

Counselling saved Salma's life

Zahoor Ahmed and Salma Bibi got married 10 years ago. Salma Bibi was 21 years of age at the time of marriage. Salma is residing in chak no. 183 located 38 km away from district Jhang. The couple desired to have a baby boy as their first child. Salma, however, delivered a girl after first year of their marriage. All were happy. However due to the desire of a boy, she did not adopt any birth spacing method and just after one year she became mother of second girl.



She deliberately conceived every year compromising on her health and her elder children, and just in 10 years she gave birth to seven girls. Salma's health deteriorated with the passage of time. She also became victim of criticism from her in-laws. Her husband, a farmer with meager income of Rs. 2500 per month, failed to send his children to school. He was also upset due to desire of a baby boy and bad health condition of her wife.

Salma recalled that it was a bright day when the Punjab Rural Support Programme (PRSP) team came in her village in 2014 and started providing counseling and reproductive health services. PRSP field team in their first community dialogue discussed the problems of rural life including health, education and sanitation issues and gave suggestion to solve the issues. They structured the community into Village Health Committees (VHCs) by involving men and women equally. VHC in its 1st meeting selected Parveen Sultan and Ijaz Ahmad as Community Resource Persons (CRPs) for the implementation of the project activities. Parveen worked actively and within a six months she mobilized communities through group meetings and household visits. Resultantly 83 potential clients were referred to service outlets. Salma was one of them.

Salma interacted with CRP Parveen during group meetings and household visits. Parveen motivated her for birth spacing methods, its benefits for her entire family future and particularly for her health. Parveen also sensitized Salma that both boys and girls have their own values in a family and she should not be disappointed for not having a boy. Male CRP Ijaz Ahmad also held discussion with Zahoor Ahmad, Salma's husband, and convinced him that birth spacing is very necessary for her wife's health. In response to the CRPs efforts, Salma Bibi adopted the long term method of Copper-T with the consent of her husband and now her health is improving and she is able to take care of her seven girls in a better way. The couple is happy with their decision.

Salma said that she is thankful to Parveen, Ejaz and VHC for educating them and sensitizing them on birth spacing, thus saving her life.