Along a narrow path veering off of the main highway, Chak 117 of Bahawalpur is a colourful assortment of brick houses, dirt roads and green fields. Outside of one particular home, where the village’s Community Resource Person (CRP) Abida Parveen lived, children fed tethered goats hay, while the cats teased the children, lounging playfully on the mud walls, just out of reach.

Abida, 48, would leave early in the morning for her rounds under a family planning project, register in hand and ready to work with households in her community. Through her regular tours of her neighborhood, she had begun to establish a close relationship with many of her peers. However, while her counseling on the benefits of birth spacing did touch the lives of many women in the community, not everyone heard her voice or agreed with her. This was especially true for an 18-year old woman the community, Hina Asghar.

Hina married her husband at the young age of 17. She became pregnant shortly after. When Abida first visited Hina’s husband’s house in February, she was informed that the young, expecting mother was not home. Hina was to have a home birth at her parent’s house in a different Chak, where she would spend a significant period along with her newborn directly afterwards as well.

Abida and Hina’s first counseling session actually came many months later — and sparked a budding friendship between the two. Today, Hina was visiting Abida with her 10-month old daughter Maryam. The two sat at the edge of a bed, Hina cradling her baby in her lap. ‘I am very grateful to Abida for her counseling on birth spacing.’ Hina

Beneficiary Hina plans to continue availing injectables at the DAFPAK camp to ensure she fully recovers from her daughter’s birth.
said. "My husband and I were overjoyed at the birth of our daughter...but I know how keen he is on having a son. Right after I had Maryam, he brought up the next pregnancy. I am happy with growing my family eventually, but not right now. The thought of experiencing another pregnancy all over again was very overwhelming", she shared as she cradled an upset Maryam.

Abida interjected, "I knew Hina had recently gotten married, and that too very young. It wasn't easy to get her to speak with me – her mother-in-law and her husband had not passed along the message that I had been dropping by in the hopes of speaking with her."

"That's correct," Hina agreed. "I wasn't in the village, and my husband's family had not prioritized passing along the news of Abida's visits. I learnt that she had been looking for me when a neighbor of mine who was visiting my parents' village, mentioned it and suggested I get in touch with the CRP to discuss my options," she explained, breaking apart a biscuit that had her daughter's attention.

"When I finally met her, I could tell Hina was worried about getting pregnant again. So I spoke to her husband and mother-in-law on how birth spacing benefits both mother and child. After a bunch of questions, they relented and agreed it would be better for Hina to avail the service." Abida said. "I gave Hina a referral slip to present at the next health camp, and recommended her to look into long-term methods," she added. Hina nodded in agreement and shared. "At the camp I presented my slip and opted for the injection method, that offers 3 month's worth of protection. I recently received my second shot, and plan to space out my next pregnancy by 5 years – this will allow me to focus on raising my daughter while my husband works towards a more secure future for us."