

Busting the myth

Asma Bibi, 24, lives with her husband in a small colony of Tehsil Daharki in District Ghotki, Sindh. Her village is not covered under government's lady health workers programme. Thus they have no or minimum access to reproductive health services. Many residents of her colony do not take birth spacing as a measure to improve mother



and child healthcare. Mothers-in-law particularly influence the matters related to reproductive health of their daughters-in-law and their decisions about family planning.

Asma was also expecting her first child when her mother-in-law was introduced to the newly launched Provision of Reproductive Health Services through Social Marketing Project by the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) in partnership with Population Services International (PSI) in Ghotki. Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO) is implementing the project in Ghotki since July 2016. Community awareness on birth spacing was a huge challenge for the project team. Busting myths connected to birth spacing was not easy in a conventional setup where people considered it a taboo to talk about reproductive health matters.

Community Health Worker (CHW) Safia, working under the Health Communication Component (HCC), another project run by RSPN, engaged Bilqees Bibi, mother-in-law of Asma, in community support group meetings. During her household visits, she explained birth spacing and its benefits to Bilqees Bibi, who understood the importance of taking reproductive health services and brought her daughter-in-law to the outreach mobile camp after two months of her first delivery. Bilqees along with her daughter-in-law consulted project lady health visitor and mutually chose a contemporary long term birth spacing method.

She narrates, "In our times, no one told us about the importance of birth spacing and family planning. Women then had an average of 7 to 8 children. This is the main reason mothers-in-law never allowed their daughters-in-law to adopt any family planning method as they themselves had never opted for it. But I am glad that we receive awareness as well as services at our doorsteps. I am grateful to the project team who helped me assist my daughter-in-law to choose a spacing method. This will allow her to take care of her child and herself in an optimal manner."