

# JSK's New Strategy



## Prerna [Inspiration]

### Justification for the strategy

- In rural areas and in particular rural district in the States of Bihar Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, the most important cultural factor which adversely affects the health of women and infants is the practice of early marriages, (often at 15-17) when girls are physically underdeveloped, anaemic and unprepared for pregnancy and child birth.
- According to NFHS-3\* between 61 and 65% of the rural women were married by 18 in States like Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. In comparison among rural women in Tamil Nadu, the percentage of such early marriages was 26%.
- Unable to negotiate reproductive rights, young girls give birth to children with poor chances of survival and growth.
- Almost 50% of the under five children in India are stunted and 40% are underweight.
- Child mortality is as high as 25% in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar have more than 58% underweight children.
- Adolescent pregnancies contribute to nearly 19% of total fertility and record the highest maternal mortality rates.
- Anaemia is the cause of another 20% of deaths. Anaemia is as high as 97%\*\*.
- Studies show that children born to mothers in their twenties have a 50% lower risk of dying by their first birthday than children born to teenage mothers.
- Women aged 15-19 have higher maternal death rates compared to those aged 20-24.

### JSK's approach

“Prerna” provides an opportunity for couples who have fulfilled specific **responsible parenthood** criteria to become entitled to receive a reward for breaking stereo-types. The ingredients to qualify are:-

- Girl's marriage after 19 years of age. **(Reward of Rs.5000/)**
- Giving birth to the first child after the mother was 21 years old. **(Reward of Rs.7000/ if it's a girl child & Rs 5000/ if it's a boy)**
- Keeping a 36 month gap between first and second child, and one parent getting sterilized after the second child is born. **(Reward of Rs.7000/ if it's a girl child & Rs 5000/ if it's a boy)**

Couples fulfilling any one or all of these conditions will receive the rewards as Kisan Vikas Patras

*These are all healthy, responsible practices which JSK strongly supports.*

\*NFHS- National Family Health Survey, India (2005-06)

\*\*DLHS-RCH – District Level Household Survey on Reproductive and Child Health (2002-04)

## Check List for administrators only



1. Birth registration is compulsory. In case supporting documents are not available, proper certification regarding birth and marriage from authorized sources is necessary to claim the award.
2. The upper age limit for eligible married women should be below 30 years. There is no age limit for the husband but younger is better.
3. When selecting an eligible couple, i.e. age of girl's marriage should be 19 years (not 18) and the first child should be born when the mother's age is more than 21 years. Likewise the second child should be born after 3 years gap and there should be evidence of sterilization after the second child.
4. The selection process should involve the community at all stages and the implementation should not be in *sarkari* mode. However factum of age has to be checked / certified through government sources only. The community should be satisfied about the selection and they should be capable of being 'paraded' as role models for responsible parenthood.
5. Before selecting the eligible couples, there is need to look into the reason for the girl's marriage at 19 years. If the reason supports the girl's health, education or skill learning then the selection was worthwhile. In case it was because of extraneous factors, the girl should not be included. It is very important that "Role models" should inspire confidence and not create controversy.
6. The eligible couples should be socially acceptable. Any criminal record or anything which points to unsuitability should not be present.
7. Payments would be made in the form of an NSC or Kisan Vikas Patra to be issued by the local post office and given by the Collector personally alongwith wide press coverage and messages about the health of the mother being all important for the health of the child. (JSK will supply material relevant to the district on request)