

Satara's 'unwanted' girls get new names

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Pune/Satara: Until Saturday, they were known as 'Nakoshi', which means 'unwanted'. Aishwarya (13) and Sunita (7) were rechristened to replace a name that spelt out their hapless status in their respective families. In fact, Satara's district health administration has identified as many as 222 girls aged up to 16 with the name 'Nakoshi', or a similar-meaning 'Nakusa', in the district's villages. It has begun the process of renaming them. Aishwarya and Sunita got their new names at a small function held at Saygaon village after the panchayat prepared affidavits to effect the change.

"Most of these girls were the second or third girl child in the family, when parents hanker for a boy," said Satara district health officer Bhagwan Pawar. "Parents say the names only express what they felt when the child was born. We are now slowly working on improving the sex ratio in our district and the lot of the girl child." The impetus to change the parents' outlook may stem from the fact that provisional data from the 2011 census showed Maharashtra's child sex ratio dropped to 883 from 913 a decade before. Satara's situation is worse with a ratio of 881. But the task is not easy. "We longed for a male child. When our fifth child too turned out to be a girl, we named her Nakoshi," the mother of one such girl said nonchalantly.

