

DAFPAK CASE STUDY

UNITED FOR A BETTER TOMORROW



VHC LEADER MUHAMMAD SHAFI, SHARING UPDATES WITH HIS FELLOW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

On a swelteringly hot afternoon in the off-grid village of Basti Allah Dittah, men and women dragged charpais – woven beds – along the yard of a small house. Curious goats tied to a post in the yard looked on, as did the tiny children playing with them. Once the charpais were set in place in the shade of the sole tree in the yard, the men and women got seated.

This was the community's Village Health Committee (VHC), a group of locals who mobilized themselves so they could discuss various health problems within their community. Their leader, Muhammad Shafi, stood up and welcomed everyone.

"Salam to my brothers and sisters, and thank you for attending today's meeting. As you all know, we have been campaigning on the benefits of birth spacing for our community for almost a year now. Family planning methods have long been considered to be against Islamic teachings by those who are aware of their existence, which in our community has been a small minority. Our work has been focused on spreading a positive message on the benefits of birth spacing", he said

Shafi then seated himself back on the charpai, and the focus shifted to a young woman wearing a purple head cloth.

"My name is Nadia Bibi, and I have been working as

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a CRP for about a year now. I have been trying to touch lives by helping women learn of their choices regarding birth-spacing, but the message hasn't always been received well by other members of the family," she stressed. "And that is why your support is still needed. As you are aware, a short while ago we stumbled across a household in which the wife had borne 10 children, and was miserable. The husband and the rest of the family would not even entertain the notion of her having a conversation with me. They told me my work was unIslamic, and asked me to leave. When I appealed here at the VHC, Shafi Sahab accompanied me on my next visit and after speaking with the husband, managed to arrange for me, a meeting with the woman. And a referral! She should be coming to the next camp!" she exclaimed.

There were murmurs of approval at her pause, after which Nadia Bibi continued: "We still have a lot of work left to do, there are many households that we are still to convince." Following this, she promptly sat back down onto her space on the charpai. Two women, Iqbal Bibi and Kausar Bibi, then collectively told the group they would accompany Nadia on her visits to help her garner support. The group nodded their heads in agreement, following which Shafi stood up and thanked everyone for taking out the time to attend today's meeting. "I appreciate all your efforts to improve our community's wellbeing. "We will continue to focus on spreading a positive message on birth spacing citing Islamic examples. We can use our future meetings to raise other concerns on our agenda as well, such as the quality of water we are getting in some of our wells," he concluded.