

PRESS RELEASE

8.12.97

Women pay with their lives for inhuman cancer research as guardian of medical ethics, ICMR, breaks all the rules.

We are shocked to learn of the ICMR [Indian Council of Medical Research] study between 1976-1988 in which cervical dysplasia was left untreated in 1,100 women, in order to study the progress of the disease. It is distressing to note that after abnormal tissue growth was detected and the risk of cervical cancer identified, the doctors did not think it fit to either warn or treat these women, but chose instead, to use them as guinea pigs for their experiments.

The fact that the research was conducted by the leading cancer research institute, the ICPO [Institute for Cytology and Preventive Oncology] through eight major government hospitals in Delhi is equally distressing. These are hospitals that thousands visit everyday in hope of treatment, not to be subjected to unethical and inhuman research. It is also totally insufficient for the ICPO to claim that since the women are illiterate, oral consent was taken from them for these experiments, when the internationally accepted protocol is to take written consent.

Such inhuman behaviour and absolute violation of the ethics of medical research is doubly shocking since it was sponsored by the 'premier' research body of India, the ICMR which actually lays down the ethical guidelines for medical research in the country. The lack of genuine concern within ICMR is apparent from the fact that 'in-house probe' initiated on the matter has failed to take off as the probe committee has not even met in the last one year. Obviously, the health of human subjects of medical research is not the priority they claim it to be.

Further, government action on the matter has also been typically lackadaisical. Two months after the Union Health Minister ordered an enquiry, the report is yet to be submitted.

It is imperative that stringent action be taken against all those responsible for such unethical and inhuman research immediately. Women subjected to the study must be followed-up, given prompt and adequate treatment, and awarded suitable compensation for what they have suffered. The report on the violation of medical ethics and health care in the course of this study must be made public immediately.

Unfortunately, unethical research in India is not restricted to ICMR alone. Tests on anti-pregnancy vaccine conducted by the National Institute of Immunology and widespread use of the dangerous and unlicensed procedure of Quinacrine sterilisation by private practitioners and NGOs, have also shown utter disregard for informed consent and follow-up. Hence, there is an urgent need to ensure that medical ethics be made more stringent and informed consent genuine. The ICMR draft document on ethics and informed consent that it proposes to circulate, must be thrown open to women's groups and health activists who have been involved in the issue. Only a genuine public debate, backed by a system of redressal for the victims of medical research and stern punishment for the offending researchers can ensure implementation of ethical guidelines. *Else they will continue to remain meaningless words on paper, while people, especially the poor and illiterate, continue to pay with their lives for the pursuit of science.*

PRESS RELEASE

WOMEN'S ORGANISATION'S PROTEST AGAINST THE REPORT OF THE EXPERT COMMITTEE ON POPULATION POLICY

Women's organizations have already protested against the Expert Committee's Draft National Population Policy submitted to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on May 21st, 1993, through an Open Letter to the Committee Members.

This Committee was appointed by the Ministry in August 1993 and its members are eminent scientists and administrators, including, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, (Chairman) Dr. Devaki Jain, Dr. J.P. Gupta, Shri Pravin Bisaria, Dr. Ashish Bose, Ms Avabai Wadia, Shri N. Bhaskara Rao, Dr. V. Gowarikar, Dr. K.B. Pathak and Shri T.V. Antony. The Report is expected to be tabled before Parliament during the Monsoon session and in the meanwhile remains a closely guarded secret even from senior Government officials.

At the meeting held to mark the World Population Day, women's organisations appealed to the sensitive sections of public opinion to oppose the unconstitutional attacks on the rights of the people. This hysteric assessment of the "Population Environment" relationship, emanate from the refusal to address the basic issues of overconsumption and maldistribution of resources and power, nationally and globally.

Women's organizations have been consistently attempting a dialogue with the expert Committee and had been assured by the Chairman that their suggestions were being seriously considered. These suggestions had included banning of hazardous contraceptives which were provider controlled and long acting, taking a balanced view in the consumption-population debate, removing coercion and disincentives which had serious consequences on women's health and autonomy, and recommending positive and effective measures to ensure child survival, quality health services and employment. Measures to reduce child marriage, illiteracy, universalisation of elementary education, and democratisation of the process of policy formulation were other recommendations.

The organisations feel the Expert Committee has not only ignored all their but recommendations but has gone several steps ahead of the government to define a model policy which only the most authoritarian regimes ready to ride rough shod over human rights and dignity can adopt.

The most objectionable elements of the policy comprise of recommendations which debar people with more than two children from contesting elections in a country where the average fertility is 3.6. This has also been made a disqualification against getting

jobs in the government and the organized sector. Victims of child marriage are to be similarly debarred from employment in the organised sector.

The Committee has even proposed deploying the army and the paramilitary forces to achieve population stabilization, thereby displaying a completely hysterical approach to the phenomenon of growing numbers.

The Committee has advocated unhindered import of all contraceptive technology without so much as stopping to question the cost of these technologies and the ability of our poorly equipped and manned health care system to deliver these to women. It has escaped the Expert Committee that the country which can barely provide the choice between rice and wheat can hardly afford to use contraceptives which cost several thousands rupees per head.

While acknowledging the problem of over consumption by the elites, it has not recommended a single measure to contain consumption. Instead it has blamed the poor for their poverty and also for the failure of the government till date.

The meeting was addressed by Shri Rajiv Dhawan, Prof. Imrana Quadeer, Shri Dunu Roy and representatives of Women's Organisations.

प्रेस विज्ञप्ति

गर्भ नियंत्रण की प्रयत्न क्षमता चाहिए जनसंख्या नियंत्रण नहीं

विश्व जनसंख्या दिवस पर खतरनाक गर्भ निरोधकों का विरोध जारी संगठनों व अन्य सक्रिय संगठनों द्वारा आज खतरनाक गर्भ निरोधकों के विरोध में धरना आयोजित किया गया। मात्र पिछले दो सालों में ही कई नई तकनीकें भारत में प्रचलित की गई हैं अथवा परीक्षणधीन हैं, इनमें शामिल हैं डेपो प्रोवेरा तथा नेट-एन की सुइचों, नॉरप्लोर, गर्भ विरोधी टीका एवं गर्भपात गोली आर यू 486। साथ ही सरकार जानी मानी अवरोधक पद्धतियों जैसे डायफ्राम, सर्वाइकल कैप व फीमेल कंडोम के प्रचलन में बाधा खड़ी कर रही है व देरी लगा रही है।

गर्भपात गोली के छोड़कर (जो जान लेना स्वतः भ्रू उपचार है) बाकी सभी तकनीकें लम्बी अवधि तक कारगर रहती हैं व लगाने वालों के वश में रहती हैं और इनका जमकर जनसंख्या नियंत्रण कार्यक्रमों में दुरुपयोग किया गया है।

धरना में शामिल औरतों का कहना था कि सरकार का औरतों की गर्भनिरोधकों की जबरन पूरी करने का कोई इरादा न था। क्योंकि जहाँ सरकार समय की कमी पर खरे उतरे डायफ्राम जैसे निरापद गर्भ निरोधक पर व्यर्थ परीक्षण करवाने पर आया था वहाँ बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों द्वारा लाई गई डेपो प्रोवेरा जैसी दवा को वगैर परीक्षण के ही लायसेंस दिया जा चुका है। इसी प्रकार सुप्रोस कोर्ट में केस होने के बावजूद नेट-एन को बाजार में लाया गया है।

इस बात पर ध्यान आकर्षित किया गया कि सरकार की प्रतीति तकनीकें सिर्फ बेहद महंगी ही नहीं हैं बल्कि सही प्रचलन के लिए अच्छी प्रिक्लिन्सीय सुविधाएँ भी माँगती हैं जो इस देश की स्वास्थ्य व्यवस्था दे पाने में सक्षम है ही नहीं। वह स्वास्थ्य व्यवस्था जिसका स्तर विश्व बैंक द्वारा प्रकाशित हुए दार्जांग परिवर्तन के तहत लगातार सिमट सिमटती ही जा रही है। इस परिवर्तन के चलते जनसंख्या नियंत्रण की देरी पर औरतों के स्वास्थ्य की खलि दी जा रही है।

सरकार पर इल्जाम लगाया गया भ्रू वारंटे करने का। जैसे पहले उन्होंने राष्ट्रीय महिला आयोग को आश्वासन दिया कि नॉरप्लोर के परीक्षण को 10 केन्द्रों तक सीमित रखा जाएगा पर बीच ही में केन्द्रों की संख्या 30 कर दी गई। इसी प्रकार औषधि नियंत्रण ने लिखित आश्वासन दिया कि व डेपो प्रोवेरा की खिनी को सीमित करेंगे पर साल भर में इसके लिए कोई कदम नहीं उठाया।

महिला संगठनों का कहना था कि अगर जनसंख्या नियंत्रण पर जोर देना बंद नहीं किया जाता व गरीबी और पर्यावरण विनाश

के असली कारणों पर ध्यान नहीं दिया जाता, तब तक औरतें इस
धनकारी नीति का शिकार होती ही रहेंगी। उन्होंने फिर मांग की
कि आयुष्मान का शीघ्र प्रचलन किया जाय व दूसरी अवरोधक
पधतियों पर शोध की जाय ताकि औरतों व बच्चों का स्वास्थ्य
सुरक्षित रह सके।

भाग लेने वाले संगठनों में शामिल थे सहेली, अखिल
भारतीय जनवादी महिला समिति, नेशनल फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडियन
विमेन, सबला सदा, अखिल भारतीय युगतिशील महिला
समिति, जागोरी, एक्शन इंडिया, पुरोगामी महिला संगठन,
आल इंडिया ड्रग एक्शन फोरम, आग, शक्तिशालिनी, ज्वाइंट
विमेन्स प्रोग्राम, पीपल्स हेल्थ नेटवर्क, पी यू डी आर,
इसाफ, पीपल्स लिंक व पब्लिक इंटरैक्ट रिसर्च ग्रुप।

Press Release

July 11, 2005
World Population Day

Findings of the Study on the "Implications of the Two-Child norm on representatives in (Panchayati Raj Institutions) PRIs especially women, in Madhya Pradesh"

Sama- Resource Group for Women and Health conducted a study during 2003-04 on "Implications of the Two-Child norm on representatives in PRIs especially women, in Madhya Pradesh". The study was conducted in collaboration with MP Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS) in 12 districts of Madhya Pradesh - Betul, Harda, Hoshangabad, Jabalpur, Katni, Raisen, Ratlam, Shivpuri, Sehore, Sivni, Vidisha and Panna.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. To examine the impact of the two-child norm on the political participation of the economically and the socially disadvantaged groups in society;
- ii. To assess the extent to which the policy affected women's autonomy, their position in the family and their participation in the political process;
- iii. To study the impact of the policy on women's lives, both in public and private sector.

The findings are based on in-depth interviews with 128 men and women –representatives in PRIs who were subject to implementation of the two-child norm. In addition the study involved discussions with members of the community and documentation of violations, narratives from secondary sources.

FINDINGS/ OBSERVATIONS

The two-child norm disproportionately impacts adivasis, dalits, especially women and in general the poor. Nearly 50% of the 128 respondents were *dalits* and *adivasis* (SCs and STs), of which almost 40% were women, most being non-literate, landless and from the lowest category of average monthly household income. Forty five percent of all respondents average monthly household income was less than Rs. 750, around 33% income was between Rs. 750 and Rs.1000, Fifty percent of all dalits and adivasis in the study had an average monthly household income less than Rs. 750, with another 35% in the income category of Rs. 750-1000.

Nearly 25% of all respondents were not literate (33 of 128), of which about 65% were women. Approximately 87% of the persons who were non-literate were Dalits and Adivasis. Ninety percent of the women who were non-literate were Dalit and Adivasi women.

Approximately 44.53% percent (57 of 128) of respondents were solely dependent on daily wages through agricultural activity, stone breaking, working in sand quarry, etc. Of these nearly 65% were Dalits and Adivasis and nearly 51% were women.

Political participation

The two-child norm violates the 73rd amendment to the Panchayat Act. It discourages political participation of

- **Dalits, Adivasis and poor in general:** Nearly 50% of the 128 respondents were *dalits* or *adivasis* (SCs or STs), and about 45% of the respondents average monthly household income was less than Rs. 750.
- **Women:** Almost 32% of the total respondents disqualified, which is alarming in a context where women's participation in the political process is minimal. Of the 50% of dalits, adivasis disqualified, nearly 40% were women.
- **Young people:** A large number of younger men and women in the reproductive age group are adversely affected by this norm. The study highlighted, for example, an emerging trend whereby older women/ mothers / mothers-in-law replaced vacated posts of daughters/ daughters-in-law.

Process of Implementation

An overwhelming number of respondents said that they had no prior information about the norm. Most of them heard about it for the first time only when they received notices of disqualification. Because of low levels of literacy, lack of access to information, many were unaware about the law itself and were taken

aback with the sudden imposition of the law. *"We were not aware of any such law. The Sarpanch told us that I was removed because I had three children, I came to know that such a law existed."* - Panch SB

The study revealed that most of the representatives received the notices, which were issued from the Collector's office. Some had not received any notice and were informed verbally that they were removed, by other members of the Panchayat or the community. *"I did not get any kind of written order but only verbal communication regarding the investigation to be carried out. I did not receive any information about the norm."* - A woman sarpanch. Some had seen their name in the local newspapers on a public notice issued by the Collector's office.

A large number of men and women interviewed said that they would not have contested if they had been aware of the norm. The two-child norm therefore does not succeed in changing decisions regarding the size of the family. This is particularly true in the context of son preference.

Tool for Misuse

The norm is misused as a tool to settle political and personal scores. It is used to usurp power and dislodge representatives, especially women from dalit and adivasi communities, who challenged the dominant power / caste structures and male hegemony and asserted themselves. The study documented that women, especially first time leaders who tried to challenge and change the functioning of the panchayat were targeted.

"The upper caste people lodged a false complaint against me. I used to take independent decisions, without being in their control. They don't want any developmental work done in our area...this was unacceptable to me. They got this order against me despite the fact that my last child was almost six years old at that time." - Dalit Woman Sarpanch,

Manipulation and misrepresentation of births is common because of high prevalence of home deliveries and non-registration of births. In instances where such records existed, tampering of records was recorded. The norm has been used to pre-empt potential political rivals.

There were instances where the child was born before the **stipulated date**. One woman member had her child five days before the stipulated date and yet she was removed.

I had my third child on the 21st of January 2001 and where as the norm came to the implementation from 26th January 2001. I was removed from the post. I produced the Immunisation card as the proof. Since the child was born at home I did not register the birth. I was asked to produce the birth certificate but I could not get it." She added that, *"It is an irony to prove the birth of the child to save the post. I did not go to the court as I could not afford."*

Being a rural situation, most of the children were **born at home** and their births not registered. So in many cases, it became a difficult exercise to prove the date of the last born.

The study also indicated that there were many instances of **disputing the age** or date of birth of the last born child, tampering with records and evidence, providing false certificates; several instances of dispute over number of children and date of birth of the last born child.

A dalit woman sarpanch was removed when she had only two children. *"The upper caste people sent false information and I was disqualified. I got the stay order as I could prove that I had only two children."*

The norm is not clear on the issue of stillbirths and **twins**. There were two instances of disqualification where the representatives had **twins**.

"We had twins and I was removed from the post. We did not know that we would have twins. I got a stay order from the High Court. I challenged the norm on the issue of twins." - Dalit Male Sarpanch.

In a study by Hunger project in MP has observed a similar experience where a woman Sarpanch had a similar experience. She had one child and she became pregnant. She had twins and was removed from the post.

Larger Implications

The norm has far reaching implications for women. **Forced abortions**, giving up a child for **adoption**, **desertion** and **abandonment of women and children** were used as strategies to prevent disqualification

and continue as representatives. Such strategies, in the context of low status of girls and women and son preference, disproportionately affects girls and women, violate their right to life and equality.

Adoption

In the 128 respondents, 6 had given up child for adoption of which 5 were girls.

"I want a future in politics. In order to do that I had to give up one of my daughters who was born after January 26th for adoption." – Male Panch

"I have three children; the youngest was born after the stipulated date. People in my area persuaded me to give one of my children for adoption." – Male Councilor. He gave up one of his daughters for adoption, although the youngest child (born after the stipulated period) was a son.

Forced Abortions

The two-child norm has opened the door to forced abortions and provided further impetus to sex selective abortions and female infanticide that will only facilitate further deterioration of the sex ratio.

"When I was pregnant with the fifth child, my husband to continue as panch, took me to a nearby town for abortion. The doctor advised against it as the baby was due soon...If the two child policy is to be implemented, then prohibition on female foeticide should also be lifted." – Woman Upsarpanch

Sex selective abortions and declining 0-6 sex ratio

The 0-6 sex ratio in many districts of Madhya Pradesh is alarming:

S.No	District	Sex-ratio(0-6)
1	Bhind	829
2	Morena	829
3	Gwalior	849
4	Shivpuri	909

Reference: Human Development report

A Study of the implications of the norm by Mahila Chetna Manch in Orissa and Rajasthan highlighted that implementation of the norm had led to an increase in the number of pre-natal sex determination tests that resulted in the abortion of female fetuses. A study by the organisation SUTRA in Himachal Pradesh shows that the districts with the highest juvenile sex ratio have the highest disqualifications while those with the lowest sex ratio show no or very few disqualifications.

Abandonment /rejection of women and children

A Sarpanch received a notice for removal because of the birth of his third child in November 2001. He however refuted it claiming that his opponents had lodged a false complaint as his wife had been living separately from him, at her natal home since November 1999. He claimed that they had not had sexual relations with her since and that he had divorced her on the grounds of adultery (Newspaper report).

Humiliation and Disempowerment

▪ In addition to being kept out of political process by mechanism of the state the representatives from dalit and adivasi communities faced humiliation in their villages.

"I was even abused physically but when all else failed, my rivals used this law against me. My wife and I have received notices. People are talking about us and taunting us. My rivals are also laughing at us." – Dalit male Panch.

"My low caste was the main reason for the problems I had to face while performing my duties as a Sarpanch. Some villagers from the higher castes could not bear to see me at a higher position than them" – Dalit Male Sarpanch

▪ Women's position in community and family were further compromised. Women as representatives as well as spouses of representatives faced the consequences. They were subjected to humiliation and increased violence in their villages and in their homes.

One dalit sarpanch was **accused** of killing her third child to retain the post. She went through **mental agony and humiliation** because of the allegations.

Another woman sarpanch said, *"I studied up to primary level. I was very happy to be a Panch. The villagers called me "member" and I was respected. When I was removed, I lost all the respect and prestige that I had earned by being a Panch. I was terribly disheartened. My husband was furious because he felt his prestige was lost. He said that, 'I had told you not to enter politics, but you never listened to me. You were dying for power. Now face the consequences*

Child Survival- Infant Mortality

In Madhya Pradesh the neonatal mortality is 54.9 and the infant mortality rate is 86.1 (Ref Human Development Index). As per NFHS, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) at 88 per 1000 was much higher than the national average of 68. The child mortality rate at 56.4 per 1000 was almost double the national average.

The average Infant Mortality Rate of the 12 districts (data for only 10 available) where the study was conducted averaged as 147 per 1000 live births. (The Madhya Pradesh Human Development Index; Pg 132) This figure is more than double the national average.

MP was disqualified because he had four children. However, three of them died after he was removed. The study revealed that child mortality was extremely high in a large number of the households, with 1 to 3 deaths per household. Eighty percent of these were adivasi households.

The above statistics reiterate the insecurity of food, lives and livelihoods and, inequitable and inaccessible health services that large section of people live with.

Action taken in response to the notice

Nearly 49% of those who have cited reasons for not taking action did not do so because of lack of money, 'time' and not being literate. Fifty three percent of these were dalits and adivasis. Nearly 32% of the total number of women did not take any action.

Other provisions of the MP population policy

It is also important to note that the Madhya Pradesh population policy links the provision of rural development schemes and income generating schemes to the **performance of family planning**. It says:

"Awards will be given in the field of community support for population stabilization at all levels for the best performing health institutions, individuals, and Panchayat Raj Institutions every year.

Rural development schemes, particularly those dealing with infrastructure, will be linked with family planning and reproductive health performance.

The policy also stresses **on the legal age at marriage** "From January 26, 2001, persons marrying before legal age at marriage will not be eligible to seek government employment in Madhya Pradesh" (Ref: (Madhya Pradesh Population Policy January 2000, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Madhya Pradesh p 17)

Disqualification from government jobs for persons married before legal age presumes that they have the power to do otherwise. This will discriminate against women more than men and hold them responsible for a deeply entrenched social custom of child marriage over which they have no individual control and violate their right to livelihood and equal opportunities.

The provision of rural development schemes to performance of family planning when women have no autonomy to decide family size and composition; in the absence of access to and dismal quality of health infrastructure and services.

We condemn the norm on the following grounds:

- Imposition of the Two Child norm and the disincentives proposed, has had disastrous consequences on the already marginalised populations particularly women, dalits, adivasis and the poorer sections who are bearing the brunt of the state's withdrawal of welfare measures.
- The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment sought to strengthen India's democratic governance by providing constitutional recognition to local self-government bodies. The State's legislation on Panchayati Raj that introduces punitive measures on the basis of the two child norm, deprives them of their constitutional rights by barring them from contesting elections and thus hindering their participation in the political process. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment that made it mandatory to have 33 % women as panchayat heads and members. The act also mandated quota for weaker sections and adivasis in direct proportion to their numbers in the area. The objective was to create space for women and economically and socially marginalised sections to participate in the political process. However, this progressive effort of the state government to restore the rights of the marginalised has been thwarted by such a step.
- The two- child norm bars large sections of dalits, adivasis and the poor in general from contesting elections in the PRIs and thus deprive them of their democratic rights.
- Women, in particular, suffer the consequences of this policy even though they have no autonomy when it comes to family size or sex composition. Few have the power to make choices around contraception while access to safe contraceptive methods and services is another matter altogether.
- In the context of strong son preference, such a norm also provides an impetus to Sex Selective Abortions and female infanticide thus worsening the already alarming sex ratios in the country.
- Depriving the children of their rights to survival and development is violative of International Convention on the Rights of the Child and successive directives of the Supreme Court to enhance their right to education and health services.
- This norm violates several Directive Principles of the Constitution of India as well as several International Covenants that India is signatory to, including the ICPD Declaration.

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Annexure

Madhya Pradesh Population Policy states that:

- "From January 26, 2001, persons marrying before legal age at marriage will not be eligible to seek government employment in Madhya Pradesh.
- Persons having more than two children after January 26, 2001 would not be eligible for contesting elections for panchayats, local bodies, mandis or cooperatives in the state. In case, they get elected and in the mean time, they have the third child, they would be disqualified for that post.
- The girl-child scheme like Rajlakshmi to ensure retention of girls in schools and to prevent child marriages, will be launched in the state with the help of financial institutions"
- Awards will be given in the field of community support for population stabilization at all levels for the best performing health institutions, individuals, and Panchayat Raj institutions every year.
- Rural development schemes, particularly those dealing with infrastructure, will be linked with family planning and reproductive health performance.

Ref: (Madhya Pradesh Population Policy January 2000, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Govt of Madhya Pradesh p 17)

According to **the Panchayati Raj Act**, under **section 36, D (1)**, after January 26, 2001, a person having a third child will be removed from their respective posts in local bodies and Panchayat, Mandal, Co-operative Societies, and will not be eligible to contest the elections and were also to be deprived of the benefits of Welfare Programmes.

Saheli

Women's Resource Centre

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PRESS NOTE

On the occasion of World Population Day on 11 July 1998, Saheli, an autonomous women's group working on issues related to women's health, has written an open letter to the Hon'ble Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Mr Dalit Ezhimali, demanding a stop to unethical medical practices that make women pay the price for population control.

On this day last year, Saheli had released a detailed report on a hazardous method of chemical sterilisation, titled, 'Quinacrine : A sordid story of chemical sterilisation of women'. In the course of the year, and as a result of a nationwide campaign against the method, it has now been banned by the Drugs Controller General of India - a ban that has also been upheld by the Supreme Court. Yet, several crucial questions of implementation of the ban, and punishment of the guilty remain.

The letter also details several other instances of gross violations of the law and ethics of clinical trials and medical practice, and calls on the Hon'ble Minister to take immediate action to help safeguard the health and well-being of women, who constitute half the population of the country.

A copy of the letter to the Hon'ble Minister is enclosed. We would be grateful if you could publish it on 11 July 1998 the occasion of World Population Day.

for SAHELI

9.7.98

PRESS NOTE ON WORLD POPULATION DAY

11 July 2000

THE WORLD DOES *NOT* NEED POPULATION CONTROL, IT NEEDS CONSUMPTION CONTROL !

Release of a Saheli Poster

In the last year, there has been a worldwide fascination with population figures. 6 billion in the world. 1 billion in India. And as usual, the focus has remained on "reducing numbers, essentially of the poor". In India, the stress has moved to a National Population Policy, and even as the government further reduces its responsibility of looking after the health of its citizens, it is striking new alliances with the corporate sector for population control.

But how valid are these apprehensions about the limits of the earth's resources and whether there is enough to feed every mouth? In identifying "population" as the "problem", we believe that governments, policy makers and others with a stake in population control, refuse to acknowledge where the real problem lies - not in the numbers of people, but in the amount of resources "some people consume" and the burden that puts on "all people".

- Developed nations (with smaller populations) and the elite in countries like ours with unsustainable lifestyles, energy-depleting technologies and destructive development are responsible for depleting the global environment; not the large numbers of poor.
- Global data reveals that countries like the U.S. with 1/3 the population of India, consumes 5 times more oil, 8 times more electricity and 12 times more petroleum.
- In India, the highest income groups (1.44% of the population) consume 75% products like electricity, petroleum products and machine based household appliances that have a severe global environmental impact.
- And in Delhi itself, 60% of the population (the poor) lives on less than 7% of the land; and the transport facilities they use (like buses) account for only 1.3 % of total vehicles on the streets.

**On World Population Day, we think it is crucial to
SHIFT THE FOCUS FROM THE "POPULATION EXPLOSION" TO THE "CONSUMPTION EXPLOSION".**

Hence, we are releasing a poster (enclosed), titled "**Not Population Control, We want Consumption Control**", which presents a global picture of consumption, pollution, and wastage; and highlights the implications of such consumption on women, especially the poor, who are made targets of coercive population policies and subjected to the use of hazardous contraceptives.

Despite the hue and cry about the poor having excessively large families, studies in U. P., Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have shown that they actually have relatively smaller families than better off classes. And data on family size by socio-economic class has not been gathered at a national level since 1951! It is clear that much needs to be done.

**RATHER THAN THE FOCUS ON A POPULATION POLICY TO REDUCE NUMBERS,
WHAT WE NEED IS THE POLITICAL WILL TO STRIKE AT THE ROOT CAUSES OF POVERTY
WHICH IS NOT SCARCITY OF RESOURCES AND FOOD, BUT SCARCITY OF JUSTICE.**

Pop Con 2005

Press Release

The census data on population and sex ratios provides an opportunity to take a dispassionate view at the determining factors of demographic patterns. The data will help India make a review of the relevance of the Cairo Declaration to which it was a signatory ten years ago. In 2005, Governments across the world will meet to review the developments since the Cairo Declaration on issues concerning population, sex ratios, women's reproductive rights, women's health issues and so on. Unfortunately the opportunity provided has sought to be hijacked by a sectarian political platform wants to manipulate religion based data for its own communal purposes. We strongly condemn these attempts. We as concerned citizens and organizations want to raise certain issues which we think are crucial to the current debate.

Firstly we express serious concern at the revival of the ideologies of "population control" and the wholly misconceived and in fact damaging policy framework of incentives and disincentives. The BJP chief ministers conference has specifically taken a policy decisions on these lines for the state where BJP is in power. This shows the total hypocrisy of the party. In 2000 when it was heading the Central Government a National Population Policy was adopted by Parliament UNANIMOUSLY which expressed a commitment against all policies of quotas disincentives and to improve social indicators of women's development such as literacy, access to health ad medical services, addressing unmet contraceptive needs etc. A National population Commission has been set up under the Prime minister for the implementation of the policy with an initial amount of Rs.100 crore rupees. Surely the country is owes an explanation by the BJP Leadership prompted such a reversal of a Population Policy, which was formed under its leadership?

Secondly the issue is important because the census data provides a clear evidence if the relevance of a non-coercive development oriented approach to strengthen the processes of family planning. It is precisely those states that have higher indicators of social development where the population growth rate has come down across communities and castes. Contrary to the BJP's ill motivated propaganda, it is not religion but better access to basic rights that determine family size. Thus for e.g. Muslim women fertility rate in southern states is lower than that of Hindu women's fertility rates in many northern states. In communities and regions where IMR is higher, families tend to produce more children. Thus, socially disadvantaged who have the highest rates of infant mortality have larger families. The census data has provided very valuable information of cross-classification for religious categories. For example, it shows the literacy rates among Muslims at 59.1% is way below the national average of 64.8% and lower than that of all other communities listed. Worse still, work participation rate among Muslims is just 31.3% again far below the national average of 39.1%. In other words a Muslim in India is 25% less likely to be working than the average citizen in the country. The picture is even more grim if we look at the disaggregated figures for work participation. Just 20.7% of Muslims are listed as cultivators, as compared to an average citizen of India. In contrast 8.1% of Muslims -- almost twice the national average of 4.2% -- work in Household industries, that is in poor, ill paid, sweetshop conditions.

A Two-child norm, if legislated upon, can only be sought to be implemented by coercive measures. Measures that make villains out of the real victims of the path of socio-economic development followed in this country. It discriminates against the poor, against dalits and tribals, against minorities and against women. It is a convenient play to pass on the burden of non-performance in governance on these sections. We are strongly opposed to any attempt to force any such coercive legislation on the people of this country. Let those who talk about such a norm, first ensure health, food education for all. Let them bring down the unacceptably high

child and maternal mortality rates in the country. If this does take place, there will be no need to bring in a legislation to control population.