United Nations Development Fund for Women

Topics:

Female Infanticide

Rights of Women in Developing Nations
Topic 1: Female Infanticide

Background:

Female Infanticide is formally known by the UN as the deliberate killing of newborn female children. Additionally it can be called “gendercide” or gender-selective killing. In addition to female infanticide, sex-selective abortions go under the same category of “gendercide” since it is the choice to abort a infant due solely to the sex of the baby.

Female Infanticide is most commonly practiced in India and China. For example, in India a major cause of female infanticide is the economic view of women within the country. This economic burden associated with women is due to the traditional dowry. Essentially a dowry is a sum of money given to the bridegroom’s family by the bride’s family along with the giving away of the bride. The dowry has been practiced for centuries and during the Colonial Period was the only legal way to get married. Although due to the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1962 this practice is theoretically illegal, Indian culture still practices it. In an effort to decrease the violence created due to the dowry the 1986 amendment to the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was created however a 12% increase in dowry related deaths occurred from 1992 to 1993 resulting in 5,377 deaths in 1993 alone. In the last three years there has been a total of 24,771 dowry related deaths have been reported. A dowry related death is simply a killing of a person due to beliefs of the dowry. An additional issue seen uniquely in India is the mistreatment of amniocentesis, a medical procedure used for prenatal sex determination. A report showed that in 1993 in Bombay, a city in India, 8,000 abortions were performed after amniocentesis and 7,999...
of them were female fetuses. It is estimated that by 2020 50% of males in India will not have any female counterparts. There is a global estimate that each year we lose 200 million female births due to sex-selective abortions and female infanticide.

The unique issue seen in China would be the One Child Policy which was first introduced in 1979 by the Chinese Government and is still in act today. The government originally created this policy in response to the enormous chinese population. Additionally the government supports the termination of “unauthorized” pregnancies, basically the government is condoning early-stage abortions. Chinese traditions are rooted in Confucism which favors the men of the household causing increased female infanticide and sex selected abortions. Confucianism regards male children as more desirable due to their security for the elderly and higher chances of getting work. Unlike India women aren’t seen as an economic burden, however they are seen less strong and reliable than men. In Chinese culture it is tradition for the men of the house to take care of the parents when they get old, so women are seen as shameful because the parents won’t have anyone to take care of them when they grow old. In 1997 a study was conducted and showed there was 750,000 more males than females out of the 25 million children born.

Cultures influence the choice more than religious aspects. The major factor leading to these premature killings would be overall son preference which is seen in both India and China as well as countries such as North Korea. Technology is another major factor to the increases in female infanticide, however it isn’t solely the technology but the misuse of it. There was a major influx of abortions in India after the introduction of
ultrasound in the 1980s. Also many cultures see women not as capable in schooling when compared to men. Lastly a contributing factor to this issue would be in rural countries families need men to do the hard labor on the fields since women lack the physical needs for those field work jobs.

Female Infanticide continues to be an issue to this day seen by increased amount of sex selected abortions contributing to the issue of female infanticide. Between the years of 2000 and 2014, 24, 561,345 sex selected abortions occurred around the world. Behind India and China, Pakistan had the largest amount of sex selected abortions at 1.2 million. Although specifically female infanticide is focused in India and China female discrimination and male preference is seen throughout the world today.

**UN Involvement:**

The major action taken so far by the United Nations to deal with the issue of female infanticide would be actions taken by the organization UN Women. Specifically UN Women focuses on the gender divide in India. Between 2011-2013 UN Women has trained motivators to educate and inspire about different social issues, domestic violence as well as sex selection. In addition to the mass education movement, 6 million women participated in 1,172 Gram Sabhas, 5,163 Ward Sabhas and 3,179 Mahila Sabhas which are different women’s meetings due to the efforts by UN Women. In Haiti, UN Women has assisted a network of safe houses which offer counselling, medical services and legal assistance. Additionally each month of 2017 UN Women has a different goal to accomplish. For example January 2017 focused on women’s economic empowerment and May 2017 focused on mobilizing resources to end violence among women and girls.
Resolution A/RES/57/181 expresses the need for better enforcement of anti-violence laws like the dowry in all countries. This resolution has proven to be successful especially with the kickstart of UN Women’s involvement with the issue of female infanticide.

Additionally to target female empowerment in India the UN has been filtering nine rotations of female peacekeepers in the main capital of India, Monrovia. These peacekeepers keep a 24-hour surveillance of the capital as a response to the civil war outbreak within the country. In addition to keeping peace within the area, these peacekeepers empower young women around them by showing what women can really do. For example in Ethiopia UN Women has set up safe homes for women in violent situations. These houses focus on providing health care, job-training and overall empowerment for these women. One specific home is located near a police station allowing the reporting of crimes easier.

**Questions to Consider**

1. How can we change the social views of women within countries like China and India?
2. What is a better way of enforcing the illegality of the dowry, a sum of money given to the bridegroom’s family by the bride’s family along with the giving away of the bride, making women a financial burden?
3. What can the UN do to check the government control countries like China have over the children being born in their country?
4. How can we better enforce laws that are in place that prevent dowry violence?
5. In what ways can we empower women worldwide and not only in developed countries?

Works Cited:

Topic 2: Rights of Women in Developing Nations

Background:

Women have attempted to gain their rights through the Women’s Rights Movement dating from 1848 to today. The Women’s Rights Movement consisted of three waves of feminism, which entailed obtaining suffrage (the right to vote), and declaring that men and women are equal. More developed nations, such as the US, over the years have gained more of an acceptance of women in society, while other developing nations, such as Afghanistan, completely oppress women from society, and they face extreme violence as a result of patriarchal dominance. Religion is a major factor for the rights of women, as they often believe that it is mandatory women take a domestic role. For example, Islamic teachings in countries such as Algeria, Palestine, and Egypt perceive women as inferior to men. The root cause for inequality started when women began to go on maternal leave for work for months on end. As women started to stay home, men globally became prominent in the workforce, and thus, being a stay at home mom became the norm. Unfortunately, this caused a major drawback to developing nations today, seeing that many stick to this type of tradition.

Women mainly seek reproductive rights, civil rights, and the right to access an education. For example, reproductive rights include right to terminate pregnancy, and use contraceptives, while civil rights include the right to be able to vote, the ability to have access to an education, and equal pay in the workforce. In 2014, UNICEF declared that over 700 million women in developing nations were married under the age of 18 as a result of cultural and traditional beliefs. Some countries, such as Burundi, see women as
a burden in the economy, and therefore attempt marriage at such a young age, in order for males to control them. In a World Bank Gender study in 2015, it was estimated that females globally make less money than males, only making about 60%-75% of a male’s salary. Another study conducted in 2017 revealed that 155 of 173 countries have legal differences restricting women’s economic opportunities in the nation. Of those 155 countries, 100 have laws that restrict women from obtaining jobs, and in 18 of the 100, such as Tanzania, husbands are permitted to prevent their wives from accepting jobs. In terms of the political sector, a study of developing countries in 2016 revealed that women make up less than 10% of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, which includes four countries that have no women involvement at all in both chambers. Luckily, in the STEM field, women are becoming more active and various organizations such as Tech Need for Girls and Organization for Women in Science in the Developing World have helped grant women scholarships to pursue their education. These actions have been noted in African nations, such as Ghana, where there are mentors who teach young girls computer skills for computer science.

**Case Study: Afghanistan**

Women’s rights in Afghanistan have gradually improved other the most recent years, however, they still face so much violence, as a 2016 poll suggests. Afghanistan is currently the 4th most dangerous country for women, whereas in 2011 it was considered number one. Unfortunately, women’s rights activists are deliberately targeted, and the Afghan government refuses to protect them because of the country’s patriarchal
dominance. There is a wide gender gap between males and females, where an astounding 85% of women in the country are illiterate and have little access to an education. Many women die giving birth to their child: there are 460 deaths for 100,000 childbirths. An appalling 2% of women have had a live childbirth before age 15. Typically, girls had arranged marriages and became child brides, or were sold to husbands before reaching maturity. Although this practice is illegal in Afghanistan, the tradition remains in certain rural regions.

From a religious perspective, women were not allowed in mosques during the Taliban rule in the 1990s. Luckily, for the past 12 years, mosque doors have been open for women. Opening these doors for women allowed them to hear sermons delivered by imams (one who leads prayer in a mosque), who often preached about the importance of education for women, as well as persuading their families to let them study. As a result, the Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization (NECDO) was created, when a women’s rights activist, Jamilia Afghani, declared that it was necessary for women to be integrated into society. NECDO is currently working with 6,000 trained imams to help women become fully educated and close the gender gap in Afghanistan. NECDO has aided 2 million girls obtain an education as a result. This program has sparked the beginning of accepting women into society, and opened many opportunities for women in the workforce and science.

**UN Involvement:**

In 1946, the UN created the Commission on the Status of Women. This
commission’s main goal is dedicated toward providing gender equality and empowering women. Since 1975, the UN held a series of conferences on women’s issues, which have created international awareness for violence against women. There have been a series of four world conferences including Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985, and Beijing in 1995. The most significant conference was held in Beijing because a UN document, known as the Platform for Action was signed. This document suggests international cooperation to achieve gender equality, economic empowerment of women, and discuss the gender gap between women of all cultures throughout society. The Platform of Action strives to grant women access to equal pay in the workforce, as well as an education. Countries, such as China, make promises to adhere to the goals of the Platform of Action. Unfortunately, a 2015 summary indicates many countries have not kept these promises; therefore progress for women is currently stagnant. As a result of these devastating conclusions, the UN launched an initiative known as “Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step it Up for Gender Equality” (under the Platform for Action), where this organization works with the governments of various countries to make commitments for gender equality internationally. So far, these governmental partnerships have begun to ease tension in many African countries such as Kenya and Rwanda. Furthermore, resolution E/RES/2015/6 was passed in 2015 under ECOSOC, and set forth goals toward increasing the rights of women and focuses on the engaging the practices set forth by the Commission of the Status of Women in developing nations in hopes to ease the gender gap. The resolution describes how the Commission will hold annual discussions in order to provide women their deserved education and equal place in the economy, as well as
evaluations in countries where women are not able to thrive. The UN International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has played a major role toward closing the gender gap in developing nations. In 2015, UNICEF declared that two-thirds of the world’s 799 million illiterate adults over age 15 were women. Therefore, UNICEF had three major goals in 2015 to advance the rights of women by getting girls into quality schools, improving maternal health, and promoting child protection. UNICEF speculates that if they are able to get girls into school at a young age, they will be less vulnerable to exploitation, and are less likely to contract HIV/AIDS. Likewise, if a girl is educated for six years or more, as an adult her prenatal/postnatal and childbirth survival rates are expected to improve. In order to make these improvements, UNICEF currently works with governments of developing nations such as Afghanistan to provide vaccinations for children to fight against prevalent diseases within the country. In order to achieve this, the UN Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) works with UNICEF to obtain global partners and funding so girls have equal access to an education.

International Women’s Day is held March 8th annually, and is a time to reflect the progress made by women. Every year, there is a theme that embodies the 2030 Agenda, which follows the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5: achieving gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls, and ensuring a quality education for all. This year’s theme was “Be Bold for Change” and a social media campaign in hopes to encounter a gender inclusive world. Activities that supported this year’s theme were aimed toward fundraising, as well as protesting, where women had a voice to preach for human rights. Also supporting International Women’s
Day is the “Step it Up” Initiative created by UN Women. Since May 2015, the “Step It Up has worked in the political and economic sectors for women to obtain jobs and leadership within their country. On May 22, 2017, UN Women did a poll in North Africa and the Middle East. Of a survey of 10,000 men, one-quarter of them indicated supported gender equality. This has thus far opened doors for women in these nations, as it gives an opportunity for UN organizations like UNICEF to help aid this developing region.

**Questions to Consider:**

What rights does your country have for women?

Has the “Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality” initiative contributed toward easing the patriarchal dominance within in your country?

Has the economic status of women changed throughout the last decade in regards to your country?

How will your country represent women and integrate them into the workforce?

Does your country endorse the Platform for Action? If so, how?

How can political factors be changed in order to allow equal opportunities for women both civilly and economically?

**Works Cited:**

http://www.trustineducation.org/resources/life-as-an-afghan-woman/


https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-09-06/afghan-women-largely-lack-healthcare-education


http://necdo.org.af/?p=942

https://www.unicef.org/mdg/gender.html
