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Mothers Receive New Child Care Support in the Chittagong Hill Tracts with Support from the Leadership to Ensure Adequate Nutrition (LEAN) project



When Taronna Chakma came to her Union health complex to give birth to her second child, she was worried about whether they would be able to help her if something went wrong. However, thanks to the training and support received by Union Health Complex staff, Taronna had a smooth delivery without any complications. She learned after that it was all possible thanks to the support of the Leadership to Ensure Adequate Nutrition (LEAN) project, funded by the European Union.

Many pregnant women face difficulties during pregnancy and delivery in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), as they lack access to accurate information on pregnant and mothers' health care. People of CHT are not used to delivering in clinics because of limited knowledge of available services.

According to government statistics, the ratio of low-birth-weight newborn babies is higher in the CHT which is related to maternal, child health and nutrition during pregnancy and delivery.

Surveys have also found a knowledge gap among indigenous women regarding pregnancy-related health problems, as well as proper information on where to take the health services. This is due to a range of barriers to access in health services including poverty, difficult travel conditions, and limited training or maternal facilities at clinics.

Despite these risks, Taronna always feared to delivery at home, as she faced some trouble when she gave birth her first child with the help of midwives. As she was preparing for her second child, Taronna learned about the services available at her local women's business center (WBC) from her fellow community people. With the support of the LEAN project, 164 Women's Business Centres are currently operating across CHT as one-stop service centres for nutrition sensitive agriculture advice, inputs, marketing centres and information hubs for women. Taronna went to her local WBC to take the services during her pregnancy period where WBC members measured her weight and discussed her dietary intake. She got clear information on regular health checkup resources, diversified food intake, importance of the first 1000 days for mother and child, and increased awareness of the 5 danger/warning signs during pregnancy.

During her pregnancy, Taronna has taken WBC's regular sessions for mothers which are facilitated by WBC members where she came to know about the importance of taking diversified and nutritious foods. Linkage with WBCs helped her to get regular health checkups at her local clinic and the WBC members who facilitated all those sessions are highly experienced and have received training from the LEAN project on how to conduct all those sessions. They were well informed on pregnant women's needs and support. In addition, WBC members set up favorable linkages between the Community Clinic and pregnant women like Taronna which made her decision on a delivery location easy.

Taronna explains that, after getting more information, I have come to know for the very first time of the importance of feeding colostrum to baby within one hour of birth. As it promotes growth and health of infants. It helps to fight infections, and improve gut health. There is so much new information that I have acquired for the very first time. All this information will help me to grow my baby healthy and well.

