

**GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN  
PARENTING OF THE YOUNG CHILD IN INDIA:  
Achievements, Challenges and Way Forward**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The United Nations recognises parenting as an important role in nurturing, educating and socialising children, without which there cannot be progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In fact, it observes June 1<sup>st</sup> as Global Day of Parents (UN, n.d.). Traditionally, in many societies including India, fathers have been expected to be disciplinarians and to be bread winners (UN, n.d.). Mothers, on the other hand, continue to be the ones expected to nurture and care for the well-being of their children, in addition to being sources of supplementary income (UN, n.d.). What it is to be a parent varies across countries, contexts and time. Further, what is expected of fathers and mothers has changed over time, and there is a greater recognition now than before of the fact that with the exception of breast feeding, fathers can nurture their children just as much as mothers, and mothers can be bread winners, too. It is also an emerging reality that parents can be single, non-heterosexual and non-biological, too. Gender is not the only axiom of challenge posed to effective parenting of the young child, in particular parenting of children living on the streets, children at work, children of migrants, children with disabilities, children in conflict with the law/ children whose parents are in conflict with the law and children of sex workers. These aspects are challenges in addition to the traditional ones like caste, class, ethnicity, minority status, etc.

This paper focuses on the care of the young child, defined here as one who falls in the age group 0–6 years. Care of the young child is ultimately a state responsibility, as emphasised by the Child Rights Convention (CRC) (UN General Assembly, 1990). Article 2 of the CRC emphasises that the state shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians or family members. While recognising that all children have a right to be brought up by their parents (Article 7), the CRC calls upon the state to provide a conducive environment for parenting, and to intervene when parents are in conflict with the law, are not alive, are abusing the child or are unable to live with each other (Article 9). Goal 4<sup>1</sup> of the SDGs reinforces nation states' responsibilities in ensuring access of young girls and boys to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education by 2030 (UN General Resolution, 2017, UNDESA<sup>2</sup>, 2018). SDG 5<sup>3</sup> calls for sharing (and recognition of) unpaid care work, as the burden continues to fall on the mother, which may not be in the interest of the child or the mother (UNDESA, 2018). However, the term parenting, leave alone transformative parenting, is not used in SDG targets or indicators. See Annex 1 for the targets and indicators under SDGs 4 and 5 globally and in India.

This paper argues that in-spite of legislation and policy frameworks pertaining to parenting like the Maternity Benefit Act, the Paternity Benefit Bill, the Early Childhood

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<sup>1</sup> Goal 4 is "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"

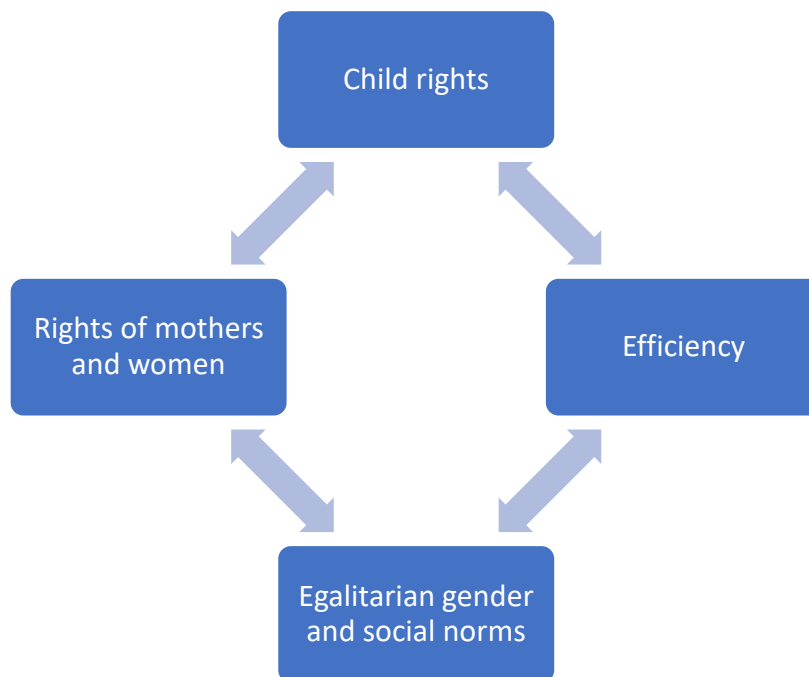
<sup>2</sup> United Nations Development of Economic and Social Affairs

<sup>3</sup> Goal 5 is "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"

Care and Development Framework (ECCD Framework); campaigns like Beti Bachao and Beti Padhao; and schemes like the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and crèches, there is a “deficit” in gender/socially transformative parenting of the young child. Parents affected by intersecting marginalities have been little exposed to positive (defined in the next section) and non-stereotypical parenting, and have little time and resources to spend on such parenting.

The legal and policy framework as well as implementation needs improvement with a focus on children affected by multiple identities. Plugging this gender/socially transformative parenting deficit is a **right** of the young child, will contribute to **efficiency** of the economy, can lead to more **egalitarian gender and social norms** in society and **further the rights of mothers** (See Figure 1). Studies have shown, for example, that children with better access to nutrition and other aspects of ECCD contribute more to the economy through better education and higher wages (Bahri, 2018). Gender/socially transformative parenting could free up the time of mothers, boost their nutrition intakes and enhance their decision making (Plan International, 2017).

**Figure 1: Rationale for gender/ social transformative parenting of young child**



This paper is structured as follows. The second section defines parenting in greater detail and elaborates on gender/ socially transformative parenting, distinguishing between gender/ socially neutral, gender/ socially ameliorative and gender/ socially transformative parenting. The third section examines the trends and present situation in parenting of young children that is emerging globally (in brief) and in India and in a few other states for which material was available. The fourth section looks at Indian government policies and implementation on parenting from the

gender and social inclusion lens, and examines specific policies of a few states. The fifth section looks at good practices in engendering parenting globally and in India and lessons from these. The sixth section offers concluding remarks and recommendations for gender/ socially aware parenting.

## **2.0 A GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION PERSPECTIVE TO PARENTING OF THE YOUNG CHILD**

### **2.1 Understanding Parenting**

According to Brooks (2012), parenting is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood, as described below.

- Physical development is the process by which a child's body grows and acquires movement, including fine and gross motor skills. Physical development provides children with the abilities they need to explore and interact with the world around them.
- Intellectual development describes how mental processes—learning, remembering, problem solving and thinking—develop from birth until adulthood. Understanding cognitive development is useful in determining the kind of thinking children are capable of at different age levels.
- Social development describes how children develop skills that allow them to interact with other people at age appropriate levels.
- Emotional development describes how children express and control their emotions.

### **2.2 Gender and social inclusion in parenting of the young child**

One can discern between gender discriminatory, gender ameliorative and gender transformative parenting of young children based on who the parents are and how they parent

- **Gender/socially discriminatory parenting of the young child:** Gender/ socially discriminatory parenting occurs when it is mainly the mother or other women members (e.g., a grandmother) of the family who parent, or there is gender-discrimination in the physical, emotional, social and intellectual aspects of parenting of the young child. When social norms do not encourage men to take care of their young children, it deprives men of bonding with their children and reduces their own emotional wellbeing. Studies have shown that fathers who share parenting responsibilities are less violent within the family and outside (MenEngage-UNFPA<sup>4</sup>, 2014). Irrespective of who parents, in countries with son preference young girls receive less access to health care, education and nutrition, opportunities to play and

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<sup>4</sup> UNFPA stands for United Nations Population Fund

access to early learning than young boys (Saha, 2013<sup>5</sup>). Stereotypes persist about the kind of dresses that are put on and the kind of activities that are encouraged for young boys and girls. For example, in urban middle and upper-class India and post media advertisements, it is common to dress girls in pink dresses and boys in blue. Frocks are used to dress young girls and shorts/pants to dress boys. Cars and trucks are seen as toys for boys, and dolls and cooking toys for girls (Asha, 2013). However, instances of putting a “black dot” on male infants and toddlers to ward off the evil eye or dressing them like girls persist in rural areas and amongst the urban poor. Discrimination against young children takes non-gender-specific forms too. Cases of neglect of step-children<sup>6</sup>, young children with disabilities, third order girls, migrant children, working children, etc., by parents have been noted (Murthy and Sagayam, 2006, Shijit and Sekher, 2015). Further, it is not uncommon for parents to prohibit their children from mixing and playing with children of other castes, religions and class groups.

- **Gender/socially ameliorative parenting of young child:** Gender/socially ameliorative parenting can be considered to refer to situations where the mothers, grandmothers or adolescent girls are the primary parents of the young child, but fathers support them a bit. Unlike discriminatory parenting, there is no differentiation in access of young daughters or children with disability to food, health care and education. Emotional parenting may be similar, too. However, differences in the social aspects of parenting of the young child persist, like asking the young girl child (5–6 years) to pick up her used plate and those of her younger siblings, but not the young boy child. Like in discriminatory parenting, parents may tell children not to mix with young children of certain other communities. Fathers, in ameliorative parenting, may teach their young son's sports like cricket and football, contributing to their own relaxation, but without bringing forth their feminine and nurturing sides out.
- **Gender/socially transformative parenting:** Gender/socially transformative parenting of young children refers to situations where both parents play an active and equal role in parenting and actively avoid inequalities and stereotypes relating to access to food and nutrition (0–6 years), access to education (3–6 years), the nature of games and toys they introduce their children to (0–6 years) and whom they allow their children to be friends with (2–6 years). It is also a process of parenting where children are allowed to grow without caste, class, religious and other differences in their minds (0–6 years). Fathers in transformative parenting are equal care givers and break gender norms on emotional, physical and intellectual parenting (0–6 years). In

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<sup>5</sup> Saha (2013) analysed data from 64<sup>th</sup> round of NSS conducted in 2007-2008 on education expenditure of households on members in the age group 5-29 years. The data captured expenses on education at primary level and above, pointing that children as young as 5 years are in primary school against the norm of six years.

<sup>6</sup> In the context of emergencies, when parents are in conflict with law, etc

the process, they are likely to adopt less aggressive and violent forms of behaviour with other men and women (Plan International, 2017, MenEngage-UNFPA 2014).

In India, the parenting approach falls more into discriminatory and ameliorative categories and less into transformative ones. Though fathers do help when women are working, their input is far from equal. Gender stereotypes may be coming down in educated families, but rarely do stereotypes in other classes, castes and religions break. In rural areas, a constraint is that ICDS centres are often located in separate areas of the villages and friendships rarely continue.

### **2.3 Gender, background of the parent and development of the young child**

Apart from being a right (of the young child) in itself, international literature suggests that parenting by both mothers and fathers has benefits for the development of the young child. This aspect has not been researched much in the Indian context, but international literature suggests that mothers and fathers emphasise different and complementary aspects of child development. However, these differences in parenting are more social than biological. A study in Kansas, United States of America (USA), found that fathers emphasise to a significantly greater degree intellectual development of the child (35–37 months old) than mothers, but emphasise social development less than mothers. Another study on whether parenting differed across 399 mothers or fathers of children 3–6 years old in the USA found that mothers rated higher for physical care and emotional support than did fathers. Personalised parenting (hugging the child) was lower for fathers in respect of daughters when compared to sons (Moon and Hoffman, 2008).

Available literature suggests that even if one takes parents of one nationality, the parenting approach may be different when they are in their home country and when they are living abroad. A study on the parenting practices of 57 Asian parents living in India (34) and the USA (23) found differences in parenting practices of the Asian parents for their 3–5 year old children, depending on the place of residence. This points to the importance of both the backgrounds of parents and the contexts they live in (Jambunathan and Counselman, 2002). Asian Indian mothers living in the USA had lower inappropriate expectations from their children and tended not to reverse roles with their children (like expecting children to console them), while Asian parents living in India engaged in such behaviour. The results also showed that the Asian Indian mothers living in India favoured the use of corporal punishment more than their counterparts in the USA.

Drawing on three studies in the USA, Moon and Hoffman suggest that parents of 3–6 year old sons were less likely to divorce (Moon and Hoffman, 2008), and whether this is true across age and in Indian context merits investigation. In the American context, there is no benefit in the same gender single parenting, father–son and

mother–daughter parenting (Lee and Kushner, 2008, Ryan et al., 2006). Again, this aspect has not been studied in India and across different age groups.

The economic background may make a difference to parenting practices. A study in the UK finds that the lower the socio-economic status of the English parent, and the higher the marital dissatisfaction of the Indian parent, the higher the tendency to use harsh disciplinary methods with children (Atzaba-Poria and Pike, 2008).

From another lens, gender discrimination and women's low status are at the root of women's limited autonomy and of the denial of their rights to health and bodily integrity in several countries. When women suffer poor mental and physical health and limited decision-making power, it impacts negatively on their children's survival, healthy growth and development. That is, gender discrimination affecting mothers affects their ability to parent effectively, and there is intergenerational transmission of gender inequality attitudes. Improving women's strategic consciousness and positions is likely to lead to better and more equal parenting practices, with aware women demanding sharing of care work when they enter the workforce (Plan International, 2017).

### **3.0 PARENTING PRACTICES IN INDIA FROM A GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION LENS**

Much of the literature on parenting practices in India is on the urban middle class, and little is on children in rural areas and children of parents in the urban informal sector, children whose parents are in conflict with the law, are sex workers, are poor migrants, are living in the streets, etc. Literature on parenting by women heading households and women of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations is also rare. Studies examining differences in parenting in nuclear families (58% as per NFHS 4 carried out in 2015–6, being slightly higher in urban and lower in rural) versus joint families are few. In the latter, grandparents—grandmothers in particular—play a role in parenting of young children.

The available literature, though scant, suggests that there is no evidence that gender/socially transformative parenting practices are followed across classes, castes, headship, ethnicities, regions, migrant statuses, occupations, and locations. Gender gaps in access to early childhood education may be low in states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Maharashtra (perhaps due to greater investment in early childhood education by government and bringing centers closer to villages/slums), but stereotypes of how children are brought up persist even in these states. Further, it suggests that young children living in the streets, children of migrants, children who work in hazardous occupations, children with disabilities, third or higher birth order girls, etc., may not have access to physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development. The segregation of households along caste lines in rural areas and around economic lines in cities does not allow for mixing of young children, apart

from shaping access to services. Women heading households face more constraints in parenting young children than women living in the institution of marriage.

The first part of this section examines parents' investment in early childhood development and primary education, and gender and social differences if any. The second part examines specific challenges to gender/socially transformative parenting in economic, social and politically difficult situations like poverty, living on streets, single headship, migration, displacement, etc. The third part looks at parenting in regular contexts. The fourth part looks at child sex ratio, which reflects gender discrimination in parenting.

### **3.1 Parenting, gender, early childhood/primary education**

A question that arises is do parents invest differently in early childhood education of boys and girls, and whether the backgrounds of the parents affect early childhood and development outcomes.

A five-year longitudinal research of 14,000 four-year-old children (following them from 4–8 years) from Assam, Rajasthan and Telangana by UNICEF in partnership with the Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development, Ambedkar University, Delhi, and the ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) Centre reveals that all the 376 village had at least one Anganwadi run under the ICDS, and over half also had at least one privately managed preschool (varied across states). It notes that privatisation of early childhood education is spreading, with privatisation being higher in Rajasthan than Assam, and falling in between in Telangana (Kaul et al, 2017). More boys than girls were found in private preschool facilities-which parents believe teach in English and have better infrastructure- pointing to the persistence of gender discrimination by parents. More children from better off families were in private pre-school facilities than those from poor families. Most sampled children were attending preschool, but few children with special needs had access to such services. A concern is that ages were not strictly adhered to with regard to early childhood education and early primary education. Preschools performed better in the psychosocial domain and the cognitive and language domain. Mother's education and child's age had a bearing on primary school readiness at age 5+, and in Rajasthan, economic affluence also had an impact on school readiness. Caste independent of income did not have an effect on school readiness (Kaul et al, 2017).

At another level, looking at parenting practices and the pressure of social norms, parents and society identify a baby as either a "she" or a "he" right from birth. Parents select gender distinct clothes, blankets, and even toys (Rao et al, 2015). Colours like pink are selected for girls and blue for boys amongst the middle and upper-class parents. These trends are spreading to the working class through the media. Girls are encouraged to play with dolls and utensils and boys with trucks (Rao et al, 2015). However, in rural areas, it is not uncommon to find male infants with a "dot" on their forehead to confuse the public about their gender identity.



**Moving to education investment by parents,** A study analysing individual level data on educational expenditure from the 64<sup>th</sup> round of the National Sample Survey (2007–8) for 16 Indian states (including education at **primary levels**) shows that households across both rural and urban areas of the country prefer to spend more on their male members in comparison to female members. Gender discrimination was found to be lower in urban areas than in rural areas. In rural areas, Kerala has the lowest gender discrimination (perhaps due to higher literacy levels of parents), whereas in urban areas, Assam has the lowest (reasons not clear). The study notes gender discrimination in household educational expenditure is not only confined to the socially and economically backward states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, but is also found in the progressive states such as Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. The states with a significant concentration of tribal populations, such as Orissa and Jharkhand, have a relatively lower prevalence of gender bias (Saha, 2013). The study also observes that households with more members tend to discriminate against girls more. By contrast, households with five or fewer members are observed to show less favouritism to male students. The gender gap is more pronounced in the middle of the expenditure scale. Almost negligible gender bias is detected at the beginning of the scale, where household spending on education itself is not very significant. A similar pattern also prevails in the higher expenditure classes (Saha, 2013). Such disparities in education expenditure lead to lesser opportunities for intellectual development (assuming quality is good), lesser work opportunities and lesser access to information on supportive parenting. Female disadvantage is higher when private schools are more expensive (Saha, 2013). While the study covers children in the age group 5–29 years, the data is not disaggregated across age or level of education.

Another dimension to investment in primary education is time available to children to study at home and parental support for education at home. A study by Motiram and Osberg (2010) using Indian Time User Survey (1999) notes that girls spend more time on domestic chores than boys, in particular in rural areas. However, the time spent by parents on giving informal support to their children's education at home is similar across genders in both rural and urban areas.

### **3.2 Parenting in difficult circumstances: gender and social inclusion**

Parents are at times forced to adopt child adverse and gender differentiated coping strategies when faced with acute poverty. Bhukuth (2005) observes that while the investment in education of young boys and girls has gone up in both rural and urban India, **child labour** persists in India, like in the brick kiln industry in Tamil Nadu. The impact of child labour on the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of young children from poor families is a matter for concern (Bhukuth, 2005). The age at which children are pushed into such work is not discussed. However, he observes that if wages increase, women go to work leaving even young children in the care of adolescent girls (Bhukuth, 2005). In Madhya Pradesh

too, young girls from poor families were asked to keep an eye on a younger sibling as both parents had to engage in work outside (Murthy, 2015).

A more recent study, this time in eastern Uttar Pradesh, covering 1400 households of children in the age group 6–14 years from 70 villages in three districts found that there is a gap between enrolment and attendance of children in schools, and an even greater gap between official attendance and actual attendance. Of 1400 households, 793 reported children involved in household work (more girls than boys) and 35 reported that their children engaged in outside work (more boys than girls), with a majority working outside the district. However, the study does not provide disaggregated statistics on how many children at the age of 6 years or in the 6–8 years bracket do not attend regularly, drop out and engage in paid work, pointing to a gap in research. It also shows vulnerability of boys engaging in child labour to separation from parents in very poor families (Pandey and Gautam, 2015). That is, in some situations, sons may be more vulnerable than daughters.

In Rajasthan, a census-based study on out of school children in one panchayat concludes that the proportion of children in the age group 5–17 years who are out of school is higher amongst lower castes, religious minorities and females (Bhatty et al., 2017). Attendance of children in primary grades is higher than in upper primary because as a child enters his/ her teens, there is greater pressure from the household to (a) enter the labour market, (b) assist in domestic chores and/ or (c) enter into early marriage in the case of girls (Bhatty et al., 2017). Attendance rates of boys was higher than those for girls, but this data is not disaggregated by age (Bhatty et al, 2017).

On the whole, child labour may have declined, but does persist, and varies across states and economic statuses of parents. Parents push girls into reproductive work and boys into earning for their family and even hazardous work. When young children are pushed into such work, it can endanger their development, and when children have to look after younger siblings, there is a risk to the well-being and development of the younger siblings.

**Young children living on streets** literally grow up on their own with little parental support. Their lives are at risk, and they miss on quality early childhood education and development. Based on an interview with 200 street children in Jaipur, Rajasthan, Mathur (2009) observes that 16% of them were in the age group 5–8 years and 29% were girls. She observes that a majority live with their families on the streets, while a minority were living alone or with siblings. Parents kept late hours. Several of the children (ages not clear) worked as well, and some were engaged in begging. The stories of the children include poverty, stressful family situations, working on the streets to earn money for survival, close bonding with peers, forming addictive habits early in life, becoming vulnerable to employers' demands and being subjected to police brutality. Leisure is seen as roaming the streets with other children and seeing age inappropriate films at a young age. While girls in the street were lesser than boys

in number, they were more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking. There is no effective parenting on the streets, with relaxation for parenting meaning hiring videos and watching three Bollywood films through the night. Girls earned less than boys for work that they did (Mathur, 2009). An aspect not clear in the study is breast feeding and supplementary feeding practices of mothers in street towards infants, as well as incidence of unsafe abortion.

**Migration** poses its own challenges for parenting of the young child, and some of the challenges are gender specific. Rajan (2018) observes that 12% of both boys and girls in 21 states dropped out of school (elementary level<sup>7</sup>) due to migration. Researching in-depth education of children of migrant parents in Bangalore, he argues that one model of hostel-based education or bridge schools may not fit all migrant children. Migrant children in Bangalore further migrate to rural areas with parents during agricultural seasons, migrate with parents to areas with large scale construction activities and move from one place to another. This is also true for nomadic pastoralists. Rajan observes that hostels may be not a good solution for young children whose emotional needs cannot be fulfilled other than by parents. They may require mobile schools that follow them. Children who move from one area to another may need expedited opportunities for shifting from one government school to the other. Tasks that children do, like fetching water, caring for younger children (girls), etc., have to be taken over by the state if the children are to attend schools.

Migration of Indian women abroad poses many opportunities and challenges. Findings from reviews of international literature are given in Box 1. Studies on migration of mothers from Kerala present two different views on parenting strategies. Percot (2006) notes that for lower middle class women from Kerala migrating to the Middle East, it is a temporary transit. Through their earnings in Middle East they pay back loans taken to pay the agents who arranged their jobs and accumulate money for dowry for their wedding. In 2–3 years' time, most migrant nurses enter into arranged marriages (with exceptions) and facilitate the migration of their husbands. Once pregnant, they return to Kerala and attempt to clear exams to go to developed countries. They leave their infants with their mothers-in-law and earn some more to buy tickets and migrate to the West with their children and husbands and become middle class citizens there (Percot, 2006). The second article, which draws on a research (by one of the authors) from Kerala, notes that around half of the 22 women nurses from Kerala who migrated to the UAE and were interviewed in 2003 were married and left their children with relatives or in hostels. Thirteen of the children were below five years of age. A majority of the mothers came only once a year to their hometown, but sent money and gifts to their children and care givers who are related. She observes that employers in the Middle East benefit out of this care provided by women relatives in Kerala, and hence, capital is transferred from South to North. Further, they observe that the 'commons of care' in the South are

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<sup>7</sup> Classes 1 to 8.

eroded by global capital, with several villages in Kerala where mothers are not around. Children left behind feel a sense of anguish, doubt, envy and sadness. In the second case, while parents state that they migrate for their children, the consequence on the children's development is not known. When fathers alone migrate, the mothers left behind assume greater power and roles in parenting.

### **Parenting and migration: Experiences of other countries**

Based on their study of African origin migrants with children in the age group of 0–2 years to Australia, Sims and Omaji (1999) observe that when poor and middle class families migrate to a new country, they are required to map the parenting practices from their country of origin onto those of their country of residence. Sometimes there is dissonance between practices from both cultures, and families need to decide if they wish to discard the practices associated with their country of origin, amend those practices, or continue to use them in their original form. In the context of migration to developed countries, the use of corporal disciplinary methods and the emphasis of migrants on respect for the elderly (whether they are on the right or wrong) contrast with culturally accepted parenting norms. In the case of corporal punishment, it contrasts with state norms. On the issue of gender, women migrants to developed countries not only had to carry on care work without family support, they also had to engage in paid work. While in pre-migrant times children could play outside, now they had to play inside the house even when the mother was cleaning the house, which irritated mothers (Sims and Omaji, 1999). Deng and Marlowe (2013) bring in an added gender and parenting dimension from their study of refugee-migrants from South Sudan into New Zealand. They observe that children learn English in schools from single parents (mainly mothers) and both parents; this creates dependency of parents on children (whether on young children is not clear) to negotiate the world around them. This reverses roles, and makes effective parenting difficult. It is not clear what age group of children is being referred to. They also observe that without access to child care facilities (including in English language centres) and financial access, it is difficult for single mothers to earn income and provide for the well-being of themselves and their children. They also observe that in addition to teaching refugee parents what parenting practices are not acceptable in New Zealand, a discussion on how the same problems could be handled differently should take place.

In contrast to these experiences, the trend of Indian parents working in the USA and leaving their children (including young children) in India as a choice is also emerging. The reasons are several: a) daily challenges in caring for their children in the USA, (b) parents' concerns around paid group childcare in the USA, (c) grandparents, ideal caregivers, who are unable to move to or stay in the United States, (d) presence of other extended support in India and (e) parents wanting their children to maintain their language and customs (Srivatsava and Guzman, 2015).

**Conflicts can lead to migration and displacement.** Tikoo (1994) observes that when 42 Kashmiri pandit families fled in 1989–90 and came to live in camps in New Delhi, it was a migration out of fear. Parenting changed from being family driven to community managed. Child abuse, and in particular girl child abuse increased.

Children in the age group of 4–11 years felt more comfortable in camps than those who were 12–18, years old; among these, there were more boys than girls. Speaking their native tongues in shelters helped preserve their culture. Their performance in schools was average.

**Headship is** a social factor that affects parenting, and disadvantages young children as single parents tend to be poorer than households where both parents are together. The percentage of single women heading households (widows, divorced, deserted) is higher than that for single men. Around 15% of households covered under the NFHS-4 are women headed. Buvanewari (2008), through her study of women headed households in Neyveli Town, Tamil Nadu, observes that women heading households find it difficult to meet the expenses of education, clothing and other needs of their children as they are sole earners. At times, they cave in to the demands of their children, though it may not always be in the best interests of the children. She observes that drop-out rates tend to be higher amongst children of women headed households when compared to children of male headed households. Unfortunately, the article does not examine gender dimensions of parenting, or distinguish between challenges faced by women heading households in parenting of children of different age groups.

### **3.3 Parenting, gender, birth order, caste and class**

This sub section does not necessarily deal with gender, social inclusion and parenting by parents in extreme economic distress. It examines gender, caste and class differences in parenting styles, parenting styles adopted with regard to birth order, challenges posed to parenting by globalisation and nuclearisation.

Balda et al. (1999) examine gender differences in disciplining styles, which is one aspect of parenting. They interviewed parents of 178 children in the age group 4–6 years in Hissar, Haryana, on disciplinary styles adopted by parents. The disciplining styles are divided into three categories: lax, firm and harsh, with firm being the most appropriate. The study found that fathers were more lax in their disciplining styles while mothers used harsher control styles. They argue that mothers at times vent their anger and frustration against patriarchal husbands on the children. Further, parents were found to be harsher with sons than with daughters (Balda et al., 1999). The younger the child, the more lax was the disciplining style, and the higher the levels of education of the parents, the more either firm or lax was the disciplining style of parents. That is, children may bear the brunt of **patriarchy**, and a male child more vulnerable to harsh punishments.

**Birth order of girls** influences the access of second and higher order girls to physical, social and intellectual development. Research on parenting in the Maratha community in Satana District in rural Maharashtra highlights the giving of the name Nakuusa (unwanted) to higher order girls. In spite of the government changing the names of the girls named 'Nakuusa' officially, neglect of these girls by family

members, communities and schools persisted in a study covering 100 girls named 'Nakuusa'. A separate analysis of forms of neglect of young Nakuusas is not included, but the forms of neglect of Nakuusas in general comprise discrimination in food, access to education, play, rest, etc. The authors call for provision of incentives by the government to educate such daughters, gender sensitisation of parents and community, changing their past certificates and changing their names (Shijit V.P and T.V Sekher, 2015). The practice of naming a girl as 'unwanted' is not particular to Maharashtra. In parts of Tamil Nadu as well, a higher order girl child may be named unwanted (Vendam in Tamil), in the hope that the next child will be a male.

### ART Opportunities and Challenges to Parenting

A new trend is the emergence of Assisted Reproductive technologies (ARTs) and both heterosexual and people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity using it to conceive children. Goswami (2015) in his article on assisted reproduction technologies, parenting and child rights argues that ARTs have strengthened reproductive rights of heterosexual individuals/ couples and people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities but led to a difference between socio-legal parenting and biological parentage. The question is putting in place strategies to protect the rights of a child to know its biological parentage, recognised under Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989. He argues for the need of DNA profiling. However, he does not study the larger issues of implications of ARTs for physical and emotional development of the child. There is also a danger that in the event of the child being born with an abnormality, the commissioning parents would not adopt the child. A few cases of the surrogate mother being forced to abort by the commissioner if the foetus is a girl have been noted (Rawal, 2017). Further, how surrogacy affects existing children has not been studied.

Caste discrimination in anganwadi centres is discussed in the next section, here the focus is on **caste differences in parenting** and has been discussed in parenting styles across castes. An article classifies parenting style into four categories: cold and rejecting<sup>8</sup>, warm and rejecting, cold and accepting and warm and accepting. The age group of children was not clearly specified. The study in West Bengal found that the higher the caste of the child, the less the perceived maternal warmth and the more perceived maternal neglect children report experiencing. These results are supported by the mothers' own reports about their treatment of their children. Boys in West Bengal, for instance, tend to perceive slightly more maternal warmth than do girls, and in parts of North India, the difference is more marked (Shodhganga, n.d.). The reasons for this difference are not mentioned by the author, but could be due to higher dependency on helps to look after young children. As caste and class often go together, it merits exploring whether these are class or caste effects.

Parenting of young children also varies across **different family structures**. A more recent study on parenting amongst 30 middle class nuclear families in New Delhi

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<sup>8</sup> Rejection includes hostility, aggression, indifference and neglect, while cold and warm are not defined

found that fathers played little role in parenting. The responsibility was shared between mothers, many of whom also worked outside, and the mothers-in-law (living nearby). The study noted that while mothers knew how to parent (on disciplining in particular), they could not put their knowledge to practice due to constraints of time and energy after long commuting (Tuli, 2012). Thus, norms on discipline are slow to change. Donner also comes to a similar conclusion on men's inadequate involvement through her study of parenting practices amongst middle class nuclear families in Calcutta (including Marwaris) (Donner, 2005). In addition, she notes that globalisation has created not just a demand for English education, which requires that both parents earn, but also new kinds of jobs for women. Apart from mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law (supporting care of children), there is also the model of shared parenting when different nuclear families live in the same household. She observes that these developments—of women earning outside in addition to parenting—have led to more balanced relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. However, the study does not examine whether parenting practices have changed, whether men have assumed a greater role in parenting, and whether gender transformative methods are adopted (Donner, 2005). Information on the age of children is not provided.

### **3.4 Child Sex Ratio: A composite indicator of gender discrimination in Parenting**

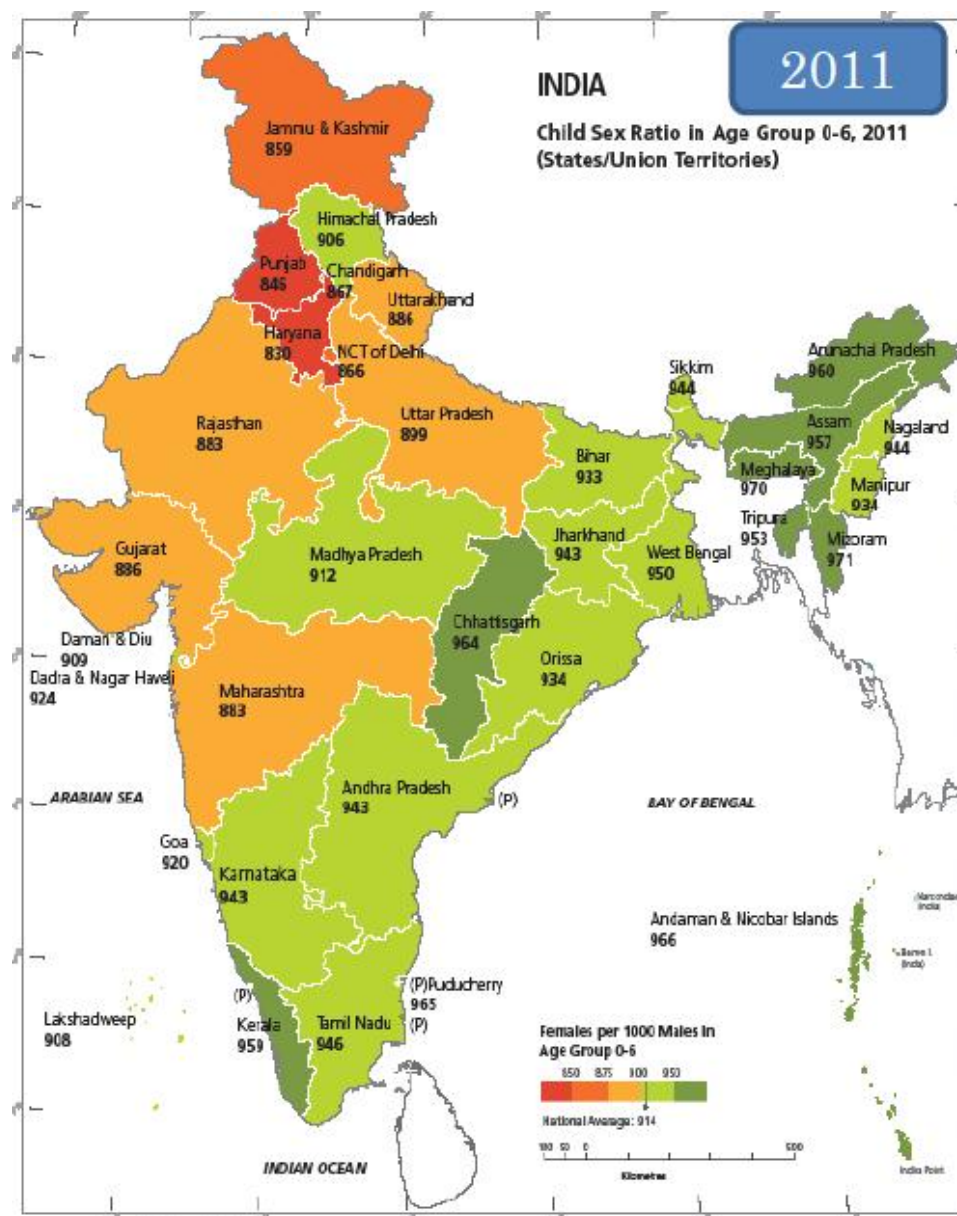
Figure 2 gives data on Child Sex Ratio as of 2011 across the states and union territories at that time. Child Sex ratio is the ratio of children in the age group 0-6, and reflects both prenatal and preconception sex determination and girl child neglect by parents and care givers. Overall the CSR was a dismal 914 in 2011 when compared to the ideal of 952, and was lower in urban than rural areas (possibly due to higher income and sex determination/health facilities). The CSR, 2011 is worse in north and western states when compared to southern and eastern state. Of 35 states/union territories, only 9 (Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Kerala, Puducherry, and Andaman Nicobar Islands), have Child Sex Ratio above the ideal figure of 952<sup>99</sup> girls per 1000 boys as of 2011. Possible reasons why son preference is less prevalent in some states include larger proportion of tribal population wherein son preference is less (e.g. Chhattisgarh), existence of a few matrilineal communities in the state (e.g. Kerala, Arunachal Pradesh). Southern states have a good investment in women's empowerment schemes, and the Child Sex Ratio is above 940 in all, though above 952 only in Kerala. The worst states in terms of skewed CSR are Punjab and Haryana, followed by Jammu and Kashmir. Higher income levels, as in Punjab and Haryana, does not seem to go with lower son preference- in fact it may generate money for use of pre-conception and pre-natal sex selective technologies (Kulkarni, 2012). Similarly, good education levels of parents also need not go with reduced son preference and girl child neglect (Echavarri and Ezcurra, 2010). Whether prolonged conflicts in Jammu and Kashmir lead to heightened son preference merits examination

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<sup>99</sup> As per WHO norms more males than females are born all over the world, and this balances according to Kulkarni to a sex ratio of 952 females per 1000 males of 0-6 years if there is no female neglect (WHO, 2016, Kulkarni, 2012)

If one looks at trends, between 2001 and 2011 the all India CSR declined from 927 in 2001 to 914 in 2011, with decline being higher in rural CSR than urban one. Child sex ratio has declined in 27 of 35 states/union territories, with the decline being highest in the case of Jammy and Kashmir (-8.71%). Improvement was highest in Punjab (6.02%) which began with a low base in 2001. The eight states/union territories which saw an improvement in Child Sex Ration between 2001 and 2011 were Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Andaman and Nicobar, though CSR is below the ideal 952 in most (other than Andaman and Nicobar and Mizoram).

Figure 2: Child Sex Ratio across states, 2011



Biswas, 2011 (Using 2011 Census data)



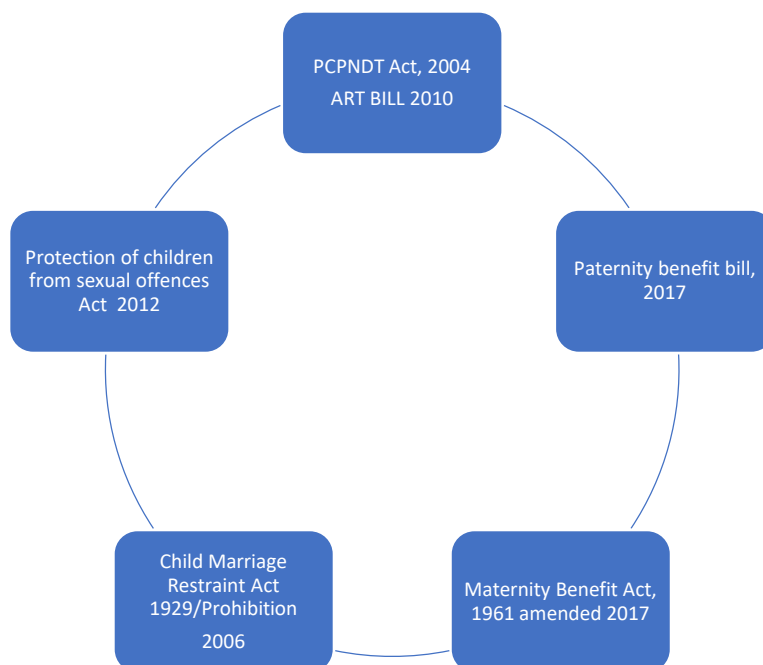
#### 4.0. LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND SCHEMES OF RELEVANCE TO GENDER/SOCIALLY TRANSFORMATION PARENTING OF YOUNG CHILDREN IN INDIA

The **Constitution of India** guarantees fundamental rights to all children in the country and empowers the state to make special provisions for children. The Directive Principles of State Policy specifically mention that the state is responsible for protecting children from abuse and for ensuring that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner in conditions of freedom and dignity (cited in the Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2013). In addition to the CRC, the Indian government has ratified two optional protocols, as well as the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which touches on the rights of the girl child, too. Yet, as this section explores, there are gaps in legislation and schemes pertaining to parenting of young child, while the 2013 Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy is on the right track.

##### 4.1 Legislation

Some of the important pieces of legislation pertaining to parenting of young children are given in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Legislation pertaining to parenting of young children**



In the 1980s, the government and civil society recognised that prenatal diagnostic technologies were being used for sex-selection due to son preference in India. Apart from being a violation of gender equality by itself, male biased sex ratio can lead to increased violence on women and girls, trafficking/trading of girls. The first legal

response from the Government of India came in the form of the Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PNDT) in 1994, and the same was further amended into the Pre-Conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) (PCPNDT) Act in 2004 as a legal instrument to foster positive change. Under the 2004 Act, service providers are held accountable for disclosing sex of the foetus, and not the parents who avail services. However, its implementation has been weak and according to a study conducted by civil society agencies, only 600 cases have been lodged in 15 years (Public Health Foundation of India et al, 2010). The total number of convictions using the Act is roughly 20. As per the NFHS-4 the sex ratio at birth<sup>10</sup> has barely improved from 914 in 2005-6 to 919 in 2015-16, and the urban sex ratio (899) is lower than the rural one (927). The ideal sex ratio at birth is around 950 females per 1000 males (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2016). According to the World Health Organisation nature provides that the number of new-born males slightly outnumber new-born females because as they grow up, men are at a higher risk of dying than women not only due to sex differentials in natural death rates, but also due to higher risk from external causes. Thus, the sex ratio of total population is expected to equalize with age (WHO. 2016)

The Assisted Reproductive Technology (Bill) 2017 bans the use of ART for sex selection. However, it mentions that the biological parent does not have rights over the child after the birth, and it rests with the commissioning parents (Department of Health Research, 2017). In the case of surrogacy, this violates the rights of child to know its biological parentage, recognised under Article 7 of the Child Rights Convention which is on child's right to know his or her origin and identity (European Center for Law and Justice, 2012). It can also lead to weak health of poor surrogate mothers and may affect health of their children.

The Paternity Benefit Bill, 2017, proposes that the maximum period for which any man with less than two surviving children shall be entitled to paternity benefit shall be fifteen days, of which not more than seven days shall precede the date of expected delivery. Biological fathers and fathers who have adopted are eligible for the benefit (Satav, 2017). The father of a still born child is also eligible. It also includes leave for husbands for "commissioning mothers". However, leave for husbands of surrogate mothers is not mentioned; this nature of leave would enable the husbands to take care of their children while the mothers rest, and result in bonding of fathers and infants. Thus, paternity leave is much lower than maternity leave—the 2017 Amendment of the 1961 Act provides maternity leave for 26 weeks (not more than eight weeks before the expected delivery) for the first two surviving children. The 2017 amendment to the Maternity Benefit Acts extends leave to "commissioning mothers", but not leave to surrogate mothers who may need to rest and recuperate to care for their children. The 2017 Amendment to the Maternity Benefit Act also makes it mandatory for an establishment to provide a crèche (childcare) facility within an appropriate distance where the number of workers is 50 and above.

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<sup>10</sup> Births during last five years

Women are allowed to visit the child up to four times a day (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2017). However few eligible women in the informal sector are able to access maternity leave due to the procedures involved in enrolling labour welfare board, paying fees and applying for and accessing benefits. Those who deliver in government health facilities find it easier to access maternity benefits under the Janani Suraksha Yojana than under the Maternity Benefit Act 1961 (amended 2017). There is no provision under the Maternity Benefit Act (2017 Amendment) or the Paternity Bill 2017 for parental education on care of the young (leave alone gender/socially transformative parenting).

**Two years' (total) maternity leave for women in civil service in Jammu and Kashmir:**

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir, for example, issued a notification that women in civil service may be granted child care leave by an authority competent to grant leave for a maximum period of 730 days with pay during their entire service for taking care of their two eldest children, whether for rearing or for looking after any of their needs, such as education, sickness and the like. Child care leave applies to caring of children less than 18 years or less than 22 years in case of children with at least 40% disability. It is not clear whether this is applicable for each child or both children together. Further, for the third child onwards no such leave is available. There is no mention of paternity leave. There is no mention of it applying to other services (e.g. bank) and women in the informal sector. (Government of Jammu and Kashmir, 2015).

As per The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, every child marriage, whether solemnised before or after the commencement of this Act, shall be voidable at the option of the contracting party who was a child at the time of the marriage. The groom's side would have to pay maintenance to the girl when the marriage is annulled (National Commission for Women, 2007). The district court shall keep the best interest of child produced through child marriages while awarding custody. There is no information on well-being of children whose marriages have been annulled under this Act. Data from NFHS-4 suggests that the proportion of females of 20–24 years stating that they were married before 18 years has declined from 47.4% in 2005–6 to 26.8% in 2015–16 (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2016). The decline in early marriage is not just due to the legislation prohibiting child marriage, but to a variety of other factors, like emphasis on girls' education. Age wise statistics on child marriage are not provided in the Fact Sheet. Prevention of child marriages reduces the risk of pre-term birth and underweight babies, apart from lowering the risk of high risk pregnancies.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, seeks to protect both girls and boys from sexual violence, including from incest. While sexual violence is higher

amongst girls, it is not uncommon amongst boys. The purview includes sexual violence by people in education institutions, police, prison authorities, health institutions, shelter homes, etc., thereby seeking to protect children from duty bearers (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2012). However, as a majority of sex offenders are known to the child (including relatives), it is difficult for children and their parents (if they are not the abusers) to book a case under the POSCO Act. At times shelter homes which are supposed to protect girls, become the place of abuse.

## 4.2 Policies

The preamble to the **National Policy for Children, 2013** recognises the diversity amongst children and affirms that no child shall be discriminated against on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, class, language, and disability, social, economic or any other status. It mentions three aspects related to parenting, namely:

- *all children have the right to grow in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding;*
- children are not to be separated from their parents, except where such separation is necessary or in their best interest;
- *families are to be supported by a strong social safety net in caring for and nurturing their children.*

(Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2013)

In keeping with the above, the state proposes the following affirmative measures—legislative, policy or otherwise. It delineates key priorities in three areas: i) survival, health, nutrition, ii) development and education, II) protection and participation. The aspects of state responsibility towards young children mentioned in the National Policy on Children, 2013, across these three themes are given in Table 1.

**Table 1: The National Policy on Children 2013 and State/parent responsibilities**

Theme	State parent responsibilities
Survival, health and nutrition	Secure the right of the girl child to life, survival, health and nutrition  Prevent disabilities, both mental and physical, prevent discrimination due to disability and promote rehabilitation.  Promote nutrition and health of adolescent girls <sup>11</sup>
Education and development	Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for all children less than six years, and elementary education for every child in the age group of 6–14 years  Ensure that all out of school children <sup>12</sup> are tracked, rescued, rehabilitated and have access to their right to education.

<sup>11</sup> Nutritional status of adolescent girls has a bearing on the next generation of young children

<sup>12</sup> Such as child labourers, migrant children, trafficked children, children of migrant labour, street children, child victims of alcohol and substance abuse, children in areas of civil unrest, orphans, children with disability (mental and physical), children with chronic ailments, married children, children of manual scavengers, children of sex workers, children of prisoners, etc

	<p>Address discrimination of all forms in schools, sex, religion, disability, language, region/location, caste, ethnicity, health, social, economic, or any other status; provide inclusive education</p> <p>Ensure safety of all children in all institutions;</p> <p>Promote positive disciplining free from physical or mental punishment</p> <p>Provide and promote crèche and day care facilities for children of working mothers, mothers belonging to poor families, ailing mothers and single parents</p> <p>Promote appropriate baby feeding facilities in public places and at workplaces for working mothers</p>
Protection	<p>The state shall protect all children from all forms of violence and abuse, harm, neglect, stigma, discrimination, deprivation, exploitation including economic exploitation and sexual exploitation, abandonment, separation, abduction, sale or trafficking for any purpose or in any form, pornography, alcohol and substance abuse</p> <p>To secure the rights of children temporarily or permanently deprived of parental care, the state shall endeavour to ensure family and community-based care arrangements including sponsorship, kinship, foster care and adoption, with institutionalisation as a measure of last resort</p>
Participation	<p>The state has the primary responsibility to ensure that children are made aware of their rights, and provided with opportunities and support to develop skills, to form aspirations and express their views in accordance with their age, level of maturity and evolving capacities</p> <p>In particular, it will promote participation of girl children, children with disabilities and children from minority groups or marginalised communities</p>

Source: Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2013a, The National Policy for Children 2013, Ministry of Women and Child development, Government of India,

While on the whole progressive, the National Policy on Children, 2013, does not refer to promoting the removal of gender stereotypes and stereotypes about marginalised groups in early childhood education, school curriculum, parenting practices, etc. It mentions that issues like gender and career choices (not too clear whether stereotypes would be addressed) would be addressed through career counselling and vocational guidance (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2013a).

The **Kerala State Policy for Child, 2016**, on the other hand, refers to the need for promoting gender/socially just curriculum at all levels. Unlike the National Policy on Children, 2013, it emphasises equality of transgender children as well as children of transgender persons. It recognises that children in coastal areas need special attention, protection and development. It mentions reducing anaemia amongst children between 6 and 59 months of age. The Kerala Policy mentions that child participation will be promoted through 'balasabhas' (children's councils) and balapanchayats (children's local government institutions), and that at the time of framework the Kerala State Policy for Child 2016 was devolved to local self-governance institutions (Social Justice Department, 2016) .

The **Draft National Women's Policy 2016** recommends better implementation of the Maternity Benefit Act, including the provision for nursing breaks. This will improve the health and emotional well-being of infants. It mentions that children of migrant women/ parents should have access to education in destination places, but there is no specific mention of access to early childhood education. Access of young children/ girls living in streets, daughters of sex workers, daughters of women/ men in conflict with law to early childhood education is not referred to. The policy mentions that access of girls to pre-primary education needs to be improved through sensitising parents. The need to free women's time through expanding the chain of Creches is mentioned. The term parenting does not appear in the National Women's Policy, 2016, or the need for gender sensitive parenting (Ministry of Women and Children, 2016a). The Draft Women's Policy, 2016 recognises that as more women seek the assistance of ARTs to conceive, the rights of surrogate women, commissioning mothers and children who are born through surrogacy should be protected. It also calls for measures to protect the health of surrogate mothers. The focus on the health of surrogate mothers is stronger than in the ART bill, but does not mention the health of own children of surrogate mothers (ibid, 2016a).

**The National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)**, approved in 2013, seeks to promote inclusive, equitable and contextualised opportunities for promoting optimal development of all children below 6 years of age. It recognises that 48.2% of children in the age group of 0–6 years are covered by ICDS, and some more by unregulated private sector and civil society actors. It seeks universal access, equity and quality in ECCE and strengthening capacity of service providers. It refers to the need to eradicate discrimination in early childhood on the basis of gender, social identity, disability and other exclusionary identities. It emphasises that parent and community outreach programmes will be strengthened to establish collaborative relationships. It includes the strengthening of 'mothers (parents) committees', reflecting the ambiguity on the role of fathers in parenting (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2013b).

**The National ECCE Curriculum Framework** (no date) has been in development in keeping with the National ECCE Policy. It refers to strengthening capabilities of families (fathers, mothers and other care givers), communities and service providers

to ensure quality care and education for children in the early years. It emphasises that home based and centre based stimulation for 'mother and child' is imperative to strengthen parental interventions. It also mentions that ECCE programmes of the government should enable parents and family members to read books, play games, sing songs, narrate stories and converse with children. The ECCE Framework seeks to ensure parental commitment to enrol children at the right time for getting timely intervention. Workshops for parents are called upon covering health and development, physical development, emotional development and dealing with behavioural issues. The importance of gender training of ECCE teachers, equal treatment of boys and girls, and use of gender sensitive stories and play way methods is referred to in the Curriculum Framework (unlike the ECCE Policy). The Framework points out that male ECCE teachers should be encouraged so that learners will benefit from male role models in parenting. Regular communication of Anganwadi workers with parents on children's progress is called for, as well as tapping of parents' and grandparents' knowledge of folklores for learning in Anganwadi centres. Early identification by ECCE teachers of disabilities and medical conditions and counselling for parents is recommended.

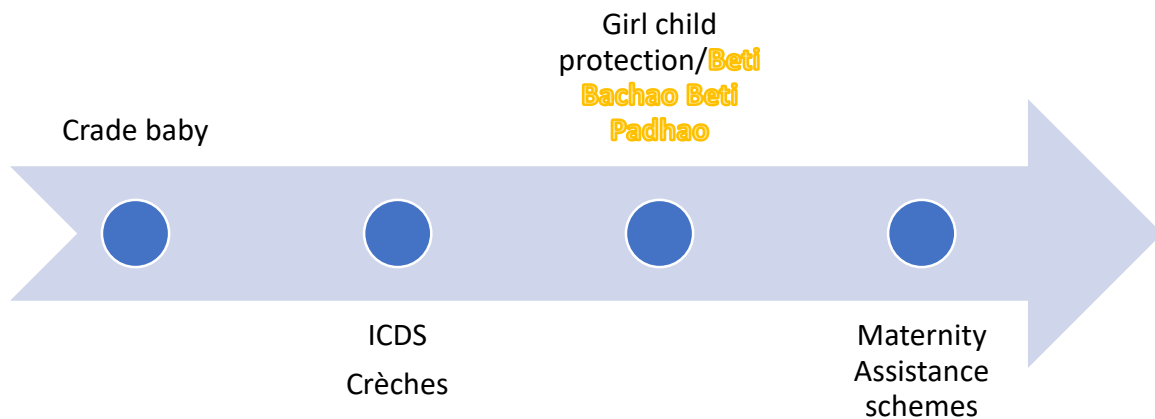
Overall, there is recognition of the need to ready families for parenting, but there is more emphasis on education of mothers on ECCE than fathers. Photos on parental interactions with ECCE centres in the Guidelines show only mothers attending. Stories, materials and games free of gender and social biases have to be made. Further, the Framework, while emphasising that play way methods should be free of gender stereotypes, does not refer to bringing up children without stereotypes around caste, class, religion, ethnicity, etc. (Ministry of Women and Child development, n.d). It is not clear whether budget for gender/ socially sensitive training of anganwadi workers, helpers, CDPOs, parents and other care givers, and material development and production has been allocated. The strategy to take early childhood development to young street children, migrant workers' children, children of construction workers, children whose parents are in bonded labour, children of sex workers etc remains unclear.

Emphasis could also be placed on identifying child sexual abuse amongst 0–6 year olds and referring to Child Protection Officers and parents (if they are not involved) (Ministry of Women and Child development, n.d).

### **4.3 Schemes**

There are a variety of schemes that have a bearing on gender and parenting, which are listed in the Figure 4

**Figure 4: Schemes pertaining to gender and parenting**



**Cradle baby scheme:** The cradle baby scheme was introduced by the Government of Tamil Nadu in 1992 when faced with the practice of female infanticide and the practice of abandoning the girl child. Assessing the design and impact of the scheme two decades after its introduction, Srinivasan and Bedi (2010) observe that the Cradle Baby Scheme tries to ensure that female babies who would otherwise have been killed are given up for adoption. Based on a statistical analysis, they conclude that the scheme may have directly accounted for about 14% (370/2700) of the reduction in post-birth daughter deficit between 1996–99 and 2003. They note that while it is true that encouraging parents to abandon female babies is not a substitute for tackling the crime of female infanticide, until the girl child is welcome in families such a scheme will be needed. However, a study by Women Power Connect and Campaign Against Sex Selective Abortion notes that mortality of babies in the cradle baby scheme is five times that of the average Infant Mortality Rate in the state (Women Power Connect and CASSA, 2015). The scheme is being extended to other states like Puducherry (The Hindu, 2007).

Campaigns against sex selective abortion observe that the scheme is a violation of Articles 7 and 9 of the Child Rights Conventions, which deal with the child's right to be cared for by her biological parents and requires the state to ensure that children shall not be separated from their parents, and, in case of separation from one or both the parents, the state should respect the rights of the child to maintain personal relationship with both parents (cited in Srinivasan and Bedi, 2010).

**ICDS:** A ten-year-old longitudinal study of 200 anganwadi centers in six states (Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) reveals that the proportion of mothers who report that the anganwadi centers is in same neighbourhood has gone up from 72 to 85% that the percentage of mothers



reporting pre-school education, 0-6 child nutrition<sup>13</sup> and weight monitoring services are provided in anganwadi centers has improved between 2006 and 2016. However, gap remains between the performance of anganwadis in the first three states and the last three states considered as 'dormant' and 'active states' respectively. The proportion of centers open for more than four hours is higher in 'active states' than 'dormant states', and highest in Tamil Nadu.

As per the anganwadi workers, 30% of centers had not conducted a survey on young children with disability and an additional 25% had not conducted a survey the year of the study (two disability surveys are to be conducted in a year). The proportion of children in anganwadi centers who are Dalits is more than in the population. As per the reports of the investigators involved in the FOCUS study, the percentage of caste discrimination against Dalit mother's children, helpers and anganwadi workers investigators has come down from 14% in 2006 to 6% in 2016 and was higher in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Examples of discrimination included upper caste women not allowing children to go with Dalit Anganwadi helper, caste Hindu helper reluctantly serving food to Dalit children, and the anganwadi worker not tasting food cooked by Dalit helper. Cases of tribal women getting lesser access to Take Home Ration when compared to caste women also came to light during the FOCUS study. Interestingly percentage of mothers who did not want children of different castes using the anganwadi increased from 2% to 9%.

Further, home visits is a low 46% in 'active states' (highest in Maharashtra) and 30% in dormant states. As mothers and grandparents come to the center more, low rates of home visits points to the possibility of low engagement with fathers on parenting. Nutritional health education meetings with mothers have declined between 2004 and 2014, other than Maharashtra wherein it has increased. The reason for this is attributed by the Focus Study to the NRHM under which village health and nutrition days are celebrated at the anganwadi centre. Both the mothers meeting under ICDS and VHND do not engage with men as fathers, but mainly women as mothers. The report does not examine the gender or social sensitivity of the messages communicated

**Under the umbrella of ICDS, the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana** has been operational from 2016 (it was earlier called the Janani Suraksha Yojana). Under this scheme, Rs 5,000 is payable in three instalments with the last instalment being payable after child birth. This scheme could not only improve the mother's health, but also the health of the new-born child. A bank account and Aadhar identification are necessary, which makes it difficult for women living on the street, migrants, etc., to avail of the scheme. Further, this benefit is available only for the first two pregnancies<sup>14</sup>. The other scheme under the ICDS Umbrella is **the Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers**. The scheme aims at

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<sup>13</sup> However, 59% of mothers reported that they distributed the take home rations amongst family members, which may affect the nutrition of children 0-6 years.

<sup>14</sup> MWCD, n.d, [http://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Training%20Module\\_v4.4%20%2023102017.pdf](http://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Training%20Module_v4.4%20%2023102017.pdf)

providing day-care facilities for children (6 months to 6 years) of working mothers in the community, improving nutrition and health status of children, promoting physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of children and educating and empowering parents/ caregivers for better childcare. It seeks to reach women working in the informal sector in rural and urban areas who have children 6 months to 6 years old. The women should be employed for a minimum period of 15 days in a month, or six months in a year. The focus is on children from marginalised families. Mothers breastfeeding their babies can come to the crèche to feed their babies. The crèche timings are flexible—7.00 a.m. to 2.30 p.m., 8.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m or 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., with extra payment for additional time at reasonable rates and on mutually agreed basis. The user fees are Rs 20/ child if below the poverty line. The scheme does mention training crèche workers on appreciation of parents' involvement in crèche programmes, but the content does not include educating parents on ECCE<sup>15</sup>. The workers' tasks include motivation of parents for immunisation and counselling them if growth of child is not adequate, but education on ECCE is not part of the tasks. There is a crèche monitoring committee, but representation by parents is not mentioned. Unlike the guidelines on the ECCE Framework, there is no reference to breaking gender or social stereotypes and barriers. There is no reference to reaching children marginalised by caste, class, religion, ethnicity, disability or those living with sex workers, on the streets, in prisons, etc. (Ministry of Women and Child Development, n.d).

### **Challenges in ECCE teacher–parent interactions**

Through their study of private and public early childhood centres, Joshi and Taylor (2005), observe that the interaction between early child development teachers and parents is central to early child development. In India, they argue the concept of encouraging parents to get involved in early childhood centres does not exist, and early childhood development teachers with exceptions deal with parents in a top down manner. Further, the centres are seen by parents as a medium for children to learn the three Rs—reading, writing and arithmetic—and be assisted to move to primary school. Hence the importance of communication on early childhood development and effective interaction between the teachers of these centres and parents. To examine perceptions on the factors that influence this interaction, the authors interviewed 12 preschools covering 65 teachers and 173 parents (71% mothers, 29% fathers). 83% of the teachers worked in private schools that were attached to secondary schools. The main finding from the survey with teachers was that satisfaction of teachers with pre-school training imparted and job satisfaction were central to the nature of interaction with parents and not the amount of training, years of experience and class size. The salary, in turn, was a determinant of job satisfaction. The main finding from the parents' survey was that the more the amount of training of pre-school teachers the less the interaction of teachers with parents. The authors argue that often pre-school teachers in India think they know much more than parents and interact with them in a top down manner.

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<sup>15</sup>The content covers hygiene, health and nutrition and specifically emphasises the development and use of innovative teaching methods for pre-school children

**Girl child incentive scheme:** A Girl Child Incentive scheme was introduced in Tamil Nadu in 1992 by the state government to eradicate female infanticide prevalence, eliminate son preference, promote girls' education and promote small family norms. The incentive given to the mother was available only if the couple adopted permanent methods after the first two births, and if both were girls. A study on the impact of the scheme in 6 blocks of Tamil Nadu observes that the off take picked up after 2001. It observes that the scheme had little impact on son preference, with Child Sex Ratio declining in 3 of the 6 blocks studied after the introduction of the scheme. The decline in CSR was achieved with development of technology, and was more due to prenatal sex selection than reduction in female infanticide. The scheme did not have any impact on dowry, which increased. While girls' enrolment to high school education improved, there was no difference in enrolment of daughters of non-participants in the scheme. Education was more valued in general, and grooms too wanted educated girls. 60% of beneficiaries of the Girl Child Incentive scheme were against the rights of girls to inherit property, pointing that the scheme had no impact on girls' attitudes. On parenting attitudes, restrictions were placed on the mobility of girls and the times by which they should return home. Girls were married after high school, as the family honour was at stake, which may have affected their health and that of their children, as they were expected to conceive soon after marriage (Women Power Connect and CASSA, 2015).

**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:** The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao is a scheme to address the declining child sex ratio, an indicator of disempowerment of women and girls. As discussed in the previous section, this trend is due to gender biased sex selection, and post birth discrimination against girls through neglect in food, nutrition and health care. In this context, the objectives of Beti Bacaho Beti Padao scheme of the Indian government are three fold, namely i) prevention of gender biased sex selective elimination, ii) ensuring survival and protection of girl children and iii) ensuring education and participation of girl children (Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), 2016b). This initiative began in 2014-2015 100 selected districts low in CSR, covering all States and UTs (MWCD, 2016b). Sixty one (61) new districts were added in 2015-2016. The scheme is implemented by three Ministries: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Human Resource Development through the District Collector. Multi-sectoral District Action Plans have been operationalized in the states. Capacity-building programmes have been imparted to trainers to further strengthen capacities of district level officials and frontline workers. Innovations include use of street plays, signature campaigns, Guddi Gudda (girls-boys) Boards, live your dream for one day initiative (e.g. be a policewomen), etc (PM India, n.d) According to findings reported in 2016, 49 of the 100 districts covered under the Beti Bachao Beti Padao program witnessed a positive Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) but not the others, as per Ministry for Woman and Child Development (cited in Save the Children, 2018). Further the implementation of the scheme has come under scheme. Out of a total

amount of ₹43 crore that was set aside for Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme in the fiscal year 2016-2017, a mere ₹5 crore has been utilised so far, according to the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development (Huffpost, 2017). Further funds were not always used as per guidelines. Others have critiqued that deep rooted gender norms are difficult to change, and can be seen in persistence of inequalities against adolescent girls and women during the same period (One India, 2017). Once the scheme ends the gender discriminator norms may surface.

**Village Education Committee and Parent Teachers Association:** As part of strengthening universalisation of elementary education, considerable stress was laid on community involvement through various committees such as Village Education Committees and Parent Teacher Associations by the National Policy on Education in 1986. It suggested that local communities would play an important role in different aspects of school management. The Revised Policy on Education also reiterated the same concept of people's involvement in school planning and management. A step further in this process was the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts (Panchayati Raj Act, 1992) that laid emphasis on giving powers to the democratically elected bodies at the district, sub-district and panchayat levels to improve the quality of education. These committees are actually designed in a manner to reflect equal representation of women, SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities, representatives from parents and other public spirited people. The VECs and PTAs are supposed to work in close coordination to implement educational policies and programmes at grass-roots level. Pandey and Guatam (2015) observe that 75% of 1400 families with children in the age group of 6–14 covered in a study did not know about the existence of Parent Teachers Associations and School Management Committees, leave alone their functioning. The Gram Panchayat was aware of the Right to Education Act, but not of other policies that have a bearing on child rights.

## **5.0 GOOD PRACTICES ON GENDER/SOCIALLY TRANSFORMATIVE PARENTING**

The review of good practices of civil society actor points to innovative ways of providing care and education to young children, at times linking with the assistance of government schemes or with the assistance of companies. These efforts have shown how children neglected in government initiatives can be reached, like children of construction workers, pastoralists, sex workers etc. However, their outreach has been limited. How far the curriculum on early childhood education is gender or socially- transformative and promotes the same through training of parents varies across organisations. Another good initiative is working with school development and management committees on parenting. Yet another effort, this time by UN and INGOs together, is engaging with men as fathers. Surveys on attitudes of men on gender norms, including on parenting have been initiated, but there is no comparison with women's attitudes on same. Online courses on

transformative parenting and mobile Apps on parenting of young children have been attempted in other countries which if replicated can only reach middle and upper class parents. These practices are explained below

### **5.1 NGO run Creches**

Around five decades old, Mobile Creches works for the right to Early Childhood Development for marginalised children. Its work spans from grassroot level interventions to policy advocacy at the national level. At the grass roots, it works in construction sites and slums of New Delhi, running Creches (9 A.M-5 P.M, 6 days a week) and centres to provide health care, nutrition, early learning and care from birth to 12 years of age. It also trains other NGOs and construction companies to do so. In the slums of New Delhi, it offers similar services (other than working with construction companies) and in addition, works with locally elected representatives and people's representatives. Mobile Creches also works to strengthen the ICDS scheme. Unlike the ICDS, Mobile Creches offers education to 'families' and not just mothers on best practices in child care. Thirty-six organisations have been trained on care of young children. Its advocacy has been around right to early childhood development, prioritising early childhood development and maternity entitlements. It has been instrumental in formulating the ECCD Policy, 2013, and advocating for conversion of 5% of Anganwadi centres into Creches for young children. It was one of the players in bringing about the provision for Creches under the Construction Workers Act, 1996. Its crèche model for young children was absorbed into The Crèche Scheme for Working and Ailing Mothers, 1979, and later, the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme (Mobile Crèches, n.d). In 1989, Mobile Creches was instrumental in promoting the Forum for Creches and Child Care Services (FORCES), a network of women's rights, child rights and labour rights organisations. A new development is the creation of the Parents Development Forum, which engages fathers in childcare and child development. As a result of the Parent Development Forums, many fathers come to pick up children from the centres and participate in the abhibhavak (parents) meetings. Mobile Creches seeks to link the community with state programmes, again tying in with Mobile Creches strategy to 'activate' state services, rather than MC providing services directly (Chigateri, 2017). While studies have lauded the education, nutrition, health and care services provided by the crèches, they have not studied the content of education: whether they are free of gender and social stereotypes, whether the training given to the service provider and to parents is free of such biases.

SEWA also provides child care services and early childhood development services to members/ members' children through its cooperatives and local organisations. At present, its services are offered to children in the age group of 0–6 years, and its child care services are linked to ICDS and the social welfare department. Services were provided to parents who were tobacco workers, salt pan workers, agriculturists and urban informal sector workers. Like Mobile Crèches, it considers itself an important player in formation of FORCES and takes on a leadership role in Gujarat. For SEWA, Creches are seen as integral to women's employment (SEWA, 2009a,

2009b). However, no detail is available on the content of parenting and whether and how children of different castes and religions mix.

## **5.2 REAL Fathers Initiative**

The Responsible Engaged and Loving (REAL) Fathers Initiative, which began in Uganda, tries to break the cycle between experiencing/ witnessing violence in early childhood and becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence, including gender-based violence, in adult life. It seeks to build positive partnerships and parenting practices among young fathers (aged 16–25 years) who are parenting a child 1–3 years old in three areas i) using nonviolent discipline, ii) decrease in use of intimate partner violence and physical punishment of children and iii) foster acceptance of non-traditional gender roles in parenting (Institute for Reproductive Health and Save the Children, 2017). Local chiefs identify eligible young fathers from their community to participate in the program. Then, selected young fathers and their wives reflect on the qualities of someone whom they respect, and choose a man from their community to serve as their group mentor. The mentors meet the men individually, with wives and in groups. The mentors give parenting exercises to young fathers and visit them. Curriculum themes include fatherhood, tips and tricks to being a REAL Father, Loving My Family, Dreams of My Family, Communication and Parenting. Posters and audio visuals are used to build public pressure for positive parenting. At the end of six months, fathers share their learning and commitment for the future. Evaluation of the initiative in Amuru District, Uganda, found that young fathers exposed to REAL Fathers were half as likely as those unexposed to report using any form of Intimate Partner Violence (physical, psychological, or verbal) at end-line and one year after project end. The REAL package had a significant effect on reducing use of physical child punishment in the long term, but not in the short term. Father–child interaction also improved, as well as parents' communication with each other. Interestingly, the REAL Fathers package had no significant effect in the short term in shifting young fathers' attitudes around traditional gender roles in caregiving and decision-making, but in the long term, REAL Fathers with young fathers exposed to the intervention were half as likely to agree that "bathing and feeding the child is the woman's responsibility," among other norms. However, it is not clear whether the REAL Father Initiative, apart from engaging men in parenting and perhaps contributing to reduced violence, promoted gender and social transformative parenting.

UNFPA supports the Men Engage Alliance, active in 30 countries including India, to promote positive and non-gender stereotypical parenting (Men Engage and UNFPA, 2014). There are other INGOs as well that promote similar initiatives in India and elsewhere, like World Vision (Harris, 2017). An example of how gender sensitisation of fathers can change attitudes towards girls and the outcomes for girls is given in box.

### Consequences to daughters on working with fathers on gender discrimination

A father's support to his daughter can make a difference to the girl's well-being by protecting her from child rights violations. Realising this, World Vision started a "Men Care Group". One of the participants in this group, Pramod, learnt how traditions such as early marriage, dowry, early pregnancy and female infanticide impede the advancement of girls. Pramod now sees his daughter as an important member of his family, which was not the case earlier. He wants her to pursue a career that she desires. Pramod reports listening to her grievances, however, small and helping her find a solution (Harris, 2017)

### 5.3 Strengthening school development and management committee

UNICEF has been providing technical support to enhance the capacity of School Development and Management Committee members and to develop School Improvement Plans and on gender and social inclusion in Gujarat and Jharkhand at the secondary education, level through the *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan* programme, especially for increasing participation and attendance of adolescent girls and boys (UNICEF, 2016). Such support could be extended to strengthen parents'/ mothers' committees of ICDS and primary school development and management committees, and include gender/ socially transformative parenting practices as well.

### 5.4 Using games for promoting discussion on gender norms:

Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW) in Uttar Pradesh, India modified the popular board game "Snakes and Ladders" to promote discussion among children and youth about changing gender norms, promoting girls' education, challenging sexual harassment and norms on gender roles. The "board" is a large cloth that children stand on as the game is played. In Mumbai, a consortium of NGOs that included MenEngage partners developed a program of school festivals. Leading up to it, students designed posters and wrote comic strips and stories. On festival days, there were games, role-plays and races based on gender issues. One example was a contest that involved both girls and boys in a race to stitch a button, dribble a ball, and fold a shirt—thus giving greater value to women's/ girls' traditional skills and making the point that these are skills that girls and boys should learn (Men Engage and UNFPA, 2014). Such games could be introduced with parents too in mixed or separate groups.

### 5.5 Surveys on men's attitudes and attitudes

Starting from 2009–10, MenEngage Alliance partners, with the support of UNFPA, carry out large-scale surveys on men's attitudes and practices. Led by Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women, partner researchers administered the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) to more than 20,000 men and women in 9 countries<sup>16</sup> to begin with, including India (more

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<sup>16</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Mali, Mexico and Rwanda.

countries were added later). The survey covers attitudes and practices relating to domestic and parenting duties, gender equality, sexual relations, use and experience of violence, health issues, and other areas. A similar survey, based in part on IMAGES, is being coordinated in several countries in Asia by the UN project Partners for Prevention supported again by UNFPA. (Men Engage and UNFPA, 2014). It is not clear how this survey is feeding into policies.

UNICEF has initiated a longitudinal study underway in Chhattisgarh to track the impact of parenting on children aged 0–3 years as they go through the ICDS and into the first two grades of primary education (UNICEF, 2016). This study again would offer useful relevance for policy.

### **5.6 Using online platforms and ICT**

The online course on transformative parenting started by Transformative Parenting, USA covers three aspects: i) strengthening attachment and connection of parents and children, ii) strengthening appropriate architecture and structures including daily rituals for the children to grow, and iii) positive disciplining approaches. These sessions are normally covered in 10 sessions spread over 10 weeks. There is a blog space to share how parents dealt with difficult situations in parenting of children. While the course does not mention covering gender/socially transformative it suggests the potential use of ICT for such purposes (Transformative Parenting, 2016). Further, in the present Indian context, online courses/ therapies can only address the parenting needs of the elite.

ACEV, a partner of Promundo, Brazil, has evolved a free mobile app **First6Years** through which it communicates positive parenting practices to fathers, in different settings. It proposes to evaluate its impact across different cultures (OpenIdea, 2018). This could have a wider use than online courses, but may require access to a smart phone which the poorest sections (and women amongst them) are less likely to have. UNICEF has been collaborating with the Indian government on using television, radio and **social media** to raise gender awareness, address negative social norms, enhance confidence among adolescents, increase awareness on ending child marriage, boost nutrition and education and prevent gender-based violence. The outreach is 15 million. This initiative could be extended to promote stereotype free education and entertainment programmes for young children and mixing of children of different age groups (UNICEF, 2016).



## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Conclusions

Gender/ socially transformative parenting refers to situations where both parents play an active and equal role in parenting, and break stereotypes on the basis of gender, caste, class, religion etc. This research was constrained by lack of adequate material on parenting practices, and gender and social dimensions of it. The information gap was higher for rural than urban areas, and amongst vulnerable groups compared to the middle class. Nevertheless, several insights emerge from the research

This paper has argued that there is a gender/ socially transformative parenting deficit in India, in particular parenting of street children, migrant children, children of sex workers, children living with disability, orphans etc. (and girls amongst them). There is no evidence that mothers, across classes and types of families, follow better or more gender and inclusive parenting practices than fathers. While gender disparities in access to food, nutrition and education, may be lower in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, there is no evidence that parenting even in these states are devoid of gender and social bias. The spatial segregation of families across caste and class also poses a barrier to inclusive parenting. Plugging this gender/socially transformative parenting deficit is a right of the young child, will contribute to efficiency of the economy, can lead to more egalitarian gender and social norms in society and further the rights of mothers and adolescent girls. New issues like Assisted Reproductive Technology pose challenges to parenting and rights of child and the poor donors & surrogate mothers. Old issues like migration of young mothers from lower middle class abroad (in particular in Kerala) leaving their child behind is a concern for the development of the child.

As such, India does not have a legislation or policy on parenting, and there is an assumption that cultural norms on parenting and conditions that shape parenting are in keeping with rights of the Child and the Girl Child. The **National Early Childhood Care and Education curriculum Framework** (post 2013, no date) does mention the need for gender sensitisation of teachers, use of gender sensitive methodologies, recruitment of male teachers and sensitisation of parents on parenting (not what type of parenting). The legislation on Maternity Benefit Act, and Paternity Benefit Bill do not have a component on education of parenting before going on leave, and neither is such a component included as part of maternity assistance schemes, girl child incentive scheme and scheme on Crèches. Structures like parents (mothers) committee and Parent Teachers Association also do not play a role in shaping parenting in a transformative manner. At the same there are good practices of civil society, like positive fathering initiatives, use of ICT for transformative parenting, mobile Crèches, Crechesfor reaching the unreached, surveys on men's attitudes on gender and parenting etc. which could be strengthened and replicated.

## 6.2 Recommendations

It is in this context that the following recommendations are made to the government:

- i) **Pass legislation on transformative parenting** including of young children, which is in keeping Child Rights Convention as well as CEDAW and human rights. Parenting should be in keeping with principles of gender and social equity. South Africa has passed a legislation titled Children Act, which includes parental responsibilities and so do a few other countries.
- ii) **Expand the outreach of ICDS** to beyond 48.2% through reaching remote tribal areas, young children of construction workers, children living on streets, sex workers, people living with HIV, children living with parents in mines, brick kilns etc. Universal coverage of ECCE has been mentioned in the National ECCE Policy, 2013, but the required strategy has to be evolved and budget & staff have to be allocated.
- iii) **Beyond ICDS, replicate NGO models for care of the young child** such as mobile crèches, care centers after ICDS hours etc., with an emphasis on dialogue with parents on gender/socially transformative parenting. Creches have to be provided by government on demand. Such models could be integrated into the National ECCE Curriculum Framework, with the required budget and staff being allocated.
- iv) The National ECCE Curriculum Framework of the country should develop a **detailed strategy, curriculum and materials for gender/ socially transformative ECCE and training of parents and** allocate necessary budget and widen its focus beyond gender equality, like install values of equality irrespective of caste, religion, abilities etc
- v) **This curriculum on gender/socially transformative parenting** may be used by the ICDS, Crechesscheme, Maternity Assistance scheme, Girl Child Incentive Scheme and made mandatory for those availing Maternity or (in future) Paternity Leave. Companies should mandatorily run parenting courses which include gender and social dimensions. All private providers of ECCE should mandatorily follow the ECCE guidelines, including on transformative parenting. The rules and guidelines governing legislation and schemes on Maternity and Paternity Assistance may be modified accordingly.
- vi) **Use of Parents Teachers Association, Village Education Committees and other forums** for sensitising teachers, parents and village leaders on gender/ socially transformative parenting. This could be integrated into the guidelines on Sarva Siksha Abhiyan.
- vii) **Use media and ICT and social media for promoting gender/socially transformative parenting.** Television serials, radio programs, SMSs could be used for gender/socially transformative parenting. Parents Day may be used as the day to launch such programmes. This recommendation could be integrated into the National ECCE Curriculum Framework, with necessary allocation of budget and trained staff.

- viii) **Conduct parenting practice survey periodically, including** who looks after emotional, social, intellectual and physical development. The link between drop out of girls at secondary level, and shift in parenting responsibilities to them has to be monitored. This recommendation. This recommendation could be integrated into the National ECCE Policy, 2013 and Curriculum Framework, with necessary allocation of budget and trained staff.
- ix) **Replicate Kerala model of state formed children's committees** at village and panchayat level so that children are aware of their rights under CRC and laws to protect them, and suggest ways of strengthening ECCE of young children without taking away rights of older boys and girls. These suggestions could feed into the action plan of each district on ECCE
- x) **Study parenting and child rights** dilemmas of those who have gone for Assisted Reproductive technologies, from those commissioning and providing services, and passing ART Act to safeguard interest of the child and children of surrogate mothers ps. The study may inform the ART bill when passed.

A major constraint in gender/socially transformative parenting is deep rooted patriarchal values and the segregation of location of citizens along caste (in rural areas) and class lines (in urban areas), and increase in trend in migration. Initiatives to promote gender/ socially transformative parenting have to address these larger structural issues.

## 7.0 KEY MESSAGES

### Goal/Rationale

- Every young child has access to gender/socially transformative parenting. Gender/ socially transformative parenting refers to situations wherein parents play an active and equal role (if couple) in parenting, and adopt parenting styles breaking stereotypes on the basis of gender, caste, class, religion etc.
- Plugging this gender/ socially transformative parenting deficit is a right of the young child, will contribute to efficiency of the economy, can lead to more egalitarian gender and social norms in society and further the rights of mothers

### Main findings

- There is a gender/socially transformative parenting deficit in India, as in many parts of the world, reflected in skewed child sex ratio on the one hand and non-fostering of egalitarian attitudes in the young child.
- The responsibility for parenting rests mainly with women-mothers, grandparents, adolescent girls. Mothers do not necessarily adopt more gender transformative parenting than fathers.

## Patterns and Trends

- Gender discrimination in parenting is less in north east and southern India when compared to northern and western parts of India, reflected in comparatively favourable child sex ratio; equal access to ECCE and primary education.
- Parenting deficit is higher amongst young children of bonded labourers, higher order daughters, children of migrants, children left behind by migrant parent (s), children of sex workers, children with disabilities, children in conflict areas etc.
- Indian parents are mainly heterosexual couples. Parenting by lesbians, gays and bisexuals is an emerging reality. Transgenders also parent young children. Parenting by single women and single men is a recent reality. However, ECCE policies mainly recognise heterosexual couples.
- Migration of women, men or/and families is one the rise, posing challenges for effective parenting of the young children
- New issues like Assisted Reproductive Technology pose challenges to parenting and rights of child and the poor donors & surrogate mothers (and their children).

## Deep rooted challenges/opportunities

- Gender stereotypes in parenting – by mothers and fathers- stemming from patriarchal values is a deep rooted challenge
- Spatial segregation of families across caste (rural areas) and class (urban areas) and social norms which divide citizens on the basis of caste, religion etc also poses a barrier to socially transformative parenting.
- Uneven development (rural-urban and inter-state) which leads to bonded labour, migration, sex work etc poses its own challenge to
- At the same time matrilineal inheritance and wide outreach/long history of women's empowerment may have contributed to better CSR in north east and southern India. Further support of elderly parents by daughters is not uncommon.

## Government initiatives

- As such, India does not have a legislation or policy on responsible parenting, and there is an assumption that cultural norms on parenting and conditions that shape parenting are in keeping with rights of the Child and the Girl Child.
- The National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework mentions the need for gender sensitisation of teachers, use of gender sensitive methodologies, recruitment of male teachers and sensitisation of parents on parenting (not what type of parenting). The coverage of ICDS is 48%
- Legislation exists on Maternity Benefit and Paternity Benefit Bill has been drafted. However, they do not have a component on education of parenting before going on leave, and neither is such a component included

as part of maternity assistance schemes, girl child incentive scheme and scheme on Crèches.

- Structures like mothers committee attached to ICDS and Parent Teachers Association have potential to parenting of young children in a gender/ socially transformative manner, this potential is yet to be realised.
- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme is operational in 161 districts and aims at arresting child sex ratio, protection of the girl child and education of the girl child in campaign mode through Ministry of Women and child Development, Human Resource Development and Health coming together. Results from 100 low CSR districts suggest that in almost half the CSR has improved.

Good practices which are amenable to policy

- South Africa has passed a Children's Act which includes a section on parental responsibilities vis a vis the child and also under what condition can the state intervene. Other countries like Canada have legislation on parental responsibilities. However, it does not cover gender/ socially transformative practices
- There are examples from different parts of the world of working with fathers on "positive fathering". Many of these initiatives emphasise role of fathers in taking care of children, house work and as spouses. They do not necessarily, emphasise removing gender/social stereotypes in parenting. Some have also used ICT to disseminate messages on positive parenting and collect men's attitudes on gender, fathering and being a spouse.
- Yet another initiative is to promote mobile Creches in construction sites and for other mobile population. Crechesto suit the time of workers has been another initiative.

Recommendations to decision makers

- To mainstream the concept of gender/ socially transformative parenting into existing legislation, policy and schemes of Indian government relevant to ECCE. For example, when Bill on Paternity Leave bill is passed the rules may spell out parenting responsibilities of fathers – including from a gender and social equality lens.
- To replicate mobile Creches on a larger scale with the involvement of NGOs and corporates, and integrate gender/ socially transformative parenting principles into that
- In addition to Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, to promote women's empowerment on a large scale, a campaign saying that girls look after parents too, and property rights of women.
- To pass a legislation to uphold rights of all children to gender/ socially transformative parenting or Parental responsibilities.
- To allocate adequate budget for implementation of above, ensure that it is utilised and re that appropriate staff, capacities and infrastructure are in place.

## Annex 1

### SDG TARGETS AND INDICATORS RELATED TO GENDER AND EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT

Goal	Global Target	Global Indicator	Indian draft indicators
<b>SDG 4:</b> Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.	<b>4.2.1</b> Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>4.2.2</b> Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex	Prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years of age  Prevalence of underweight children under 5 years of age  Proportion of children 12-23 months receiving full immunization  Proportion of 12-23 months old children immunised against measles  Under five mortality rate  Infant mortality rate  Sex ratio at birth
<b>SDG 5</b> Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girl	5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location	Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work by sex, age and location

**Source:** UNDESA, 2018, SDGs Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development  
<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/> Last accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2018

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