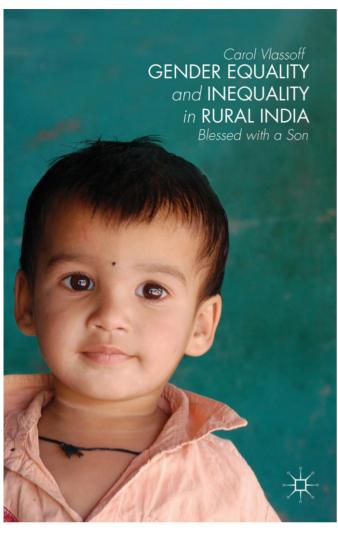
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Gender Equality and Inequality in Rural India Blessed with a Son

Carol Vlassoff

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Carol Vlassoff is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Ottawa, Canada. Her research interests include: international health, gender issues, and social and economic aspects of infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

About the book

As India strives to improve overall social and economic conditions and gender relations through policies such as the abolishment of dowry, increasing the legal age at marriage, and promoting educational opportunities for girls, serious challenges remain, especially in rural areas. *Gender Equality and Inequality in Rural India* focuses on son preference and the extent to which economic development has resulted in positive changes in women's empowerment and reproductive health.

Based on a study from a village in Maharashtra where impressive gains in economic development have occurred in recent decades, Carol Vlassoff examines the impact of sex preference on fertility and rural women's economic empowerment and other aspects of reproductive behaviour. She provides evidence of the added value of their employment beyond the traditional wage labour and domestic spheres, and argues that policies aimed at closing gender gaps in social inequalities must be complemented by policies fostering employment opportunities for women. While many studies have demonstrated the importance of social empowerment for improved reproductive health, this is the first to separate out the differential effects of social and economic factors. This work demonstrates, on the basis of a robust statistical analysis, that women's education and their professional labour force participation contribute to better health and wellbeing of rural society, including through reductions in fertility, son preference and infant and child mortality.

This book is unique in that it traces change over more than three decades - 1975 to 2008 - capturing development and stagnation in the same population over time. *Gender Equality and Inequality in Rural India* is the first village study in India to present both quantitative and qualitative data, collected by the same author and using a similar study design, over such a long period, and demonstrates the intransigence of son preference, even in the face of considerable economic and social development in other spheres.



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