

YUNMUN XXVIII

CSW Topic 1: Sex-Selective Abortions

Sex-selective abortions is defined as the termination of pregnancies based on the predicted sex of a child. In our committee, we will be dealing with the termination of female pregnancies, a practice common in areas whose cultures esteem males more than females. This issue is prevalent in countries such as the People's Republic of China, India, and Pakistan, but can also be common in the [Caucasus region](#) and areas in Southeastern Europe¹.

Reasons for sex-selective abortions tend to be both social and economical, based on the perceived advantages of having a male child and supposed disadvantages of having a female child. Male children are viewed as assets to their family, providing labor and support for the family in future. Female children, on the other hand, are seen as a liability, requiring resources before being married off, necessitating a dowry and, once married, no longer contributing to the well-being of her family².

Aside from the wider moral question which arises when discussing the issue of intentionally terminating female pregnancies at a disproportionate rate to male pregnancies, more concrete societal consequences also arise. Sex-selective abortions have been proven to cause an increase in human trafficking, prostitution, and forced marriage. Due to the disproportionate ratio of women to men, men in areas where sex-selective abortions are prevalent will be more willing to participate in illegal activity to obtain a sexual partner or wife. Research has shown women from Vietnam, Myanmar, and North Korea being trafficked to China and forced into prostitution or marriage³.

While there are some recognized positive effects of sex-selective abortions, such as the increased appreciation and value for women in areas where their numbers

¹ A. Gettis, J. Getis, and J. D. Fellmann (2004). Introduction to Geography, Ninth Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill. pp. 200.

² Goodkind, Daniel (1999). "Should Prenatal Sex Selection be Restricted?: Ethical Questions and Their Implications for Research and Policy". Population Studies. 53 (1): 49–61.

³ Last, V. Johnathan, The War Against Girls. The Wall Street Journal, 2011.

are smaller⁴ and a decrease in potential infanticide and female child neglect and abandonment⁵, the practice generally stems from discriminatory customs.

Countries from across the globe have written and passed legislation regulating sex-selective abortions, including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, China and India. In addition, in 2011, the resolution of the [PACE](#) (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men denounced the practice. The issue, however, is still relevant and all too common today.

Before the conference, I recommend you focus your research on three main areas. Firstly, what is your country's current position on sex-selective abortions? Have you taken any action to limit or prevent the practice thus far? Bear in mind your country's statistics regarding the male to female ratio, noting if it has had any negative or positive effects on the well-being of the population.

Secondly, consider the best way to address this issue — one that is both country specific as well as internationally relevant. Should CSW focus on working with countries individually to create a solution that will directly address the cultural, societal, and economic factors of the country, or should our committee work towards a resolution which dictates internationally applicable legislation? Spend some time thinking about your country's position on an issue which often stems from deeply rooted cultural biases against women: is a cultural shift a viable option for addressing the issue of sex-selective abortions, and if so, how would that be enacted?

Lastly, how should CSW work towards quantifying sex-selective abortions? To what degree should we allocate resources for assessing the statistics and data of sex-selective abortions versus reserving funds for on-the-ground programs dealing with the issue in already affected regions? More specifically, in a case-by-case basis, how can one discern when an abortion is sex-selective and when a disproportionate ratio of men to women in a region indicates sex-selection?

This topic is nuanced and will touch on sensitive aspects of your country's culture, history, and beliefs. Be diligent and deliberate in your research, and come prepared to participate in respectful and riveting debate with your fellow

⁴ Park, Chai Bin; Cho, Nam-Hoon (1995). "Consequences of son preference in a low- fertility society: Imbalance of the sex ratio at birth in Korea". *Population and Development Review*. 21 (1): 59–84.

⁵ Goodkind, Daniel (1999). "Should prenatal sex selection be restricted? Ethical questions and their implications for research and policy". *Population Studies*. 53 (1): 49–61

delegates. If you are having trouble, begin by perusing the articles cited above in the topic paper. Feel free to contact me with any questions about the topic or the conference in general at lgelman@mail.yu.edu.

Looking forward to working with you!

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