



IT'S A GIRL, THE THREE DEADLIEST WORDS. HOW WILL THE CHURCH RESPOND?



BY RICK WOOD
EDITOR OF MF

EDITORIAL

ANAYA IS PREGNANT and along with her husband, Arjun, and their entire extended family, they are hoping their latest child will be a boy. Anaya lives in a remote village of northern India where advanced medical technology such as ultrasound machines is not available. They will just have to wait and see. There are great social status and financial benefit for those families blessed to have a son. Anaya says, “When my son grows up we will arrange a great match for him and his new wife will join our family and she will take care of me and my husband in our old age. We will make sure to find a girl whose family will provide a good dowry.”

Soon the day of delivery arrives and Anaya gives birth to a beautiful, healthy baby girl. This is the eighth girl that Anaya has given birth to. Their dreams of a secure financial future are dashed. What will they do now? A short time later Anaya goes for a walk carrying her new daughter to a secluded area near her home. She lays her yet unnamed daughter on the

ground. Anaya pulls out a beautiful Indian cloth and places it securely over the baby’s face. After a brief struggle Anaya’s baby girl stops moving. Anaya digs a shallow grave and buries her latest baby girl next to her seven other daughters. Anaya says, “I felt we could keep it only if it was a male and kill it if it was a female child.”¹

Anaya’s child is one of over 200 million “missing” girls according to United Nations estimates. More girls go “missing” from India and China every year than all the girls born annually in the United States. Anaya’s choice is but one method by which millions of girls have been eliminated. Most often the sex of the child is determined by ultrasound examination, even though it is illegal to do so, and abortion becomes the preferred method of terminating the pregnancy. The roots of this crisis have been around for centuries. The arrival of modern medical procedures to identify the gender and “quietly” eliminate the female child has turned a long-standing cultural preference for boys in India and China into gendercide—a holocaust of female children unlike the world has ever seen.

These diabolical systems of cultural and financial prejudice against women have to stop wherever they exist. The practice of paying a dowry

must end. To his credit, Indian Prime Minister Modi has spoken out against the killing of girls but the Indian government at every level must get serious about enforcing the laws already on the books. Concerted efforts do make a difference as seen in the article starting on page 30.

It should be noted that the devaluation of women and the gendercide that results is not just an issue for India or China. It’s a global problem and sex selective abortion should be illegal in every country on earth. It is currently not illegal nationwide in the U.S.

Will the Church Provide the Answer?

The murder of girls is deeply rooted in the cultural devaluation of women that has existed in many cultures of the world for millennia. It is tragic that women themselves have felt so trapped by financial, cultural and governmental pressures that they have become at least unwilling participants in their own devaluation and murder. How can anyone read the stories from Jill McElya’s article starting on page 13 and not be dumbfounded by the ability of some to justify the routine murder of girls as a normal part of daily life rather than condemn it as the horrendous moral outrage that it

is. The global church must speak out against this horror on behalf of the supreme value of girls and women created in the image of God.

As those possessing a biblical worldview and a commitment to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Church should be leading the charge against the devaluation of women in every culture where it occurs. The teachings of Scripture are very clear—both men and women are of equal value and worth as created in God's image. As Paul says in Gal. 3:28, there is now neither male nor female. We are all equal at the foot of the cross as members of the New Covenant. Women are equal members of the royal priesthood of all believers. Women are equal recipients of all of God's spiritual gifts, Acts 2:17-18. Both genders are equally responsible for carrying out Jesus' command to "Go and make disciples of all nations." (Mat. 28:18-20). Women have been called by God to be disciple makers and church planters right alongside their male counterparts. The Church must provide women with the freedom, training and opportunities to excel in this common mission. But, quite often the Church does not. Many churches and mission agencies still hold to a pro-male bias in training, leadership development and ministry opportunities. We must not muzzle or stifle half of the Body of Christ. We need the full participation of both men and women to complete world evangelization.

Based on what Scripture teaches, the Church should be known as the one place in every society where women are protected, respected and empowered to express their God-given gifts for the glory of God and the expansion of His kingdom. Unfortunately, many women see the Church as a place of

limited opportunities and ongoing prejudice and disrespect.

Sadly, all too often the Church simply reflects the beliefs of the surrounding culture. Rather than impacting culture with the truth of God's word as Jesus did, the Church often compromises with culture until little difference can be seen between the Church and the world around it. Raaj Mondol states the problem clearly in his article starting on page 34, "The church in India can play a significant role in stopping this tide of violence by sharing a gospel message that accords equal value to women for being created in God's image and redeemed by Christ to become co-heirs of God's kingdom. This indeed would have been 'good news' to millions of 'missing women' in our country, but sadly the church has largely failed to proclaim and demonstrate this good news."

By its very nature the Church should be a counter cultural institution that critiques every culture by its very presence. As people submit their lives to the rule and reign of Jesus Christ, renew their minds by the washing of the Word and seek to obey all that Jesus has commanded us, then Jesus followers will stand out as shining lights in a dark world.

William Carey gave us a model for Christian activism when he went to India in 1792 to proclaim the gospel and confronted the cultural practice of *Sati* or Widow Burning. This is where a woman either voluntarily or by force is burned alive on her husband's funeral pyre or commits suicide in some other way. Carey worked for years to abolish it. It was banned provincially in 1829 and nationally in 1861.

It is time for the Church to stand up for the inherent value of women as

taught in Scripture. It is time for the Church to provide women with equal opportunities to express their God given talents and gifts. It is long past time to end the slaughter of baby girls.

A New Global Coalition of Movement Leaders is Born: The 24:14 Coalition

Please do not miss reading Steve Smith's and Stan Park's latest Kingdom Kernels column starting on page 39. Steve and Stan are making a *major announcement* introducing a new global coalition of movement leaders called 24:14, named after Mat. 24:14. This new coalition represents the coming together of many networks and coalitions of movement catalysts with the singular goal of initiating Church-Planting Movements in every unreached people and region by the year 2025. Our own Dr. Steve Smith, the regular contributor to the Kingdom Kernels column in MF for the last six years, is the co-leader of this new global coalition alongside Stan Parks. We will have much more on this exciting new global effort in upcoming issues of MF. But for now, read this latest column and get excited. God is on the move! 

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Where did all the girls

FEATURE ARTICLE

BY **ELIZABETH RENO**

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Elizabeth is the founder and president of Give Her Life. She is passionate about healthy families and women, holistic change, transformational leadership, and pioneering new work. She is currently based out of Pasadena, CA, but has worked in over a dozen countries alongside families, non-profits, religious organizations and educational institutions.

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GENDERCIDE

**and What the Good News
Has to Say About It**

AROUND THE WORLD, families face great pressure to have a son. Sons mean honor and prosperity; daughters are a financial and social liability. Desperate families respond with desperate measures and try to “select” for a son by killing or aborting daughters. Every year millions of daughters are strangled, suffocated, drowned, lethally neglected, or aborted simply because her family wanted a boy and not a girl. This is called gendercide.

Because of gendercide, girls are disappearing at an alarming rate. In 2005, demographer Christophe Guilmoto estimated that Asia was currently missing 163 million women and girls from their population due to gendercide.¹ Gendercide has continued since then, and kept growing. The United Nations puts their estimate at closer to 200 million women.² In a single generation, more women have gone “missing” from Asia due to gendercide than all the girls and women alive in the United States.

When I first encountered these issues, my heart broke. I grieved for the lives lost. I grieved for the mothers and fathers who faced such immense pressure that they felt compelled to discard their child. I grieved for the stories I heard, for the mother who declared that for her daughter it was “better for her to die” than to live in the situations of abuse and hardship her mother had faced, for the mother that strangled and buried seven daughters.

Gendercide is rooted in a belief that a girl offers little to her family in terms of social or financial benefit, but a boy offers much more. I grieved at the thought of measuring the worth of a human life in financial and social status.

But I believe the gospel can indeed be good news to families and communities facing gendercide. This isn’t about asking people to pray a prayer and “convert.” Nor is it just about rescuing unwanted girls. It’s about a transformation of individuals and families to embrace their kingdom identity as people loved by God and called to love others. For me, the understanding of good news has come to rest heavily on the idea that humans are made in the image of God. (See “The Image of God: A Dignifying Invitation.”) Each person has value because he or she is created, known and loved by God.

The good news is that you matter. You are made in the image of God, which means you have worth and dignity that is sacred and eternal. Your life is not disposable. Your value is not conditional on your status, your wealth

or your gender. It cannot be tarnished.

The good news is that you can know God. God is not a far away deity who has no interest in you. He knows you and wants you to know Him. This is a radically different understanding of God from religious traditions where the gods pursue their own ends and have little concern for humans. But God cares so much about being known that He sent Jesus to show us who God is and how much He cares about us.

The good news is that others also have worth and dignity. When we come to understand our own place before God, we can extend the same grace to others. This transforms the way we treat one another, including our own families and children.

The good news is that your salvation is not your own work. God made the first move towards us. This is not a matter of struggling to please a flippant god or trying to be good enough. God declared that we are created, known and loved. He loved us first. This is why we have the gall to hope that God will enter into our brokenness to redeem us.

We can believe with confidence that God cares for these girls and their families, and that it is within His power to shine His light into the darkness that is gendercide. So let’s dive in and get a better understanding of what’s happening. Here are some of the basics.

How does this happen?

These girls have been eliminated primarily through sex-selective abortion specifically targeted at terminating a female fetus in hopes of later conceiving a male. Families with less access to ultrasound and abortion may also kill a newborn daughter, or simply withhold life essentials such as food and medical care. In both India and China, there are laws against finding out the sex of a fetus, aborting because of the fetus’s sex, and killing a child. However, the practices continue with little resistance. A girl is killed or aborted every 16 seconds, simply because she is a girl.³

How do we know how many women are “missing” due to gendercide?

The prevalence of gendercide is measured by the male to female sex ratio. A sex ratio reports how many males there are compared to how many females in a certain

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KEY TERMS

GENDERCIDE

The systematic killing of members of a specific sex, virtually always used of women

SEX SELECTION

The attempt to control the sex of the offspring to achieve a desired sex (in this case, a son). It can be accomplished in several ways, including sex selective abortion and female infanticide

FEMALE INFANTICIDE

The deliberate killing of a newborn female baby

SEX SELECTIVE ABORTION/ FEMALE FETICIDE

The practice of terminating a pregnancy based upon the sex of the baby (in this case, a female)

SEX RATIO

Ratio of females to males in a population (The absence of female births indicates gendercide.)

SON PREFERENCE

Placing a higher value on sons than daughters (Son preference is rooted in gender inequality and is often the motivation behind gendercide.)



age group (often ages 0-6) in a certain area. If there is no gendercide, the natural number of males and females would be about even. The presence of many more boys than girls indicates the practice of gendercide.

Some areas report dramatically skewed sex ratios. For example, the sex ratio of the 0-6 age range in the Indian state of Punjab is 846 girls per 1,000 boys.⁴ Another example, China's sex ratio for children 0-5 years old stood at 810 girls for every 1,000 boys in 2005, so we know that many of those girls have been eliminated from the population.⁵

Although the sex ratio is the primary measure of gendercide, other types of evidence can also contribute to our understanding. For example, a study in Delhi found "that out of 8,000 cases, 7,999 aborted fetuses were female; another Bombay study indicated that of 1,000 cases, 97 percent were female."⁶

Where is this happening?

India and China account for the majority of the missing women (See "A Caste Story from India"). Vietnam, Georgia, Armenia, Albania and Azerbaijan also have dramatically skewed child sex ratios.⁷ It is important to keep in mind, however, that the sex ratio can vary greatly depending on the area of the country. Although gendercide is not practiced exclusively by one particular religious block, the majority of communities that practice gendercide are among unreached people groups.

Why is it happening?

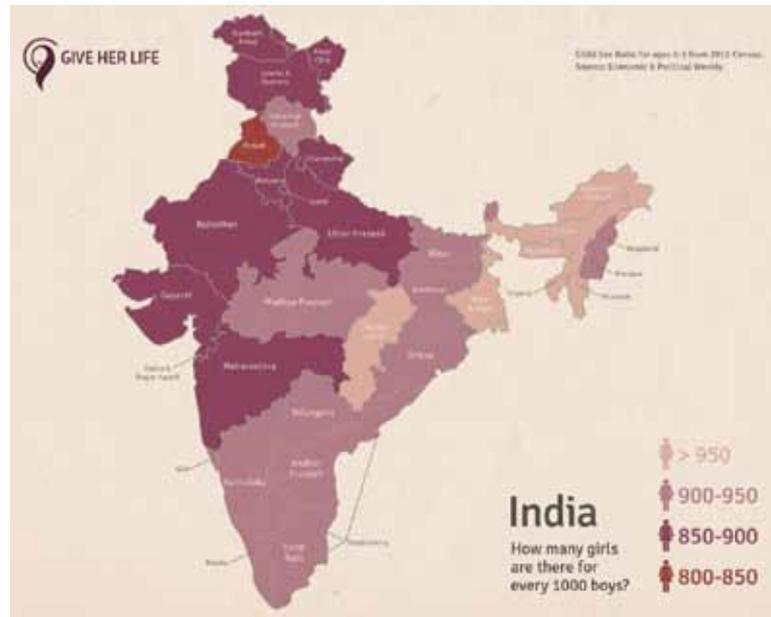
Families desire sons for a multitude of cultural, religious, and economic reasons and will go to great lengths to ensure that their offspring are male. Gendercide thrives in patriarchal societies that have traditionally valued men over women. Sons bring honor to a family while girls bring shame and economic burden. Sons carry on the family lineage and are able to inherit any wealth or business the family might own. Among Hindus, it is the eldest son that lights the funeral pyre at his father's funeral so that his soul can move into the after life. In India, daughters are seen as a financial burden due to the cultural tradition of paying a dowry to the groom's family at the marriage of a daughter. Although exchanging dowry is technically illegal, it continues in a modernized version and can be up to ten times a family's annual income.

Moreover, spending money on a daughter's education is seen as investment with no return as she will most likely marry and then she and her children will belong

to another family. It is also likely upon marriage that a woman will no longer work, even if she previously held a job. Both Indian and Chinese parents worry that without a son, they will have no one to care for them in their old age. Therefore a son is financial security for aging parents. Sons are an asset, daughters a liability.

There is a widespread belief that gendercide is naturally decreasing as education and modernization spread, but the evidence shows otherwise. Son preference is as old as time, but three developments in recent decades have exacerbated gendercide. The first is technological expansion, which has made ultrasound tests and abortions cheap and accessible. The second is a demographic shift to smaller family sizes, making families more likely to take measures to ensure that their first or second child

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is a son. The third development is government policy that limits family size and encourages abortion as a tool for family planning. (See "Tackling Gendercide and the Two-Child Policy.") Although it is illegal in China and India to find out the sex of a fetus or get a sex-selective abortion, these regulations are rarely enforced. (See "Gendercide in India: What's making a difference?" for

more on how governments and NGOs can decrease gendercide.)

What are the consequences?

The consequences of a population missing millions of women and girls are large and far-reaching. Due to the lack of females in certain communities, many men cannot find eligible women to marry. These men are known as bare branches.⁸ It is estimated by the year 2020 that approximately 15% of young adult men in China and India will be bare branches. To meet the demand, women are trafficked to become wives of men who cannot find a bride locally. Men are paying large sums to obtain a wife. As age appropriate women become scarce, the market turns to child brides to fill the gap. Essentially, marriage becomes commoditized as women are bought and sold as a supply and demand mentality overtakes entire populations. The elimination and abuse of women has terrible consequences not only for women, but also for men, families, and communities (See “The Ripple Effect”).

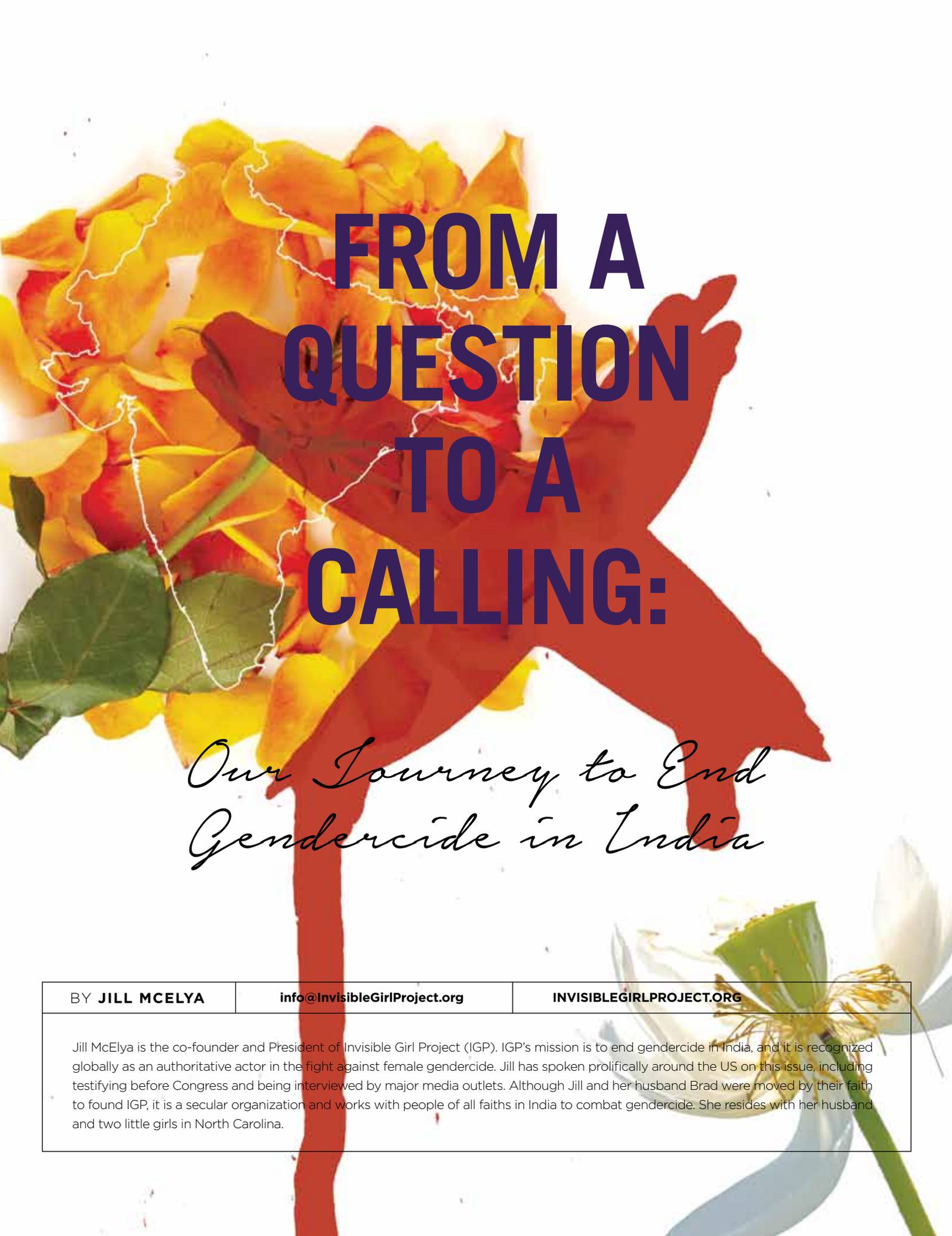
Conclusion

I dream of a world where women are given a chance to exist, their innate value is respected, and they are able to fully contribute to their families, communities, and world. I believe this world would be better for all of us, and that the Church has something unique to offer in bringing it about. I lead an organization⁹ whose vision is for the restoration of families and communities where girls can flourish and gendercide is eradicated.¹⁰ But this is only possible because we believe that God gave intrinsic worth to each life, regardless of gender.

Never before have I been so compelled by the understanding that humans bear the image of God. This is what gives each of us worth and dignity. This is why we treat others with worth and dignity. And this is why we have the courage to hope that the God of the universe will stoop down low to whisper His love in our ear. But how heart breaking it would be to live without knowing that you have intrinsic value! That value will not tarnish or fade. It is not dependent on social status or finances or

being born female. If you've never heard this before, it is indeed good news. 

- ¹ Guilмото, Christophe. 2012. Sex Imbalances at Birth: Current Trends, Consequences and Policy Implications. Edited by UNFPA Thailand. Bangkok, Thailand: UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.
- ² A. Diamantopoulou, 4 May 2000. Speech at the conference Violence against Women: Zero Tolerance, http://www.eurowrc.org/13.institutions/1.ec/ec-en/05.ec_en.htm. found via: Vlachova, Marie and Biason, Lea, Eds. (2004). Women in an Insecure World: Violence Against Women – Facts, Figures and Analysis. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/women_insecure_world.pdf.
- ³ Hudson, Valerie M. and den Boer, Andrea M. 2005. Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population. MIT Press. Page 112-113.
- ⁴ 2011 India Census. Gender Composition of the Population. Available from http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/india/Final_PPT_2011_chapter5.pdf.
- ⁵ Zhen, Guo, Monica Das Gupta, and Li Shuzhuo. 2013. "Missing Girls" in China and India: Trends and Policy Impacts. Maryland Population Research Center.
- ⁶ Hudson, Valerie M. and den Boer, Andrea M. 2005. Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population. MIT Press. Page 111.
- ⁷ CIA World Fact Book 2013. Available from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>.
- ⁸ Hudson, Valerie M. and den Boer, Andrea M. 2004. 'Bare Branches' and Danger in Asia. Washington Post. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A24761-2004Jul2.html>.
- ⁹ Give Her Life www.giveherlife.org.
- ¹⁰ Give Her Life's core motivation is to follow Jesus' example of servanthood and love for all people, families, and nations. We embrace opportunities to serve and partner with people regardless of religion.



FROM A QUESTION TO A CALLING:

*Our Journey to End
Gendercide in India*

BY **JILL MCELYA**

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Jill McElya is the co-founder and President of Invisible Girl Project (IGP). IGP's mission is to end gendercide in India, and it is recognized globally as an authoritative actor in the fight against female gendercide. Jill has spoken prolifically around the US on this issue, including testifying before Congress and being interviewed by major media outlets. Although Jill and her husband Brad were moved by their faith to found IGP, it is a secular organization and works with people of all faiths in India to combat gendercide. She resides with her husband and two little girls in North Carolina.

IN JANUARY 2009, my husband Brad and I were living in Chennai, India where I was working as an attorney for an international human rights organization. Throughout our previous year there, friends visited on short-term mission trips and told us that while in remote villages of South India, they learned that baby girls were being killed. That was difficult for us to fathom. We thought—how in this day and age could baby girls be killed without public outrage? Why had we not heard more about this?

So, Brad and some friends of ours journeyed south to explore the prevalence of this practice. When he returned, Brad and I sat across from each other at our little table in our apartment. On a warm January day, under the humming of the overhead fan, he shared with me what he saw and what was ultimately life-changing for us both.

Brad described that in many villages he saw boys running and playing, but rarely little girls. In one village, he detailed how friendly and open the villagers were with him. They were almost unashamed in telling him that in their village, the boys outnumbered the girls eight-to-one (8-1), and that the midwife killed baby girls when they were born. They pointed to an elderly grandmother and said, “That’s the ‘babykiller.’”

Both men and women told him that no one wanted daughters. Daughters were liabilities. Daughters required a dowry when they married. Daughters cost too much. Sons took care of you when you were old. Sons provided for you. Sons brought their wives to care for you. He learned that daughters were murdered simply because they were girls.

Brad remembered feeling dumbfounded, and then he noticed a young woman who was holding a newborn baby girl. Wondering how this baby survived, he was introduced to the young mother. She explained that she was the 12th daughter born to her parents. In desperate efforts to have a son, her mother became pregnant, had a baby girl, and the parents killed their daughter shortly after birth. Again, they got pregnant, had a baby girl, and murdered their daughter. Eleven times, the mother delivered a daughter, and 11 times, the baby was murdered. Now, at the age of 21, this 12th daughter, now a young woman, had delivered her own baby girl and kept her.

As Brad relayed this story to me, tears welled up in my eyes. I was overwhelmed with the reality that little girls were routinely murdered, with impunity. Deeply

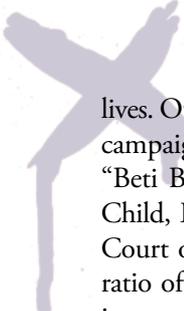
impacted by this terrible and universal injustice, Brad and I resolved that day to do what we could to save the lives of little girls in India. Throughout that year, we

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studied the issue extensively and met many Indians who were working to combat gendercide, but who needed their capacity increased. At the end of the year, we moved back to the States and formalized steps to start Invisible Girl Project (IGP). In 2011, we founded IGP as a not-for-profit organization.

IGP’s sole mission is to end female gendercide (the systematic killing of girls and women) in India. We raise global awareness concerning the loss of female lives in India, because more people around the world must learn of this evil. But, we believe that the discriminatory mindset against females that has existed for thousands of years must change from within the culture. So, we also work with indigenous organizations to rescue and care for vulnerable girls, educate them, and teach them their inherent value. We use social workers to counsel families and teach them that girls are valuable, not burdens. In addition, we seek justice for mothers who are pressured to abort or kill their daughters, understanding that the public justice system in India must work to save girls’





lives. Our mission is consistent with both India's national campaign introduced by Prime Minister Modi called "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao," meaning, "Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child," as well as the Supreme Court of India's directives to address the declining sex ratio of girls in India. Invisible Girl Project is the only international, secular, non-profit organization addressing gendercide in this manner.

Through our partners' work, over 700 girls have been saved and hundreds of mothers have been empowered to protect their daughters. On a recent trip to India, I met one of these mothers, named Shanti.¹ She was dressed in a beautiful green sari, sitting in the humid office of one of IGP's partners when she shared her story with me. Over two years ago, she became pregnant. She and her husband were excited that they would soon become parents. But, shortly thereafter, her husband and his parents began pressuring her to have an ultrasound to determine whether she was pregnant with a boy. These ultrasounds are illegal in India, but often ultrasound technicians are bribed monetarily into revealing the sex of the child.

Although they were poor—living on less than \$2/day, they were able to scrape together enough money to pay for the ultrasound. When the technician told her, "I am so sorry," she knew she was having a girl, and her husband's pressure to abort their daughter began. Consistently verbally abused and berated by her husband and his parents for being pregnant with a girl, Shanti succumbed and had an illegal abortion.²

Months later, Shanti and her husband conceived again. This time, women in her village noticed her belly beginning to swell. They informed IGP's partner that Shanti was pregnant and in jeopardy. This partner works in the villages with families that are high-risk for killing their daughters, offering care to pregnant women, and providing social workers to counsel families on the value of girls.

IGP's social workers offered Shanti prenatal care and assistance that she welcomed. When she feared her husband, she called. When her husband tried to coerce her to have another ultrasound, our social workers helped her to refuse. And, when her husband intimidated her, telling her he would kill the baby if she gave birth to a girl, our social workers continued to strengthen and uplift her.

Ultimately, Shanti gave birth to a healthy girl. She was overjoyed to have a baby daughter. But when her baby was just a couple of weeks old, late one night, her husband and

his mother, quietly took the baby from Shanti's side, and sold the baby girl to people in a neighboring state. When Shanti realized what happened, she immediately called our social workers seeking help. Threatened with prosecution, Shanti's husband and his mother began searching for the baby. Through our partner's help, Shanti's baby girl was miraculously found and returned to her.

As Shanti and I sat together in that warm office in India, she held tightly to her baby girl. As tears streamed down her face, her deep brown eyes conveyed both the trauma she suffered and gratitude. I held her hands in mine, and she smiled.

Shanti's baby girl is no longer in jeopardy. Through IGP's Child Sponsorship Program, she will live with Shanti and will be given food, a savings account, and an education. Shanti will also be able to take a "cow loan" from our partner so she can sell the milk and earn income to care for her daughter. Our social workers and women's self-help groups in the villages will also continue to support Shanti.

Shanti's story is one of hundreds where IGP's partners have intervened to help rescue a vulnerable little girl and empower a mother, no matter their religion or background. We will continue to methodically and comprehensively teach families the inherent value of girls. We will continue to pursue justice to deter gendercide. And, we believe that the culture can change.

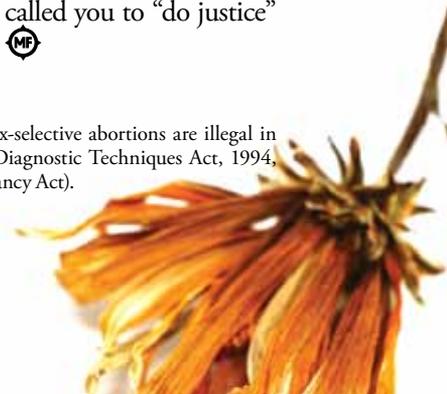
God calls His believers to "do justice."³ At IGP, we believe "doing justice" includes saving girls' lives and saying that we will no longer tolerate the atrocity of female gendercide in India. Every little girl is created in God's image. Every life is valuable. Every saved life encourages us further to pursue this mission.

Years ago, short-term missionaries told my husband and me about the babies they learned were killed in South Indian villages. Those missionaries stirred our hearts to begin our journey to fight the evil of female gendercide. With God's calling, Invisible Girl Project began and will continue to work tirelessly to end gendercide in India, as we are led. I pray today that your heart will be stirred and that you ask how the Lord has called you to "do justice" in this fight to end gendercide. 

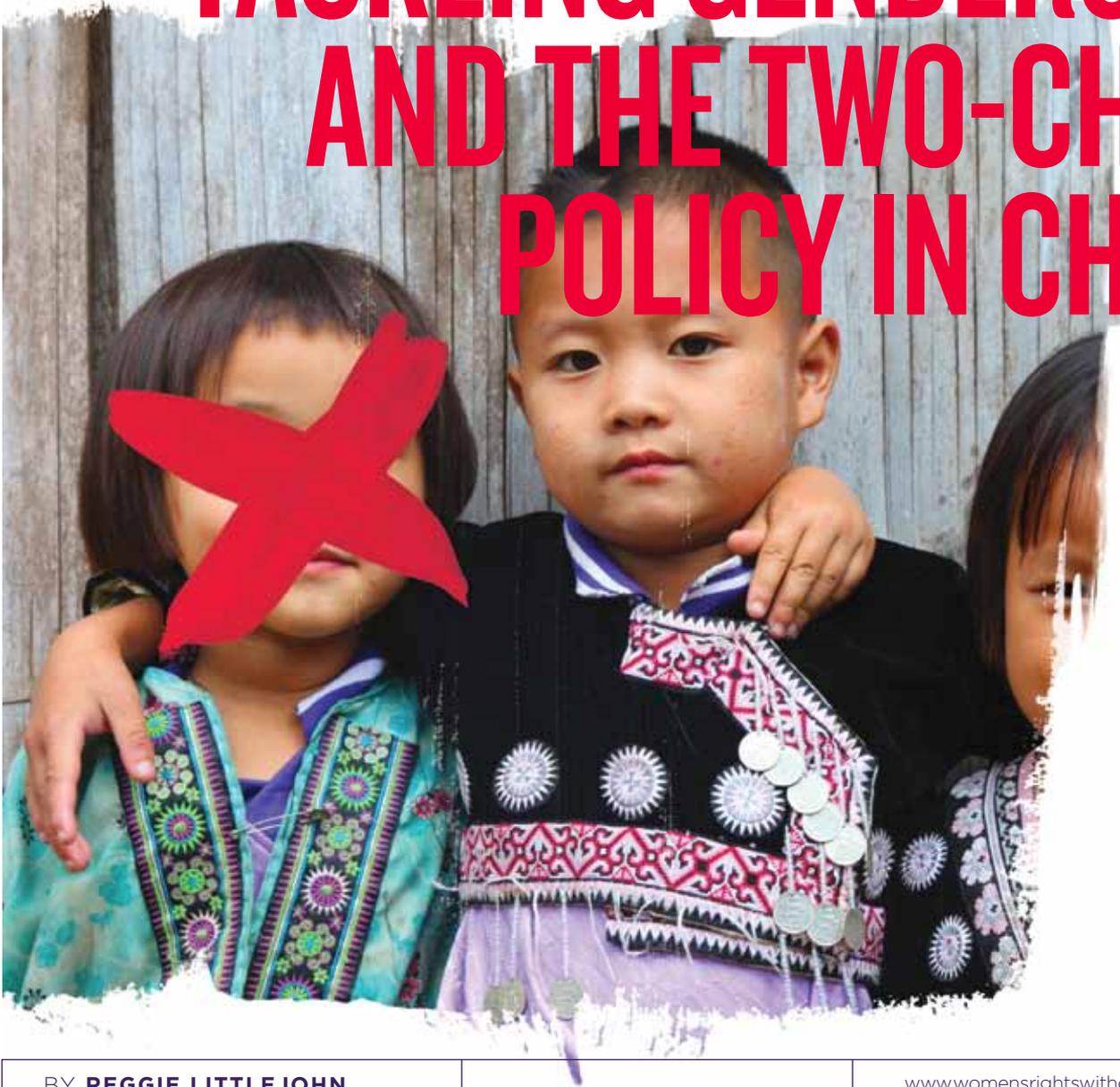
¹ Pseudonym.

² Sex-determination ultrasounds and sex-selective abortions are illegal in India (Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994, and the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act).

³ Mic. 6:8.



TACKLING GENDERCIDE AND THE TWO-CHILD POLICY IN CHINA



FEATURE ARTICLE

BY **REGGIE LITTLEJOHN**

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Reggie Littlejohn is the founder and President of Women's Rights Without Frontiers, www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org. A graduate of Yale Law School, she is an acclaimed international expert on China's One-Child Policy. Her organization has been called the "leading voice" in the battle to expose and oppose forced abortion and gendercide (the sex-selective abortion of baby girls) in China. Women's Rights Without Frontiers is also saving lives in China. Their "Save a Girl!" campaign finds women who are about to abort or abandon their babies because they are girls and enables them to keep their daughters by providing the family with monthly stipends for a year. They have saved hundreds of baby girls.

Reggie has testified eight times at the United States Congress, three times at the European Parliament, twice at the British, and has spoken at the Irish and Canadian Parliaments, the Hague, United Nations, State Department, White House, and the Vatican as well. She has received recognitions such as one of the "Top Ten People of 2013" by Inside the Vatican Magazine, the National Pro-Life Recognition award by Priests for Life, and being named a Public Policy Fellow at Notre Dame's Center for Ethics and Culture.

The following is from an interview conducted with Reggie Littlejohn on May 4, 2017.

Gendercide happens in many places, but you specifically focus on China. What are some of the factors that are unique to China?

Yes, China is not the only place where gendercide happens. But there are things that are unique to China. The main one is the coercive population control. For decades, there's been the One-Child Policy. Now China has modified its policy from a One-Child Policy to a Two-Child Policy, but the way the Chinese government announced that was very misleading. They stated that they had "abandoned" the One-Child Policy. The mainstream media really picked up on that word, and now people think that all coercive population control in China is over, and that's not true. They just switched it from a One-Child Policy to a Two-Child Policy.

So that now every couple in China is allowed to have two children. What does that mean? That means that the entire infrastructure of surveillance and coercion are still there. Women are still having quarterly pregnancy checks to make sure that they're not illegally pregnant. They can still require a waiting period between the first child and the second child. And if you get pregnant during the waiting period, you can still be subject to forced abortion. Children can still be forcibly aborted. We had some cases that came out of China last year, 2016, where women were subject to forced abortion of third children. So coercion is continuing under the Two-Child Policy.

So you say, "What's unique to China that causes genocide?" Well, when you have a coercive low birth limit—if you're only allowed to have one child, many people want to have a boy. So they will selectively abort or abandon a girl. Under the Two-Child Policy, what demographers have found is that people are willing to let nature take its course on the first child because if you have a girl, you can always try for a boy on the second child. But the family is much more likely to select for a boy on the second child if the first child was a girl. So second daughters are still very much at risk because people perceive the second child as their last chance to have a boy.

You're the president of Women's Rights Without Frontiers (WRWF). What is the mission of WRWF, and why do you think it's important?

We are leading the movement to end forced abortion and sex-selective abortion in China, and it's important because these are the biggest women's rights issues in the world. For example, in the United States, we've had about 58 million abortions since the Roe versus Wade decision. Whereas in China, the Chinese Communist Party has boasted that they have prevented 400 million lives, mostly through abortions. That number, 400 million, is the entire population of the United States and Canada combined. So this is absolutely the biggest life issue in the world.

And it's the biggest women's rights issue in the world because these abortions are not a woman's choice. The Chinese government didn't release a statistic on how many of these abortions were forced. But they said that these abortions were a result of the One-Child Policy, which, to me, implies that they would not have happened other than the policy. And if they would not have happened except for the policy, then that means that they were forced. Because to me, anytime a woman has to have an abortion because of a government policy, then that's a forced abortion. If she wants the baby and she has to abort it because of a government policy, that's a forced abortion. So this is a huge women's rights issue—the biggest life issue and it's the biggest women's rights issue in the world today. We are leading the movement to end these things.

In terms of sex-selective abortion, according to one UN statistic, there are up to 200 million women and girls missing in the world today because of the sex-selective abortion of baby girls. That number, 200 million, is greater than all of the casualties of all of the wars of the 20th century. Most times, these women do not want to selectively abort their baby because she's a girl. They're pressured by their husbands and their in-laws. So, again, this is a huge women's rights issue.

How does WRWF engage with these issues?

We engage with these issues in two ways. First, we have an international advocacy campaign. And I have testified personally in U.S. congressional hearings eight

The other thing that we do is that we have a Save a Girl campaign. We have boots on the ground inside of China to save the lives of individual girls from sex-selective abortion or abandonment.



times, the State Department a dozen times, and multiple times at parliaments in European countries. China's government denies the existence of forced abortion, but we document it and present the evidence. So we're not the favorites of the Chinese Communist Party. When I began this work in 2009, people did not even believe that China was still forcibly aborting women. People believed the Chinese propaganda machine, which said that all the abortions were voluntary. So the first thing that WRWF had to do was convince the world that this is still happening. And then, of course, we've been calling for it to end and we've had some success in that. The European Parliament and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women have both issued statements condemning coercive population control. And the European Parliament actually passed a resolution naming China and citing a case called Feng Jianmei. She is a woman who was arrested and forcibly aborted at seven months in 2012. So that's what we do for international advocacy.

The other thing that we do is that we have a Save a Girl campaign. We have boots on the ground inside of China to save the lives of individual girls from sex-selective abortion or abandonment. We have connections through our network where through which we learn of a woman

who is pregnant with a girl or had just given birth to a girl and is either planning to abort her or abandon her under pressure from her in-laws because she's a girl. We will actually go to her door and say, "Please don't abort. Please don't abandon your baby because she's a girl. She's a precious daughter. And we will give you a monthly stipend for a year to empower you to keep your daughter." And we have saved more than 200 baby girls with this program. These women don't want to abort and abandon their daughters. They're being pressured. Again, there's a strong connection between sex-selective abortion and forced abortion.

One of my favorite stories was of a woman who was pregnant, and her mother-in-law was really pressuring her to have an ultrasound to find out if it was a girl. These selective abortions are usually late-term abortions because you have to wait until you're far enough along to see the gender of a child by ultrasound. Plus these women really drag their feet on having the ultrasound because they know that if it's a girl, they're going to get pressured to abort her. So this woman waited until, I believe, she was eight months pregnant to have this ultrasound. She found out that not only was she carrying one girl, but she was carrying twin girls. So the pressure became really intense to abort because she would be

using up her entire quota in one pregnancy, and they would both be girls. And we were able to go to her door and say, "Please don't abort your baby girls. Girls are as good as boys. And we'll give you two monthly stipends for a year to help you support your daughters." And we were able to save those twin girls in that way.

If you're a believer, then you've got to care about whatever God cares about. God cares about the whole world. God cares just as much about Chinese mothers and babies as he does about American mothers and babies.

Do you believe sex selection should be of concern to the American church? And if so, are there any action steps that you can recommend?

This should absolutely be of concern to the American church because if you're a believer, then you've got to care about whatever God cares about. God cares about the whole world. God cares just as much about Chinese mothers and babies as he does about American mothers and babies.

And the Chinese women can't do anything about this because if you stand up against the Chinese Communist Party and say this is wrong, then you end up like the blind activist Chen Guangcheng. He was jailed and tortured and his family has been terribly persecuted because he took up a stand against the One-Child

Policy. So the Bible says, "Have nothing to do with evil deeds of darkness but rather, expose them (Eph 5:11)." That's a command. It's not a suggestion. And so now that we know about this, we have a responsibility to do something about it.

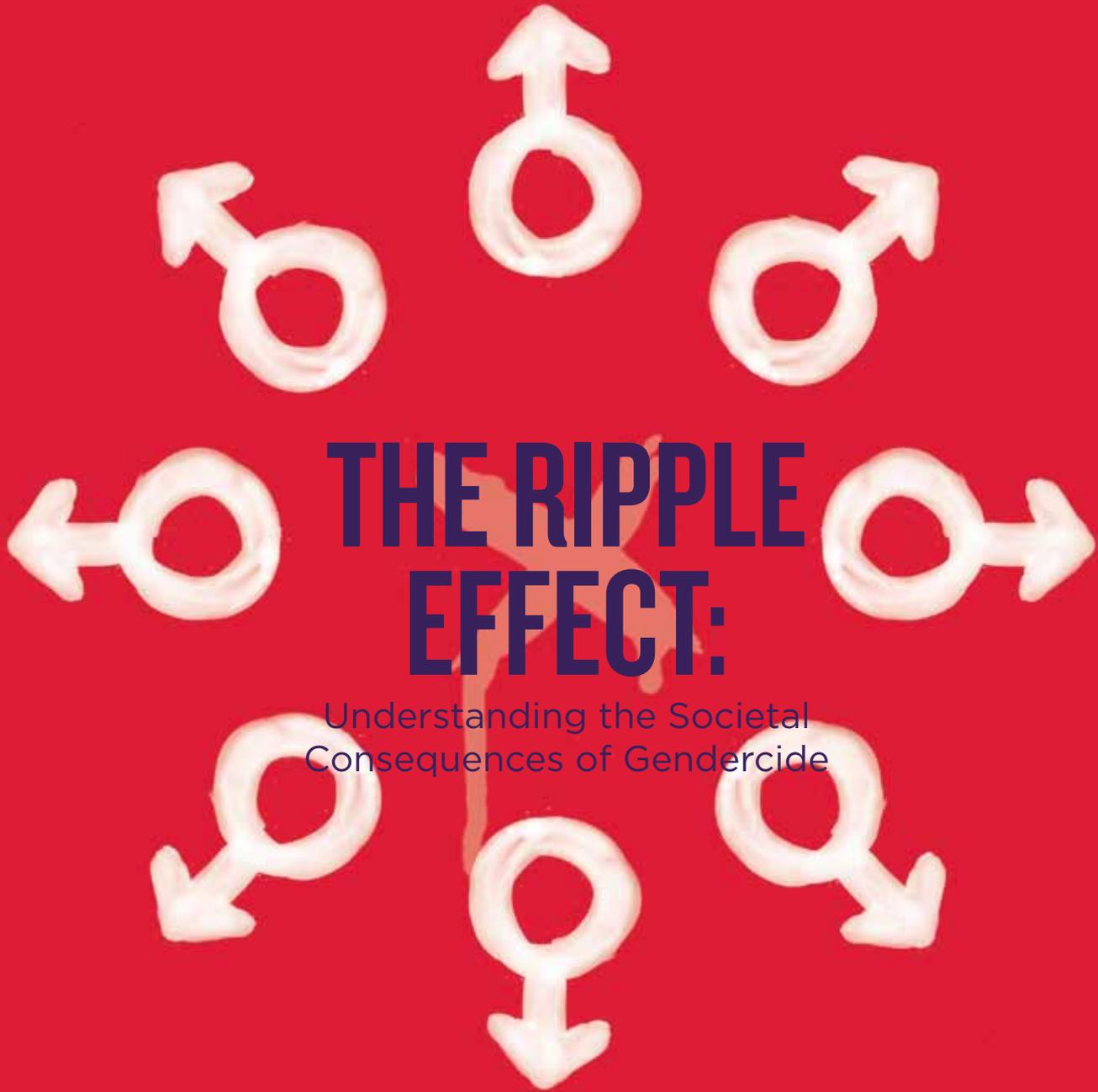
If people want to help us save babies in China, they can go on my website, www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org/. This is a way for somebody to reach their arm from their kitchen table in America all the way to the door of a woman in China and help her save her daughter. 

*Learn more or support WRWF
Women's Rights Without Frontiers
www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org*

*Save the Girl Campaign
<http://womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org/index.php?nav=end-gendercide-and-forced-abortion>*

*Learn more about forced abortion
<http://www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org/?nav=stop-forced-abortion>*





THE RIPPLE EFFECT:

Understanding the Societal Consequences of Gendercide

FEATURE ARTICLE

BY **LYNDSAY MATHEWS**

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SKIPPING ROCKS ALONG the riverside can be a peaceful, even meditative, activity. But there's always that one friend who wants to find the biggest boulder along the bank and heave it into the water. The ripple effect is impressive with waves that progress far outside the point of initial impact. When 200,000,000 girls are missing from the population, the societal repercussions are akin to those from a large rock hitting the water. There are many far-reaching and extremely interconnected consequences.

In an attempt to make a complicated issue more understandable and solvable, let's break it down using the image of the rock hitting the surface of the water. In your mind's eye, imagine this rock colliding with the water in slow motion. The first wave after impact is the closest and most directly related to the initial disruption. "Bare Branches," or men who are unable to find spouses in their community, are a direct result of gendercide. As the wave continues to gain momentum, "Bare Branches" then leads to other consequences – bride buying, child brides, increased prostitution and human trafficking. The wave continues as some distance is gained between the crest of the wave and ground zero. Now we begin to see consequences such as increased STDs, rising crime rates, and domestic violence. Girls and women missing from the population is not a singular event. Many people in multiple nations feel the consequences of gendercide. Each of these consequences will be explored to gain a better understanding as to why gendercide should be on the agenda of the global Church.

Bare Branches

The first repercussion to consider is how the gender imbalance in certain regions of the world directly impacts a man's ability to find a spouse. "Bare Branches" comes from the Chinese word *guang gun* and refers to those men who will be unable to marry and thus will not add to the family tree.¹ While the term is Chinese, the concept can be applied to any community or nation with a large number of men unable to find spouses within their community due to gendercide. Christophe Guilmoto estimates that by 2030 "the female deficit in the 20-49 age group will rise to 26 and 23 million in China and India, respectively."² The current population of Texas is a bit more than 26 million people.³ Imagine if every person in Texas were a man of marriageable age who could not find a spouse. The ripple effect would not end there.

Bride Buying and Child Brides

This large number of unmarried men leads to another destructive repercussion of: bride buying and child brides. When millions of men cannot find suitable spouses within their community, they begin to look elsewhere. "Elsewhere" means the surrounding countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Russia, Uzbekistan, to name only a few.⁴ In cultures like China where it is imperative that men marry in order to produce sons to carry on the family lineage, this marriage squeeze becomes an imposing issue. Marriage is no longer a sacramental act between two people, but a business transaction. Women become commodities. Since commodities can be treated as less than human, domestic violence is not uncommon in marriages where the woman was purchased.⁵ Unfortunately, it is not only women of marriageable age who are bought by men seeking a spouse. A third of the world's child-brides are found in India, where half of the women marry before the age of 18.⁶ We already know from Guilmoto that there are millions of women missing from the Indian population. When there are not enough women to marry, girl children become targets for men seeking a spouse.

Zhang Mei is a victim of the domino effect of gendercide, which leads to women being trafficked for forced marriage. Originally from a poor province in Western China, she was forced to go east to marry a man fifteen years her senior. She was not kidnapped or coerced. Her parents sold her. She is not allowed to return home. Her ability to carve her own future vanished as she became the property of another human, not as a slave, but as a wife.⁷

Trafficking and Prostitution

Not all trafficked women, however, are bought as brides. Many of them end up in brothels or on the streets pimped out as prostitutes. And there is a direct correlation between a lack of women in a community and an increase in prostitution. In an article published in *The World Bank Economic Review*, two researchers estimate that, given the current sex-ratio trend, the percentage of men in China paying for sex will increase by 2-3 percent in the next thirty years.⁸ The study was published in 2009, so in 2017 we are nearly ten years into the expected increase in prostitution. The mushroom effect continues as an increase in prostitution means an increase in sexually transmitted diseases such

Those regions in India with the most skewed sex ratios have higher murder rates.

The correlation between skewed sex ratios and violent crimes is even higher than the correlation between skewed sex ratios and poverty.

as HIV. Syphilis, which was nearly eradicated from the area 50 years ago “is now the most commonly reported communicable disease in Shanghai.”⁹ Women who were not initially at risk of contracting an STD in their home country or community are exposed after being sold as a wife or prostitute.¹⁰

Increasing Crime Rates

An increase in crime is another repercussion of gendercide. If one wanted to know the regions of India with the highest murder rates, they wouldn't necessarily need to look up the number of people murdered in each region. Instead, they could look at sex ratios. Those regions in India with the most skewed sex ratios have higher murder rates. The correlation between skewed sex ratios and violent crimes is even higher than the correlation between skewed sex ratios and poverty.¹¹ While it has long been thought that when men outnumber women in the population crime rates increase, a direct correlation has historically been hard to nail down. However, one team of researchers took advantage of the sporadic roll-out of the One Child Policy in China beginning in 1979 and used the data to show that as little as a 0.01 increase in the sex ratio “raised the violence and property crimes by some 5-6%.”¹² When men outnumber the women, the community and nation suffer the consequences. 

¹ 2011. *The Flight From Marriage*. The Economist. www.economist.com/node/21526329

² Guilmoto, Christophe. *Characteristics of Sex-Ratio Imbalance in India, and Future Scenarios*. Paper presented at Fourth Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health, 2007. 5. www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/regional_analysis.pdf

³ United States Census Bureau. www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045216/48

⁴ Hvistendahl, Mara. 2011 *Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys Over Girls, and the Consequences of a World Full of Men*. New York: Public Affairs, 165.

⁵ Hvistendahl, 171.

⁶ UNICEF. *Introduction to Child Marriage*. unicef.in/Whatwedo/30/Child-Marriage

⁷ Zhang Mei's story can be found in Hvistendahl, 187.

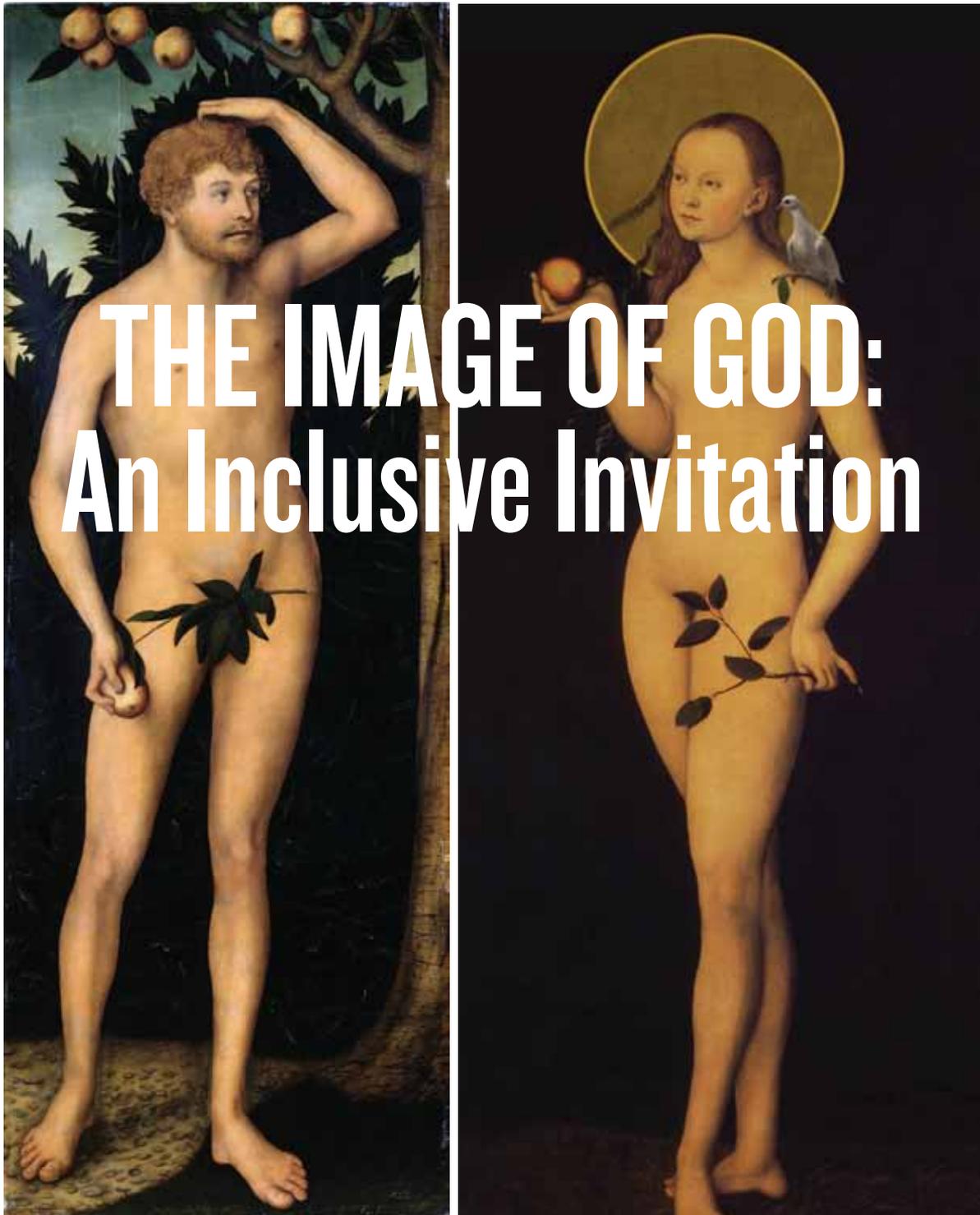
⁸ Ebenstein, Avraham Y. and Ethan Jennings Sharygin. 2009. “The Consequences of the ‘Missing Girls’ of China.” *World Bank Economic Review* 23, no. 3. 412. www.researchgate.net/profile/Avraham_Ebenstein/publication/46511479_The_Consequences_of_%27Missing_Girls%27_in_China/links/00b49534537bf42000000/The-Consequences-of-Missing-Girls-in-China.pdf 412

⁹ Tucker, Joseph D., et al. 2010. “Syphilis and Social Upheaval in China.” *New England Journal of Medicine*; 362:1658-1661. www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp0911149#t=articl

¹⁰ Hvistendahl, 193.

¹¹ Hvistendahl, 222.

¹² Edlund, Lena, et al. 2007. *More Men, More Crime, Evidence from China's One Child Policy*. Institute for the Study of Labor Discussion Paper Series. Bonn, Germany. anon-ftp.iza.org/dp3214.pdf



FEATURE ARTICLE

BY **CHRISTA L. MCKIRLAND**

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Problematically, Christian thinking has been more influenced by the cultural dogmas of the day than the divinely revealed truths about the value of both women and men.

GENDERCIDE IS BASED on the ideology that female life is less valuable than male life—that women are somehow less human than men. However, this way of thinking should be foreign to the Christian paradigm due to the concept of the image of God. Problematically, Christian thinking has been more influenced by the cultural dogmas of the day than the divinely revealed truths about the value of both women and men. Such influence can be traced via the question: What does it mean to be human?

Those who answered this question privileged with whatever attribute or embodiment they personally possessed—and since these thinkers were male—being male became the criterion for humanness, and consequently, value. Aristotle played an especially significant role in propagating a male-centric value system by ascribing male natures with superior powers, particularly of reason, over female natures. For him, a woman was a “mutilated male” requiring her subservience to men.¹ This dominant paradigm, that women have different natures, and thus, lower value, influenced Christian theologians such as Tertullian, Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Aquinas—thereby passing on an ideological inheritance which devalues women systemically and individually.²

Fortunately, this distortion of value is baseless. To discern the answer to what it means to be human,

we will begin in the Genesis account (1:26-28). Here one finds God communicating intent: “Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion.” And then he acted on this intent: “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Finally, God blesses the creation of this act by saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over...every living thing that moves upon the earth.” Significantly, appeal to this same concept appears in Genesis 5:1-2, even after sin has entered the scene, and the explicit inclusion of female as well as male persons is also reiterated.³ Later, in the final use of this explicit concept in the Old Testament, the image and likeness of God provides the justification for prohibiting murder (9:6).⁴

What do these texts tell us? First, humanity must be understood in relation to God: “*in the image of God*.” We will return to the preposition “in” below, but the statement that humanity is expressly related to God communicates creatureliness and dependence of identity on an external source. Second, while humans share creatureliness with the rest of the world, this unique identity of being “in the image of God” seems to be the causal reason for being given dominion over the world.⁵ Thus, there is a special kind of representation of God’s presence in the world via

Thus, while the content of the image of God is not expressly stated in the Old Testament, the consequence of being in the image of God seems to involve the expansion of God’s reign in all the earth—a task equally given to both female and male persons.

humanity.⁶ This dominion is given expressly to both male *and* female without qualifier. Third, such representation is also meant to be expanded as God charges them to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” Here, maleness and femaleness is a necessary prerequisite for humanity to reproduce and extend into the world. Yet, the capacity to reproduce is held in common with the rest of the created world and should not be understood as the *content* of the image of God. Fourth, when read in conjunction with Genesis 5:1-2 and 9:6, the image of God does not seem to be lost even though humanity sinned. Fifth, being in the image of God is not located in any given attribute or embodiment but includes the entire person.

A quick contextual backdrop for how Eden was understood will help underscore the dignity of both male



and female—specifically, that it was understood to be a part of the cosmic temple.⁷ This was a sacred space where God dwelt with the created world and the created world responded in worship to God. As such, male and female functioned as priests in this context. Such a reading finds support since the same verb for “walking” (הלך) that God is doing in the Garden is also used for the presence of God walking in the tabernacle (Lev. 26:12, Deut. 23:15, 2 Sam. 7:6-7). Further, the duties given to humanity in Genesis 2:15 were the same duties given to the Levites evidenced by the use of “to work” (עבד) and “to keep/guard” (שמר) the sanctuary.⁸ Finally, the Israelite cosmology, as reflected in their tabernacle construction, understood the Holy of Holies to be the heavenly throneroom, the Holy Place to include the heavens, and the outer court to include the habitable world—of which, Eden was a part. Israel was intended, as a people, to spread God’s presence in the world as a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:5-6). Such a national vocation was analogous to the original vocation of all humanity. Thus, while the content of the image of God is not expressly stated in the Old Testament, the consequence of being in the image of God seems to

Through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, all humanity is invited into becoming this image, which is the end for which it was already intended

involve the expansion of God’s reign in all the earth—a task equally given to both female and male persons.

In contrasting complement to the Old Testament, the New Testament provides explicit content to the concept of the image and likeness of God. This content is now a person: Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Temple—the presence of God—and the true image. No longer do any prepositions stand before “image of God,” (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15, equiv. Heb. 1:3), since it is *in his image* that humanity was patterned.⁹ Through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, all humanity is invited into becoming this image, which is the end for which it was already intended (Col. 3:10; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18). This invitation is enacted by the Holy Spirit and enables becoming the image of God as a member of the royal-priesthood and as vessels of the divine presence. Consequently, such an invitation is both individual and corporate, for the Epistles declare that the individual is the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19), the church is the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16, Eph. 2:21), and a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 5:10). Such a vocation is not only open to women as well as men, but requires women as well as men to partner with the Spirit of Christ in expanding the presence of God in all the earth through “making disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). 

¹ Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*; *Politics*.

² For a history of this misinterpretation’s devastation see Kilner, John F. 2015 *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

³ Genesis 5:3 uses “image” and “likeness” but in the context of a human-human relation instead of God-human relation, and space does not allow for explication.

⁴ James 3:9 functions like Genesis 9:6 in speaking of humanity in general and using a preposition.

⁵ Dominion needs to be rightly contextualized as ruling as God would rule, which involves stewarding the world toward creaturely flourishing. See F. Davis, Ellen F. 2009 *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Also, for a structural argument regarding the causative relationship between being in the image and having dominion, see Gentry, Peter J. and Stephen J. Wellum, 2012 *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 189.

⁶ Middleton argues convincingly for image as royal representative, though he does conflate the constitution of being in the image with the consequence of being in the image of God. Middleton, Richard J. 2005 *Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press; 2014 *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁷ Alexander, Desmond T. *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction To The Pentateuch*; Beale, Gregory K. *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*; Walton, John H. *The Lost World of Genesis One*. See especially Alexander regarding the priestly association, as well as Gentry and Wellum, cited above.

⁸ Some might argue that these functions only applied to the man in the garden, since the woman was not yet created in this account of the creation sequence. However, the fact that the woman was not specifically addressed does not mean that she was not included in this charge. If this priestly language is gender-exclusive, then one must also conclude that the command not to eat from the tree of good and evil was only required of the man since the woman was not given this prohibition directly. Also, given the argument that Eden is a sacred space, the woman should not have been allowed into the domain in which God walked unless she was a priest as well. That she was also a priest may be additionally supported by Genesis 3:21 in which God makes garments of skin for the man and the woman, using the same vocabulary as the priestly donning of clothing (Exod. 28:41; 29:8; 40:14; Lev. 8:13). See Wenham, Gordon J. 2014 “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in *Cult and Cosmos: Tilting toward a Temple-Centered Theology*, Morales, Michael L. ed., Biblical Tools and Studies, volume 18, Leuven: Peeters, 163-164.

⁹ The fact that Jesus is identified with the image, and is the original after which all humanity is patterned since the Son pre-existed all creation, is a possible reason that “in” and “according to” are consistently used in talking about humans and the image but then they drop out when speaking of the Son of God as the image.



FEATURE ARTICLE

FEATURE ARTICLE

GENDERCIDE IN INDIA: WHAT IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

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Introduction

GENDERCIDE, or the elimination of daughters from society, has been occurring in India for centuries. Because of modern technology, people are now able to use sex selective abortion as a method to ensure sons, and not daughters, are born. The child sex ratio (CSR), or the amount of girls there are to the amount of boys in a society, is the best way to track how many daughters are missing. A normal CSR is about 100 girls to every 107 boys. In parts of India, it is upwards to 121 boys for every 100 girls. Hudson et al.¹ asserts, "...the death toll among Indian women as a result of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion from 1980 to the present is almost

NGOs). It is difficult to measure if their efforts have made a difference, but the best way is to look at the CSR before and after an initiative has taken place. Then we see if the CSR got better during their efforts, showing if there was less or more gendercide. I did a study to look at this. The goal of the study was to see if the initiatives were making a difference and I did that by collecting many initiatives and looking at the CSR before and after each initiative.

This study collected 112 separate interventions, or efforts, that have occurred in India. The CSR is measured before and after each initiative, indicating if things got better or worse over the duration of the efforts made. The results show that 51% of the initiatives did have a better child

sex ratio after initiatives occurred.

The most important finding was that states in India that had a lot of initiatives occurring had a better change in the CSR than states that only had a few initiatives. See Figure II for data results.

Best Practices

From these findings, there were several strategies in the initiatives that look like they might be lessening the occurrence of gendercide. These "best practices" are ways that government and civil society groups can make a difference. These best practices — strict, serious enforcement by the government, multi-pronged approach, women's leadership in policy formation and implementation, in-context methods, and partnership with

authority entities — are present in the vast majority of the interventions that had a better CSR after implementation.

Government Best Practices

1. Strict, serious enforcement by the government

The first strategy is serious government efforts to combat sex-selective abortion. For example, in 2005, a "Watchdog" group was established consisting of former police chiefs, the health ministry, and the retired director general of police. Their efforts, which included undercover inspections and legal action against abortion

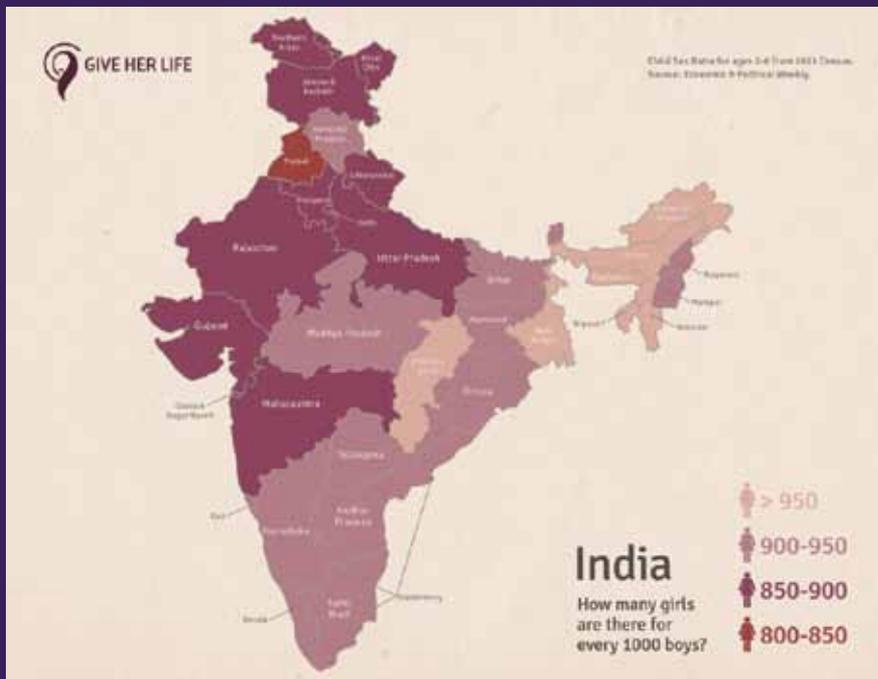


Figure 1 Child Sex Ratio for Ages 0-6 from India 2011 Census.³

forty times the death toll from all of India's wars *since and including* its bloody struggle for independence." It is estimated that there are 43.3 million missing girls in India in 2010.² See Figure I for a map of India and the child sex ratio at birth in each state.

Results of the Study

The very abnormal CSR is how we know there is a problem in India. But has anything been done and by whom? The main players in the fight against gendercide are the government of India and civil society groups (nonprofits/

Figure II: Total Initiatives per Indian state and associating change in the child sex ratio from 2001 to 2016

Indian State	Government Initiatives	Civil Society Initiatives	Total Initiatives	Percentage change in CSR (2001 to 2016)
Andhra Pradesh	3	1	4	-2%
Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	-2%
Assam	0	0	0	-2.4%
Bihar	2	2	4	-1.5%
Chhattisgarh	1	1	2	-4.4%
Goa	0	0	0	-1.7%
Gujarat	7	4	11	2.5%
Haryana	8	9	17	8.3%
Himachal Pradesh	5	2	7	1.3%
Jammu and Kashmir	0	0	0	-.4%
Jharkhand	1	1	2	-4.3%
Karnataka	3	1	4	-.3%
Kerala	1	0	1	-.7%
Madhya Pradesh	2	2	4	-.3%
Maharashtra	3	5	8	1.3%
Manipur	0	0	0	-2.6%
Meghalaya	0	0	0	-2.4%
Mizoram	0	0	0	-1.7%
Nagaland	0	0	0	-7.3%
Orissa/Odisha	4	1	5	-1.2%
Punjab	5	6	11	11.7%
Rajasthan	4	7	11	2.2%
Sikkim	0	0	0	1.2%
Tamil Nadu	2	4	6	-1%
Telangana	1	0	1	-.1%
Tripura	0	0	0	-4.6%
Uttarakhand	0	2	2	-.2%
Uttar Pradesh	1	3	4	-1.5%
West Bengal	0	1	1	-2.7%
Delhi	2	6	8	5.7%
TOTAL	55	58	113	

Note: **7+ initiatives in BOLD**, Negative percentage change, .1-5% change, 5%+ change

clinics, occurred in five different states. In all five states, the CSR was better after intervention.

2. Multi-pronged approach by the government

The second strategy for the government is a multi-pronged approach that combines a variety of methods, groups and organizations into one initiative. This study shows that these combined effort cases, which include the government and local non-government organizations (NGOs) are essential to making a difference. In Haryana, a multi-pronged approach headed by state government has been underway and includes financial assistance to girls and their families, rewards for districts with improved sex ratio, plays, rallies, pledges by citizens and other publicity. In 2005 the CSR was 823 girls to 1000 boys and increased to 903 girls in 2016,⁴ showing that the CSR was much better after intervention.

3. Women's involvement in the leadership, implementation and policy-making of government schemes

The third strategy is women's involvement in the leadership, implementation and policy-making of government schemes. For example, in Bibipur, Haryana, an all-women panchayat (village-level administrative group) was put into power. They immediately banned sex selective abortions and passed a resolution that those found participating in female sex selective abortion would be charged with murder.⁵ Violators of the ban are also socially boycotted.⁶ The women then used government monies by investing in intensive campaigns aimed at tackling issues like dowry and gender bias. They have banned DJs and other celebrations at marriages to minimize dowry expenses. Many women were given assistance in pursuing education, empowering them to become more independent.⁶

Civil Society Best Practices

1. Context appropriate methods

The first strategy for grassroots, civil society efforts is context appropriate methods. These specific context appropriate methods are how activists have used language

and slogans appropriately, set culturally sensitive goals and addressed correct audiences. These strategies were particularly important in education and media campaigns. In Morena, Madhya Pradesh, the NGO Prayatn has taken great care in creating context appropriate interventions by creating a rapport with the city and its citizens, giving training and education to men and women about women's

“No nation, no society, no community can hold its head high and claim to be part of the civilized world if it condones the practice of discrimination against one half of humanity represented by women”.

legal and reproductive rights, and organizing a cadre of local women activists.⁷ During Prayatn's initiatives, the city of Morena saw a 9% positive change in the CSR.

2. Partnering with local authority entities

The second strategy for civil society groups is partnering with local authority entities. The authority entities, usually local government and religious bodies, hold authoritative sway in many communities, thereby adding soft power to civil society efforts. In one example, several groups (including UNICEF, UNFPA and religious leaders) teamed up to walk 2,000 kilometers across five Indian states.⁸ The pilgrimage concluded in the holy city of Amritsar on a religious Sikh holiday. Sikh religious leaders condemned sex selective abortion and threatened that any patrons found to be participating in the practice would be excommunicated. Of the five states visited, four saw a significant positive change in the CSR.

3. Sponsorship of local Indian NGOs by international NGOs

The third best practice for civil society groups is sponsorship of local Indian NGOs by international

NGOs. For example, in Haryana, ActionAid India has sponsored many local groups (including women's rights groups, academics, and activists) to conduct carnivals, advocacy, education, celebrations of baby girls' births, etc. During their campaign, Haryana saw a 6.4% positive association with the CSR, showing that the initiative may have made a difference.

Conclusion

In 2008, the Indian Prime Minister declared, “No nation, no society, no community can hold its head high and claim to be part of the civilized world if it condones the practice of discrimination against one half of humanity represented by women”.⁹ The Prime Minister then outlined specific government campaigns to end sex selective abortion in several states throughout India. This study shows that some of this work by government and civil society groups may be making a difference in a few states in India. There is, however, a generous amount of work, policy implementation, and grassroots effort that need to be made before a balanced child sex ratio is achieved. 

¹ Hudson, V. M., Ballif-Spanvill, B., Caprioli, M., & Emmett, C. F. (2014). *Sex & world peace*. New York: Columbia University Press.

² Bongaarts, J., & Guilamoto, C. Z. (2015). How many more missing women? Excess female mortality and prenatal sex selection, 1970-2050. *Population and Development Review*, 41(2), 241–269. doi:10.1111/j.1728-4457.2015.00046.x.

³ Census of India: Census data online. (2011). Retrieved February 10, 2017, from Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, censusindia.gov.in/2011-common/censusdataonline.html.

⁴ Thakur, M. (2016, January 22). Beti Bachao delivers gains in Haryana, but gaps remain. Retrieved February 21, 2017, from www.livemint.com/Politics/p6CEyeHkxxZckdx7RTiWON/Beti-Bachao-delivers-gains-in-Haryana-but-gaps-remain.html.

⁵ Sandhu, K. (2015, June 12). Haryana village initiates contest for 'best selfie with daughters': Beti Bachao, Selfie Banao. Retrieved February 10, 2017, from indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/win-win-contest-is-rage-in-haryana-village-beti-bachao-selfie-banao/.

⁶ Siwach, S. (2016, July 14). Activists to adopt 2 Haryana villages having worst sex ratio - Times of India. Retrieved February 21, 2017, from timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Activists-to-adopt-2-Haryana-villages-having-worst-sex-ratio/articleshow/46362986.cms.

⁷ Gender Equality & Social Justice. (2014). Retrieved July 21, 2016, from Prayatn, www.prayatn.org/gesj.html.

⁸ Adorna, C. (2005). *UNICEF endorses multi-faith campaign against female foeticide*. Retrieved July 19, 2016, from UNICEF India, unicef.in/PressReleases/265/UNICEF-endorses-multifaith-campaign-against-female-foeticide.

⁹ Srinivasan, S., & Bedi, A. S. (2011). Ensuring Daughter Survival in Tamil Nadu, India. *Oxford Development Studies*, 39(3), 253-283. doi:10.1080/13600818.2011.594500.



SEX SELECTION: A Story from India

FEATURE ARTICLE

FEATURE ARTICLE

BY **RAAJ MONDOL**

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Raaj Mondol is a training facilitator and is engaged in raising awareness on the issue of gendercide among university students. He leads a small team in sensitizing churches on domestic violence. He lives with his wife and two sons in New Delhi.

Dr. Puneet Bedi, a practicing gynecologist in a famous hospital in New Delhi, says that it is “probably the single most important issue in the next 50 years that this country and China are going to face.”

IT WAS AN ORDINARY DAY like any other and I was on my way to our office on a cycle rickshaw in the morning. Midway I started to feel a sense of deep heaviness in my heart like carrying a big weight. It was quite unusual, so I started to pray to understand what it was all about. The Lord showed me a vision, a picture of our land soaked with blood. I kept on praying to ask the Lord whose blood it was and the answer that I received was that it was the blood of the innocent girls in our land who were killed before they were born. The Lord was planting in my heart his own concern about the plight of girls in our country whose lives were snuffed out because they happened to be girls. This happened about 12 years ago but the memory of that experience is still vivid in my mind. As I reached the office I shared this vision with our team members and we prayed together to find more clarity.

As we continued to pray for some time the Lord reminded us of a verse from 2 Chronicles 7:14, “...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” We recognized that the Lord was bringing to our attention one of the “wicked ways” of our time – the practice of sex selective abortions, also known as “gendercide” or “female feticide” in our country. We

realized that the Lord required us to take ownership of this social problem and seek His forgiveness if we wanted to see His healing come to our land.

We started to pray more intently seeking His guidance and to learn more about this issue as it was new for us. In the following months the Lord confirmed to us this call in different ways. We started to learn more and began sharing the concern in our training programs. One significant event organized was an Artists’ Residency program on the theme of “female feticide” in collaboration with one of our sister organizations. Art works produced in that residency program were exhibited under the title “The Disappeared” in an art gallery. That was our first public engagement on this issue. Since then we have continued our engagement with this concern and it has, in fact, become one of the primary focuses of our ministry.

The gravity of the problem due to sex selection has been highlighted by various demographers. Christophe Guilmoto, a French demographer, calls it “rampant demographic masculinization, a change with potentially grave effect for future generations.” Dr. Puneet Bedi, a practicing gynecologist in a famous hospital in New Delhi, says that it is “probably the single most important issue in the next 50 years that this country and China are going to face.”

The church in India can play a significant role in stopping this tide of violence by sharing a gospel message that accords equal value to women for being created in God's image and redeemed by Christ to become co-heirs of God's kingdom.

The issue of sex selection or gendercide is linked to the unequal status of women in our society. The culture of "son preference" and "daughter avoidance" stems from the belief of superiority of men over women. This belief is at the root of various forms of violence against women such as female infanticide, dowry deaths, honor killing, rape, domestic violence, acid attacks, etc. Discrimination and neglect have resulted in a skewed sex ratio, trafficking of women, purchase of brides, and increased incidents of crime against women. The church in India can play a significant role in stopping this tide of violence by sharing a gospel message that accords equal value to women for being created in God's image and redeemed by Christ to become co-heirs of God's kingdom. This indeed would have been "good news" to millions of "missing women" in our country, but sadly the church has largely failed to proclaim and demonstrate this good news.

For the global church it also raises an important concern. In the book of Exodus chapter 1 we find an account where the king of Egypt had ordered Hebrew midwives to kill all the boys born to the Hebrew women, but let the girls live. The Egyptians were afraid of the growing population of Hebrew slaves. It was also a form of sex selective killing. But the midwives feared God and did not do what the king had asked them to do. It is



written that because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own (Exodus 1:21). The current trend of sex selective abortions can be traced back to policies framed and implemented to curb the rising population in Third World countries. These policies were aggressively promoted and financed by the World Bank and other international funding agencies who were alarmed by the projections made by Paul Ehrlich in his book *The Population Bomb* and had approved of sex selection as a means to curb rising population. When such policies are promoted by governments or multilateral agencies which are clearly in contravention to the commands of God, the global church can draw inspiration from the Hebrew midwives and their choice to do the will of God rather than that of men.

The power of the gospel to break the racial barriers of “Jew and Greek” could be evidenced in the first century but it took more than eighteen centuries to break the barrier of “slave and free.” How many more centuries will we need to break the barrier of “male and female” mentioned by Paul in Galatians 3:28? The need is urgent to both proclaim and demonstrate the gospel that reinstates the equality and dignity of women as part of the message of redemption and reconciliation in Christ Jesus. The urgency of the need is well highlighted by New York Times journalists Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn in their book *Half the Sky*:

“The global statistics on the abuse of girls are numbing. It appears that more girls have been killed in the last fifty years, precisely because they were girls, than men were killed in all the battles of the twentieth century.

In the nineteenth century, the central moral challenge was slavery. In the twentieth century, it was the battle against totalitarianism. We believe that in this century the paramount challenge will be the struggle for gender equality around the world.”

With the objective to ensure equality and dignity of women and girls in our nation, we have been running a campaign named “Let her live.” We conduct awareness events among college students to sensitize them on the issue of gendercide. Dowry pops up as an important factor behind the practice of sex selection in most of our discussion with students. More than 1,500 students have so far signed a pledge to not take or give dowry and not to go for sex determination tests. Many of those students also enlist themselves as volunteers for various awareness raising events. In the last

few years, the student volunteers have visited hospitals on the International Day of the Girl Child to give gifts to the new-born girls. It is a small gesture to celebrate and welcome the births of daughters. Our vision is that those students will become passionate advocates of the cause. We are also sharing those ideas with churches and encouraging the churches to organize such events in the community. Some churches organized street rallies and street theater to share the message. We have been sharing prayer cards, prayer guides, and posters with churches to observe the International Day of the Girl Child. We facilitate a training program for churches on ending domestic violence through the formation of care groups. We need to work not only on the issue of sex selection or violence against women but also on the larger issue of value accorded to women in our society and in the Church.

“The global statistics on the abuse of girls are numbing. ...More girls have been killed in the last fifty years, precisely because they were girls, than men were killed in all the battles of the twentieth century.

As Christians, we have to bring in the inherent value of human beings and make it a moral campaign. We hope that the churches start taking initiatives in the community that will communicate the value and dignity of girls and women. When they start getting equal opportunities to exercise their gifts in the church, when they face no discrimination in their homes, schools, colleges and work places and when they are able to achieve their God-given potential without any hindrances or barriers, we will know that the birth of girls is no longer being viewed as a burden but is being welcomed and celebrated. This hope inspires us and fuels our work. 

A HAND-OUT, HAND UP, OR HAND ACROSS?

THE SAYING “A HAND UP, not a handout,” has been popularized over the last decade. The phrase was created to move people away from the trend of giving handouts and charity in chronic poverty situations, which often leaves people in the same condition and even makes it worse at times. A hand up refers to methods of helping people to help themselves by giving them the life skills, tools, experiences, and resources to be self-sufficient. In other words, a person, agency or church extends their hand (resources) to help the less fortunate get up on their feet and progress forward.

But when it comes to all things global missions, I wonder if there is another manner and approach we should add to this list: *a hand across*. What do I mean by “a hand across,” and why do I suggest this approach in spreading the gospel and making disciples?

Giving handouts and giving a hand up still put people in a kind of unequal relationship. The one who gives the handout or the one who gives the hand up still comes across as the superior one, the expert, the foreign aid person, and the fixer. In these cases, it is obvious who are considered the vulnerable, poor, and weak ones and who are the smart, wealthy, and strong ones.

Based on my experience, I would conclude that most missionaries conduct themselves as the experts, the fixers, and the solution jumpers in their host-countries. Most missionaries don't seem to need much

from those they live among; they tend to find solutions and meet their needs elsewhere (other missionaries, their organizations, professional services, hired-hands, etc.)

But I wonder if there is room for, and a need for, a hand-across approach to missions. In this case, the cross-cultural worker and the local people view each other as mutual friends and as people who truly need each other. No one seems on top or more superior or less needful of the others. In this respect, the cross-cultural servant would need to avoid being the money bags or the powerhouse, but rather bring their one or two slices of bread to the loaf, so to speak. They would contribute, but not over contribute or outshine those around them. They would gift and share, but it would be less of a transactional culture (exchange based on money) and more about sharing ideas, labor, and friendship, and fanning into flame that which is already there.

There are several distinct benefits to sharing the gospel and making disciples from this context, posture, and approach:

- Authenticity is a product of mutual servanthood, sharing, and true interdependence. Authenticity is really difficult to come by when money and the perception of power come into the relationship.
- Others say, “I can do this!”
- Sharing is NOT reduced to the monetary, financial transactions,

and professionalism, but rather allows for voluntary gifting of shared work, time, ideas, relationships, and resources as a lifestyle.

- The cross-cultural Christian worker will have to rely on their gifts of creativity, of building relationships, listening, and of being present, which is quite persuasive in making disciples.
- It protects against passing on a worldview of consumerism and materialism.
- It creates a relational and communal atmosphere of sharing evident in the gospels and in the book of Acts.

My aim is not to criticize handouts and a hand up, but rather to invite dialogue and a bit of dreaming about an approach to missions that is under highlighted, a hand across . . . where monetary transactions are not dominant, but where being needed by others and needing others are more on an equal plane.

No one seems to be teaching Westerners how to do missions from this degree of vulnerability . . . to have to trust in those around them on a regular basis.

A hand-across approach allows the gospel, church, and the Kingdom of God to spring up from the culture and the natural resources of the people. In this manner, local resources are maximized and forms contextualized. 

BY JEAN JOHNSON

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Jean Johnson is the director of Five Stones Global, formerly known as World Mission Associates.

Spreading Global Insight

by Greg Parsons

Director of Global Connections
Frontier Ventures

When I interact with workers and mission leaders globally, I realize how privileged my learning experience has been here at Frontier Ventures. What an honor to learn global missiology from key mission leaders and thinkers over 35 years—including Ralph D. Winter! In this column, I will describe our learning process, how it has served the mission movement and how it can continue to do so into the future.

How does Frontier Ventures gain insight?

In 1976, when Ralph and Roberta Winter founded the U.S. Center for World Mission (now Frontier Ventures) they considered the role of missionary orders to be crucial to advance the Kingdom. Thus, we are a protestant missionary religious order. Members of religious orders do some things in different ways, which I will not outline here. One way is that when someone joins, they make a commitment to the core purposes and overall direction of the order. Here is how we describe that in our bylaws:

...the primary purpose of the Order shall be: to serve the mission enterprise by identifying barriers and pursuing solutions toward Kingdom breakthrough to see the gospel of Jesus Christ unleashed and unhindered among the least reached, so that “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” — Habakkuk 2:14.

In order to serve the mission enterprise well, we realized we needed to (1) listen to what global leaders were learning and experiencing. Then, we sought to (2) share with others what we were hearing; and (3) interpret what we were hearing and point out potential gaps in mission strategy and practice.

How did we accomplish this?

My first thought is what we called our weekly Frontier Fellowship meeting. Every Thursday night we would meet from 7:00 – 8:30 pm. Normally, there were two visiting speakers—usually from very different parts of the world in different kinds of ministry. These presenters (usually global workers) did not do their usual “pitch” of their ministry and often they found it to be a great time to share more in-depth to an audience that cared. While those of us on staff were often weary from a week of work—which never really ended—we were regularly encouraged to see what God was doing. While I often wished I didn’t have to go to the meeting, I rarely left it feeling it was a waste of time.

It was like a weekly missions conference, but it was much deeper than what most churches would want for such an event. We learned so much from these speakers — who might be just off the field from work among various people groups in Africa, Asia, Latin America or Europe.

After the two speakers shared, Ralph Winter would get up and “wrap up” the evening. He only shared 10-15 minutes, but I regularly thought what he shared was challenging and

profound—often inspiring.

What did we do with what we learned?

With all this great insight from people in a myriad of ministries from all over the world, we worked hard to communicate these insights we had gleaned through still other relationships with churches and mission agencies as well as through publishing in *Mission Frontiers*, the *IJFM* the *Global Prayer Digest* and William Carey Library. It fed into the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course.

What’s next?

Since I worked in our media ministry back in those early days, I was running the sound system and recording the sessions on cassette tape. Over the last few years, we have digitized over 3,000 audio recordings (from other presentations too...not just the Frontier Fellowship meetings). We also have hundreds of files of writings from Ralph and Roberta Winter, Donald McGavran, and others.

We are working hard to make these available in various ways. Our intended audience is interested mission-oriented folks and field workers, mobilizers, trainers, etc. We hope this valuable content will give you something helpful to reflect on and apply to your life and ministry. 

I’d love to hear your thoughts and needs. You can reach me at: greg.parsons@frontierventures.org