

## Christian charity works to save baby girls from abortion in India

**In many parts of the world, a girl child is a second class citizen even before she is born. Cases of female infanticide are still widely prevalent across the world and particularly in India where it is estimated that up to a million babies are aborted each year simply because they are girls.**

Some babies are given cactus milk that acts as a poison; hot liquid is poured into the baby's mouth; babies are made to lie on wet sack cloth which induces fits; and others have their nose and mouth deliberately covered at birth.

No efforts to curb this social evil have succeeded thus far, but Compassion is making positive inroads by working with families through their church-based Child Survival Programme (CSP) and Child Sponsorship Programme.

Mr Reuben is the project co-ordinator at the aptly named 'Mercy' CSP in Chellempatty, Maduri. "We have saved four baby girls from certain death by convincing the parents to give up these girls for adoption rather than killing them," reports Mr Reuben. "The CSP has also helped contribute in lowering the female infanticide rates through awareness programmes and also because we will help them care for their girls."

Amudha is one of the beneficiaries. Already a mother to two girls, she came under intense pressure to kill her third baby girl. "I will not kill her. The Child Survival Programme staff have promised me they will help me care for my child," insisted Amudha. Her daughter, Swathi, is now a healthy, five-year-old old bundle of mischief; the joy of her parents and two elder sisters.

Despite the positive difference being made by Compassion, much work still needs to be done to break the customs and traditions which have held women and girls as second class citizens for centuries. The dowry system, which requires the bride's family to pay out a great deal of money when a female child is married, is a major contributing factor. The birth of a girl child is seen as the beginning of financial downfall whilst the birth of a boy is a source of inheritance.

"I already have two girls and even the wealthy cannot manage dowries for two daughters. How do you expect me to?" says Sarojini, a mother in Andhra Pradesh. "It is a shame on me (sic) to bear only girls. Society laughs at my husband and mocks me."

But Compassion is firm in their resolve to continue fighting the damaging practices not only through the CSP but also their Child Sponsorship Programme. "Our girls have access to higher education only because of Compassion," continues Mr. Ruben. "Because of this and our gender sensitization programmes, our girls are becoming more vocal. They are also beginning to question their parents about the inequalities they experience at home."

**Compassion has produced a number of resources to be used by churches, house groups and individuals this Mother's Day. To help raise awareness of the plight of mothers around the world.**

**For a full story and images contact:**

**Kate Sharma, [kates@compassionuk.org](mailto:kates@compassionuk.org) / 07985259720**