
Supportive Families Enable Healthy Mothers and Thriving Babies

By SPRING/Kyrgyz Republic



Photo credit: SPRING/Kyrgyz Republic

Rano Shamyraeva with her two daughters-in-law and grandchildren.

“Supporting our daughters-in-law during their pregnancy ensures they raise healthy children.”

—Rano Shamyraeva, grandmother of two

A Family Affair

Zainalabid Shamyraev and his wife, Rano, live with their two sons, daughters-in-law, and two grandchildren in Padek village, located 50 kilometers from Ala-Buka rayon center, in Jalalabad oblast. One school, a kindergarten, and feldsher-midwife point (FAP) serve this village of 3,360 people, most of whom make a living through agriculture and livestock farming. The local health facility is small, with two family nurses.

When SPRING community activist Chinara Mavlyanova learned that Rano and Zainalabid’s daughter-in-law, Eliza Rysalieva, was pregnant, she began visiting the household, teaching the family about the importance of a healthy diet for expectant mothers, including eating foods rich in iron to prevent anemia. Excited for their new grandchild, Zainalabid and Rano made every effort to ensure Eliza attended her checkups and ate a diet rich in meat, beans, and green leafy vegetables. When Eliza gave birth to her son, Nuriman, the family supported her to ensure she could exclusively breastfeed for the first six months before introducing appropriate complementary foods.

Little did Zainalabid and Rano know, but they would soon lend this same support to daughter-in-law Asel Salimankyzy during her pregnancy with baby boy, Sultanbek. Now, the boys—Nuriman and Sultanbek—20 months and 9 months, respectively, are both thriving. “Supporting our daughters-in-law during pregnancy ensures that they give birth to healthy children. The materials provided by SPRING were useful in ensuring proper nutrition during this time.”

A Growing Trend

Familial support is evident across SPRING communities. About 650 kilometers away is Tash-Bashat, a small village of 307 households, located in the mountains on the outskirts of Naryn rayon, where the climate is harsh. The Orozbekov family lives here, including daughter-in-law, Aizhan Kurmanbek kyzy (age 26), who is pregnant.

During her first two pregnancies, Aizhan often felt weak and tired because of anemia. When SPRING began working in her community, her family was excited to learn more about the best nutrition for her and her children. SPRING activist Nurzada Aitbaeva often visited Aizhan in her home, providing useful information on handwashing, dietary diversity, and breastfeeding. It was during these home visits that Aizhan's husband, Maksat Orozbek uulu, learned how to help her practice good nutrition and hygiene during her third pregnancy. "The health of the mother and children depends upon care by the whole family," he said. The family's involvement left an impression on Nurzada, who hopes all families will be as engaged in supporting healthy practices.

Engaging Influencers

Husbands, mothers-in-law, and other family members can impede proper nutrition practices if they are not informed and engaged -- or they can support them. This is especially important during



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The Orozbekov family listens attentively as a SPRING activist talks about dietary diversity.

the 1,000-day period from the beginning of a pregnancy to 2 years of life, a critical window of opportunity for preventing chronic malnutrition and stunting later in life. Through activists' household visits, community meetings, and campaign events, SPRING promoted nutritional awareness in a gender-sensitive manner, focusing on the role of different family members in supporting better nutrition for babies and breastfeeding mothers. These platforms considered intra-household dynamics and power balances that influence the adoption of optimal nutrition practices.

From 2014 to 2018, SPRING worked to improve the nutritional status of women and children in the Kyrgyz Republic by improving nutrition-related behaviors, enhancing the quality and diversity of diets, and supporting evidence-based nutrition policies. For more information, visit <https://www.spring-nutrition.org/countries/kyrgyz-republic>.

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SPRING

JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc.
1616 Fort Myer Drive, 16th Floor
Arlington, VA 22209, USA
Phone: 703-528-7474
Fax: 703-528-7480
Email: info@spring-nutrition.org
Internet: www.spring-nutrition.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com