GENDER DIFFERENCES
AMONG CHILDREN 0–5 YEARS:

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILD SURVIVAL INTERVENTIONS

A Review Paper Prepared for the BASICS Project
By Kathleen M. Kurz and Charlotte Johnson-Welch
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A Review Paper Prepared for the BASICS Project

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Basic Support for Institutionalizing Child Survival
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Abstract:

Increasing attention in the developing world has been devoted to the girl-child. There is a scarcity of information on gender differences among children under the age of 5. It is important to focus on possible gender bias among young children so that child survival interventions benefit girls as much as they do boys. A literature review was conducted that found: few studies disaggregated health and nutrition data of underfives by gender; gender-disaggregated data give a mixed report on the direction of gender bias; few insights explaining gender differences emerged from a review of the health and nutrition literature; a common way in which gender bias manifests is that girls tend not to be taken for health care as often or as early in their illness as boys; girls may receive less attention from parents; first-born girls may be healthier than their younger sisters; increasing household income and increasing mothers’ education are not sufficient to reduce gender disparities; and interventions can be designed and implemented to overcome gender biases. The authors conclude that child survival efforts are well placed to help reduce gender differences in the health and nutrition of underfives as follows: By determining if there are gender-biased behaviors or gender-differential outcomes; by investigating why the gender differences occur; by developing and testing interventions to reduce gender differences; and by sharing lessons learned and developing a consensus about reducing gender differences.

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# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Sources</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Results</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few studies disaggregated health and nutrition data of underfives by gender</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-disaggregated data gave a mixed report on the direction of gender bias</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few insights explaining gender differences emerged from the review of the health and nutrition literature</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A common way in which gender bias manifests itself is that girls tend not to be taken for health care as often or as early in their illness as boys</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls may receive less or poorer quality food than their brothers</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls may receive less attention from parents</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-born girls may be healthier than their younger sisters</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing household income and increasing mothers’ education are not sufficient to reduce gender disparities</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions can be designed and implemented to overcome gender biases</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Demographic and Health Surveys: 45 Countries</td>
<td>A.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: National Family Health Surveys: 14 Indian States</td>
<td>B.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GENDER DIFFERENCES AMONG CHILDREN 0–5 YEARS: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILD SURVIVAL INTERVENTIONS
**Table 1.**
Extent of Gender Disaggregation in International Sources of Cross-National Data on Underfive Health and Nutrition .................................................. 7

**Table 2.**
Extent of Any Gender Disaggregation and Any Gender Differences in Articles on Underfive Health and Nutrition, by Region ................................................................. 8

**Table 3.**
Extent of Gender Disaggregation and Gender Differences in the Articles, by Health Topic ................................................................................. 9

**Table 4.**
Male:Female Mortality Ratios in the Narangwal Study ........................................... 19

**Table A.1.**
Mortality Rates for Male and Female Children 0–5 Years: Data from Demographic and Health Surveys ...................................................................................... A.1

**Table A.2.**
Percentage of Male and Female Children 0–5 Years for Whom Medical Care Was Sought for Diarrhea, Fever, or Acute Respiratory Infection: Data from Demographic and Health Surveys .... A.2

**Table A.3.**
Percentage of Male and Female Children 0–5 Years with Immunizations: Data from Demographic and Health Surveys ............................................................................. A.3

**Table A.4.**
Percentage of Male and Female Children 0–5 Years with Low Nutritional Status: Data from Demographic and Health Surveys .......................................................... A.4

**Table B.1.**
Mortality Rates for Male and Female Children 0–5 Years: Data from National Family Health Surveys ........ B.1

**Table B.2.**
Percentage of Male and Female Children 0–5 Years for Whom Medical Care Was Sought for Diarrhea, Fever, or Acute Respiratory Infection: Data from National Family Health Surveys ............... B.1

**Table B.3.**
Percentage of Male and Female Children 0–5 Years with Immunizations: Data from National Family Health Surveys ................................................................................. B.2

**Table B.4.**
Percentage of Male and Female Children 0–5 Years with Low Nutritional Status: Data from National Family Health Surveys ................................................................................. B.2
Figure 1.
Articles with Gender-Disaggregated Data ................................................................. 8

Figure 2.
Disaggregated Results by Region, Asia, Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa ........... 10

Figure 3.
Disaggregated Results by Health Topic, Morbidity, Health Care Utilization, and Nutritional Status ........ 11

Figure 4.
Gender Differences in Nutritional Status in Rural Bangladesh: HKI Nutritional Surveillance Project,
Stunted Children by Land Holding Size, August 1991–February 1994, Underweight Children
by Season, February 1991–October 1994, and Stunted Children by Mother’s Education,
August 1991–February 1994 ......................................................................................... 17