

Inclusive awareness approach works for Aalia

Aalia Wahid, 18, resident of Village Allah Bux Mehar of Union Council Rajan Pur Kalan, Rahim Yar Khan, married to Muhammad Jahangir, 19, in 2016. The couple is modestly educated, with Jahangir having primary and Aalia secondary level education. When they got married, they had no knowledge of reproductive health and birth spacing, for there was not lady health worker working in their area.

Usually elders of such teenage couples take family planning related decisions for their children. Male elder members of a groom's family guide the groom about reproductive health, thus giving husband the authority to decide how many children they want. But unfortunately these young grooms are not always sensitised about the importance of mother and child health. What they hear from their elders revolves around having a child every year.



When RSPN introduced Population Services International funded Provision of Reproductive Health Services through Social Marketing project in Rahim Yar Khan, a clear focus was on to involve male community members for awareness creation and making them sensitive about family planning with emphasis on mother and child health.

Village Allah Bux Mehar was also selected for project interventions. RSPN's member and project implementing partner National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) selected a male community resource person (CRP) and a female CRP in this village. Aalia's husband Jahangir was also approached to attend group sessions conducted by Muhammad Imran, male CRP. While a female CRP, Sumaira Imran, involved Aalia in group discussions and informed her about the positive health impact of family planning and safe birth spacing. During their meetings, CRPs also explained in detail the adverse health effects of teenage pregnancy, both on mother and child. Intrigued by the information less known to many people in remote villages like Allah Bux Mehar, the couple discussed the prospects of adopting family planning methods and mutually approved the idea. Aalia then approached project's health mobile camp where she availed birth spacing services.

Aalia says, "The message I received from group meetings was something new for me. There was no such thought of reproductive health or significance of family planning in our minds. So, naturally I was afraid of disapproval from my husband. But it is a uniqueness of project's team that they involve and educate men on family planning. That's why I was able to make a right decision which will ensure a promising future for us."