



Awareness session on MNCH, district Charsadda

## Preventing unhealthy pregnancy: The power of spousal communication

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Sidra and her husband were not practicing birth spacing due to religious reasons; both also wanted to have a son

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Early age pregnancy can lead to complications, including the maternal death. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 99% of maternal deaths among girls aged 15 – 19 years occur due to pregnancy related complication in the middle and low-income countries .

Sidra is a 19 years old mother, from district Charsadda, bearing two daughters. She only had 9 or 10 months of space between the two pregnancies. Sidra and her husband were not practicing birth spacing due to religious reasons and preference to have a son. Hence, Sidra was neither using any contraceptive methods nor practicing the two years' minimum gap between pregnancies (known as health birth spacing).

When the female Community Resource Person (CRP) Shakila, was conducting sessions in Akhun Baba on birth spacing, the 19 years-old Sidra also attended. The CRP informed the participants about the health

benefits of birth spacing for better health outcomes for the mother and the child. Sidra not only explained the health benefits of birth spacing, but also advocated based on the basic teachings of Quran and Sunnah. She quoted that Islam promotes two years of birth spacing by comprehensive breastfeeding. She also gave example that the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) never discriminated based on gender. Later, she guided her where a woman can obtain health and birth spacing services.

As part of the IHSS-SD activities Sidra's husband attended the awareness sessions on birth spacing conducted by a male social mobilizer in her village. That helped Sidra in initiating discussion on the benefits of birth spacing for her own and her children's health. Luckily, she convinced and made him understand to adopt birth spacing. They mutually consented to get further information about the services and best suitable method. Sidra visited a Lady Health Worker (LHW) in her nearby community, to seek guidance for opting a suitable method for birth spacing.

Under the IHSS – SD Activity, the Rural Support Programmes Network, through its partner, the Sarhad Rural Support Programmes, have oriented 1,680 Community resource persons on maternal, neonatal and child health, birth spacing, hygiene and handwashing, and infectious diseases. 420 of the 1,680 Community Resource Persons are from district Charsadda. The CRPs conduct weekly sessions with women in non-Lady Health Worker covered areas. The aim is to improve rural communities' access to basic health services and engage them in positive health seeking behaviors related to mother and child health.