



breakthrough

## **Mission Hazaar: A Campaign by Breakthrough against gender biased sex selection.**

### **Bike Rally for a Cause: Men and Women Bikers Join Hands to Raise Awareness**

**New Delhi, 22 February:** Breakthrough organized a bike rally with biker groups Free Souls and Bikerni to spread awareness about gender biased sex selection (GBSS) on Sunday, 22nd February. The bike rally, which will see a participation by 75 male bikers and 25 female bikers, was flagged off by iconic female biker Shabnam Akhtar from Qutub institutional area in New Delhi.

The rally that went enroute Punjabi Bagh and Baddhurgarh, first stopped at Rohtak DC office before concluding at Chotu Raam Stadium in Rohtak.

More than one thousand men and women joined Breakthrough's Mission Hazaar Campaign at Chotu Ram Stadium to raise their voices against the skewed child sex ratio in Haryana.

During the event, Breakthrough also disseminated the survey report of an audit conducted amongst 10000 school and college going students in Haryana. The audit aimed to point out the fact that there are women missing from communities because of prolonged practice of gender biased sex selection in communities.

**The survey results clearly suggest that women are missing from schools, colleges, work places and public places. Some of the key findings of the survey are as follows:**

- **66% participants said that women are not to be seen in public places after dark**
- **Only 11% women are seen working in organized sectors**
- **There are only 47% women in families**
- **90% parents preferred boys over girl children**

The survey results are evidence that son preference is deeply embedded in India's socio-political-economic and cultural constitution. The very fact that many Indians prefer a son over a daughter due to the tradition of sons being the property inheritors, rite performers and name carriers of the family heavily affects the status of women in India. For many Indians, while daughters are considered a bad investment for various reasons, sons constitute a profitable investment with short as well as long term returns which leads to the phenomenon of Gender-biased-sex-selection (GBSS).

The term GBSS captures the fact that people are making choices about sex of their child based on broad biases around gender. The sex ratio of girls and boys in several states in India illustrates how a girl child is perceived even in a foetal state.

According to 2011 child sex ratio survey in India, there are only 834 girls for 1000 boys in Haryana and there are only 871 girls for 1000 boys in Delhi. According to global trends, the normal child sex ratio should be above 950.

***“When Breakthrough began working in Haryana, we realised that the evident absence of women and girls is an unspoken but accepted reality. We wanted to raise awareness about this absence, which is the root cause of several ills, including increasing forms of violence against women. People are aware that gender-biased sex selection is illegal. Since it is a largely invisible crime, they believe they can get away with it. Mission Hazaar aims to put the issue of missing girls in the public eye and introspect about how repeated discrimination against the girl child has led to the disappearance of women from communities”***, said Sonali Khan, Vice President and Country Director- India, Breakthrough, speaking at the launch.

“Mission Hazaar is a true endeavor to find the missing women in our communities. Women are seen working in houses and in fields but they are missing from public spaces, work places, schools and colleges. Its time we acknowledge the fact that more women around, makes this world a better place to live. From the last two years, our team at Breakthrough has tried spreading awareness about the issue through street plays, magic shows, etc. Thousands of students have been mobilized, hundreds of Anganwadi workers, Asha workers and health workers have been trained. Breakthrough have been able to reach more than 50000 people through community mobilization activities and Mission Hazaar is another chapter of the same tireless endeavor” said Veenu Kakkad, Deputy Director Program GBSS.

“The young generation plays a key role in making gender biased sex selection unacceptable. We hope and believe that these students will realize their role and responsibility and take this effort forward,” said Roki Kumar, Program Manager, Rohtak.

During the event, Breakthrough also honored women who have broken gender stereotypes. First female Arjuna Award winner for Judo Karate Poonam Chopra, wrestling champions Suman Kundu and Sakshi Malik, world cup best players in Kabaddi Bateri and Renu, Bus drivers Ritu Sharma and Raj Bala, Panchayat member Mukta Vishnoi, Farmer Sunita and a biker for last 40 years Saroj shared their life stories and experiences with those present at the event.

Breakthrough unveiled its campaign, ***Mission Hazaar***, along with the Ministry of Women and Child Development and UNFPA on 16 January. Mission Hazaar, is a 360 degree multi-media campaign, with presence across digital and non-digital platforms, which aims to raise awareness against Gender-biased Sex Selection and inspire communities to take action against practices that have resulted in abysmally low sex ratios. Breakthrough believes that if communities realize the impact that sex selection has on women and their society and key stake holders are held accountable for why women and girls are missing, then there is a greater likelihood for the communities themselves challenging this practice. Our interventions are currently on across four districts of Haryana – Jhajjar, Rohtak, Sonapat and Panipat – among districts with the lowest sex ratios across India.

**Two TV advertisements (Cab Driver and Railway Station) created jointly by Breakthrough and UNFPA on the issue of GBSS have been disseminated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development under government's National Media Campaign of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.**

Mission Hazaar aims to raise conversations in communities on the ground and across social forums about the missing girls/women from society and the need for intervention to counter low sex ratios across several states in India. The campaign also throws light on the problems created in society due to the reduced number of women and girls in the communities and how these can be addressed by changing mind-sets and traditional practices. **It is estimated that between 2001 and 2008, 5.7 lakh girls have gone missing at birth annually, as a consequence of gender-biased sex selection (UNFPA, 2011). This takes the cumulative missing toll to 45 lakh or 4.5 million missing girls in just 8 years.**

**About UNFPA:** UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA is the lead United Nations agency for delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person's potential is fulfilled, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

**About Breakthrough:** Breakthrough is a human rights organization seeking to make violence and discrimination against women and girls unacceptable. We use the power of arts, media, pop culture and community mobilization to inspire people to take bold action to build a world in which all people live with dignity, equality and justice.

We create groundbreaking multimedia campaign that bring human right issues into the mainstream and make them relevant and urgent to individuals and communities worldwide. These, along with our in-depth training's of young people, government officials and community groups, have ignited a new Breakthrough Generation of leaders sparking change in the world around them.

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