

Gender Differences in Child Health Care in the Indian States

Prof. T. Rajaretnam
Program Management Specialist
Tata Institute of Social Sciences
Deonar, Mumbai, India
Email: trajaretnam@gmail.com
Mobile: 09987672794

Abstract

In India in the recent past there has been a phenomenal increase in the delivery of child health and nutrition services especially in the rural areas and as a result the health indicators have shown significant improvements in the health status of children. However discrimination against female children in the utilization of available health care services was very common in different parts of India. Studies conducted in the recent past have come out with different scenarios of the prevalence of discrimination: from a strong discrimination to a weak or no discrimination in child health services utilization in different parts of India. This paper tries to review published, unpublished and web-based information on child health care utilization and also analyse the three NHFS datasets on the subject, to assess the trend and differentials in gender discrimination in child health care services and utilization in different states of India. To facilitate the analysis a gender discrimination index has been constructed and applied to the NFHS data on four areas of child health care namely breastfeeding practices, utilization of child immunisation services, prevalence and management of childhood diarrhoea and ARI, and extent of under-nutrition among children. A preliminary analysis of the data indicates that gender discrimination in child care do exist in many states of India but appears to be weak or very weak. Probably the health care services are now widely available, people are more aware of these services, and the cost of these services is nominal if not nil, people tend to utilize these services without discrimination to the gender of the child. States that have shown relatively high and low discrimination in child health care utilization are identified and appropriate policy implications drawn.