

# **China's One-Child Policy and the UNFPA: A Silent but Deadly Partnership**

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**Testimony Submitted to the Subcommittee on  
Africa, Human Rights and International Programs  
of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the U.S.  
House of Representatives**

**July 9, 2012**

### **The UNFPA and the One-Child Policy**

Beijing continues to vigorously pursue its infamous one-child policy, ignoring the massive human rights abuses that this entails, the skewed sex ratios that have resulted, and the labor shortages that it has produced.

Over the past three years, PRI's investigative teams have spent several weeks in China visiting UNFPA Model Birth Control Counties. During this period, the teams spent over 80 hours interviewing several dozen witnesses to, or victims of, China's coercive one-child policy. Over 30 hours of testimonies were recorded on audiotape, and approximately 5 hours of testimonies were recorded on videotape. Additional photographic evidence of birth control directives was obtained.

The term Model Birth Control Counties originated with the UNFPA, which in 1998 formally communicated to the U.S. House of Representatives that it had reached an agreement with the Chinese government to take over the management of birth control (*jihua shengyu*, in Chinese) programs in 32 counties. In these Model Birth Control Counties, the UNFPA assured the Congress that the program would be "fully voluntary" and untainted by coercion.

It is important to note that UNFPA also made even more specific guarantees. It stated that in these counties that (1) targets and quotas have been lifted, (2) "women are free to voluntarily select the timing and spacing of their pregnancies", and (3) abortion is not promoted as a method of family planning.<sup>1</sup> Several years later, maintaining that the original program had been a success, the UNFPA added another 40 counties to the list of model birth control counties, bringing the total to 72.

The goal of PRI's independent investigative teams was to carry out an in-depth analysis of several UNFPA "model birth control county" programs. We deliberately limited our recent visits to counties that had been included on the original 1998 list, where the UNFPA would have had more than a decade to end abuses and bring the birth control programs into line with generally accepted international standards of human and parental rights.

The county programs selected for investigation were:

Fengning Manchu Autonomous County, Hebei province.  
Luan County, Hebei province.  
Wenshui County, Shanxi province.  
Sihui County, Guangdong province.  
Lipu County, Guangxi province.

Our complete report will be published shortly.

Our conclusion is that the UNFPA is directly responsible for forced abortions and forced sterilizations in China. But how can it not be, when investigations of counties where it claims to have stopped such abuses produce evidence that such abuses continue?

Here I summarize two important findings of our research. First, contrary to the claims of the Chinese government, minorities appear not to be exempt from the one-child policy. Second, the extraordinary police powers given to the population cadres have resulted in numerous abuses, including the abduction and selling of "illegal" children.

### **Minorities Are Not Exempt from the One-Child Policy**

Fengning Autonomous Manchu County, in northern Hebei Province near what used to be called Manchuria, is officially designated as a UNFPA “Model Birth Control County.” Many of its residents are of Manchu descent, hence its designation as a “Manchu Autonomous County.” From the beginning of the one-child policy, the Chinese government has maintained that the policy does not apply to minorities like the Manchus, the Uyghurs, and the Tibetans. Members of such groups, instead of being restricted to one child, are supposedly allowed to have two or even three. The rationale is obvious: Imposing a one-child policy on a minority group would shrink its numbers over time, and could even prove genocidal. The outside world has generally bought into this generous-sounding claim.<sup>ii</sup>

PRI conducted interviews with several dozen Manchus and Han Chinese. We conclude from these interviews that the one child policy is just as rigorously enforced in this UNFPA county as in other non-UNFPA counties. Moreover, we conclude that the same childbearing regulations that are enforced on the Han Chinese are also enforced on the Manchu minority. For example, we interviewed a Manchu dairyman who, despite being a member of a minority group, was only allowed to have one child:

PRI: “Do you have any children?”  
Manchu man: “We have one child, a son. He is in school right now.”  
PRI: “Would you like to have more children?”  
Manchu man: “Of course we would like to,” he shrugged. “But that is not allowed.”  
PRI: “What happens if you have an illegal child?”  
Manchu man: “It depends on your income, but it can run into the tens of thousands of Chinese Yuan.”  
PRI: “And you are Manchus?”  
Manchu man: “Yes, we are.”

The Chinese government claim that all minorities are exempt from the one-child policy, which the UNFPA has at various times repeated, is false. This is relevant because that UNFPA is also helping to fund “family planning” services not just in Fengning but in other minority regions as well.<sup>iii</sup> This provides, *inter alia*, yet more evidence that the UNFPA’s claims that it is a moderating force in China do not accord with the reality of its complicity in coercion.

### **Child Abduction, Child Trafficking, and the One-Child Policy**

It is well known that those who violate the one-child policy have sometimes been subjected to coerced abortions or, if they have already given birth, have been forced to pay punitive fines *and* have been sterilized. But it has also recently come to our attention that Chinese villagers who cannot afford to pay these fines have their “illegal” children abducted and sold by Chinese population control officials.

The birth control regulations posted in one town warned that those who violate the one-child policy shall be contracepted or sterilized:

Under the direction of the birth control bureaucracy and the technical personnel (assigned thereto), those married women of childbearing age who have already had one child shall be given an IUD; *those couples that have already had a second or higher order child shall be sterilized.* (Italics added.)

This sterilization directive was confirmed in conversation with villagers. One woman, a Chinese minority, told us that the consequence of having a third child would be that the government “would take measures to sterilize you.”

The fines now imposed on violators of the one-child policy are, by any standards, enormous. In one UNFPA "Model Birth Control County," we photographed a billboard of birth control regulations that warned:

Those who illegally reproduce ... will be assessed, when their illegal behavior is discovered, a "social compensation fee" based on a unit calculated from a year's salary for urban dwellers and based on a year's income after expenses for rural dwellers;

Those who illegally give birth to one child, will be assessed a fine 3 to 5 times their annual income; those who illegally give birth to a second child will be assessed a fine from 5 to 7 times their annual income; those who illegally give birth to a third child will be assessed a fine from 7 to 9 times their annual income; those who give birth to 4 or more illegal children will be assessed a fine extrapolated from the above schedule of multiples; Those who illegally take in a child, have an extramarital birth, have an out of wedlock birth, both parties involved will be assessed a "social compensation fee" according to the above schedule of (income) multiples.

That these fines were actually imposed was clear from our discussions with ordinary Chinese. We were told again and again that violators are fined "tens of thousands of *renminbi*," or "20,000 or 30,000 *renminbi*." These are enormous sums of money by Chinese standards. One woman reported that she and her husband had been forced to take out a 10-year loan to pay the 25,000 *renminbi* fine that had been assessed for each of her two illegal daughters. To pay off this "child mortgage," her husband had been forced to go to work in the city.

When we asked what would happen if a couple couldn't afford to pay the fine, we were told that offenders would be visited by population control officials who would "seal off" their homes, and possibly even destroy them, as punishment for non-payment.

In Lipu county, another UNFPA Model Birth Control County, located in northern Guangxi province, we were told by a village officials that "At the present time, if you don't pay the fine, they come and abduct the baby you just gave birth to and give it to someone else."

This practice of child abduction has recently been confirmed by the Chinese government. According to a report in the *Caixin Century* magazine, authorities in the southern Chinese province of Hunan have begun investigating a report that population control officials had seized at least 16 babies born in violation of strict family planning rules, sent them to state-run orphanages, and then sold them abroad for adoption. "Before 1997, they usually punished us by tearing down our houses for breaching the one-child policy, but after 2000 they began to confiscate our children," the magazine quoted villager Yuan Chaoren as saying.

The children, reportedly from Longhui county near Hunan province's Shaoyang city, had been abducted by who accused their parents of breaching the one-child policy or illegally adopting children. The local family planning office then sent the children to local orphanages, which listed them as being available for adoption, the report said, adding the office could get 1,000 *renminbi* or more for each child. The orphanages in turn receive \$3,000 to \$5,000 for each child adopted overseas, money that is paid by the adoptive parents. The magazine reported that al least one migrant worker said she had found her daughter had been adopted abroad and was now living in the United States.

It is worth noting that these two reports come from the same general area of China and occurred in neighboring provinces. Lipu county, where we heard about the practice of abducting and selling "illegal" children, is located in northern Guangxi province not far from the Hunan border, while Shaoyang is located near the southern border of Hunan not far from the Guangxi border.

Local officials deny any involvement in child trafficking. But it is well known that the so-called "job responsibility system" requires them to rigorously enforce the one-child policy, and that their

success (or failure) in this area will determine future promotions (or demotions). Abducting and selling an “illegal” baby or child would not only enable an official to eliminate a potential black mark on his record, it would allow him to make a profit at the same time. In this way the one-child policy, through its system of perverse and inhumane rewards and punishment, encourages officials to violate the fundamental right of parents to decide for themselves the number and spacing of their children.

Child trafficking has occurred in other countries that offer children for adoption, most notably in Cambodia, Nepal and Vietnam, where the abuses are so rampant that the U.S. has put a moratorium on adoptions. It may be time to consider a similar moratorium on adoptions from China.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I would like to make three points.

First, China’s one-child policy constitutes the longest-running and most far-reaching violation of human rights the world has ever seen. Four hundred million Chinese children are missing because of this policy.

Second, the one-child policy is coercive not by accident, but by design. The abuses that we have talked about today are not occasional missteps by overzealous officials--as they are sometimes characterized by Chinese officials--but are the very lifeblood of the program. The one-child policy, like all political campaigns of the Chinese Communist party, is coercive by virtue of its fines, its targets, its quotas, and by the extraordinary pressure that the highest levels of the Chinese government put on lower-level officials.

Third, the U.N. Population Fund has been complicit in China’s one-child policy from the first, not merely turning a blind eye to abuses, but facilitating them in various ways. This is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the U.N. Population Fund’s “model county program,” where UNFPA-trained officials oversee the enforcement of the one-child policy, and where abuses are rampant.

The U.N. Population Fund should once again be defunded, Mr. Chairman, this time permanently.

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<sup>i</sup> See: "UNFPA's County Program in China: Providing Quality Care, Protecting Human Rights," UNFPA, August 10, 2001.

<sup>ii</sup> If you Google “China’s One-Child Policy and Minorities,” as I have, you will find dozens of sites blithely repeating Beijing’s mantra that the policy does not apply to minorities. I had doubted this claim from the beginning, and for good reason. Back in the eighties, I collaborated with an American doctor who documented the forced abortion and sterilization of Tibetan women who threatened to violate the one-child policy.

<sup>iii</sup> See MDGF-1692: The China Culture and Development Partnership Framework, accessed on June 21, 2009, at <http://sdnhq.undp.org/opas/en/proposals/suitable/189>. Here the U.N. Population Fund in involvement in a project to promote family planning among minorities. Their goal is and “Increased proportion of clients seeking MCH/FP counseling services in program locations.”