

Explosive new book details war on unborn baby girls



Imagine waking up one day to find that every single woman in the U.S. has disappeared.

Picture this, writes author and scientific journalist Mara Hvistendahl, and you will come close to understanding the magnitude of over 160 million baby girls being selectively aborted in Asia and East Europe over the last few decades.

Already critically acclaimed since its release in June, Hvistendahl's book, "Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys over Girls and the Consequences of a World Full of Men," meticulously documents the phenomenon of "missing" girls and its dire implications for the future.

"It's a huge problem," Hvistendahl told EWTN News on Aug. 24. "What I want readers to take away is that this is a global issue on the level of something like HIV/AIDS or female genital mutilation."

Hvistendahl said that aside from the basic issue of baby girls being aborted due to their gender in countries such as China, India, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, other human rights abuses are beginning to arise from the shortage of women in these regions.

"Women are being bought and sold – trafficked for sex work and for marriage," she said, noting that the increase in bride-buying and forced prostitution in these countries is staggering.

The author, a Columbia University graduate who has worked as a "Science" magazine correspondent in Beijing, said that her interest in the subject of gender imbalances began to increase after living in China for a few years.

"I didn't understand why sex selection was happening," she said. "I just felt it wasn't very well explained."

Hvistendahl set off to find out more, traveling to nine countries and interviewing doctors, mothers,

prostitutes, demographers, mail-order brides and men who would be forced into lifelong bachelorhood.

She began to discover a complicated web of explanations but eventually found that some of the ideological roots of the problem could be traced to zealous population control efforts from the 1960s and 70s.

Through funding from western organizations such as the World Bank and the International Planned Parenthood Federation, grants were being funneled into population control initiatives in eastern countries, with sex-selective abortion seen as an effective tool.

The results of these efforts show that in places such as China today, as many as 120 baby boys or more are being born for every 100 baby girls.

In addition to the current problems that women are facing in these countries, “the question in my mind was, How was this going to effect society 30 years from now when this hugely imbalanced generation grows up and there are many more men than women?” Hvistendahl asked.

“There is a danger in jumping too far ahead and making predictions about what will happen,” she added, “but I think this will be a major issue in China and India for social stability.”

“The governments in both countries are very worried,” she said, noting that men statistically commit more violent crimes in societies.

It's a troubling prospect that Hvistendahl is not alone in noticing.

Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt – a political economist, demographer and member of the visiting committee at the Harvard School of Public Health – has often referred to the problem as a “war on baby girls.”

He outlined for EWTN News the three major factors he believes have led to the current crisis of gender imbalance.

The first is what he calls a “ruthless” son preference that is present in numerous cultures and religious systems.

That, coupled with the second problem of smaller families due to population control efforts such as China's “coercive” one-child policy, has made couples' quests for sons even more aggressive, he noted.

“When parents have five, six children, the gender outcome at birth isn't that critical,” Eberstadt said.

“But when parents are only going to have one or two children, the sex of that child seems to become something that parents want to have a say about.”

Eberstadt said that the third factor in the rise of sex-selective abortion in these countries is reliable, accessible and inexpensive prenatal gender determination technology, such as ultrasound machines, in areas with “policy environments of unconditional abortion.”

Despite the glaring human rights abuses caused by the practice, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been largely silent on the issue – a fact that's been noted by Hvistendahl and other experts.

Dr. Susan Fink Yoshihara, director of the International Organizations Research Group and vice president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, told EWTN News that the population fund has played “a major role” in the increase of sex-selective abortion.

“They do this by refusing to condemn the practice and mainly by promoting its two main causes: fertility control and increasing (the) availability of abortion.”

If the United Nations fund “says it promotes women’s rights,” Yoshihara said, “why do its leaders refuse to condemn this egregious practice of killing girls?”

Its “leadership has instead issued directives to its employees time and again that show UNFPA is more concerned with promoting abortion than defending women’s right to life.”

Adding to the problem is what many call the ineptitude of U.S. leadership in effectively addressing the issue of forced population control.

Vice President Joe Biden sparked controversy during his recent trip to China where he told leaders that he “fully understood” the country's one-child policy and was not “second guessing” it.

His comments came during an Aug. 21 appearance at Chengdu's Sichuan University where he was discussing the United States' dilemma of paying for entitlement programs when the number of retirees exceeds the number of workers – a problem he said China shared.

The vice president's remarks in Chengdu drew widespread criticism, particularly from pro-life activists and his political opponents.

“Instead of using the power the American people gave him to speak up for human rights, he ignored his responsibility,” Yoshihara charged.

“His scandalous comments are but one example of how easy it is for us to turn away from our responsibility toward the poorest of the poor, in this case, the unborn child.”

Eberstadt was equally critical of the Biden’s remarks, but observed that the “silver lining” in the recent gaffe could be that more media attention is brought to the issue.

He said that demographers in China estimate that half of the missing 160 million girls could be attributed to the country's one child policy alone.

Eberstadt likened the problem of discrimination against baby girls to the issue of slavery during the 19th century, saying that sex-selective abortion needs to be stigmatized in the same way.

“I think that the only sure way of extirpating this – and it's an abomination – is the way we've

extirpated other abominations in the past,” he said.

“Which is through a struggle of conscience and the advent of a new moral understanding of why something like this should be absolutely anathema to a decent, civilized society.”

But an even deeper problem that needs to be addressed, observed Yoshihara, is the underlying human tendency towards selfishness.

“The fundamental problem is that we do not love one another. We do not see that the inconvenient or unwanted person is just as valuable, just as worthy of love, as you and me.”

“Ideologies like radical feminism that undergird UNFPA’s refusal to speak out, ideologies like communism that justify coercing or even forcing mothers to abort their children, and ideologies of utilitarianism that subtly pervade our own society,” she said, “make it easy for us to say nothing in the face of unspeakable human suffering.”

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