

China Commission – Paper Submission

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Content:

Summary of Give Her Life.....p. 1
Cross-Comparative Analysis of the Sex Ratio at Birth in Asiap. 2
Root Causes of the Sex Ratio Imbalance in Chinap. 3
The Care for Girl’s Campaignp. 4
Government Best Practices: Strategies of Successp. 5
The Girls Count Actp. 8

Summary of Give Her Life

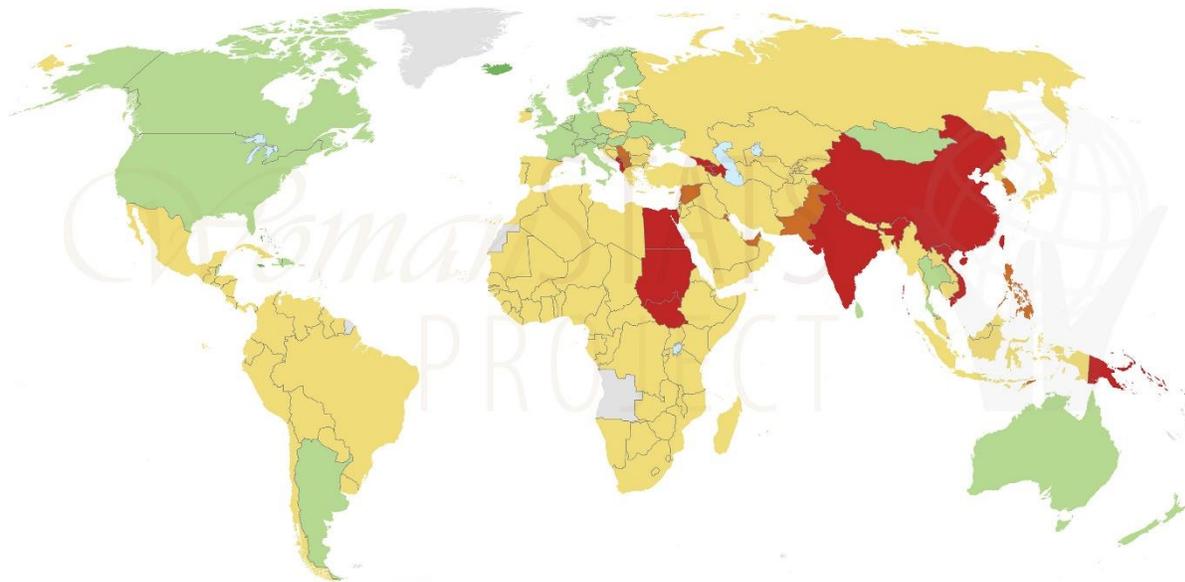
I am the Director of Research and China outreach at Give Her Life (www.giveherlife.org), a non-profit organization dedicated to eradicating gendercide in Asia. At GHL, we conduct research-based interventions that will build into social enterprise for women in areas with poor sex ratios at birth. The first country of these interventions is India. I have built the largest database in the world solely devoted to the sex ratio at birth. This database includes the countries of China, India, the Caucuses, Vietnam, Pakistan, S. Korea, Taiwan and others. The data, which has over 450 sources, includes statistics on the sex ratio at birth, scholarly publications, policy reports, etc. This database is accessible for free online at www.giveherlife.org.

Cross-Comparative Analysis of the Sex Ratio at Birth in Asia

There are more females missing in Asia than the total female population of the United States, equating to approximately 163 million missing women. In China and India alone, there are 1.7 million sex selective abortions per year. On average, within these two countries, a girl is aborted because she is a girl every 19 seconds. China, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Albania, and Montenegro all boast an imbalance in the sex ratio at birth. Each country has differing severity and differing motivations for son preference. See Map 1 for a geographic mapping of the sex ratio at birth, scaled by the WomanStats project in 2015.

Map 1:

Son Preference and Sex Ratios Scaled 2015



- Normal sex ratios, no son preference.
- Normal sex ratios, limited son preference.
- Normal sex ratios, common son preference.
- Somewhat abnormal childhood sex ratios favoring males.
- Extremely abnormal sex ratios favoring males.
- No Data

Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam – Confucianism, virilocal marriage, care of elderly and ancestral lineage all play a role in creating deep-held preferences for sons. In South Asia – in countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal – marriage practices such as dowry, age of marriage, and matchmaking, religious rituals, and devaluation of women in society are some of the factors involved in son preference. In West Asia – in countries such as Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia – post-independence political conflicts, family lineage, and traditional male domination – all contribute to a low sex ratio in the Caucasus. In Southeast Europe – in countries such as Albania and Montenegro – boys are expected to support parents financially and provide for their security and protect honor.

Root Causes of the Sex Ratio Imbalance in China

In China's patriarchal society, the decision to abort a baby daughter is indeed influenced by institutions upheld by patriarchy. By looking at socio-demographic indicators, such as rural areas that propagate traditions (Confucianism, for example) averse to women's progress, we will be able to clearly see the association to the sex ratio at birth. Although the birth-sex ratios reflect patriarchy in China, they also help to sustain patriarchy. My analyses test theories which maintain that women's status, indicated by variables such as the gender gap in education, has an impact on the aggressiveness of son preference, and therefore the decision to abort a daughter.

Evidence based on both empirical and theoretical data point to the patriarchal system as the root cause. Spatial analysis shows that the high SRB is not random, but forms clusters, or a "neighborhood phenomenon". These clusters hold constant GDP and other socioeconomic variables. From this data, we understand that sex-selection is not a random

occurrence, but driven by social and cultural factors in neighborhoods across China.

The root cause of the Sex Ratio Imbalance – driven by social pressures within neighborhoods - is the patriarchal kinship system. The branches of this root include patrilocality (virilocal marriage), continuation of patrilineal lines, ancestry worship, Confucianism devaluation of girls, expectation of sons to provide for elderly, discrimination in society against women and girls (land rights), and low fertility rate caused by the now Two Child Policy.

The Care for Girls Campaign

In 2000 the Chinese government began seriously combating the skewed SRB by pursuing a national Care for Girls Campaign (CGC), which is also under the umbrella of the Family Planning Commission. The CGC hopes to take a deep, comprehensive approach to decreasing the SRB with goals extending as far as 2020 and beyond. The plan began in 2000 with an experimental program in one county, then expanded to 24 counties in a CGC pilot program, and by 2009 every province at the national level had implemented the CGC. Because of the extensive, long-term nature of the CGC, the base causes for the skewed SRB will need to be addressed by the Chinese government if the campaign has hopes of reaching its goal of achieving a natural birth sex ratio.

The Care for Girls Campaign addresses the following root-causes of SRB: Expectation of sons to provide for elderly (by giving stipend to daughter-only families, built a few elderly rest homes), changing Confucian ideals (through slogans and a few training lectures), and discrimination in society against women and girls (by promoting girls and women survival environment). Because of these efforts, the SRB has been dropping since

2009, to around 114 girls to 100 boys. But, even within these domains, the CGC has a long way to go to becoming more effective. The root causes the CGC does **not** address are as follows: patriarchal kinship system, continuation of patrilineal lines, ancestry worship, patrilocality (virilocal marriage), and low fertility rate caused by the Two Child Policy. Aside from not reaching the all of the roots of the problem, one of the biggest critiques is that the CGC provides stipends to girls, which some claim reinforces the idea that girls are not as valuable as boys.

Government Best Practices: Strategies of Success

The following is an excerpt from a piece that will be submitted for publication later this year entitled, "A Comprehensive Survey of Efforts to Normalize the Sex Ratio at Birth in India: Government and Civil Society Interventions" (author Julie Ford Brenning, co-author Dr. Valerie Hudson).

The *Give Her Life* Database has collected over 200 sources and over 120 data points related to the sex ratio and intervention methods in India, culminating in the largest database in the world devoted solely to sex selection. This database, which is available for public use online (www.giveherlife.org), includes the most up to date information from news, journals and reports taken from academics, authors and government publications specializing in the research of the sex ratio in India. Extrapolating from these campaigns and reports (examples shown above), this paper has created the government and civil societies of India "Best Practices" list. These "best practices" present four basic strategies that have proven the most effective and efficient ways the government and NGO's have lowered the SRB within India. The intent of this report is to provide a comprehensive

survey of interventions for government and civil society groups to analyze. The objective is to then improve methods and campaigns that fight sex selective abortion throughout India.

Government Best Practices:

1. Strict Enforcement

The first strategy is strict, serious government enforcement of PNDT and campaigns. In Ambala, the Deputy Commissioner reported that their scheme of shaming and rewarding showed improvement in the SRB due to “strict” implementation of PNDT. In another case of shaming and rewarding in Punjab, ratios began to normalize “but regressed once a new set of authorities with a new set of priorities came on the scene”. Apparently, throwing money at the problem does little unless there is firm government commitment to cracking down on illegal use of ultrasound equipment and implementing effective campaigns.

Government also ought to provide incentives for change. Here are a list of suggestions:

- Cash prizes to cities making significant progress in lowering SRB
- Intensive training of local government officials
- Withholding funds for government officials in cities that are not improving
- Significant tax breaks for marriages NOT practicing patrilocality/virilocal marriage
- In areas where women have large gaps in education, vis a vis men, government ought to provide funds to these women to increase education

2. Multi-Pronged Approach

The second strategy is a multi-pronged approach that combines a variety of methods while working with different groups and organizations. An effective campaign includes enforcement of PNDT, shaming and rewarding, economic schemes and involves local government and NGO's. The state of Rajasthan presents a prime example displaying creative and effective implementation using several methods and groups to enforce PNDT. In 2013 Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan, became the first district in India to take action against companies selling ultrasound machines. They have set up one police station in the state specifically designated to handle cases and pursue violations of PNDT. Working with local civil society groups, they have established a scheme that rewards a pregnant woman who pretends to request a sex-selective abortion after receiving an ultrasound. They then report their findings to the local station. Kishanaram Easharwal, the head of the state intervention unit, stated, referring to the pregnant women, "It is their courage that helped our team to apprehend medical practitioners. They play a pivotal role and are our strength".

3. Assessment

The third strategy is quality assessment, which includes adequate measures, reports and research on government campaigns. In India there is no national plan, little research to track trends and effectiveness of schemes, sparse and inconsistent before and after measures of the SRB in areas of intensive campaigning, and some states lack any evidence of trying to lower the SRB. With this lack of data, creating an effective national plan (or any efficient plan at all) seems virtually impossible. In 2013, the Supreme Court of India even admitted there is a lack of cohesive

organization. They stated that in government efforts there is a "lack of proper supervision" and major challenges in record-keeping. They called for new methods, including creating a map of all registered and unregistered ultrasound machines. The government response has yet to be seen.

4. Women Involvement

The fourth strategy is involving women in the leadership, implementation and policy-making of government schemes. For example, in Bibipur, Haryana an all-women Panchayat (village-level administrative group) is making a huge impact on the lives of women and lowering the sex ratio. Once in power, they completely banned sex selective abortions, which goes many steps farther than the simple fines given by the implementation of PNDT. The women then distributed government monies by investing in intensive campaigns with the aim of tackling issues like dowry and gender bias. Many women were given assistance in pursuing education, empowering them to become more independent. They have also banned DJs and other celebrations at marriages to minimize dowry expenses. Violators of the ban are socially boycotted. According to the leaders of the all-women Panchayat, the sex ratio has improved from 569 in 2012 to 890 in 2014. The village has received a government award of Rs 1.5 (est. \$245,580 USD) for their dedication and effective campaigns.

The Girls Count Act

Because of the 2-Child Policy, there are hundreds of parents now protesting to register their "invisible" second children, many of whom are girls. The Chinese government

has not found a solution to this problem, which presents an opportunity for the U.S. to influence the current situation. The Girls Count Act, which states that all children and babies have a right to government registration, is essential in China. There are literally millions of girls not registered in the Chinese Hukou System, thereby denying these girls access to healthcare, welfare, education and other essential human rights. This registration would allow a more accurate count of the Sex Ratio at Birth, important in policy assessment, and also increase the quality of life for girls.

According to my research in Asia, it is important the U.S. work with the Chinese government to find a quick legal solution that allows all children and babies registration in the Hukou System. This best practice strategy, **strict enforcement**, is essential and must be pushed by the U.S. in any way possible. Second, as the U.S. begins encouraging and monitoring registration, it is important to keep accurate **assessment** and records so that every child is counted in the Hukou System. Third, the U.S. needs to take a **multi-pronged approach**. Important in this process is to make sure that the U.S. works with several entities – community members protesting the Hukou system, the government as they seek legal changes, and non-profits who are specifically trying to register baby girls in China. They also need to approach the issue with several different methods – including legal routes, on the ground management, and financial aid to community and non-profit volunteers. As the U.S. assesses their efforts, methods that are most successful should be unified into one policy. Fourth, the most important best practice, is the **involvement of women** in the policy formation and implementation. I would suggest that tapping into the vast talented and passionate Mothers in China who are fighting for hukou registration of

their daughters would be a good starting point. These Mothers have the experience and drive to make a difference and ought to be taking a big role in this Act's implementation.