



Awareness session on MNCH, district Lakki Marwat

Birth Spacing: It's Never Too Late

“ Saima gave birth to her 11th child, she now knows and plans to practice birth spacing ”

Allowing at least two years between pregnancies improves mothers' and their children's health. The time allows a women's body to recover from and prepare for another pregnancy, and the mother to provide care to ensure her newborn's healthy growth.

Saima is a resident of a village in district Lakki Marwat. Now 25, Saima married a day laborer when she was only 12, and went on to bear 10 children, three of whom died within one year of their birth. The consecutive pregnancies—usually with only two months between them—took a terrible toll on the young mother as well, leaving Saima exhausted and malnourished.

When Saima was pregnant with her 11th child, she attended a session on birth spacing, maternal, newborn, and child health, nutrition, hygiene, and infectious disease prevention. The session was conducted by a female community resource person (CRP), who conducts such sessions with women from 15–17 households in Saima’s village. Saima lives in an area that is not covered by a lady health worker (LHW), leaving her and women like her largely without access to primary care services. The CRP’s session taught them about how important birth spacing is to the health of mothers and babies. They also learned that birth spacing could help families save money.

After the CRP’s session, Saima discussed birth spacing with her husband. Initially, he was against it because he believed that such methods had side effects that could make them sick. Saima explained that birth spacing would actually improve their health, and finally convinced him to agree to give her time between pregnancies. He even took her to a health facility for a prenatal checkup, where the two consulted a doctor about birth spacing. “Saima gave birth to her 11th child, she now knows and plans to practice birth spacing” said the CRP while conducting an interactive session on birth spacing.

Under the IHSS–SD Activity, the Rural Support Programmes Network, through its partner the Sarhad Rural Support Programme, has oriented 1,680 CRPs on maternal, newborn, and child health, birth spacing, hygiene and handwashing, and infectious diseases. In Lakki Marwat, 280 of the 1,680 CRPs conduct weekly sessions with women who live in areas that are not covered by LHWs. The aim is to improve rural communities’ access to basic health services and engage them in maternal and child health-seeking behaviors.