

Helping families plan for their futures in Assam

Sanju*, 22, is a tea garden worker in Assam, India. Like most women in her community in Tengakhat, Sanju was married to her husband at a young age and they now have an 18 month old baby girl called Pari.*

Sanju attended a video screening held by Unicef as part of a series that broadcasts lifesaving messages to raise awareness of issues around health, hygiene, child development, and survival.

Unicef airs the short entertaining films to small groups of women in communities to spark discussion and urge action around key practices and behaviours that affect children. Episodes address issues such as nutrition and growth, immunisation, sanitation, HIV and AIDS, and breastfeeding etc.

Sanju watched a film about family planning, something she had never heard of before. She was interested to see that leaving time in between having children is important. She learned that having two children in quick succession can impact on the upbringing of the family and can often lead to the mother becoming weak or suffering health problems such as anaemia or malnutrition.

Sanju also learned that having too many children too close together can limit opportunities for the family. She thought about her husband who is one of five brothers, and his family who did not have enough money for all of them to go to school. Her husband had to leave school and work from a young age to help support the family, limiting his chances for better employment in the future.

Sanju decided that having another child at this current time would affect her family and she would prefer to wait for a few years before having another baby. She spoke with her husband and mother-in-law and after a lot of conversation and debate they agreed that it would be in the best interests of their family to wait a few years for more children.

Unicef is working with the Ethical Tea Partnership to create long lasting change to help transform the lives of children in Assam. The partnership is working with communities to empower and educate young girls with the knowledge and confidence they need to protect themselves and become agents of change in their communities.

Suja is now using family planning to prevent herself from getting pregnant for the time being. She feels happy and empowered that her family will face a brighter future ahead because she now has the knowledge she needs to keep them all safe.

** Names have been changed to protect identities*

