Care and Protection of Girl Children in India
Status, Emerging Issues, Challenges and Way Forward

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The Oblivion State of Girl Child in India

Archana Dassi & Sanghamitra Dhar

Introduction

The Anthropological Survey of India in 1985 revealed that all over India a strong emphasis was found on the patrilineal system except for Kerala and the North-eastern tribal states. There was an overwhelming preponderance of inheritance in the male line (N=4635 communities), typically male equigeniture (3680 communities), and succession through the eldest son in 4427 communities. Given this scenario, no wonder that the Indian society is routinely characterized as a classical example of “patriarchal” society with the inheritance and succession rights harmoniously given to the male line. This is an overarching factor that can explain several contemporary social phenomena in South Asia, particularly in India, for instance, the notorious “son preference” and skewed sex ratio and the women’s compromised autonomy. The women are looked upon as a second-class citizen who is best in roles of servitude as ... only men constitute and reproduce the social order. The mother merely gives birth; it is through the father that a child acquires a social identity and is incorporated into the social order. Men are fixed points in this social order, and women are the moving points because when they marry they leave their home and lineage, and are absorbed into their husband’s lineage (Das Gupta et al. 2000).

On the same breath we must also acknowledge that the children of the twenty-first century have been fortunate in so far as international and national legislative mechanisms are concerned. A hallmark of such initiatives can be found in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 which India has been a signatory since 1992, according to which there are four guiding principles to be found under Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12; however, for practical reasons let us would cite them in a different order which is as follows:

Article 6: Survival and Development - Every child has the inherent right to life, and the State has an obligation to ensure the child’s survival and development.

Article 2: Non-discrimination - All rights apply to all children without exception. It is the State’s obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights.

Article 3: Best Interests of the Child - All actions concerning the child shall take full account of his or her best interests. The State shall provide the child with adequate care when parents, or others charged with that responsibility, fail to do so.

Article 12: Child’s Opinion - The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

The reason for aligning this order of sequence stems from the subject under study in this article – the survival of the female child which is at stake as they are not allowed to be born. So the authors emphasize on the need to first ensure the birth and survival of the girl child which then comes across the issues of non-discrimination, best interest and participation. Survival is the fundamental issue in the case of the girl child in many parts of India where sex-selective abortions are rampant and have adversely affected the sex-ratio scenario, particularly in the North and Western part of the country.

Further, at the beginning of the earlier decade in the year 2000 we were witness to another progressive and indicator-based commitment list of achievements from the United Nations for making the world a better place, namely the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development.

Conspicuously though female foeticide as an endemic and life-threatening issue has not found any mention in any of the subparts of the eight goals, although it would seem that the third and fourth goals would have mention of it. Owing to which
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CHAPTER SIX

THE STREET CHILDREN
AND THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS:
A STUDY OF INDIA*

ARCHANA DASSI AND SANGHAMITRA DHAR

Abstract

The phenomenon of street children has evoked mixed response from people who are involved with them in various capacities. While on one hand they are subjected to physical abuses, neglect and rejection by the society, on the other they are considered as children in need of care and protection by the State. According to UNICEF (2005) there are more than 11 million street children in India, and 100,000 are in Delhi, where they face severe child rights violations.

Despite several piecemeal efforts by the State, the situation of the street children is more or less the same, constantly the victims of apathy and injustice. Against this background, the present paper attempts to examine the issue of street children from a rights-based perspective.

* The empirical fieldwork for this study was conducted in early 2011. The authors extend their gratitude to two volunteers, Mr. L. Tirang Rangsanamei and Mohammad Shabbir Alam, for their support with the data collection. Sincere thanks are extended to the children who took out time from their busy life to share about themselves, their joys and their sorrows, their dreams and aspirations. We wish them a life of fulfillment and happiness. The contents of this study reflect the views and interpretations of the authors exclusively.
International Conference on Resettlement and Rehabilitation

Certificate of Presentation

Fr. P. T. Joseph, S.J.
Director, XIMB

This is to certify that Ms. Sanghamitra Dhar has presented a paper entitled "Land Dispossession causes social disintegration among the Affected People - A case of Special Economic Zones in India" in the International Conference on Resettlement Rehabilitation held at Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar on April 10-12, 2012.

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