



## USAID MCH Program - Health Communication Component



### Report on World Health Day Celebration

#### HEALTH MELA

7<sup>th</sup> April 2015

Rural Support Programmes Network

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The World Health Day 2015 was celebrated under USAID MCH Program's Health Communication Component (HCC) in all five intervention districts of Sindh province, namely Matiari, Umerkot, Sukkur, Sanghar, and Mirpurkhas. The World Health Day is a global health awareness day, which is celebrated each year on 7th of April. The World Health Day is held to mark the WHO's founding, and is seen as an opportunity to bring people's attention to a subject of major importance of global health each year. The WHO organizes international, regional & local events on the day related to a particular theme. The theme for World Health Day 2015 was Food Safety, a theme of high relevance to all people on the planet, and multiple stakeholders, including government, civil society, the private sector, and intergovernmental agencies and community.

## **USAID's MCH PROGRAM**

USAID has been a stalwart partner to Pakistan. USAID's current flagship Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Program with its five interrelated components: 1) Family Planning/Reproductive Health (FP/RH); 2) Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH); 3) Health Communication; 4) Health Commodities and Supply Chain; and 5) Health Systems Strengthening, is an innovative program designed to improve health outcomes of women and children in target areas. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs (JHU-CCP) in partnership with Center for Communication Program Pakistan (CCPP), Mercy Corps and Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) is implementing the Health Communication Component. Under this component the RSPN/RSPs are responsible for demand creation MNCH/FP services and referral to public and private facilities. In addition, the RSPN/RSPs are responsible for community mobilization. Celebration of International days/ advocacy events is an important component of community mobilization. In this regard, the RSPN in collaboration with the National Program for Family Planning and Primary Health Care (NPF&PHC) celebrated the Health Melas at community level in aforementioned districts.

## **HEALTH MELA**

Health Melas were organized at the community level, to celebrate the World Health Day 2015, by the RSPN in collaboration with the National Program for Family Planning and Primary Health Care (NPF&PHC), where Lady Health Worker (LHW) program took lead of the event. The Health Melas were a one day event in which the communities from RSPN-HCC intervention areas, the representatives of implementing partners of MCH Program and district level health sector stakeholders were invited.

The objective of the Health Mela was to provide the implementing partners of MCH program and health department of government with a platform to inform the communities about their projects and services in the area, to provide opportunity to community members to have access to information regarding MNCH/FP issues and services, and to provide the communities with an opportunity to raise their voices related to health issues, and know about the available health services in their respective areas.

In Mirpurkhas district the event was held at RHC Meerwah Gochani UC Meerwah, in Sanghar at Irrigation Rest House UC Jam Nawaz Ali, in Sukkur at Shaheed Nazeer Abbasi Community Hall UC Loung Bhatti, in Matiari at Makhdoom Shafique u Zaman Auditorium Hall Hala, and in Umerkot at Soreh Badshah Complex Ground.

## ACTIVITIES

The Health Melas were organized simultaneously in all five intervention districts and the event followed the same agenda with minor variations. The main activities of the event included information sharing on the importance of World Health Day, the interactive discussions on Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) and birth spacing, real-life experience sharing on birth spacing methods, demonstration of hand washing steps, skits on matters of maternal and child care such as ante-natal check-ups, birth spacing, neonatal care, immunization, and institutional delivery, and quizzes and competitions.

### Importance of World Health Day

While stating the importance of World Health Day, the Cluster Coordinators of Jon Snow Inc. (JSI) linked this year's theme of food safety with the maternal and child health. It was stated that unsafe food is linked to the deaths of an estimated 2.2 million people annually – including many children and women of reproductive age. And according to estimates, around 250,000 children in Pakistan die under the age of five due to diarrhea, mainly caused by the use of untreated water or contaminated food. Therefore, World Health Day 2015 has given us an opportunity to alert people, about the importance of food safety especially during pregnancy and lactation period and children under five years of age to reduce the MMR & IMR due to malnutrition. In Mirpurkhas and Umerkot districts, JSI Cluster Coordinators could not participate and thus in their absence representatives from other organizations shared this information.



### Interactive Discussion on MNCH and Birth Spacing

The interactive discussion with the community on Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) and birth spacing were facilitated by MCHIP representatives and Lady Health Worker Supervisors/ Marie Stopes Society Officials respectively. The facilitators asked basic questions regarding MNCH and birth spacing to the participating community members and after receiving their answers told the participants about the health facilities being upgraded by MCHIP in the districts and types of services provided at these facilities. The availability of transportation was also highlighted along with 9 signals of MNCH services, training of Skilled Birth Attendants (SBAs), and availability of vaccination system.



After the community discussion on birth spacing the facilitator emphasized the role of husbands and extended family members in promoting the spacing with reference of religious texts and medical sciences, and clarified the misconceptions regarding side effects of contraceptives.

### Skits by Community Volunteers

To further endorse the importance of MNCH services, skits were presented by community volunteers. Each district performed on one theme, in Mirpurkhas district, the importance of ante-natal checkups were highlighted, in Sukkur district on birth spacing, in Sanghar district on birth preparedness and institutional delivery, in Matyaridistrict on neonatal and postnatal care with mention of Post-Partum Hemorrhage (PPH), and in Umerkotdistrict it was on vaccination/immunization.



### Real-life Experience Sharing

In each district, three community volunteers shared their experience with different birth spacing methods and their family and society's approval to its use. 1 Married Woman of Reproductive Age, aged 20-30 shared her satisfaction with the contraceptive use, 1 husband shared his supportive role in his wife's decision to adopt the spacing method or who has taken the initiative to help his wife get the birth spacing method, and 1 mother/father-in-law shared her/his perception about the contraceptive use and her/his satisfaction with their son and daughter in law's decision.



### Importance of Hand-washing, Demonstration and Competition

This session was conducted by a Mercy Core staff member in all five districts. This session started with an interactive discussion on the importance of hand-washing and later the facilitator demonstrated the key steps of hand-washing. Afterwards, 3 volunteers were called from the participants to demonstrate the hand-



washing steps and the prizes were distributed among the winners.

### Placard Presentation on MCH Key Messages and Quiz

In this activity, community members carried placards, with very clear key messages written on them, across the stage. As they passed by, the RSPN/MC convener read the messages out loud to make the participants pledge to practice safe MCH facilities.

After the presentation of the key messages through the placards, few short questions were asked to the community from the key messages and small prizes were distributed for every correct answer.



### Healthy Baby Competition

As the event was organized to promote good health practices, the healthy baby competition was held where mothers of babies of age under one year brought their babies to the stage and based on the overall weight of the baby the winner was decided and given prizes. The winning mother shared their experience of healthy diet during pregnancy, ANC visits, and breastfeeding and child immunization.



### Raising Community Issues

At the end of the event, the community members were given the opportunity to raise their health related concerns and present their issues to the government officials present at the event. 3-4 volunteers presented their concerns regarding lack of medicines and transport services at the health facilities, lack of transport facility, and other related concerns. This platform was utilized to get their issues across to the government officials and they also responded to the concerns raised.



### Remarks by Chief Guest

In Mirpurkhas district, the chief guest of the event was the Deputy Commissioner, in Sanghar, Umerkotand Matiari it was District Health Officer, in Sukkur it was National Program Coordinator.

They all thanked USAID, Community Members, GoS, implementing partners of MCH Program, civil society members, sister organizations, and journalists present at the event. Besides this they appreciated the community participation especially of women and ensured that they would continue to extend their support for such events and work in future.



### Joint Signatory Campaign

After the chief guests' remarks, the announcement was made to initiate the Joint Signature Campaign by signing the banner and pledging to the key MNCH/FP messages written on it. Not only the literate participants but also the illiterate participants endorsed the messages through their thumb impressions and pledged to practice good and safe health practices.



### Stalls

And it was also announced that stalls are set up for the community to gather information on matters related to health of mother and child. Stalls were set up by MCHIP, MSS, PWD, PPHI, HANDS, and other local NGOs. The stalls served as the awareness booths for the community members where they inquired and received information regarding their problems and available services in the area.



### Vaccination Camp – Sukkur

In district Sukkur, Vaccination camp was also organized at the venue to provide vaccination service to the participating communities. 176 people were vaccinated against Hepatitis B, C and TT for free of cost with the help of District Health Department and PPHI Sukkur.



### Event Participation

In Mirpurkhas district 210, in Sanghar district 307, in Sukkur district 257, in Umerkot district 249, and in Matiari district 458 participants were registered. They included district government officials, representatives of partner organizations and local NGOs, media representatives, community notables, and men and women community members.