

**Testimony by Sabu M George, MA(Johns Hopkins), PhD(Cornell)
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Hearing on India's Missing Girls by

House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights & International Organisations

Appreciation

I am most grateful to the US Congress for holding this hearing. Particularly the Chair Chris Smith and the members for inviting me. Greatly honoured to be invited to this Committee (Foreign Affairs) which was once Chaired by a great Congressman like Tom Lantos of California.

Who am I

My name is Sabu George and been working on protecting girl children (against practices of deliberate girl child neglect, female infanticide and sex selection) in India for 28+ years. I had the honor of studying public health and nutrition at Johns Hopkins and Cornell Universities under well known American Professors. Our early work in India in the mid-80s resulted in recognition of female infanticide by the TamilNadu Government in 1991. Later, I documented the spread of sex selection in rural Haryana in mid-90s and been involved with public campaigns against female foeticide since late 90s. Subsequently I have worked for strengthened legislation against female foeticide by litigation in Indian Supreme Court and lobbying with Parliament (1998-2003). Finally, I have contributed towards creating public discourse in India since 2001 on sex selection and continuing work with many partners to stop sex selection.

Sex selection as Genocide

Rampant Sex selection in recent decades has created a Genocide. As the Chair Smith has said at the screening of the film, "Its a Girl":- "(I)t is a crime against women, a gender crime that has no parallel or precedent in all of human history". More girls in India and China are eliminated every year than the number of girls born in US. Over the last decade, 6 million+ girls were eliminated before birth in India; this is more than the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust by the Nazis. The intensification and spread of sex selection, from fiercely patriarchal North West India to other parts of India which treated women better, has taken place over last two decades. East, South and North East, Kashmir and Himalayan States have all experienced sharp declines in child sex ratios against girls in the 2001 and 2011 Censuses.

Long Term Consequences of extensive sex selection

Four+ decades of practice of sex selection have led to the emergence of forced polyandry; ie., one woman being shared by several men in parts of Punjab, Haryana and Western UP. Violence against women has become worse in areas where sex selection has been extensive. Buying of women for marriage from other states has become an important reason for trafficking of women to North West India since 2000. In the coming decades, due to shortage of tens of millions of women, further progress in education and employment opportunities for millions of surviving women could possibly be affected; due to the increasing threat of violence against women inside homes and in public spaces.

History of Sex selection and Medical Factors

American researcher Mara Hvistendahl has highlighted the role of Americans and global population control lobbies in introducing sex selection in 1970 into India for population control. When foetal sex determination was banned in government hospitals in the late 1970s, the private medical clinics in India started promoting sex selection in North West and Western India. The role of unethical doctors and the collusion of medical associations in the spread of sex selection cannot be overlooked. They earn over hundreds of millions of dollars every year from the business of eliminating girls. Medical education has become a bigger business than Defense in India. Sadly, admission into medical schools can be secured by paying money. Lucrative specialities like radiology can fetch at least \$200,000 for the private institutions from each MD candidate.

American Corporations Profiting from Sex selection in India

The role of American ultrasound companies like GE, Sonosite is regrettable. In 2001, GE submitted

to the Indian Supreme Court the list of 6000 clinics to whom they sold ultrasound machines in the previous 5 years. The analysis of this data revealed that wherever GE had sold the most machines, those areas had the least girls born! Wall Street Journal's investigative journalism in 2007 also exposed the unethical business practices of GE. The violation of Indian law by Internet Companies like Google is also most unfortunate. In the context of the genocide taking place in India, the US government should not allow Google to advertise and legitimise emerging technologies of sex selection to India; as this is a grave human rights violation. Sex selection tourism is worse than trafficking. Google carries advertisements targetting the privileged Indians for sex selection to Dubai, Thailand, US, Europe etc..

Indian Government efforts

We have a good law against sex selection in India since 1994 thanks to the women's movement. The Indian Parliament strengthened it in 2002. Supreme Court has been directing the States since 2001 to stop the crimes of sex selection. However implementation of the law is taking place only in Maharastra but not in rest of India; therefore the numbers of girls eliminated will increase in the coming years. It is likely that the child sex ratios will decline in the Census of 2021 if the present indifference to filing cases against the crimes of sex selection continues.

Aggressive Population control will be at the expense of women and girls

Families almost everywhere in India want to have fewer children today. But several political parties in India still advocate aggressive population control. Given that American government and foundations, institutions headed by Americans like World Bank have spent up to 60 years advocating & funding population control measures in India. I appeal to the US Congress to motivate India to stop targetting women for sterilisation and ensure that coercive family planning practices are abandoned. Smaller families will be achieved by even more elimination of girls if population control does not take place voluntarily.

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