

Lek Ladki – A booklet for building capacities of Village Health Nutrition and Sanitation Committee members

An important strategy to address the issue of declining sex ratios is to build capacities of grass root and frontline functionaries at the village level so that they could take up the issue and address it in their areas. A key intervention under the Government's flagship program 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' is to build capacities of Village Health Nutrition and Sanitation Committees (VHNSCs). So as to involve them in making village plans for addressing the issue of sex selection and improve health outcomes for women and girls.

With this in mind, UNFPA in collaboration with the Public Health Department, Government of Maharashtra, extended support to the NGO – Dalit Mahila Vikas Mandal. The purpose of the engagement was to sensitise VHNSC members in the BBBP district of Beed and train Master trainers in nine other BBBP districts to in turn build capacities of VHNSC members.

A training module for VHNSC members titled *Lek Ladki (Beloved Daughter)* was developed in simple Marathi to make them aware of their role in addressing the issue of sex selection.

The module makes an attempt to discuss reasons for son preference and unwantedness of girls and demystifies the PCPNDT Act. It further presents statistics on declining child sex ratios and attempts to inform VHNSC members on the basics of inspecting a sonography center. It elaborates initiatives that VHNSC members can undertake to welcome the birth of a girl child and remove the stigma surrounding the event. The document also provides a brief overview of innovative government schemes to improve implementation of the PCPNDT Act.

The module further gives a brief overview of the MTP Act and emphasizes that abortion is the consequence and not the cause of sex selection. Hence a woman's right to legal and safe abortion should not be compromised under any circumstance.