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It's a Girl-Could Be a Death Sentence

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'It's a girl' Could Be a Death Sentence

Is Female Feticide Culturally Contingent?

by: Reinie Thomas, Hayley Schultz, Xiaoyu Fang

What is Being Done About This Problem?



In many Asian countries banning sex detection tests have not been successfully enforced as intended. In India, female feticide was criminalized and a ban was introduced in 2003 on sex selective abortions, however, the problem has only worsened since then.¹ In China there are laws that prohibit the use of technology to determine the sex of a fetus, although this law is difficult to enforce.² There are many grass root organizations, as well as IGOs working to solve these problems.

How can YOU make a difference?

Many of these organizations are looking for people to volunteer their time or resources to help eliminate female feticide.

- Youth Veerangnayan
- American Indian Foundation
- UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
- World Health Organization

You can also start by raising awareness of the issue in your community.

- Write letters to local government officials.
- Hold a fundraising event such as 5k or a bake sale.

Conclusion

In conclusion, female feticide is a problem that occurs everywhere around the world. With new technological advances, underground abortions systems, and cultural preferences for males, millions of females will never be born solely due to their sex.

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What is Female Feticide?

Female feticide is the terminating of the fetus for the sole reason of it being a female. It is most prevalent in China and India, but occurs globally.¹

History and Background

- Worldwide, gender equality is a serious issue.
- The combination of new technology, old cultural practices and economic inequality, gender discrepancy has skyrocketed.¹
- Males are seen as more dominant and desirable in society.
- In many Asian and African countries, women tend to live with their husbands family, leading parents with no sons to fend for themselves in their old age.^{1,2}
- Families lose money by having a daughter—for example, the dowry system in India (the bride's family must pay a fee to her husbands family). This practice had been illegal since 1961.¹
- In China males are preferred because they can perform manual labor on the farm and are able to carry on the family name.^{2,12}
- Due to these cultural practices and traditions, men are seen as much more valuable than women.

Technology: Hurting or Helping?

There has been much controversy regarding the use of technology to determine the sex of an unborn baby. A tool once used discover if a couple would have a healthy child, is now being used to decide if couples should abort or keep their baby because it is a girl. In many countries, mothers face pressure from family members to abort their baby if it is a girl.^{4,12}

Country (year)	Sex ratio at birth	Midyear pop. (2010), UNPD
Albania (2004)	113	3,204,000
El Salvador (2007)	110	6,193,000
Philippines (2007)	109	93,261,000
Libya (2002)	108	6,355,000
Serbia (2008)	108	9,856,000
Austria (2008)	107	8,394,000
Cuba (2008)	107	11,258,000
Italy (2005)	107	60,551,000
Kyrgyzstan (2008)	107	5,334,000
Portugal (2008)	107	10,676,000
Spain (2008)	107	46,077,000

Table 1. Sex ratio discrepancies in countries throughout the world.⁵

The Global Effects of Female Feticide

Female feticide causes numerous implications within a society. One of the most dyer problems is that men in these countries will not be able to get married, causing more men to lead single lives, which may lead to an increase in depression, suicide rates and crime.¹

- Rape, sexual harassment and prostitution enhance the spread of diseases such as AIDs and tuberculosis.¹¹
- According to Hindustan Times, young girls from Assam and West Bengal are actively being sold into marriages in neighboring Haryana.¹¹
- A study done by CNN reported that "30 million more men than women will reach adulthood and will enter China's mating market by 2020."¹²

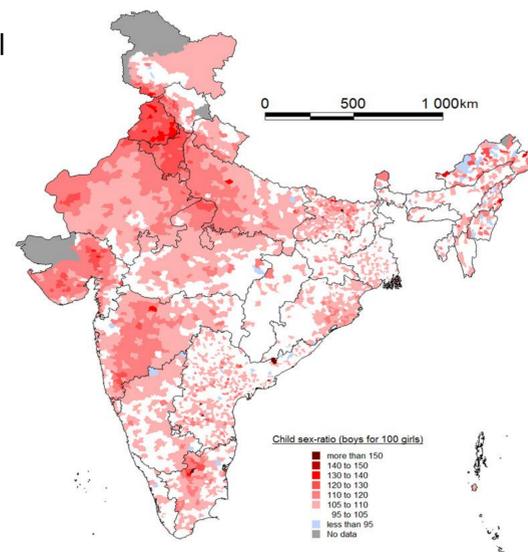


Figure 2. Child sex ration in India for sub-districts based on data from the 2006 census.⁵

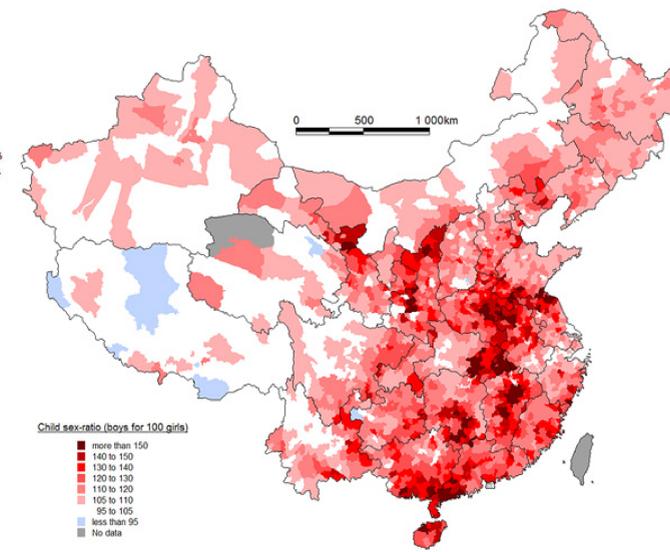


Figure 3. Sex ratio imbalances in China based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China.⁵

It's Everyone's Problem

North America

- Female Feticide is a problem in Canada and the US in Asian and Indian minority groups.^{6,10}
- "It happens enough to distort the male to female ratios in several ethnic groups" (Canadian Medical Association Journal).⁶

Latin America

- Although many Latin American countries have very strict laws prohibiting abortion, this has had an adverse affect since it has lead to the creation of many illegal underground abortion systems.⁷

Europe

- Several European countries have large discrepancies in their boy to girl ratios.^{8,11}
- "Abortion tourism" exists in Sweden because terminating a pregnancy is legal until the 18th week, whereas abortion is illegal after the 14th week in almost every other European country.⁸
- Several of the Asian immigrant groups have higher gender imbalances, especially among a second or third child.⁸

Asia

- In Asia, specifically China and India, this is an epidemic that severely impacts the societies and could lead to drastic implications if not addressed.

Africa

- Countries in Africa still have problems with abortion, but they have abortions for alternative reasons- for example, parents not being able to afford their future child or provide he or she with adequate healthcare.³