

VHC Basti Lehaq: Transforming lives

Under the Provision of Reproductive Health Services through Social Marketing project of Population Services International/Rural Support Programmes Network (PSI/RSPN), National Rural Support Programmes (NRSP) fostered a Village Health Committee (VHC) in Basti Lehaq, a very remote area of Union Council 22/DNB Tehsil Yazmin of district Bahawalpur, situated about 80 km away from Bahawalpur city. VHC Basti Lehaq has a population of 2,000 spread over Chak 22/DNB, Basti Ghalwan and Basti Lehaq. VHC comprises of ten men and ten women members according to preset criteria. (Mostly members are farmers, two members are teachers and one is a religious leader; women are

“In our area, NRSP team for the first time educated us about mother and child health. First VHC members were convinced about importance of birth spacing then we gave the message to the community members. Mostly we got positive response but in few areas the people were not receptive to CRPs where we helped the CRPs and convinced them for birth spacing methods.”- VHC Members (Mohammad Ramzan, Sajidda Bibi)

mostly housewives). NRSP provided orientation training to VHC members for better understanding of the project and their roles and responsibilities. Taking into consideration the importance of the programme, VHC members in the first regular meeting identified two couples from the community as Community Resource Persons. The VHC members after getting orientation accepted the responsibility and extended full support to the CRPs for the implementation of project activities. The VHC members supported the CRPs in registration of Married Women of Reproductive Age (MWRAs), making group meetings with them and in monthly household visit the houses of MWRAs. VHC members hold their meetings regular on monthly basis to address the issues being faced by the CRPs during implementation and played a vital role in increasing the number of birth spacing clients in their assigned areas. VHC also fully facilitated the arrangement for health camps where project Lady Health Worker (LHW) provided basic services.



“In our area members of the Village Health Committee really worked hard to convince us regarding the importance of birth spacing and arranged health camps at our door steps. Now we are also giving importance to basic health and immunization services and will support our VHC members for maximizing of birth spacing and immunization coverage” *Community Feedback*

There are 320 MWRAs in the catchment area of VHC and 110 clients have been enrolled as new users so far with the support of VHC members and by CRPs maintaining regular contact with MWRAs. The members have referred 50% of the users so far. The remaining 210 non users are not using birth spacing methods due to religious rigidity, family disagreement, side effects and myths & misconceptions. To address the issue of religious rigidity, VHC members got the support of religious leaders and now the religious rigidity has almost been removed in the area. There are about 15% of the MWRAs who are very poor and VHC executive body taken special initiatives to generate funds for those women who are not in a position to get services. Under the fund raising initiative, VHC members have supported 25 women financially in getting the reproductive health services. Presently VHC have funds of Rs. 800 to support other poor women only for birth spacing services.

In response to a question, one of the beneficiaries said that “We are very much pleased to get such type of services at their doorsteps. This is first time in the history of our village that community supported the poor women in getting the birth spacing services. This is because of health related information disseminated by Village Health Committee members and CRPs and credit also goes to the NRSP team who succeeded in realizing the importance of the birth spacing in the community. NRSP performed very good job and organized the community potential in VHC for the provision of reproductive health services”.



VHC has taken another very important initiative to address the serious issue of three delays being faced by the pregnant women during delivery. For that purpose they have arrangements of vehicles for poor women to take them to the hospitals during emergencies and owner of vehicle will only charge the cost of petrol which will be covered by the VHC members.

VHC President takes pride in the work of his community and said that the NRSP social mobilization team speaks well of VHC Basti Lehaq as it is very productive and committed to support knowledge dissemination and service delivery. VHC is very proactive and takes initiatives for the improved health of

“In our area, people do not give priority even to basic health issues. Project team sensitized us about health and mainly health of child and mother which was totally ignored in our area. Honestly speaking in the beginning I was doubtful how community will react to birth spacing topic but response of community was very positive because it was their need which was not discussed earlier.”

Mohammad Ayub - President-VHC

women and children. VHC President is very hopeful that the community will continue the project activities in the post-project period on a sustainable basis.