

Population First

Newsletter March - April 2018

Dear Friends,

While women are breaking glass ceilings and excelling in their respective fields the violence against them seems to be on the rise with every passing day.

The Kathua & Unnao incidents, in their monstrosity and political overtones, have sent shock waves through the collective conscience of the nation & shaken us to the very core. Close on the heels of these another string of horrendous crimes have followed, all involving innocent girls and even babies. The bestial nature of these crimes defies all standards of humanity and civilized society. The impunity with which these crimes have been committed is a sad comment on the legal & penal mechanisms of our country.

At present we are surrounded by questions that beg answers. Who is responsible for this monstrous and decadent mindset that seems to be quite entrenched in society today? How deep is this rot and what can we do to remedy it? What sort of people are we investing with power who defend and are at times part of such monstrosities themselves? Is capital punishment the answer? We all know the dual hazard of such measures leading to people from weaker and marginalized sections being made scapegoats and sent to the gallows and on the other hand the victim being killed to destroy all evidence. Who is responsible for unleashing the animal instinct and promoting carnal and material pleasures above all else?

We as a society need to do a lot of soul searching and try and find answers to these questions. We need to come together and start a million initiatives to rebuild our society on the foundation of humanity, compassion, justice and equality.

Ujjwala Mhatre

<http://laadlimerilaadli.blogspot.in/2018/04/howlong-how-often-somequestions-to.html>

Not Good Enough!!



A recent article sourced from PTI stated that the State Government had declared that the sex ratio, i.e. number of females per thousand males in Maharashtra has improved. The report stated that as compared to 878 girls/1000 boys in 2013-15 the latest survey in 2016 showed there were 904 girls/1000 boys in the state. If this was indeed true it would be a matter for rejoicing as it would mean that the concerted efforts of government and non – government agencies to prevent pre-birth sex selection are bearing fruit. However, before we jump to conclusions we need to verify our data and not be misled by numbers.

The most reliable data for comparing the number of girls and boys born in a given time period is the sex ratio at birth or SRB and the Sample Registration Survey is the most reliable source of this data. SRB is the number of girls born per 1000 boys. The Sample Registration Survey figures tell a different story. After the 2011 Census the SRB increased slightly from 906 to 908 and then 909 by 2012 – 13 after which it has dipped over the years 2013 to 2016 to 906, 900 and then 898.

We are far away from achieving the ideal sex ratio at birth of 955 girls per 1000 boys. This suggests that sex selection continues to be rampant in Maharashtra and the country as a whole. People still want to have sons and avoid having daughters. Despite a lot having been written about it, massive campaigns by NGOs and activists being organized against it, the PCPNDT law coming into force to prevent it, son preference is still a reality in our country that we cannot ignore.

(Ujjwala Mhatre)

Social Media at Your Finger Tips

Old and young alike spend a lot of time on social media today. News travels fast on whatsapp, twitter, facebook, instagram, youtube etc. Before one can blink a post has been sent or received. Why not harness the power of social media to spread awareness about safe abortion issues was the question that made us organize a day-long training programme on “Social Media Communication on Safe Abortion Advocacy Outreach”. The informative and interactive sessions empowered the participants with skills to use social media effectively for their campaigns. Twenty nine representatives from different non-profit organizations and institutions from Maharashtra attended the workshop.

The training programme on social media was conducted by Ms. Bharati Ramchandran, a communications professional with more than 23 years’ experience, including 18 years in the development sector. Anupam Shukla, Research Manager at FRHS India and Dr. A L Sharada, the Director of Population First provided information on abortion and challenges faced while communicating on abortion.

Anupam Shukla spoke about the Pratigya Campaign and its efforts to find common ground between the MTP and PCPNDT laws both of which sought to protect women’s rights and the problem caused by the conflation of the two laws. Denial of safe, legal abortion services to women led them to quacks for unsafe abortions which caused many complications and at times death as well.

Ujjwala Mhatre, Advocacy and Communication Manager gave a quick update on the activities carried out for Safe Abortion Advocacy through the Pratigya Campaign in Maharashtra which included workshops in colleges and interactions with working journalists as well as NGO’s.

Dr. A. L. Sharada spoke about the different aspects of communication. It was explained that a Communication Strategy comprises of Methods, Messages and approaches.

The participants were briefed about developing a message style:

- Emotional v/s Rational
- Positive v/s Negative
- Humorous v/s Serious appeal
- One – sided v/s two – sided argument
- Direct v/s indirect argument
- Definitive v/s Open conclusion
- Repetitive v/s one – time approach

It was also stressed that pre - testing of communication material should be done before disseminating it.

Dr. Sharada spoke a little about the graphics used in the print media and the presentation of articles. e.g. When writing about abortion the baby bump or the image of a full grown child is often used giving the impression that a full term child is terminated which is extremely misleading. Also data should be presented from reliable sources. It is always good to use personal stories, where available, with their consent.

She concluded the session by stressing on the fact that abortion should be framed as a legitimate choice by women who feel responsible for themselves and their families.

The session on use of Social Media as a communication strategy was conducted by an expert in this field, Ms. Bharati Ramachandran.

Some innovative and effective means of communicating our message can be through:

- Creating your own badges – which could be a photo with a surrounding slogan
- Sharing celebrity stories – however this needs to be done carefully as we need to be sure that the celebrity chosen has a positive image and should not overshadow the campaign.
- Events can be put on fb
- Infographics - make statistics interesting and easily understandable.
- Tweetathons - serial of tweets on a topic
- Whatsapp - could be used constructively as a tool for digital media campaigns.
- Survivors' stories - can be used effectively to propagate a campaign.
- Website - should be used to clearly state the purpose/ objective of the campaign, what we want to achieve, and reach a large cross section of people
- Clear call to action – inspires people to act
- Statement of achievements keeps the audience engaged with the campaign. There were stories compiled on the website.
- SMS campaigns - could be used to raise funds.

Other suggestions were:

- The website, Facebook, e-newsletter should all be interconnected or linked and also connected to offline techniques.
- Online techniques can also be connected to offline methods like presentations

Campaign Planning:

Objectives –

- To think about how social media can proactively be leveraged to amplify your story and create a buzz.
- To understand how a mix of simple and low cost methods can be used to spread information, raise awareness and develop vibrancy in a community.

Planning -

Step 1 – Campaign Goal to be decided

Objectives set for 12 months

The target audience we need to reach out to in order to achieve our goals is to be decided

Step 2 - Build a profile for each target audience

Develop one or two main messages for specific target audiences

Step 3 – For each target segment make a list of social media methods/ platforms best suited to reach out to that particular segment. For each method plan what are the kinds of social media posts you would like to develop.

Step 4 – Put together an editorial calendar.

In the last session, participants were divided into 4 groups and asked to plan a campaign each and present it to the house.

At the end of the workshop a whatsapp group of all the participants was formed to share news about safe abortion advocacy and the progress of the campaign.

“We can look at social media in a completely different light now. What we thought was a waste of time can be used to propagate our thoughts and campaigns and even to raise funds.” (Shobha – SMS)



(Compiled by Ujjwala Mhatre)

Legends for Laadli...

The legendary santoor maestro **Pt. Shivkumar Sharma** graciously agreed to use his two magic wands to spin an ethereal performance for the cause of *Laadli*, in the first event under the '**Legends for Laadli**' series. The performance was put together with love and dedication by the Population First team, with the expert guidance of event management team from Banyan Tree. The intent of the event was raising funds for *Laadli* – Population First's signature girl child campaign – which recently concluded its decade old partnership with UNFPA. The money collected from the sale of tickets, advertisement slots and sponsorships associated with the event would be put into use in the various activities planned under the Laadli Media Advocacy campaign – such as workshops, fellowships and media awards.

While we were raising money, we were keen to reach out to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds and some senior citizens to have a once in a life time experience of listening to the maestro performing in an iconic venue like Tata theatre.

The experience was particularly mind blowing for the girls from Prerna Institute. "Mind blowing"; "You showed me heaven"; "I did not know that there was an instrument called Santoor"; "I never knew there is such a beautiful auditorium in Mumbai" were some of the comments we received.

Since *Laadli* works for the girl child, their presence was as valuable as the presence of all the dignitaries who graced the occasion and filled Tata theatre to its capacity. Panditji very modestly mentioned that he felt honoured to be associated with the "pious work" of Laadli. "Thank you Panditji for your support!"



The team is grateful to all the people who supported us. We would like to especially thank our co-sponsors - the Godrej Group as well as our associate sponsors - HSBC, Aditya Birla group and Bank of Baroda, in addition to our outdoor partners - Madison and Bright Outdoors, Content partners -

Hypercollective and most importantly our event partners – Banyan Tree. A special curtain raiser film was made by Hypercollective team for the occasion Thanks everyone for helping us achieve a resounding success in our first ever fundraising effort – the first in line under the **Legends for Laadli** series. (Link for our curtain raiser video: <https://youtu.be/gkZ-cbXYOzg>)

(Maggie Paul)

International Working Women's Day Celebrations with schoolgirls from Shahapur



As we made our way to the village on the 9th of March, where the International Working Women's Day programme was to be held, the winding road to the school was as enchanting for us city dwellers as were the broad smiles of the villagers who welcomed us in their midst.

From 11.30am to almost 4pm we screened one film after another, each portraying a gender based issue. We had chosen these films with great care for a Film Festival to be held for adolescent girls from one of the villages of Shahapur. The themes covered in this Film Festival were Menstruation, Child Marriage, Child Sexual Abuse, Violence and other women's issues. The rapt attention of the girls of Kille Mahuli High School, Pivali, Shahapur while watching the films was mesmerizing.

International Working Women's Day was celebrated with these students by watching gender sensitive films and participating in a lively panel discussion that followed, conducted effortlessly by our AMCHI coordinator Sangeeta. The girls hesitated at first but were encouraged to overcome their inhibitions and speak freely on these issues. After their initial hesitation they spoke openly leading to a good discussion.

The melodious affirmative of 'houww' (meaning yes) captured our Director A. L. Sharada's attention and she repeated it to lighten the atmosphere while encouraging the girls to speak on the issues that each girl/woman faces. A few of these girls who spoke on behalf of the other students acknowledged that such films were an eye-opener. It would propel them to dwell on and analyse their own situation and act responsibly.



When 'Mann Ke Manjeere', a beautiful video of a woman survivor of domestic violence set to a lilting song in the background was screened, the students were invited to dance and all of us from the Population First Team joined in too.

A strong community feeling descended on us as we settled down to savour a steaming hot lunch. A lot was learnt as we taught. It was a very meaningful and memorable Women's Day.

(Raina Michyari)

In the next newsletter:

Common Wealth Games - It was raining gold medals and our sportswomen led the brigade ... and much more.

Please write to us at newsletter.popfirst@gmail.com and give us your valuable feedback and comments.

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