



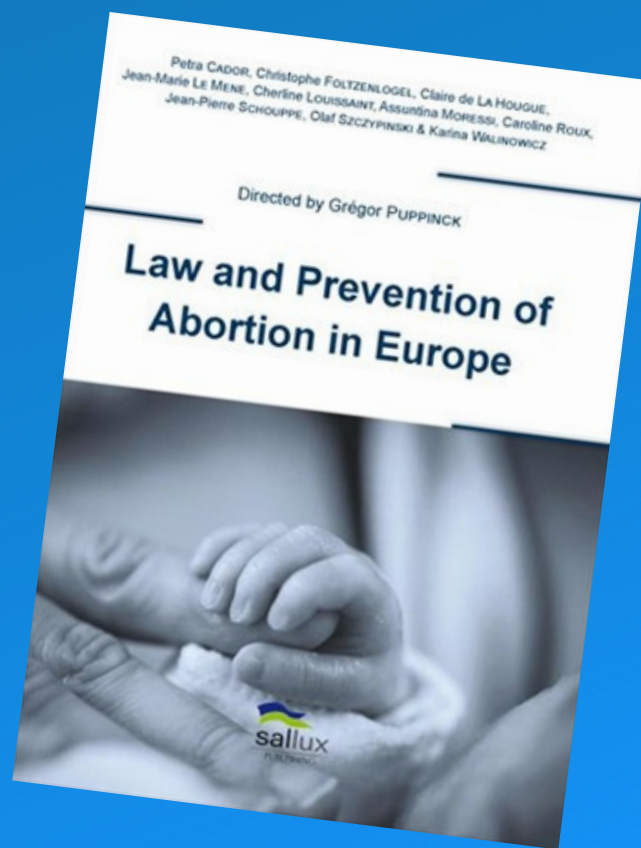
EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR LAW AND JUSTICE

Sex-selective Abortion

Claire de La Hougue

This article is a revised extract from the book "Law and Prevention of Abortion in Europe" published in 2018 in English.

You can order this book in paper version from the publisher or directly from the ECLJ by writing to us at secretariat@eclj.org



Sex-selective abortion

Claire de La Hougue

Contents

I- PROBLEMS CAUSED BY SEX-SELECTIVE ABORTION	3
A- ETHICAL PROBLEMS	3
B- DEMOGRAPHIC IMBALANCE	4
C- VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	7
II- A STRUGGLE WITHOUT CONVICTION	8
A- INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL MEASURES.....	8
1) INTERNATIONAL LEVEL	9
2) NATIONAL LEVEL.....	11
B- THE CAUSES OF INACTION.....	12
CONCLUSION	15

The unborn child has long been a source of anxiety or at least pressing questions for parents. In many cultures, it was usually the hope of the parents to have at least one boy, especially for the transmission of the name and heritage. A family of girls was a problem, as illustrated in a humoristic manner by Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. All kinds of fancy methods and too restrictive and inefficient diets were offered to parents who cherished the hope of conceiving a child of either sex. Although this preference for sons is still very much present in some countries, especially India and China, we notice in many Western countries today that there is a predilection for girls, because they would be wiser and better students.

Since the 1980s, the mystery surrounding the sex of the unborn child has dissipated. The means of knowing the sex of the child have spread, and this has put an end to the uncertainty that preceded its birth. The most common is ultrasound, which allows to identify the baby's sex during the second trimester, and sometimes at the end of the first trimester. Amniocentesis, performed from twelve weeks, and chorionic villus sampling (that is to say from the placenta in formation) from nine weeks help to concretely determine the sex of the foetus, but they are invasive methods that have a high risk of causing miscarriage. However, a new non-invasive and reliable method was developed in 2011: by simply testing the mother's blood, it is now possible to know the sex of the child from nine weeks of gestation because of the presence of foetal DNA in the mother's blood.

It is now possible to know the sex of the baby during the first trimester of pregnancy, that is to say, a term when abortion is legal on request in many countries. No monitoring is possible, even in countries where sex-selective abortion is prohibited, since the woman does not have to justify her request for abortion. Parents are able to decide to keep the baby or not based on its sex. Sex selection can also be done by pre-implantation diagnosis for embryos resulting from *in vitro* fertilization. In Europe, this technique is limited by the Convention on Biomedicine in cases where the embryo has a high risk of carrying a serious sex-linked disease. In the US, however, specialised clinics practise *in vitro* fertilization with the sole purpose of selecting the gender -- what they euphemistically call "*family balancing*". Thus, in the Fertility Institute, "*of the 800 women who underwent IVF here last year, 700 were perfectly healthy and could have a child naturally. They decided to undergo this expensive, binding and perhaps risky procedure for one purpose: to choose the sex of their baby.*"¹ The price of the procedure is above 25,000 dollars in the United States. The clients are not only American but also foreigners who come from countries where sex selection is banned: China, India, but also Canada, Australia (around 10% of Fertility Institutes' clients²) or France in particular. Embryos that are not of the desired sex or carry a chromosomal abnormality are destroyed. In 2009, the Fertility Institute also wanted to offer the choice of eye colour but abandoned it because of the controversy that this announcement sparked. The pre-sex selection procedure is also available in Asian countries such as Thailand, where many Australians travel too. The price is much lower than in the United States (less than half the price).

Lastly, there are methods of sorting the sperm into X or Y chromosome after which an artificial insemination or *in vitro* fertilization is performed. Regarding these methods, sorting is done before conception, so they do not result in the destruction of embryos because of their sex, but in case of failure or anomaly, abortion remains possible.

¹Yves Eudes, "La clinique des bébés sur mesure", *Le Monde Magazine*, 31 July 2010, http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2010/07/31/la-clinique-des-bebes-sur-mesure_1393699_3224.html (Free translation from French)

²Jenna Gallina, "Gender selection – How much would you pay to choose the sex of your baby?" *Babyology*, 29 May 2015, <http://babyology.com.au/news/gender-selection-much-pay-choose-sex-baby.html>

Since the 1980s, as the practice of ultrasound spread, the imbalance between the number of girls and boys at birth has continued to increase, showing that ultrasound is widely used in order to select children according to their sex. For the sex of the baby to be visible, the ultrasound is performed after fourteen weeks at the earliest. This means that abortion is carried out earlier in this term, and often later, around twenty weeks. However, the later the abortion, the more difficult the procedure -- technically difficult for the physician, and physically and psychologically difficult for the mother -- and the higher the risk of complications. Furthermore, the methods used for late abortions are sometimes particularly cruel to the child, whose sensory and nervous systems are already very much developed in the second trimester.

Prenatal sex selection causes many problems (I) but, although they have long been known, the solutions remain insufficient (II).

I- Problems caused by sex-selective abortion

Prenatal sex selection spawns many ethical, demographic and women's rights problems. The most common method used is abortion, which involves terminating human lives on the basis of the sex of the unborn children. While abortion was originally, and is still in theory, in most countries, a lesser evil tolerated in response to an exceptional situation, it has lost this character entirely to become an act of convenience.

A- Ethical problems

Ethically, prenatal sex selection first shows that the child is no longer welcomed as a gift but programmed to a specification and perhaps refused if it does not comply. The injunction to have children who are not only wanted but also planned extends to the features of the child, which must first meet the quality criteria for health, and then the quality for his or her physical constitution. By sex selection (as by other practices such as manipulation of the genome) man assumes a stranglehold on life, i.e. on the unborn child.

The child becomes a good that is chosen depending on the available options; it is reified. Testimonies from parents who used IVF to choose the sex of their child are revealing in this respect. A woman explains candidly that she could not love a boy as a girl, while another, who paid 40,000 dollars and used the procedure twice (the first having ended in failure) said: *"The first year, my husband and I could not stop admiring our daughter. It was worth every penny; Better than a new car or a kitchen renovation."*³

Most often, sex-selective abortion targets female foetuses because of a cultural preference for boys. In Europe, very few couples resort to *in vitro* fertilization abroad with the aim to choose the sex of their child. Abortion on grounds of sex is prohibited, except in Sweden. However, abortion is free on request through the first trimester (12 or 14 weeks of gestation) in many countries, and later in others, up to 24 weeks in the UK. Since the foetus's sex can be known before the end of this period, nothing prevents parents from deciding to abort on the basis of the child's sex. Nothing authorises a medical

³ Jasmeet Sidhu, "Comment s'acheter une fille" *Slate*, 24 October 2012, <http://www.slate.fr/story/61893/comment-acheter-fille-sexe-bebe>

body to dissuade them, and it even happens that doctors are accomplices in this decision. In the UK, the cause of the abortion must be stated, thus, some doctors write “social cause” to conceal sex-selective abortions.⁴ It is very difficult to get information on such abortions, except in rare cases in lawsuits. However, the sex ratio at birth reflects an imbalance in certain communities, especially Asian; no other factor can explain such an imbalance.⁵ When British doctors refuse sex-selective abortion or to reveal the sex of the foetus during ultrasound, some couples travel to India to get the abortion done for less than 20 euros.⁶ This imbalance is reflected in other Asian immigrant communities, particularly in the United States and Canada.⁷

For families, it is necessary to have a boy:

*“In China, Taiwan, South Korea, the lack of a male heir means the extinction of the family lineage and ancestor worship. In Hindu religion, it condemns parents to eternal wandering, since it is the son who traditionally is in charge of funeral rites when they die. In India, like in China, a girl is only a passer-by in her parents’ house. At her wedding, she will leave to devote herself to her husband’s family and therefore will not be of any more use to her own parents. In rural China, it is believed that one has to “raise a son to prepare for one’s old age,” because you never receive pension. There is a Chinese saying that “Raising a daughter is cultivating the field of another”; for the Indians, it is “watering the neighbour’s garden”.*⁸

B- Demographic imbalance

In the West, this phenomenon has a very limited impact on demography, since the communities that have a strong preference for boys are a minority. They are mainly Asian immigrant communities. Some small countries in the far east of Europe, however, have been experiencing a strong masculinisation of births in the last twenty years: Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Georgia have a ratio of between 109.8 and 111.8 boys for 100 girls, like India and Vietnam, while Armenia is at 114.8 and Azerbaijan in 116.8 -- in second place after China (117.8).⁹ All these countries have a fertility rate below the population replacement level, except Kosovo (2.3 children per woman) -- the lowest being Macedonia, with 1.5, and Azerbaijan being the highest with 1.9.

“The lack of boys after second birth tends to double, or even triple the probability of having a third child. The sex ratio at birth is rocketing among third births and is usually above 120

⁴ Holly Watt et Claire Newell, “Abortion investigation: Police called to investigate sex-selection terminations” *The Telegraph*, 23 February 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/9102287/Abortion-investigation-Police-called-to-investigate-sex-selection-terminations.html>

⁵ Steve Connor, «“The lost girls: Illegal abortion widely used by some UK ethnic groups to avoid daughters ‘has reduced female population by between 1,500 and 4,700”», *Independent*, 15 January 2014 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/the-lost-girls-illegal-abortion-widely-used-by-some-uk-ethnic-groups-to-avoid-daughters-has-reduced-9059790.html> ; Sylvie Dubuc and David Coleman « An Increase in the Sex Ratio of Births to India-born Mothers in England and Wales: Evidence for Sex-Selective Abortion », *Population And Development Review* 33(2): 383–400 (June 2007) https://www.spi.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/PDF/WP35__Sex-ratio_of_births_to_India-born_mothers.pdf

⁶ “Desperate British Asians fly to India to abort baby girls “, *The Guardian*”, 22 January 2006 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jan/22/india.uk>

⁷ Joel G. Ray MD MSc, David A. Henry MBChB, Marcelo L. Urquia PhD, “Sex ratios among Canadian liveborn infants of mothers from different countries”, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, April 2012.

⁸ Isabelle Attané “Vers le célibat forcé des prochaines générations, L’Asie manque de femmes” *Le Monde diplomatique*, juillet 2006, <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2006/07/ATTANE/13601> posted on <http://bf.10orientoccident.free.fr/10fillesmanquantes.htm>

⁹ Christophe Z. Guilmoto et Géraldine Duthé, “La masculinisation des naissances en Europe orientale”, INED, *Population & Sociétés*, numéro 506, December 2013.

or 130. In the 20th century, up to 185 boys to 100 girls among third births have even recorded in Armenia, a figure that is certainly a world record.”¹⁰

Although the problem exists in these countries, the demographic impact is limited because with a combined population of less than 25 million, they represent only 3% of the population of Great Europe.

In contrast, in countries like India or China, the impact on demography becomes dramatic. The reduction in fertility has considerably aggravated the imbalance between boys and girls. Whereas previously, families had children until the desired number of boys, they must now have one or more sons within a smaller family. When the birth of a daughter has not been able to avoid prior, then, everything must be done so as not to prevent the birth of a boy.

In China the one-child policy which was in place for thirty-five years resulted in hundreds of millions of abortions, mostly forced, hundreds of millions of sterilizations, mostly forced too, and intrauterine contraceptive devices imposed on women.¹¹ Does this violence - which has known no decrease since it was denounced by the Beijing conference on women's rights in 1995 - explain that China is the only country where women commit suicide more than men?¹² It is, in any case, what rights activists in these countries, in particular, *Women's Rights Without Frontiers* noticed.¹³

While in China, parents with only one child receive social benefits, “*A third pregnancy leads to economic sanctions: 10% salary reduction for a 3rd child, 20% for a 4th etc. In some provinces, wage penalties start with the 2nd child: -5% in Fujian, -10% in Beijing, -20% in Henan. Gradually, the Chinese provinces introduced legislation banning the birth of a third child: Guangdong in 1981, Sichuan in 1987, and the others between 1989 and 1991. Couples who accept sterilization receive a bonus equivalent to 6 months' salary.*”¹⁴ However, large families are sanctioned by the drastic decline in food stamps for rationed goods, such as rice, oil and salt. This is accompanied by an energetic propaganda, psychological and social pressures, denunciations, children and abortions quotas by region etc.

The fertility rate in China is currently 1.7 children per femme.¹⁵ It came down to 0.88 children per woman in Shanghai in 2006. Despite the fact that the one-child policy has been slightly relaxed to combat the rapid ageing of the population, the fertility rate has seen but a small rise ever since.¹⁶

In addition to the ageing population, the one-child policy has also worsened the elimination of girls, born or unborn, because all couples wish to have a boy. This has resulted in a dramatic imbalance:

“*About 105 boys to 100 girls are born worldwide, but in China the number rose from 107.2 in*

¹⁰ Christophe Z. Guilmoto et Géraldine Duthé, “La masculinisation des naissances en Europe orientale”, INED, *Population & Sociétés*, numéro 506, December 2013, p. 4.

¹¹ Elise Harris et Kate Veik, “Why no one wants to talk about China's female suicide problem”, *Washington Times*, 24 mai 2015, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/may/24/why-no-one-wants-to-talk-about-chinas-female-suici/>

¹² Women and suicide in rural China, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, Volume 87, Number 12, December 2009, 885-964 <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/87/12/09-011209/en/>

¹³ Elise Harris et Kate Veik “Why no one wants to talk about China's female suicide problem”, *Washington Times*, 24 mai 2015, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/may/24/why-no-one-wants-to-talk-about-chinas-female-suici/>

¹⁴ Yves Boquet, “La démographie chinoise en mutation”, in *Espace, démographie et société*, 2009/3, p. 551-568, <https://eps.revues.org/3869>

¹⁵ Isabelle Attané et Magali Barbieri, “*La démographie de l'Asie de l'Est et du Sud-Est des années 1950 aux années 2000*” p. 46 https://www.ined.fr/fichier/s_rubrique/211/attane_barbieri_article_f.fr.pdf

¹⁶ Patrick Saint-Paul, “La Chine dans le piège démographique”, *Le Figaro*, 2 March 2015, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2015/03/02/01003-20150302ARTFIG00310-la-chine-dans-le-piege-demographique.php>

1982 to 111.3 in 1989, 116.9 in 2000 and 120.6 in 2008. The sex ratio at birth exceeds 130 in some rural provinces of central China (Anhui , Jiangxi , Hunan) and is particularly high for second births : 108 for the firstborn, 143 for the second child (192 Jiangsu) and 157 3rd (227 in Anhui).”¹⁷

In India, the birth reduction policy, albeit less coercive, also resulted in more or less forced sterilisation on a large scale. In the mid-1970s, a vasectomy campaign was launched: six to eight million men were sterilised in one year. Since then, sterilisation campaigns targeted mostly women. 37% of married women are sterilised (just under 30% in China). Women are encouraged to undergo this procedure by false or incomplete information and financial or in-kind rewards, from food processors to Tata cars, through TVs and motorbikes, while the parents of many large families suffer various forms of restrictions.¹⁸ Women regularly die of the complications of these operations sometimes performed in disastrous conditions.¹⁹

The fertility rate has dropped significantly, but it is still higher than in China, with about 2.5 children per woman. Like in China, reducing the size of families has worsened the prenatal elimination of girls.

*“Some villages in Rajasthan boast of not recording the birth of a girl since... ten years ago. In the villages of Haryana, they say: “Here, when a girl is born, it is by accident. Not by choice”.*²⁰

The selection is not only practised in the countryside but also and even especially among the urban and educated class. Even a modern, independent woman must give birth to a son, even if it implies aborting so many girls. The survival of the custom of dowry -- despite its ban since 1961-- and its increased amount, encourages people to abort girls despite the ban on revealing the sex of the foetus.

*“Private clinics offer ultrasound + abortion of female fetuses “packages” from 5,000 to 10,000 rupees (85 to 170 euros). Even the poor prefer spending such amounts of money than having a girl. According to the (forbidden) advertisements of clinics, it is “better to spend 5,000 rupees now than 50,000 rupees later” (in dowry).”*²¹

Almost all abandoned babies are girls; female infanticide is still common, while boys are stolen from maternity centres. According to the 2011 census, the sex ratio for the country was 943 women for 1000 men.²² The imbalance is usually strongest in the northern States; the sad record is held by former Portuguese trading posts of Daman and Diu, with 618 women for 1000 men.²³

Demographers however point out that the preference for boys that leads to the prenatal or neonatal elimination of girls is closely linked to cultural and religious affiliation. Indeed, it is prevalent among

¹⁷ Yves Boquet, “ La démographie chinoise en mutation”, in *Espace, démographie et société*, 2009/3, p. 551-568
<https://eps.revues.org/3869>

¹⁸ Geeta Pandey, “Why do Indian women go to sterilisation camps?”, *BBC News*, 11 November 2014,
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-29999883>

¹⁹“Inde : arrestation du chirurgien qui a provoqué la mort de femmes en les stérilisant”, *Le Monde*, 13 November 2014,
http://www.lemonde.fr/asia-pacifique/article/2014/11/13/inde-arrestation-du-chirurgien-qui-a-opere-les-femmes-mortes-apres-une-sterilisation_4522657_3216.html ; “La stérilisation de masse des femmes, “ méthode dominante de contraception” en Inde”, *Le Monde*, 11 November 2014, http://www.lemonde.fr/asia-pacifique/article/2014/11/11/sterilisations-de-masse-en-inde-au-moins-dix-femmes-meurent_4521987_3216.html

²⁰“Inde : la malédiction de naître fille”, in *Quand les femmes auront disparu. L'élimination des filles en Inde et en Asie*, Bénédicte Manier Éditions, La Découverte, 2006, <http://www.genreenaction.net/Inde-la-malediction-de-naitre-fille.html>

²¹ *Id.*

²² Sex ratio in India, Census, 2011, <http://www.census2011.co.in/sexratio.php>

²³ India sex ratio map, *MapsofIndia.com*, 2011, <http://www.mapsofindia.com/census2011/female-sex-ratio.html>

Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Jains, who have a strong preference for male children and are tolerant of abortion, but is not found among minorities especially Christians and Muslims.²⁴

The obvious consequence is a deficit in the number of women. In China, the male surplus is estimated at 10 to 15% of successive age cohorts since 2010²⁵ and could reach 50%.²⁶ In other words, every year, one million men do not find a woman when they reach the marriageable age, and this number keeps increasing. The deficit in the number of women is estimated to 60 million.²⁷ In India, according to the 2011 census, there were 60 million more men than women. According to sources, today there is a deficit of nearly two hundred million women worldwide.²⁸ The inability to marry prevents young men from settling down and acquiring a status in society. Frustration and isolation lead to violence and the formation of gangs. There is in particular a high rise of gang rape.

C- Violence against women

One might think that the scarcity of women increases the value and respect we have for them. It is not so. The preference for boys is also evident in the treatment given to girls: they are less well fed and cared for compared to boys. As a result, while infant mortality is naturally higher among girls, *“the situation worsened in China, where the mortality of girls (30% in 2005) is now much higher than that of boys (19.4%): girls/boys’ death ratio is increasing: 0.99 in 1980, 1.03 in 1985, 1.16 in 1990, 1.31 in 1995, 1.48 in 2000, 1.54 in 2005.”*²⁹ *The child mortality between birth and the fifth anniversary, in India, is “for girls, 7% higher than that of boys; in Pakistan, 5%; in Bangladesh 3%.”*³⁰ A little girl is particularly at risk of being underfed and poorly cared for if she has older sisters rather than brothers.³¹

According to Isabelle Attané, *“Sex-selective abortions and negligent treatment of girls that lead to their death are responsible for a greater part of the deficit in the number of women -- other forms of discrimination (including female infanticide) now only longer play a minor role. These practices stem directly from the low status of women in these societies.”*³²

Even when women are not particularly treated badly, they do not have the choice: they must give birth to a son or else they would fail in their obligations towards their husbands and families in-law. They can be beaten, sometimes to death, or chased out of their homes by their in-laws if they conceive girls.³³ Consequently, doctors perform this sex-selective abortion on these women despite its prohibition to help them out. This sometimes occurs in Europe or the US ... The women also undergo

²⁴ Isabelle Attané, “Vers le célibat forcé des prochaines générations, L’Asie manque de femmes”, op. cit.

²⁵ Isabelle Attané, “La Chine, un géant démographique aux pieds d’argile”, https://www.ined.fr/fichier/s_rubrique/278/version.imprimable.chine.fr.pdf

²⁶ UNFPA, *Sex Imbalances at Birth, Current trends, consequences and policy implications*, 2012, p. 55, <http://www.unfpa.org/publications/sex-imbalances-birth>

²⁷ “La Chine, pays le plus masculin du monde”, Ined, <https://www.ined.fr/fr/tout-savoir-population/memos-demo/focus/la-chine/>

²⁸ Parlement européen, Résolution du 8 octobre 2013 sur le génocide : les femmes manquantes? 2012/2273(INI).

²⁹ Yves Boquet, “La démographie chinoise en mutation”, in *Espace, démographie et société*, 2009/3, p. 551-568, <https://eps.revues.org/3869>

³⁰ Isabelle Attané, “Vers le célibat forcé des prochaines générations, L’Asie manque de femmes”, op. cit.

³¹ UNFPA, *Son Preference and Daughter Neglect in India*, 2006, <http://www.unfpa.org/resources/son-preference-and-daughter-neglect-india>

³² Isabelle Attané, “Vers le célibat forcé des prochaines générations, L’Asie manque de femmes”, op. cit.

³³ UN Interagency statement, *Preventing gender-biased sex selection*, 2011, p. 5.

general social pressure -- which they have even assimilated -- so they are ashamed to have daughters and request abortion when they are expecting a baby girl. This leads to repeat abortions:³⁴ some women admitted having aborted seven or eight times prior to giving birth to a boy, with all the risks that it entails. The UN Population Fund's brochure, *Missing*, reveals, for instance, that Ms. Ravi, a mother of two daughters, had aborted eight times before giving birth to a boy. She died two days after delivery.³⁵ Different birth control organisations claim that abortion, especially repeat abortions, is due to an unmet need for contraception. This analysis does not apply to countries where the preference for male children is strong: women do not use contraception till they have a son, even if it implies aborting so many girls.

Women cannot oppose abortion, even repeat abortions, regardless of their suffering, because they must give birth to a son. This is the case in Vietnam³⁶ and India or China, as well as in Asian communities in Europe or the United States. Women's freedom is nullified.

On the other hand, the deficit in the number of women opens the door to various forms of trafficking. Prostitution, particularly of minors, develops, as well as crime, especially gang rapes. Migration channels are installed, especially women from Vietnam who come to China and Taiwan. However, as pointed out by the UNFPA³⁷, no country will provide enough women to fill the gap of the two giants, India and China.

A real trafficking of women for forced marriage is organised: women are abducted and sold. Men buy women and then get a marriage certificate from a corrupt civil registrar, making their situation unimpeachable.³⁸ In India, men from northern States buy a wife from the southern States. The rates vary between 5,000 rupees (average price of a mobile phone) and 105,000 rupees (the price of a computer).³⁹ Fraternal polyandry is developing:⁴⁰ a family with several sons cannot buy a woman for each son, so they buy one, and she is shared between the brothers ... This is what director Manish Jha Matrubhoomi shows in the Hindi film, *A World without Women* (2005).

These women can then become sex slaves. Moreover, many are overworked: they take care of all the house chores, especially because they have no daughters to help. And these maltreated women are pressurised and abused to give birth to boys only. Perhaps the women themselves do not want girls who will suffer the same fate as them.

II- A struggle without conviction

The situation has long been known. In 1985, the philosopher Mary Ann Warren, while creating the

³⁴ Deepti Singh, Srinivas Goli and Ladumai Maikho Apollo Pou, "Repeated Induced Abortion and Son Preference in India", *Social Science Spectrum* Vol. 1, No. 3, September 2015, pp. 181-19.

³⁵ UNFPA, *Missing, Mapping the Adverse Child Sex Ratio in India*, mai 2008.

³⁶ Ngo TD, Keogh S, Nguyen TH, Le HT, Pham KH, Nguyen YB, "Risk factors for repeat abortion and implications for addressing unintended pregnancy in Vietnam" *Int J Gynaecol Obstet*. 2014 June;125(3):241-6, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24726618>

³⁷ UNFPA, *Sex Imbalances at Birth, Current trends, consequences and policy implications*, 2012, p. 55, <http://www.unfpa.org/publications/sex-imbances-birth>

³⁸ Isabelle Attané, "Vers le célibat forcé des prochaines générations, L'Asie manque de femmes", op. cit.

³⁹ Bénédicte Manier, *Quand les femmes auront disparu, L'élimination des filles en Inde et en Asie*, La Découverte, 2006.

⁴⁰ UNFPA, *Sex Imbalances at Birth, Current trends, consequences and policy implications*, 2012, p. 57, <http://www.unfpa.org/publications/sex-imbances-birth>

neologism, published a book entitled *Gendercide: The Implications of Sex selection*.⁴¹ In 1990, Amartya Sen, an Indian economist, who became Nobel Prize winner in Economics in 1998, raised the alarm, announcing that one hundred million women were missing. International bodies were concerned with this issue for over twenty years. Yet, aside from South Korea, few effective measures have been taken, which reveals a real lack of conviction of the need to act -- largely due to ideological reasons.

A- International and national measures

The reluctance to admit the reality initially led to denying the problem. Initially, politicians turned a blind eye while researchers gave other reasons than abortion, such as the margin of error, hepatitis B or biological differences⁴², to explain the imbalance, and even denied the facts.⁴³ The magnitude of the imbalance and the severity of its demographic consequences eventually led to the realisation which has prompted recommendations and actions both internationally and nationally.

1) International level

In 1994, the Cairo Platform of Action on Population and Development lamented as follows:

“In a number of countries, the practice of prenatal sex selection, higher rates of mortality among very young girls, and lower rates of school enrolment for girls as compared with boys, suggest that ‘son preference’ is curtailing the access of girl children to food, education and health care. This is often compounded by the increasing use of technologies to determine foetal sex, resulting in abortion of female foetuses.” (4.15).

One of the objectives set by the Conference was:

“To eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the root causes of son preference, which results in harmful and unethical practices regarding female infanticide and prenatal sex selection” (4.16)

The following year, the Beijing Conference stressed in its Programme of Action (§ 115):

“Acts of violence against women also include forced sterilization and forced abortion, coercive/forced use of contraceptives, female infanticide and prenatal sex selection.”⁴⁴

Similarly, in 1998, the UN General Assembly urged all States to *“enact and enforce legislation protecting girls from all forms of violence, including female infanticide and prenatal sex selection” (§ 3).*⁴⁵

⁴¹ Rowman & Allanheld, 209 p.

⁴² UNFPA, *Sex Imbalances at Birth, Current trends, consequences and policy implications*, 2012, p. 579, <http://www.unfpa.org/publications/sex-imbalance-birth>

⁴³ The Guttmacher Institute insists that data indicating a highly unbalanced sex ratio in Asian communities present in the United States are incomplete and inconclusive

⁴⁴ UN, Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September 1995, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20F.pdf>

⁴⁵ A/RES/52/106, 11 Feb 1998, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/52/106&referer=/english/&Lang=F ;

Various measures were recommended by these texts to prevent such abortions. The United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted a “*Plan of Action for the Elimination of Harmful Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children*”⁴⁶ mainly aiming prenatal selection, and including the promotion of women in society

The plan states in particular:

“(49) Female infanticide and female foeticide should be openly condemned by all Governments as a flagrant violation of the basic right to life of the girl-child.”

“UN Women provides a summary of provisions that legislations that aim to combat sex-selective abortion should include:

“Legislation should condemn son preference, female infanticide and sex-selective abortions; Legislation should penalize anyone who performs female infanticide or sex-selective abortions, specifically including public and private medical and non-medical staff among those who should be penalized; Legislation should penalize those who aid and abet this harmful practice, specifically including family members among those who may be penalized; Legislation should establish and fund training for all sectors and public awareness about this harmful practice and its consequences; Legislation and other practices that perpetuate this harmful practice, such as dowry and discriminatory laws on succession and inheritance, should be amended or abolished; Legislation should not penalize women who are forced to undergo sex-selective abortions and should focus instead on persons who pressure, aid or abet the practice”.⁴⁷

While the United Nations has been concerned about the problem for a long time now, Europe woke up very late. In Europe, signatories to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (called *Oviedo*) undertook to ban the use of techniques of medically assisted reproduction for the sole purpose of selecting the sex of the unborn child (Article 14), echoing one of the principles formulated in 1989 by the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Progress in the Biomedical Sciences (CAHBI). But only 29 of the 47 member States of the Council of Europe ratified the Convention. These include Albania and Georgia, but not Armenia and Azerbaijan, where the sex ratios at birth are as unbalanced as those of Asia.

This commitment was followed in 2002 by a recommendation from the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers of member States, inviting them to adopt national legislation prohibiting prenatal sex selection of the foetus.⁴⁸ This appeal was renewed in 2011 with the report by Mrs Stump, which led to resolution 1829 (2011) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on prenatal sex-selection. Meanwhile, the same Assembly had only mentioned the issue on the occasion of a resolution mainly concerning the murder and disappearance of women in Mexico. “Indeed, the Assembly is dismayed that millions of women and girls are “missing” in the sense that they either remain unborn or meet an early death in many parts of

⁴⁶ E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/10/Add.1 and Corr.1, cited by UN women: <http://www.endvawnow.org/fr/articles/606-preference-donnee-aux-garcons-infanticide-des-filles-avortements-pratiques-en-raison-du-sexe-du-foetus.html>

⁴⁷ UN Women, Infanticide of girls / Unsafe abortion on account of the sex of the fetus, <http://www.endvawnow.org/fr/articles/606-preference-donnee-aux-garcons-infanticide-des-filles-avortements-pratiques-en-raison-du-sexe-du-foetus.html>

⁴⁸ Recommendation Rec (2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers on the protection of women against violence adopted on 30 April 2002

the world, such as southern and western Asia, China and North Africa.

The Assembly notes that foetus selection, the abandonment of new born girls and the lack of care given to girls also take place in Europe, in some immigrant communities which prefer boys. (...) The Assembly strongly urges Council of Europe member states and the Commissioner for Human Rights to support, at the United Nations and other international bodies in which they participate, the abolition of feminicides, including selective abortions against female foetuses.”⁴⁹

Finally, the Council of Europe’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also called Istanbul Convention, which was adopted in 2011 and entered into force on 1 August 2014 -- without explicit reference to sex-selective abortion -- requires States Parties to criminalise the act of “*performing an abortion on a woman without her prior and informed consent*” (Article 39) as well as psychological violence, that is to say an act that is carried out with the intention to cause serious harm to the psychological integrity of a person through coercion or threats (Article 33). Given that women who have abortions because of the unborn child’s sex are often subjected to psychological or physical pressure, these provisions of the Convention may provide some protection against selective abortions.

In January 2014, the Commissioner for Human Rights, for his part, said that “sex-selective abortions are discriminatory and should be banned.”⁵⁰

The European Union, the European Parliament adopted in 2013 a resolution on gendercide⁵¹, described as “*a crime and a severe violation of human rights*” (§ 1), “*whereas gendercide is committed everywhere pregnant women, on purpose or under pressure, decide not to give birth to girl foetuses because they are considered a burden to the society; (§ D). The European Parliament invites all States to in in particular« Calls on governments to specifically categorise feminicide or gendercide as a crime and to draw up and implement legislation so that feminicide cases are investigated, perpetrators brought to Court and survivors ensured easy access to health care and long-term support; (§ 4).*

These documents revealed the problem to Europeans and showed that it was not peculiar to the Far East but also existed in several European countries. They proposed measures but do not seem to have revolutionised European policy in this area, particularly in foreign relations.

2) National level

On a national scale, some hesitation is observed on the way to follow. Sex-selective abortion is prohibited in most countries, the difficulty being the measures to be implemented to effectively prevent it. Some countries have also decided to prohibit revealing the sex of the unborn child: India since 1994, South Korea and various provinces of China:

“Considering that early knowledge of the unborn child’s sex enables people to

⁴⁹ Resolution 1654 (2009), “*Féminicides*”, <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-FR.asp?fileid=17716&lang=FR>

⁵⁰ Nils Muižnieks, “Les avortements sélectifs en fonction du sexe sont discriminatoires et doivent être interdits”, *Le carnet des droits de l’homme*, 15 January 2014, <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/commissioner/-/sex-selective-abortions-are-discriminatory-and-should-be-bann-1>

⁵¹ Résolution du Parlement européen du 8 octobre 2013 sur le génocide : les femmes manquantes? (2012/2273(INI)) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2013-0400&language=FR&ring=A7-2013-0245>

*consider selective abortion, Shandong decided in 1998 to ban ultrasounds, while Tianjin banned amniocentesis (2003). Henan, the most populated province of the country, did the same in 2006 and banned abortions for non-medical reasons.*⁵²

In China, however, there does not appear to be sanctions, or even if they exist, they are not implemented, neither against the parents nor against doctors who perform selective abortions. The measures of prohibitions are ineffective, partly because they do not address the causes of the selection, which are: low social status of women and an anthropology that leaves little room for dignity.

Incentives measures, such as allowances paid for the birth of girls and awareness campaigns have been launched. In India, the revelation of sex is prohibited, but the subject is still being debated -- a minister has recommended to authorise this revelation, as a mean to identify women expecting baby girls in order to give them better support during the pregnancy.⁵³

The sex ratio at birth has declined in some countries. The imbalance remains very high, and even if the ratio went back to normal, it would take decades to fill the gender gap. For now, only South Korea has been able to return to a balanced ratio between both sexes. It particularly adopted laws recognising rights and responsibilities to married women in their birth family and launched an awareness campaign entitled *Love your daughter*. These measures, together with strong economic growth and a well-organised and monitored health care system, were effective. Consequently, the revelation of the sex of the foetus was again permitted in 2008. The sex ratio which rose to over 115 in 1994, dropped to 107 in 2007.⁵⁴ The cultural context was undoubtedly more favourable due to the strong presence of Christians (37% Protestant and 14% Catholic), who are less likely to practice prenatal sex selection.⁵⁵

In Europe, sex-selective abortion is generally considered immoral but not always expressly prohibited. In the UK, for example, it is not part of the accepted reasons for abortion under the law of 1967, and is therefore illegal, but a bill by Fiona Bruce prohibiting it was rejected in 2015.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the United States has still not banned sex-selective abortion and therefore make no effort to get it banned elsewhere.

B- The causes of inaction

The first cause of inaction is the discomfort of feminist movements in the face of this problem. Traditionally very favourable to abortion which they regard as a fundamental right of women, they are reluctant to ban it in some cases, though they are well aware of the discrimination on the basis of sex. In England, feminist movements opposed the Fiona Bruce bill which aimed to explicitly prohibit sex-selective abortion⁵⁷, arguing that the ban could mean that unborn girls were considered as

⁵² Yves Boquet, "La démographie chinoise en mutation", in *Espace, démographie et société*, 2009/3, p. 551-568 <https://eps.revues.org/3869> (Free translation from French)

⁵³ Catherine Cordonnier, "Le test de détection du sexe bientôt autorisé en Inde ?", *Top santé*, 3 février 2016, <http://www.topsante.com/maman-et-enfant/conception/tomber-enceinte/le-test-de-detection-du-sexe-bientot-autorise-en-inde-609419>

⁵⁴ UN Interagency statement, *Preventing gender-biased sex selection*, 2011, p. 3 et 8.

⁵⁵ Isabelle Attané, "Vers le célibat forcé des prochaines générations, L'Asie manque de femmes", op.cit.

⁵⁶ "MPs reject backbench bid to amend abortion laws", *BBC News*, 24 February 2015 <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-31596968>

⁵⁷ Cristina Odone, "Sex-selective abortion is simply indefensible", *The Telegraph*, 23 February 2015,

people⁵⁸, holders of the right to life, and this would thus affect abortion laws.

This is the Swedish conception of women's rights; the only country in Europe to expressly allow sex-selective abortions. When a hospital reluctant to perform multiple sex-selective abortions questioned the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (Agency under the Ministry of Health), the latter replied that the hospital was under the obligation to reveal the sex of the baby and to perform the abortion if the woman requested it due to the baby's sex.⁵⁹ In Sweden, abortion is free on request up to 18 weeks. No reason, not even theoretical, (like the UK) is required.

This difficulty is openly acknowledged by the bodies that address this issue. UN agencies emphasise that we should not restrict access to abortion because it violates the rights of women. In addition, they express their fear that if abortion is not legalised, women would turn to illegal abortion with the risks it implies.⁶⁰

Very radical pro-abortion lobbies in the US oppose the prohibition of sex selection because they consider that such a prohibition constitutes a limit to the fundamental right to abortion and would become, according to them, a Trojan horse for pro-life movements. Similarly, when partial-birth abortion was banned by the law in 2003, the lobbies opposed this ban all the way to the Supreme Court.⁶¹ In May 2012, the US Congress rejected a bill entitled *Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act*, intended to ban sex-selective abortion.⁶² President Obama has made his opposition to such a ban known.⁶³ Currently, only seven US States prohibit sex-selective abortion: Arizona, Illinois (only after the viability threshold), Kansas, Minnesota, North Carolina, North Dakota and South, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania.⁶⁴ The remaining forty-three States permit sex-selective abortion.

Those opposed to the ban also argue that it would lead to stigmatisation against Asian communities because they will systematically be suspected of practising sex-selective abortion and their access to

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-politics/11429377/Sex-selective-abortion-is-simply-indefensible.html>

⁵⁸ “*And the MP warned that the wording of the proposed clause would have implications for existing abortion laws, as it would “confer personhood on the foetus”*”. “MPs reject backbench bid to amend abortion laws”, *BBC News*, 24 February 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-31596968>

⁵⁹ Doris Stump, *La sélection prénatale du sexe*, Doc 12715, 16 September 2011, § 112.

⁶⁰ “*Restricting access to certain reproductive technologies in order to prevent an imbalanced male-to-female ratio in a given society should not result in the curtailing of the human rights of women. In addition to the difficulty of enforcing the legal prohibition of sex detection and resulting sex-selective abortions, evidence shows that if women do not have access to safe abortion services they often turn to unsafe options*”, UN Interagency statement, *Preventing gender-biased sex selection*, 2011, p. 4.

⁶¹ A procedure in which the abortionist pulls a living baby feet or buttocks first out of the womb except for the head, which the abortionist purposely keeps lodged just inside the cervix, then he removes the baby's brain with a powerful suction machine. This type of abortions had been at the heart of a longstanding debate in the United States. In 1996, the first law prohibiting it was passed but President Clinton vetoed it. The Partial Birth Abortion Act was finally passed in 2003. Opponents of the ban continued to fight all the way to the Supreme Court, which upheld the ban in the judgment of *Gonzales v. Carhart* of 2007.

⁶² Jennifer Steinhauer, “House Rejects Bill to Ban Sex-Selective Abortions”, *New York Times*, 31 May 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/us/politics/house-rejects-bill-to-ban-sex-selective-abortions.html>

⁶³ Jake Tapper, “Legislation About Gender Selection and Abortion - Today's Q for O's WH” *abcnews*, 30 May 2012, <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/05/legislation-about-gender-selection-and-abortion-todays-q-for-os-wh-5302012/>

⁶⁴ A bill of law is currently examined by Washington State: RACHEL LA CORTE, “Abortions based on gender of fetus would be banned under Olympia bill”, *The Seattle Times*, 1st February 2016, <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/washington-bill-seeks-to-ban-sex-selective-abortions/>

abortion will be restricted.⁶⁵ The Guttmacher Institute also shares the same opinion.⁶⁶ It is for the same reason that British doctors who agreed in front of a hidden camera to perform sex-selective abortions were not persecuted: they should not be discouraged from practicing legal abortions.⁶⁷

While the United States and the European Union exert strong pressure to extend “sexual and reproductive rights”, going so far as conditioning development assistance to the legalisation of abortion⁶⁸ (which is nevertheless expressly excluded from birth control methods by the Cairo conference, §§ 7.24 and 8.25), one notices that there is no pressure from them to prevent sex-selective abortions in Asia. Instead, they fund to a large extent major birth control organisations⁶⁹ such as International Planned Parenthood Federation (4.3 million abortions in 2015) and Marie Stopes International (3.4 million abortions in 2015).⁷⁰ These organisations who actively take part in the reduction of fertility rates contribute to the aggravation of the phenomenon of sex-selective abortion, since prenatal sex selection correlates with reducing the size of families. With a strong presence in Asia, they also perform abortions in large numbers and do not seem to be concerned about prenatal sex selection, which is not mentioned anywhere on their websites.

The very powerful American Federation of Family Planning (Planned Parenthood Federation of America PFFA), the leading affiliate and founder of IPPF, took position against federal and State bills aimed at banning sex-selective abortion, describing this prohibition as hostile to women and even a means of “racial profiling”.⁷¹ Already in 2012, a hidden video camera⁷² clearly showed that Planned

⁶⁵ Lydia O'Connor, « San Francisco May Be First City To Oppose Sex-Selective Abortion Bans », *Huffington Post*, 9 octobre 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/10/san-francisco-sex-selective-abortion_n_5800840.html : « San Francisco Supervisor David Chiu (D) introduced a resolution this week that would make the city the first in the U.S. to formally oppose sex-selective abortion bans, which he and Asian-American activists warn encourage racial profiling and refusal of services. »

⁶⁶ State Laws and policies, “Abortion Bans in Cases of Sex or Race Selection or Genetic Anomaly”, 1 June 2016: “In contrast, in the United States, there is limited and inconclusive evidence that immigrants from these areas—or anywhere else—are obtaining sex-selective abortions in this country. Bans on sex-selective abortions place a burden on providers, who are forced to not only question all women’s reasons for seeking an abortion, but to also second-guess and stigmatize Asian-American women and communities. While disguised as a means to eliminate gender discrimination, these laws make abortion less accessible”. <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/abortion-bans-cases-sex-or-race-selection-or-genetic-anomaly>

⁶⁷ Cristina Odone, “Sex-selective abortion is simply indefensible”, *The Telegraph*, 23 February 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-politics/11429377/Sex-selective-abortion-is-simply-indefensible.html>

⁶⁸ See the complaint of a Peruvian cardinal who denounces NGOs blackmailing Peru into legalising abortion, “El Cardenal Cipriani denuncia el chantaje of organismos internacionales has Perú para que el aborto y el legalice gaymonio” *InfoCatolica.com*, July 15, 2014.

⁶⁹ Government subsidies to International Planned Parenthood Association (IPPF) in 2015 totaled \$ 78 million and 35 million out in multilateral grants (including private donors and the European Commission) of a total budget of USD 116 million (*Financial Statement 2015*, p. 25) http://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/financial_statements_2015.pdf In 2014, Marie Stopes International received 129 million pounds, or more than 170 million euros, mainly from governments (primarily the UK, £27 million, and the US \$19 million) , or governmental organisations such as the World Bank (second largest donor with 22 million pounds) , the UN and the European Union, (MSI, *Financial Statement and Annual report 2014* p. 28/29 <https://mariestopes.org/sites/default/files/Marie-Stopes-Financial-Statement.pdf>).

⁷⁰ IPPF, *Financial Statement 2015*, p. 17 and MSI, *Global Impact Report, 2015*, respectively <http://global-impact-report.mariestopes.org/>

⁷¹ Steven Ertelt, “Planned Parenthood Opposes Bill to Ban Sex-Selection Abortions Targeting Girl Babies”, *Lifenews*, 14 April 2016, <http://www.lifenews.com/2016/04/14/planned-parenthood-opposes-bil-to-ban-sex-selection-abortions-targeting-girl-babies/> ; in Louisiane : Steven Ertelt “Planned Parenthood Celebrates Defeat of Bill to Ban Killing Girls in Sex-Selection Abortions”, *Lifenews*, 26 May 2015 <http://www.lifenews.com/2015/05/26/planned-parenthood-celebrates-defeat-of-bill-to-ban-killing-girls-in-sex-selection-abortions/>

⁷² Video posted on *Lifenews in 2016* : <http://www.lifenews.com/2016/04/14/planned-parenthood-opposes-bil-to-ban->

Parenthood would not refuse to perform abortion on a five months pregnant woman who wants to abort because she is expecting a baby girl. The Federation responded by saying it condemned sex-selective abortions but had to provide care without judging the patients.⁷³ In other words, PPFA does not refuse late sex-selective abortions. Planned Parenthood has an important political role in the United States; it adopts an official position during the presidential campaigns⁷⁴ and receives a substantial amount of public funds.⁷⁵ Like other lobbies in the United States, Planned Parenthood has instituted legislative scorecards where it records the votes of deputies and senators on issues of interest and award titles to elected representatives and States voting in accordance with the position of Planned Parenthood Action Fund.⁷⁶ In 2014, Planned Parenthood - California warned Californian legislators that any vote restricting access to abortion, including the prohibition of sex-selective abortion, would be on its legislative scorecard.⁷⁷

Considering this policy, it is not surprising that *Planned Parenthood Action Fund* does not mention the fight against sex-selective abortions in its list of concerns. Logically, its research centre, the Guttmacher Institute⁷⁸, does not list the issue of sex-selective abortion as part of its priorities for the next five years. International stakeholders, Marie Stopes International and IPPF are not interested in it either.

Faced with such inaction as regards a major demographic problem, one can only wonder. Why are Western countries not doing anything to fight against this scourge and why do they encourage it by promoting birth reduction policies and funding abortion in these countries? What about the following hypothesis: since the 1960s, a movement established in many countries as well as among UN authorities has feared world overpopulation. This explains in particular why the United Nations Population Fund was working with the Chinese Communist Party to enforce coercive population control policies.⁷⁹ IPPF also boasts about its collaboration with the UNFPA.⁸⁰ Marie Stopes International also mentions the UN Population Fund as one of its partners, in addition to the French Development Agency, the European Commission and USAid.⁸¹ One may wonder whether, for some, the prenatal elimination of girls would not be a radical way to reduce population: if there are no more women, there will be no more children.⁸² This practice is widespread mainly in the most populated countries, India and China, which have experienced - at least for India - a high population growth; it is an effective and sustainable way to stop growth or even to reduce the population of these countries. Without openly supporting this practice, some international stakeholders turn a blind eye to prenatal

sex-selection-abortions-targeting-girl-babies/

⁷³ Laura Bassett, "Planned Parenthood Sting Caught On Video, Released By Anti-Abortion Activists", *Huffington Post*, 29 May 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/29/planned-parenthood-video_n_1552672.html

⁷⁴ "Planned Parenthood Action Fund To Endorse Hillary Clinton", Communiqué 7 Jan 2016, <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/pressroom/press-releases/planned-parenthood-action-fund-endorse-hillary-clinton>

⁷⁵ The American Federation Planned Parenthood received \$ 218 million in public and private funding in 2015 (*Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc. and Related Entities Consolidated Financial Statements and Supplementary Information* June 30, 2015 and 2014, p. 4) https://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/4514/5132/1803/FY15_PlannedParenthoodFederation_FS_Final.pdf

⁷⁶ <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/congressional-scorecard>

⁷⁷ Letter published on: http://lifenews.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/6-12-2014_Planned_Parenthood_California_Budget_Abortion_Funding_ALERT_color.pdf

⁷⁸ Institute for Research and Lobbying Promoting Rights and sexual and reproductive Health in the United States and the World, 106 employees.

⁷⁹ Alex Newman, *The New American*, 12 July 2012, <http://www.thenewamerican.com/world-news/asia/item/12049-un-slammed-for-its-forced-abortions-in-china-using-us-funds>

⁸⁰ IPPF 2015, Financial report, p. 17 http://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/financial_statements_2015.pdf

⁸¹ <https://mariestopes.org/about-us/partners>

⁸² Michel Schooyans, *Le Crash démographique : De la fatalité à l'espérance*, Le Sarment-Fayard, 2000

sex selection because it contributes to the objectives they pursue.

If this calculation is true, it is not only deeply cynical but also extremely risky. Cynical, because women are the despised victims, be it the mothers or the daughters. Risky, because more than one hundred and twenty million men, or the combined population of France and the UK, are unable to marry, and that this situation will last and will worsen further in the coming decades. This situation causes violence, instability and human trafficking, and affects, at the moment, Asian women especially. The magnitude of the deficit, however, could generate consequences that could affect the West, whether by massive waves of migration or a widespread trafficking of women.

Conclusion

Fighting against sex-selective abortions should be a top priority for States, first because this practice is ethically unacceptable regardless of the sex targeted, and also because it has dramatic consequences on women's rights and demography.

The means to this end are known. Some are direct, like prohibiting the revelation of the sex of the foetus within the legal limit for abortion, prohibiting and criminalising sex-selective abortions and abortions beyond the first trimester of pregnancy, and ensuring that the woman is not under pressure or coerced. People exercising such pressure should be sanctioned. Other means include assisting families who give birth to girls by providing maternity allowance and pension for the parents; developing care, nutrition and schooling programmes for girls; and effectively banning the payment of dowry and inheritance laws. Finally, awareness and education campaigns on the joy of having and the need to have girls as well as on the inherent dignity of every human person are required. Reliable information on the phenomenon and its evolution as well as in-depth studies would also allow to better understand the problem and combat it more effectively.

Various international and national bodies have proposed measures. Significant results were obtained where they were implemented. However, as highlighted by the UN agencies, experience has shown that we can only achieve a lasting change if all stakeholders, particularly Member States, UN agencies and NGOs combine their efforts.⁸³

It implies recognising that sex-selective abortion, far from being a right of women, is a practice they endure and a violence against women.

⁸³ UN Interagency statement, *Preventing gender-biased sex selection*, 2011, p. 9.