

Laying The Foundation



Maria Tariq, 20, shares how CRP counseling helped her husband understand how family planning would help the couple provide a brighter future for their family.

In the sleepy village of Kanju, a vast expanse scattered with mud huts and well-worn trails, amidst sweeping fields of lively cotton, the men lounge idly throughout the day. The women occupy themselves with cooking, cleaning and tending to the children.

Maria Tariq is one such woman. As young 20-year old housewife, she spends the majority of her day bustling over the stovetop and fawning over her 3 month old daughter. She lives with her in-laws, and only gets to see her husband, Tariq Rahim, who works as a data entry operator in a telecommunication franchise in Rahim Yar Khan, on weekends.

“I was married off the moment I turned 18,” she recounted, staring down at the ground. “I knew I was very young, and was unsure whether I felt ready to have a child. I shared my concerns with my husband, who at the time seemed to understand my concerns. I went to the local Basic Health Unit with my sister, where the doctor inserted an IUD. I was very happy with my decision, and felt I would be in a better position to raise a child once I’m older”.

“However, things took a turn for the worst. My husband became more emotionally distant. He was already spending his weekdays in the city, working to provide for us. I felt very lonely. Six months after the procedure, he started to pressure me greatly to have the IUD removed. I went back to the hospital, and had the procedure reversed. A few weeks later, I got pregnant. I have a daughter now...but he wanted a son”, Maria said as she shifted uncomfortably on the makeshift woven bed.

“Right after I gave birth to my daughter Iman Fatima, my husband began to hint how desperately he wanted a son. I would remind him we were not at all financially secure - I am living with his parents while he lives in the city - and having a child has taken a great toll on me. I was feeling very brittle and frail, and was not at all interested in getting pregnant again so soon. I was feeling swamped with responsibilities, as my daughter requires my full attention,” she mused.

“When our CRP Sahira knocked at my door, and told me she would help convince my husband and his parents to let me wait a few years before getting pregnant again, I was so happy,” Maria recounted, a shy smile lighting up her face.

She paused for a moment and said, “I waited for my husband to come back over the weekend. Sahira made a case for me, and my husband listened. She reminded him that we still needed time to become financially secure. She suggested we concentrate our efforts on building our dream home in the city, and to have our children grow up in that home, where we would be living separately from his parents. This is something I desperately wanted as well and had confided in her. My husband cocked his head to the side, looked at me intently, and agreed.” Maria smiled. “I was given a slip and at the next camp, the Lady Health Visitor performed the IUD procedure for me once again.”

“We are now going to wait five years before we try for a son. My husband has promised me he will devote this time to saving money in a Committee, which we will use to buy a plot in Abbasia Town and build a home where we can start our future afresh with our children.”

Maria finally flashed a rare smile. “I could not be happier to have finally WON my husband’s support. I am relieved and now ecstatic about what the future has in store for us. This has actually brought me and my husband closer than ever, and I deeply value that.”