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“India’s Missing Girls”

*Excerpts of Remarks by Chairman Chris Smith(NJ-04)
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and Int’l Orgs.
2200 Rayburn House Office Building
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Today’s hearing will examine the problem of “India’s Missing Girls.” While for most of us today our attention is drawn to the unfolding crisis in Syria—I began this morning on C-SPAN’s Washington Journal Program call-in program and yesterday introduced a resolution calling for establishing a Syrian War Crimes Tribunal –other atrocities continue unabated around the world. We cannot ignore these atrocities, among the most egregious of which is violation of the human rights of the girl child and women in India.

Women in India are confronted with a compounding crisis. By most estimates, there are tens of millions of women missing in India due to the devaluing of female life beginning in the womb.

Sex-selective abortion and female infanticide have led to lopsided sex ratios. In parts of India, for example, 126 boys are born for every 100 girls. This in turn leads to a shortage of marriageable women, which then leads to trafficking in persons, bride selling and prostitution.

Perhaps the best figures we have concerning the magnitude of the problem come from India’s 2011 census figures, which find that there are approximately 37 million more men than women in India.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has addressed this issue head on, stating “the falling child sex ratio is an indictment of our social values. Improving this ratio is not merely a question of stricter compliance with the existing laws. What is more important is how we view and value the girl child in our society.... It is a national shame for us that despite this, female feticide and infanticide continue in many parts of our country.”

Even when they are not killed outright either in the womb or just after birth, this bias against girl children manifests itself in situations where family resources are limited and little food is

available, in boys being fed before girls, leading to greater incidents of malnutrition among girls and a mortality rate that is 75% higher for girls below age 5 than for boys.

The desire for a male child can be so great that there is a trend towards sex change operations for girls between ages 1 to 5, a process known as “genitoplasty.” Each year, hundreds of girls reportedly are pumped with hormones and surgically altered to turn them into facsimile boys. India’s National Commission for Protection of Child Rights has correctly stated that this “highly unethical” procedure is a violation of children’s rights as well as a “perpetuation of the age old preferences for boys and biases against the girl child.”

But the roots of the present problem lie not only with cultural factors, but also misbegotten policy decisions – including population control policies that were hatched in the United States – which have had a disproportionately negative impact on India’s women.

We will learn from our witnesses that this includes policies advanced by the United States Agency for International Development, or USAID, and funded by foundations such as the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, and abetted by non-governmental organizations such as the Population Council and the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

During the debate in the U.S. House of Representatives on a bill to ban sex selective abortion, I noted that for most of us, “it’s a girl” is cause for enormous joy, happiness and celebration. But in many countries—including our own—it can be a death sentence. Today, the three most dangerous words in China and India are: it’s a girl. We can’t let that happen here.

Our witness today, Dr. Matthew Connelly, in his book *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* traces the sordid history of sex-selection abortion as a means of population control. In her book, *Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys Over Girls, and the Consequences of a World Full of Men*, Mara Hvistendahl, elaborates “[b]y August 1969, when the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the Population Council convened another workshop on population control, sex selection had become a pet scheme....Sex selection, moreover, had the added advantage of reducing the number of potential mothers....if a reliable sex determination technology could be made available to a mass market,” there was “rough consensus” that sex selection abortion “would be an effective, uncontroversial and ethical way of reducing the global population.”

Fewer women, fewer mothers, fewer future children.

At the conference, one abortion zealot, Christopher Tietze co-presented sex selection abortion as one of twelve new strategies representing the future of global birth control. Planned Parenthood honored Tietze four years later with the Margaret Sanger Award.

Hvistendahl writes that today “there are over 160 million females ‘missing’ from Asia’s population. That’s more than the entire female population of the United States. And gender imbalance—which is mainly the result of sex selective abortion—is no longer strictly an Asian problem. In Azerbaijan and Armenia, in Eastern Europe, and even among some groups in the United States, couples are making sure at least one of their children is a son. So many parents now select for boys that they have skewed the sex ratio at birth of the entire world.”

In the *Global War Against Baby Girls* renowned AEI demographer Nicholas Eberstadt wrote in *The New Atlantis*; “over the past three decades the world has come to witness an ominous and entirely new form of gender discrimination: sex-selective feticide, implemented through the practice of surgical abortion with the assistance of information gained through prenatal gender determination technology. All around the world, the victims of this new practice are overwhelmingly female—in fact, almost universally female. The practice has become so ruthlessly routine in many contemporary societies that it has impacted their very population structures, warping the balance between male and female births and consequently skewing the sex ratios for the rising generation toward a biologically unnatural excess of males.”

Many European nations including the UK as well as several Asian countries ban sex selection abortion. Only four US states—Arizona, Illinois, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania—proscribe it.

Sex-selection abortion is cruel and discriminatory and legal. It is violence against women. Most people in and out of government remain woefully unaware of the fact that sex-selection abortion was—a violent, nefarious and deliberate policy imposed on the world by the pro-abortion population control movement—it's not an accident. The Congress can—and must—defend women from this vicious assault today.

While India has taken steps to curb these practices, passing laws to ban sex selective abortion and temper cultural facts such as the need for brides to provide a high dowry that contribute to parents looking at their daughters as a liability, these laws are irregularly enforced. Moreover, there are laws at the state level which exacerbate the problem, mandating that parents only have two children, penalizing those who exceed this number and denying benefits. This leads inevitably to sex-selective abortion and, particularly in poorer areas, female infanticide, as parents will opt to have a son over a daughter, especially when their first child is a daughter.

We hope that this hearing will better understand how we can play a role in curbing such horrific abuses.

What, for example, can we do to help ensure that companies based in the US, such as General Electric, whose ultrasound equipment is used to determine the sex of the child *in utero*, take steps to prevent what should be a tool to promote life of both mother and child from being used as an instrument of death?

Given the past role of US agencies such as USAID in coercive population control policies, what oversight do we need to conduct to make sure such abuses do not creep their way into existing programs?

Similarly, to what extent are organizations that receive funding from the United States government implicated in such practices?

What role can our State Department play, beyond compiling information regarding what is occurring in India with respect to what some have labeled “gendercide,” to influence positively the Indian government, so that it reforms laws and policies that exacerbate skewed sex ratios, such as two-child laws?

By shining a light on what is happening in India with its missing girls, we hope to move toward a world where every woman is valued and respected because of her intrinsic dignity, and where every child is welcomed regardless of his or her sex.