preparing for the consultation meeting in September 2008, by beginning to pull our research findings into an issues paper, to be circulated at the meeting. Simultaneously, we set to preparing our policy analyses documents to be disseminated at the meeting. While the India team prepared four policy briefs and a policy synthesis document highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the existing policy response in India, the China team prepared a report on their review of public policies in China and their recommendations based on the same. In addition we also developed five factsheets capturing the socio-demographic outcomes of the problem of daughter discrimination in both countries. ICRW (ARO) designed a folder especially for the consultation, in which these documents were circulated to all participants.
ICRW began the logistical preparations for the consultation in November, 2008. We firstly identified the Indian and Chinese experts who would present at the meeting. We really took this opportunity to broaden out network of experts, and selected presenters from not only amongst our stakeholders but also those recommended by our contacts. Detailed guidelines were developed for presentations in each session, and sent to the presenters for their assistance. Presentations were also reviewed before the meeting, to ensure these met with the objectives for each session.

In addition to the presenters we invited experts whose presence was both substantively and strategically important to the outcomes of the consultation as well as the project. Participants at the meeting comprised of experts from a variety of backgrounds- donors, policy makers and implementers, researchers, activists and NGO representatives. We thought it imperative to know what experts from different fields believed would adequately address the problem of daughter discrimination, and what their expectations were from the second phase of this study.

**Consultation Meeting**

The consultation titled Policy Interventions with Potential to Address Son Preference and Daughter Discrimination in India and China was held at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi on 1st and 2nd April, 2009. At this consultation we presented our preliminary policy analysis to participating experts, and held an intensive discussion on them on what policy interventions might be most pertinent for an in-depth field level analysis by ICRW and partners in phase II of the project. We also discussed the current policy scenario in India and China and the possible challenges and opportunities to improve policy interventions addressing the issue.

The meeting was organized into six sessions and a final discussion. Each session comprised of a presentation on both India and China. These sessions were organized along the following topics:

- Situating the Issue – Reasons, Patterns and Prevalence of Son Preference and Discrimination against Daughters
- Policy Overview – Policy Response and Dynamics in India and China
- Policy Analysis – Counting Girls Methodology in Phase I
- Case Studies of Policy Implementation Experiences in India and China – Policy Type 1: Ban on Sex Selection Technology
- Case Studies of Policy Implementation Experiences in India and China – Policy Type 2: Promoting the Girl Child
- Case Studies of Policy Implementation Experiences in India and China – Policy Type 3: Inheritance Rights for Women and Social Security
Through multiple presentations the project team established the need to examine the endemic problem of skewed Sex Ratios at Birth (SRB), within the larger context of son preference in both countries. While policy recommendations may be suggested by research, it would be tougher to change individual and familial preferences. Through this project, we had taken up the challenge to understand how this change could be best brought about. Discussions at the meeting highlighted the need to identify those policy interventions that worked on the ground, and understand how government and non-government initiatives interacted to impact on the problem of daughter discrimination. The highlights of the discussions during the consultation gave insight to the types of policy responses to the problem of daughter discrimination in India and China that should be analyzed, and the possible approach to be adopted for analysis of these policy interventions.

It was highlighted that while mapping existing policy interventions in India and China that seek to address daughter discrimination, it was important to identify the gaps in the policy responses as well. Among the existing policy responses, it was essential to focus on ‘types of policy responses’ rather than emphasizing on specific and individual policy interventions. Analyzing the ‘types’ per se was key to understanding their role and impact. One type of policy response- Conditional Cash Transfers- had consistently received backing from the government. Their merit needed to be reviewed to check if these merely offset the liability of raising a daughter or actually increased the value of girls within families.

A strong case was made for selecting policies with analytical linkages between themselves, and the potential to together address son preference effectively on the ground. Successful models such as South Korea where improvement in SRB had resulted due to synergies between various factors could offer important lessons.

A key recommendation was to review policy interventions that progressively address the determinants of daughter discrimination in order to reduce the problem. An analysis of laws that lead to discrimination against daughters was also deemed important to understand the role played by legislature with regard to the problem of daughter discrimination.

The need to identify specific geographic areas where daughter discrimination was practiced and then study the policy initiatives operating in those areas was also suggested by the participants. It was recommended that those areas that had recently started showing significant improvements in the status or conditions of girls be selected to study whether the improvement was the result of policy interventions or community responses or both. Research reports shared at the consultation indicated that areas with health and educational resources had shown reduced daughter neglect. It was suggested that a village providing public health and education services be chosen to assess if these services really make the desired impact on the problem.

With regard to policy analysis, an ethnographic approach was highly recommended. It was considered important to map and analyze the life of policy interventions from the
time they were conceptualized to the manner in which they unfold on the ground. This was important as a national policy intervention in India is often implemented very differently in different states based on the priorities and context of that specific state.

It was highlighted that the policy analysis must not only be corrective but also pro-active. The analysis must be able to identify gaps in the current policy response to the problem and recommend how those gaps could be addressed. Either a prospective or a retrospective approach could be adopted to evaluate policy responses to daughter discrimination. Both quantitative and qualitative indicators would need to be chosen to evaluate the impact policies have on reducing the problem of son preference and daughter discrimination. It was decided that the indicators of change should not just be SRB but gender equality.

In addition to these substantive learnings, the consultation offered an excellent platform for us to network with experts, especially those from China, and to identify partners as well as strategic stakeholders for the next phase of our study.

**Post-Consultation Activities**

We prepared a Consultation report capturing the detailed discussions generated during the meeting, in order to help us develop the Phase II proposal. Insights and recommendations from this report were incorporated into the concept note developed for Phase II of the ‘Counting Girls’ project. The note has been sent to IDRC for review, and we will begin work on the proposal soon after receiving donor reviews on the concept note. We have also identified and approached the experts we would partner with to carry out Phase II of the study in China.


ICRW has developed a paper titled Counting Girls: Addressing Son Preference and Daughter Discrimination in India and China to be sent to peer review journals. The paper has been recently submitted to the World Development journal for review. The paper analyzes a range of policy initiatives in India and China against a conceptual framework that links the underlying ideology of son preference to its practices and outcomes. It highlights the existence of several sound policy initiatives that are unable to adequately impact the issue due to contradictions and tensions between the aims of different policy initiatives, poor implementation, and limited evaluation.

**4. Project Activities**

The matrix below details the main project activities carried out in the project, February 2008 - July 2009.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February - March 2008</td>
<td>Initiated process of setting up the sub-agreement with the China partners – Women’s Studies Institute of China (WSIC), with a team led by Dr. Lin Tan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March - June 2008</td>
<td>Conducted Literature Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March - November 2008</td>
<td>Conducted Stakeholder Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>June - July 2008</td>
<td>Developed Conceptual Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July - September 2008</td>
<td>Wrote the Issues paper for India and China</td>
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<tr>
<td>September - November 2008</td>
<td>Developed Policy selection and Analysis Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2008 - February 2009</td>
<td>Conducted detailed analysis of selected policy initiatives and developed policy briefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2008 - April 2009</td>
<td>Prepared for Consultation Meeting of India and China Experts on the issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>Held the Consultation Meeting in New Delhi on April 1-2, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April - June 2009</td>
<td>Developed and finalised a detailed consultation report and circulated it amongst participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2009</td>
<td>Presented ICRW’s ‘Counting Girls’, Phase I study findings at the PAA Conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2009 - June 2009</td>
<td>Developed the concept note for ‘Counting Girls’, Phase II, and sent for review to IDRC.</td>
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5. Project Outputs

Factsheets and Lists for Consultation

- Fact Sheet on Prenatal discrimination against girl children in China: Changes in Sex Ratio at Birth, 1990-2005- This factsheet highlights that the SRB in China is high and has increased over time in many provinces, reflecting persistent sex selection in these regions.

- Fact Sheet on Prenatal Discrimination against Girls in India: Changes in Sex Ratio at Birth, 1992-2006- This factsheet highlights that the SRB in India is high and has increased over time in many states, reflecting persistent sex selection. However, this pattern is not uniform across states or regions.

- Fact Sheet on Postnatal Discrimination against Indian Girls: Full Immunization, 1992-2006- This factsheet highlights that girls are less likely than boys to be immunized at the national level, in urban and rural areas, and in several states. Girls who have two or more older sisters are particularly disadvantaged in this regard.

- Factsheet on Postnatal Discrimination against Indian Girls: Severe Stunting, 1992-2006- This factsheet highlights that while there are no observable gender differences in severe stunting at the national level, disaggregating the data reveals that girls are at higher risk than boys in some states. Also, rural girls with two or more older sisters have significantly higher risk of severe stunting than other children.

- Factsheet on Reported Son Preference in India: 1992-2006- This factsheet highlights that reported son preference has declined from 1992-2006 in all states and in urban and rural areas. Declines have occurred in states in the north as well as the south.

- List of Chinese Policy Interventions Mapped for the ‘Counting Girls’ Project- This list includes all national and provincial level policy initiatives that were mapped for their potential to impact the issue of daughter discrimination in China.

- List of Indian Policy Interventions Mapped for the ‘Counting Girls’ Project-This list includes the policies, acts and schemes introduced at the national and state level, which have the potential to address daughter discrimination in the region.

Briefs for ICRW Website

- Son Preference and Daughter Discrimination in India and China: A Summary Description for the Counting Girls Consultation- This brief situates the issue of son preference and daughter discrimination in the context of India and China, and
offers a comparative analysis of the causes and consequences of the problem in both countries.

- Policies to Address Son Preference and Daughter Discrimination in India: A Preliminary Synthesis- This working draft synthesizes the findings from our analysis of the conceptualization and articulation of policy initiatives selected for their potential to impact the issue in India. Material from this paper will be utilized for publications mentioned below.

- Review and Analysis of Public Policies to Address Son Preference and an Adverse SRB in China: A Gender Perspective- This working draft report constitutes a review of macro, Meta and micro level policy initiatives with the potential to address son preference and the adverse SRB in China. Material from this report will be utilized for publications mentioned below.

**Presentations**

- Presentation at the Indian Association for the Study of Population (IASP) - ICRW, Asia Regional Office (ARO), presented its policy selection and analysis methodology at the 30th Annual Conference of the IASP, held in Bangalore in September 2008. The Conference focused on Population, Health and Gender, and ICRW presented in the session ‘Socio-Cultural Consequences of the Declining Sex Ratio’. The presentation situated the problem of skewed sex ratios within the larger context of son preference. Through our presentation we argued that despite policy responses to the issue, the problem of son preference and skewed sex ratios persists, resulting in unwanted outcomes for girls and women. Therefore, policies seeking to address the issue need to be reviewed, and our presentation offered one methodology that could be used to conduct the review of policy responses to normative issues like son preference. This perspective on the problem of skewed sex ratios and its consequences was widely acclaimed, and the methodology received a positive response

- PAA Presentation on Counting Girls: Addressing Son Preference and Daughter Discrimination in India and China- This presentation was made at the session on ‘Cross-national Differences in the Influence of Context on Children's Well-being’, at the PAA Conference, 2009.

- 5th APCRSH- We have submitted an abstract from the India policy analysis to a session ‘Imbalanced sex ratio at birth: strategies, policy frame-work, intervention and outcomes ’at the 5th APCRSH to be held in Beijing in October 2009.

**Publications**

- Counting Girls: Addressing Son Preference and Daughter Discrimination in India and China- This paper has been prepared for peer review journals, submitted to the World Development journal for review. This paper is under submission and
review guidelines and therefore cannot be shared, cited or used for any other publication. We will keep IDRC informed about the review and selection process as it happens.

- A paper focusing on the analysis of one or two Indian policy initiatives addressing the issue has been planned for the Economic and Political Weekly. This paper is currently being developed. We will keep IDRC informed as we finalize and submit for the journal review process.

6. Overall Assessment and Recommendations

There has been little understanding or analysis of the policies for addressing the issue of son preference and daughter discrimination. In particular, we have looked at two countries in the region with adverse sex ratio of high magnitude and long history of son preference. While the accent was on a comparative analysis across India and China, the project teams instead developed unique policy analytics for the two countries, while comparing across the same core indicators. One of the recommendations that come out of the Phase I of this study is the need to develop flexible yet comparative methodologies and frameworks for any systematic research across the two countries. Some fairly useful and concrete tools were developed for this study that might be useful to other researchers working on similar issues.

In particular, we would like to draw attention to the following outputs:

- **Conceptual Framework-** This framework is a schematic representation of the ideology, practices and outcomes of son preference. It underscores that the ideology is persistent because it is reinforced and supported by patriarchal norms and structures. Research studies often study the tangible outcomes and practices emanating from the ideology of son preference. Instead policies attempting to address this complex issue need to understand the totality of the influences on the ideology, the interconnectedness between structures, ideology, practices and outcomes.

- **Policy Selection and Analysis Methodology-** The teams developed unique policy analysis methodologies in the two countries to better discern the impact of a policy statement and its potential implementation. These tools could be adapted and used by other researchers working in similar areas of policy analysis.

- **Consultation Meeting Report-** This report captures the proceedings of the consultation meeting which brought together, for the first time, more than 35 Indian and Chinese experts on the issue of daughter discrimination to one forum; thereby, facilitating an experts’ discussion on the similarities and differences between the problem and policy responses to it in the two countries.

- **Network of Experts-** Through this study we have been able to build a network of experts on the issue of son preference and daughter discrimination in India and
China. This network of experts comprises of demographers, sociologists, legal experts and policy makers.

In addition to these technical achievements, we gained very meaningful insights into the policy discourse around the issue in both countries, during the course of this phase of the study. We found contradictions and tensions between the aims of different policy initiatives, poor implementation plans, and limited evaluations of existing policies.

We plan to develop on these learnings and pursue one- or two key policy initiatives on the ground, in order to study their implementation, in Phase II of the study. We have developed a concept note for the Phase II of ‘Counting Girls’ and have sent it for review to IDRC. Based on the feedback and response from IDRC we will subsequently develop a proposal for more in-depth analysis of selected policies that address son preference in India and China.