

3 Stories from the Field

**Names have been changed*

Sonam's Story

Sonam had been married for 4 years when she conceived her first baby. At the time of conception, Sonam was 20 years old. Being from a very remote rural area of the upper Dolpa District, Sonam had no awareness of the importance of prenatal care, nor did she think she needed to attend the birthing center. Sonam's family is nomadic and all throughout her pregnancy, Sonam was on the move and never received any prenatal care.

When Sonam went into labor, she and her husband were near Saldang, a community where One Heart World-Wide has been training Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) and setting up a birthing center. Sonam was fully intent on delivering her baby by herself, in her tent, the same way her mother and grandmother had done before her. After 11 hours of labor, her husband became worried and reached out to Tashi Tsering, the local FCHV who had recently been trained by One Heart World-Wide. Tashi came at once and after seeing Sonam, she convinced Sonam's husband to take her to the nearby birthing center. The skilled birth attendant (SBA) at the center tended to Sonam's needs and she delivered the next day. Shortly after the birth, Sonam experienced intense bleeding. The skilled birth attendant immediately recognized the bleeding as postpartum hemorrhage, a leading cause of maternal deaths in Nepal. She quickly administered medication and fluids to stop the bleeding then closely monitored Sonam's vital signs.

Sonam's life was saved and her family was so grateful that they vowed to get the word out in the community to assure that all other pregnant women deliver at the birthing center. Sonam and her husband are also very grateful to Tashi Tsering. In Sonam's words "we are so grateful because she (Tashi) was there to help us. I see now that I may not have survived had my husband not listened to Tashi and taken me to the birthing center."



Nyma's Story

Nyma and Pasang were excited to welcome their first son in the rural community of Liku. At the time of the pregnancy, Nyma was 22 years old and already had two daughters. Having previously delivered both her daughters alone at home, Nyma had never considered going to the birthing center for prenatal care. However, a newly trained Female Community Health Volunteer (FCHV) in her community finally convinced Nyma to go to the birthing center for an exam, one month before her delivery date. During her exam, the skilled birth attendant realized that the baby was in a breech position (bottom down, rather than head down). She advised Nyma to go to the city of Nepalgunj for a C-section delivery. None of the health facilities in Dolpa are currently equipped to provide a C-section and all emergencies are referred to Nepalgunj (the nearest referral hospital able to provide C-sections). Because transport is so

unreliable, the skilled birth attendant recommended that Nyma plan to go to Nepalgunj at least a week before her delivery date and undergo a planned C-section to be safe.

Nyma did not heed the skilled birth attendant's advice. She went home and made no plans to go to Nepalgunj for her delivery. Her intention was to deliver her son the way she delivered her daughters, by herself. She went into labor five days before her expected delivery date. The baby was still in a breech position and Nyma had high blood pressure and edema in her legs—an indication of preeclampsia, a potentially fatal complication. The FCHV was really worried and she tried to convince Nyma to at least come to the birthing center. At the beginning Nyma refused, but after 12 hours of painful labor, she relented and went with the FCHV to the birthing center near her home in Liku. The skilled birth attendant treated Nyma and delivered her baby. It was a difficult birth but with the help of the SBA, both mother and baby survived.

Nyma expressed gratitude for her safe delivery: "When the birthing center staff told me that my baby's position is not very good and anything can happen, even death, there was a moment when I thought if I had made a mistake not going to Nepalgunj. But nothing could have been done since it was already late. I honestly totally depended on the birthing center for mine and my baby's life, but since my baby and I were alive and healthy, I am indebted to them for all they have done. Also I am so indebted to Laxmi (the FCHV) for her advice." Nyma also said, "without Laxmi (the FCHV) being there, these moments of happiness would not have been possible." Nyma is now committed to spread the word in her community to save lives.





Dorje's Story

15-year-old Dorje has been married for one year already and this is her first pregnancy. Dorje is from the Tripurakot community of the Dolpa district. Dorje was at the very beginning of her pregnancy when Pema, a Female Community Health Volunteer (FCHV) trained by One Heart World-Wide reached out to her. Dorje received basic prenatal care from Pema throughout her pregnancy. Pema also took Dorje to the nearest birthing center in Dunai for regular physical examinations. One Heart World-Wide recently established the birthing center in the Dunai Hospital, which did not previously have the capacity to assist with deliveries. There are very few options for a safe birth in Dolpa, and the Dunai Hospital was the first health facility to be upgraded to become a fully functioning birthing center in the district. In establishing the birthing center, One Heart provided all of the obstetric care equipment and trained skilled birth attendants (SBA) to serve on the staff there.

Dorje had four prenatal checkups at the birthing center and was counseled against the potentially risky home delivery that she had originally planned to have. When she went into labor, she went to the Dunai Hospital, where she experienced a prolonged labor that lasted over 24 hours. When her baby finally arrived with assistance from the skilled birth attendant, the baby had birth asphyxia with a blue face, hands, and feet. The skilled birth attendant cleared the baby's airways and started resuscitation with a bag and mask. After ten harrowing minutes of treatment, the baby began breathing normally. Dorje's family has expressed gratitude to the Dunai Hospital staff for saving Dorje's son's life. Dorje is so very thankful her community had Pema, a trained Female Community Health Volunteer who spent time with her, checked on her, provided her with counseling and supplements, and most importantly was effective in explaining the importance of delivering with a skilled birth attendant at the birthing center. If not for Pema, Dorje would not have gone to the birthing center for her delivery and she is quite aware that she would have lost her baby.

