



# Chin Rong

Miss Harris's inspirational woman is Chin Rong. In the garbage dumps that surround Beijing, scavengers from time to time will find a newborn baby girl amid the stinking refuge. Sometimes she is still alive.

Chen Rong makes her living from scavenging garbage, and over the years she has found five little girls on the tips. She brought them all home to her one-room brick shack and she and her husband try to give them a chance. In China, couples are permitted one, at most two, children. Too frequently a girl is a disappointment.

Every year, say researchers, perhaps a million girl fetuses are aborted and tens of thousands of girl babies are abandoned. "One baby died before we even got her home," says Mrs Chen. "Another garbage scavenger had taken her clothes and then left her to die. I was the only one who would pick her up. I couldn't bear to see her die. Parents shouldn't throw away their children. This shouldn't be happening."

But Chinese society is throwing away its little girls at an astounding rate. For every 100 girls registered at birth, there are now 118 little boys - in other words, nearly one seventh of Chinese girl babies are going missing.

"Some of those girls are alive, they are just not registered," says Professor Zhai Zhenwu, of Beijing's People's University. "Some are abandoned, but many are aborted when the parents find out the foetus is a girl."

"This is a huge problem for China. We already have about 20 million boys who will never be able to marry because there aren't enough women."

"That number rises by 1.5 million every year."