

Happy and healthy birth

Eradicating malnutrition and promoting family planning methods have become the main priorities for ensuring health of females in rural areas. The health of the mother is the biggest determining factor in maintaining the health of a newborn, which is why this project has targeted pregnant and nursing women. By involving ante-natal and post-natal mothers, PCI-HELP project has been able to provide supplementary nutrition to both mothers and children. In this project, services have been provided for about 31 pregnant and nursing women during the first year of the project. Counselling services are also extended for family planning. Thanks to the PCI HELP project, Mrs. Gomathy and her newborn have improved their nutrition. Mrs. Gomathy, a thirty one year-old woman and home maker who has studied up to 3rd standard. She lives in the Kitampalayam village of Suler block of Coimbatore district with her husband Mr. Murugan, who works in the power loom. They have three female children who are 8yrs, 6yrs and one & half years old respectively. When the HELP project team first met Mrs. Gomathy, she was six months pregnant, hoping for a male child. She explained that during this pregnancy, she felt very weak. She was not paying much care and attention to her health and had not consulted a doctor, because of lack of awareness about importance of care and intake of nutritious food during pregnancy.

Believing that her weakness was common and natural, she continued to eat her routine foods. Her diet consisted mostly of rice, sambar (sauce), and pickle which contains only minimal nutritional value. During her sixth month of pregnancy, the Community Health Worker visited her and explained the PCI-HELP project. During their discussion, the CHW learned that Mrs. Gomathy was not taking any nutritional food or visiting any health centres. The CHW started educating her about the importance of eating nutritious foods. He advised her to eat lot of vegetables, especially green leafy vegetables such as beans, bentis, cabbage, drumstick, milk and fruit. He also advised her about the importance of going for a walk after food, to promote good digestion. He encouraged her to visit the PHC to get a Tetanus Toxoid immunization. After this, the CHW also gave her one packet of "Sathu maavu" (Nutrition / Health Mix) made out of cereals and containing vital nutrients. He demonstrated how to prepare the powder. Mrs. Gomathy, drank a glass and found the drink tasty.

As a result of the CHW's help, Mrs. Gomathy decided to practice family planning after delivery of her last child. This was the result of frequent home visit follow-ups and counselling initiated by the CHW.

Now, Mrs. Gomathy has started to change her food habits after couple of counseling sessions. She feels more energetic and active than before. She has received the tetanus vaccinations. She expressed her gratitude to the PCI HELP project for implementing this project in her village. Without it, she admits, she and her unborn child would have suffered due to malnutrition and lack of immunizations. Now Mrs. Gomathy is feeling more confident about the future of her and her children.