

# Case Study: Couples Counseling in India

In India, a national organization that provides medical care and insurance to enrolled populations implemented a program to engage men in maternal health. Providers at the organization specifically encouraged couples to attend antenatal care counseling, during which they focused on:

- Care and nutrition during maternity, including the importance of planning for the birth, recognizing and acting on the presence of any danger signs during pregnancy/birth/postpartum, and making arrangements for transportation to the hospital;
- The importance of exclusive breastfeeding to six months and complementary feeding thereafter and its benefits for mother and baby;
- Return to fertility and postpartum family planning and the choice of contraceptive methods available including the lactational amenhorrea method (LAM); and
- Encouraging mother-baby postnatal checkup at six weeks and complete immunizations of infants.

They also provided universal syphilis testing for all pregnant women and appropriate management for those who tested positive, including partner counseling and treatment and behavior change communication (BCC) for risk reduction, as well as condom information, demonstration, and supply.

Additionally, husbands attending counseling sessions were to be informed of and asked about their own possible signs and symptoms of urethral discharge and genital ulcer disease. If they presented symptoms, they were encouraged to report them to the male doctor who was trained in syndromic management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) according to national guidelines which include partner's presumptive treatment.

Couples were encouraged to attend a clinic at six weeks postpartum, where the mother and baby would receive a postnatal checkup and couples would be offered a full range of appropriate postpartum contraceptives, including both modern and traditional methods (appropriateness refers to breastfeeding and STI risk status). (Men as Clients and Men as Partners)

## Reference

Leila Caleb Varkey, Anurag Mishra, Anjana Das, Emma Ottolenghi, Dale Huntington, Susan Adamchak, M.E. Khan, and Frederick Homan. 2004. *Involving Men in Maternity Care in India*. New Delhi, India: Population Council.