

Participation in PLA Meetings Helps in Timely Decision Making, Saving Life of a Child



I **Reena**, live in Barchhabandh, a village in the district of Garhwa. Like most other villages in Jharkhand, life here still fights for the right of better access to basic facilities like health, education, sanitation, communication, electricity and above all, win over poverty! With 2500+ population, mostly belonging to the other backward classes we live in thatched huts and our livelihood revolves around small scale farming, involvement as daily wage earners etc. Because of relatively less opportunity and focus, life is not easy for us in this small parcel of land.



Lack of awareness about several Govt. schemes, the health care practices incorporating which could have made us resilient in fighting odds and by large, difficulties to access health care services due to bad road conditions leave us little isolated, reaching out to the health service centre which is located in 4 km from the village. With all these limitations, it makes our situation more critical at some point of time. But, through our thick and thins, we always find *Sahiya* didi next to us guiding on health related issues.

One day, she told us about the PLA on maternal and child health and certainly, the content of the meetings, nature of participation, more interactive mode of engagement in the discussion made me and most of the other women interested to participate in monthly meetings. This also made our bonding stronger.

Again, this was very crucial time for me, when I, Kamlesh, my husband, who works as a daily wage earner, my father in law and my three years old son, we all were waiting to welcome my second child in our family. In a family living on small income, it was difficult but from my participation in PLA meetings, I realised the importance of nutrition, ANC check-ups, birth preparedness and planning etc. and I did not miss to follow anything during my pregnancy time.



When the day came, through institutional delivery, I delivered a baby boy who was 2.9 kg of weight. After 3-4 days of the baby was born, there were symptoms of rashes and infections all over the body but my family members were casual about it in the beginning and not consulting with the doctor. Soon there was sign of naval infection and puss formed around that region. I remembered my learning from the PLA meeting on **“Identification and Classification of Neonatal Infection”** and realised that my baby needs an immediate consultation with medical practitioner. Without losing any time further or thinking about the family’s mind-set, I immediately rushed to Garhwa district hospital. From there, we were referred to Ranchi hospital where the baby received treatment for consecutive 17 days and it recovered.



PLA not only helped me in detecting the early symptoms of the disease but taking **right and timely decisions** about the treatment.



Saket, my baby is more than one-year-old now and we don’t miss any schedule of his vaccinations.

I started feeding him solid food in completion of six months of exclusive breastfeeding and take care of his nutrition in this early days of his development as I learnt from attending the meeting on **“Importance of timely introduction of complementary food”**.

Our life is simple but not easy, especially during the present pandemic situation. We have been taking all precautions to stay safe, but not having the BPL card, we did not get any ration provided by the Govt. We have been managing with the grains cultivated in our small farmland, with support from our kind hearted relatives, but that’s not enough for a family of four. Kamlesh tries hard but with the prolonged lockdown, not having his usual source of income, we are getting into debt. We can only hope and act together for a better tomorrow.

