

## **Silent Genocide:** Selective Abortions Take High Toll of Girls

By Father John Flynn, L.C.

ROME, SEPT. 17, 2007 ([Zenit.org](http://Zenit.org)).- Fears of a demographic crisis are mounting in India, where many years of female feticide have severely skewed the makeup of the population. Ironically, one of the latest warnings came from Ena Singh, a representative of the U.N. Population Fund -- itself responsible for promoting abortion.

Singh told the news agency Reuters, in a report published Aug. 31, that the lack of women could lead to an increase in sexual violence and child abuse. According to the United Nations, an estimated 2,000 unborn girls are illegally aborted every day in India.

A much higher estimate of the number of missing girls was given earlier, when the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) presented its "State of the World's Children 2007" report in India. According to article published Dec. 12 by Reuters, UNICEF officials said that 7,000 fewer girls are born in India each day compared with global averages.

In its Aug. 31 report, Reuters noted that a 2001 census showed regions such as Punjab, Gujarat and Himachal with fewer than 800 girls for every 1,000 boys. According to Singh, the situation is worsening, as sex-selective abortions are spreading to more regions. Statistics show that in 2001, there were 927 girls in India between the ages of 0-6 for every 1,000 boys of the same age, compared with 945 in 1991.

The Indian government, reported Reuters, admits that some 10 million girls have been killed by their parents -- either before or immediately after birth -- over the past 20 years.

An earlier report from Reuters, on Aug. 21, looked at the use of techniques such as ultrasounds and amniocentesis to find out the sex of a fetus, thus facilitating abortion of girls. The use of these techniques for sex selection is illegal, but is nonetheless widely practiced.

Legislation prohibiting the use of tests to determine the sex of a fetus has been in force since 1996. So far, out of 400 cases lodged with authorities there have been only two convictions, resulting in one fine of 300 rupees (\$7) and another fine of 4,000 rupees (\$98).

Fetuses dumped

Further evidence of the enormity of the problem came with the discovery of the bodies of more than 40 female fetuses in a field by the town of Nayagarh, in eastern India, reported the British newspaper the Guardian on July 28. Santish Mishra, a health official, estimated that the fetuses were aborted at about five months of age.

The article also reported that in June a doctor in New Delhi was arrested after remains of aborted babies were found in a septic tank at his practice. Another case came in February this year, when police found the remains of 15 infants buried in the back yard of a hospital in the central state of Madhya Pradesh.

Also in February nearly 400 bones from fetuses and newborn babies were discovered in a pit behind a hospital in the city of Bhopal, the Associated Press reported Feb. 18.

In reaction to this, and other discoveries, the Indian government announced it would establish orphanages to accept unwanted baby girls, according to the Associated Press. The agency quoted a declaration by Renuka Chowdhury, the minister of state for women and child development, who said the government planned to set up a center in each regional district.

#### Lucrative business

The Wall Street Journal examined the problem in a front-page article on April 21. It reported that companies such as General Electric have sold so many ultrasound machines in India that tests are now available even in small towns that don't have clean drinking water or decent roads. Scans are available for around \$8, the equivalent of a week's wages.

V. Raja, chief executive of General Electric's health care division for South Asia, was quoted by the Wall Street Journal as saying that the company stresses the machines are not to be used for sex determination. Nonetheless, the article also cited an obstetrician from New Delhi, Puneet Bedi, who accused companies of exploiting the demand for boys by selling the ultrasound machines.

General Electric sells about 15 different models, from machines costing \$100,000 that offer sophisticated color images to basic black-and-white scanners that retail for about \$7,500. It has also teamed-up with banks to help doctors finance the purchase of their machines.

The article cited data on annual ultrasound sales in India from all companies, revealing that it reached \$77 million in 2006, up about 10% from the year before. There are more than 30,000 ultrasound clinics registered with the government in India.

#### China concerns

China is another country where the sex ratios are grossly unbalanced due to the selective abortion of female fetuses. The government recently announced it would draft new laws to increase the penalties for parents and doctors responsible for killing girls, the BBC reported Aug. 25.

China's Family Planning Association admitted that the imbalance has reached the point where in one city there are eight young boys for every five girls, according to the BBC. Among children under 4 in the eastern city of Lianyungang there are 163.5 boys for every 100 girls. In the rest of China 99 cities had gender ratios higher than 125 boys for every 100 girls.

The problem was commented on by Robin Dunbar, professor of evolutionary psychology at Liverpool University, in an article published Sept. 8 in the Scotsman newspaper. He said that current estimates put at around 18 million the excess number of men over women of marriageable age in China. This is forecast to reach 37 million by 2020.

"Boys without girls are, to be blunt, a menace," said Dunbar, referring to the social problems it causes. These range from abuse of women, to rape, to increased crime levels.

Sex-selective abortions are not limited to China and India. Earlier this year the marketing in Britain of a new test that enables parents to determine the sex of an unborn baby as early as the sixth week of pregnancy raised worries.

A May 5 report by the British Telegraph newspaper said that the "Pink or Blue" test works by testing a drop of a pregnant woman's blood. According to the company selling it, DNA Worldwide, part of the American group Consumer Genetics, the test is 98% accurate.

#### Casual attitude

"With our casual attitudes to early abortion in the United Kingdom, we feel it is

inevitable that abortion numbers will rise," Julia Millington, of the ProLife Alliance, told the Telegraph.

In Britain, according to the newspaper, the sex of an unborn baby is usually determined during a scan in the 20th week of pregnancy. Some health authorities have stopped telling parents the sex of their child for fear of "wrong-sex" terminations, the article noted.

The millions of deaths already due to sex-selective abortions, with many more still to come, have gone largely ignored by family planning groups and U.N. agencies. Even though the matter was raised by UNICEF, the launch of its report on the "State of the World's Children 2007" received little media coverage.

While the UNICEF report, at 160 pages, was dedicated to the theme of the "gender divide" suffered by women and children, a bare 102 words was spent on the issue of feticide and infanticide. Amazingly, even then the problem was minimized, with UNICEF alleging that "there is no conclusive evidence" of the misuse of diagnostic tools to determine the sex of a fetus. The deaths of millions of girls give the lie to such willful distortions.