

Prenatal health checks



Photo: The government doctor monitors the weight of a baby.

Due to the prevalence of child marriage in Rajasthan, it is often 15 -17 year old children who fall pregnant without reaching a proper weight or being fully prepared for motherhood. Women aren't always convinced by our diet suggestions, and continue working hard to run households well into their pregnancy, but they will listen to the advice of a doctor. As the population has grown, there has not been increases in natural resources including cows and buffalos and not every family engages in agricultural work. Many would rather buy a TV than a buffalo, or own a mobile phone repairing shop in the village than work the land. Half of all families don't have access to enough cow milk, and weak mothers can't produce enough breast milk so have to carry out supplementary feeding.

GVNML Health Supervisors work to convince the male members of the family to take their pregnant women to the Village Health Sub Centre for check-ups with the government doctor. They check the woman's weight and blood pressure, recommend different foods to eat during pregnancy and supply iron tablets. For normal pregnancies, check-ups take place every three months, but if the pregnant woman is suffering from complications they are as regular as once a month. The information gathered then helps to guide safe deliveries in the hospital. The baby's weight is monitored and charts for 0-3 year olds are kept. Mothers are trained on how to help their children maintain a healthy target weight through a well-balanced diet.

By monitoring mothers throughout their pregnancy, the number of women dying in childbirth has fallen dramatically. A few years ago up to three mothers per village would die each year; now one mother in every four villages dies from childbirth. This is still too many and we hope through our continued efforts that the mortality rate amongst mothers will be eliminated completely. Stronger mothers are starting to give birth to stronger babies and know how to care for them properly.