

Born to bond: The story of community health workers (CHWs) supporting psychosocial wellbeing of mothers and babies

CHWs provide timely and targeted counselling (ttC), which is enhanced (EttC) to support the mental health of mothers and psychosocial development of their infants



THE USER: Amani

AGE: 24 years old

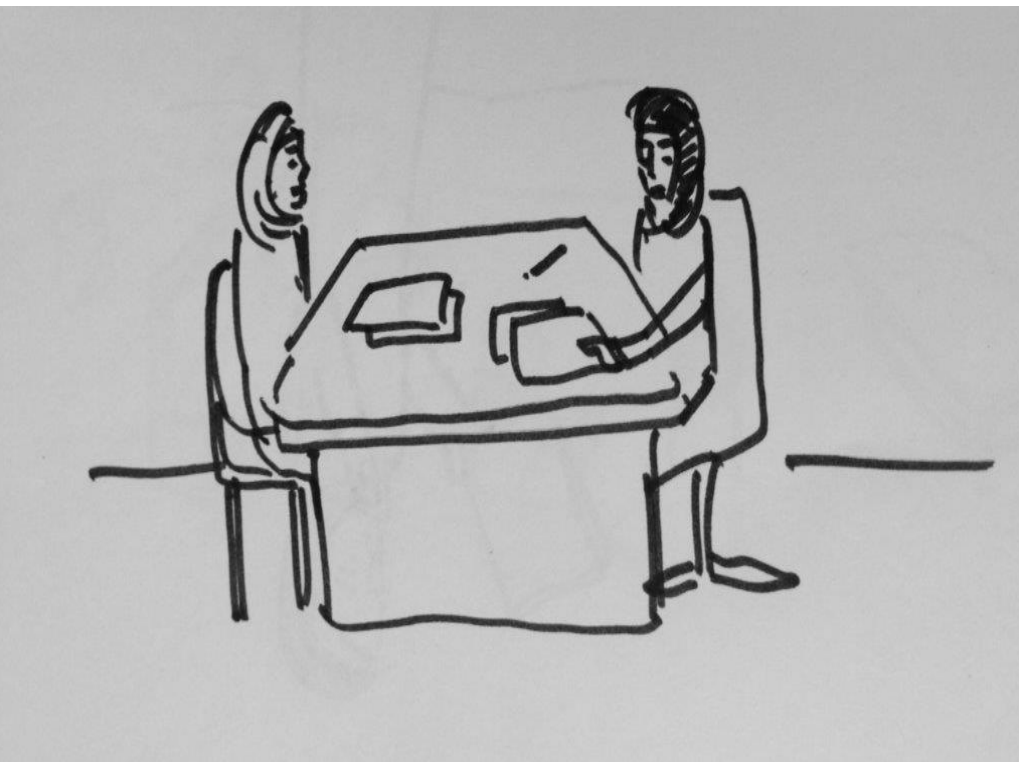
OCCUPTATION: Cleaner.

MARTIAL STATUS: Married and living with her husband and his mother.

CHILDREN: Amani is 6 months pregnant with her first child. She is excited about starting her family but is feeling worried about whether or not she can be a good parent to her baby. Caring for an infant is unfamiliar to her and she feels pressure from her mother-in-law who is already telling her what to do during pregnancy.

1. Referring

When Amani visits her local health centre, she agrees to participate in research and have a CHW visit her home to support her for the next 15 months.



2. Connecting

The CHW registers Amani as being in her third trimester of pregnancy. The CHW meets Amani, her husband and mother-in-law in their family home. She explains the EttC program to them, building Amani's trust and that of the family.



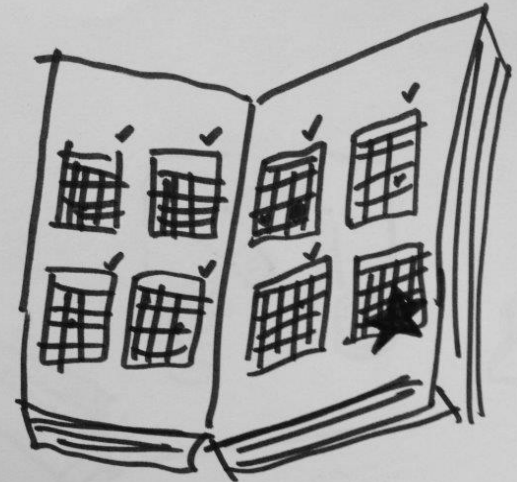
3. Enhanced Support

After the first family meeting, the CHW notices that Amani is seeming anxious about being a first-time mother. The CHW notes this down to ensure she checks in with the mother's mental health in follow-up visits.



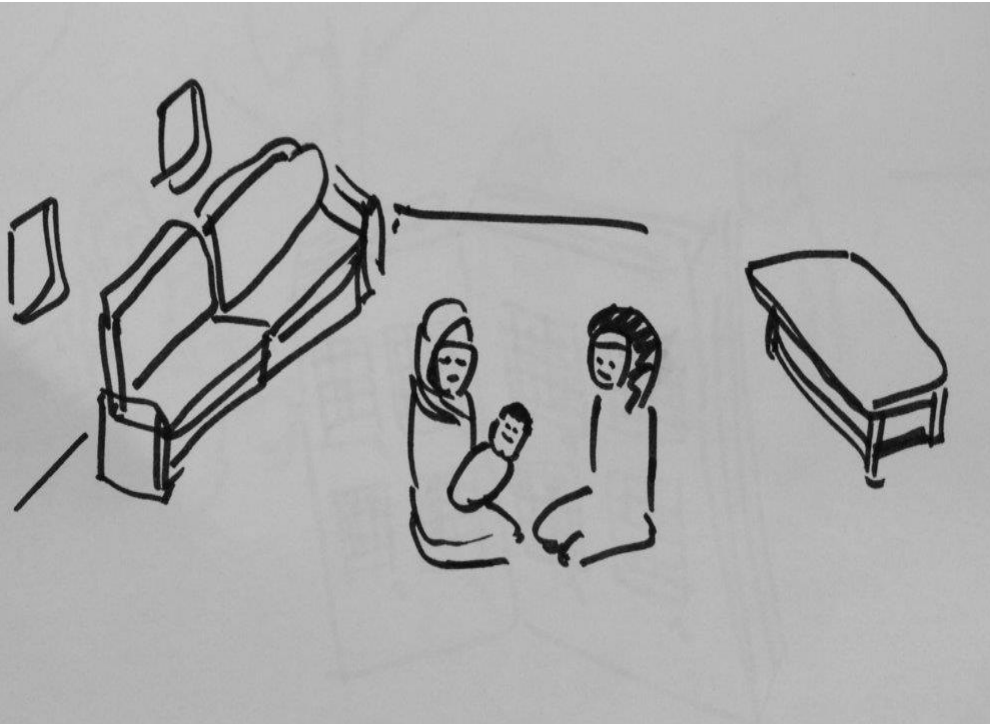
4. Timing

The CHW and Amani agree on times for the CHW to visit her. These times will depend on the phase of pregnancy and more frequent visits once the baby is born. At each visit, the CHW will provide Amani with important information that relates directly to the time of her pregnancy and/or the needs of the baby.



5. Targeted Counselling

At each home visit, the CHW provides timely information to Amani, targeting her messages based on the stage of the infant's development. They discuss topics such as nutrition, breastfeeding and hygiene. The CHW shows Amani how to play with her infant daughter, and supports Amani to reduce her nervousness and anxiety when interacting with her baby. This improves Amani's mood. Sometimes Amani's mother-in-law or husband join the play and education sessions too.



6. Mother and baby are well

After Amani's baby reaches 12 months old, she feels confident in her parenting skills. She is happy and content in her role as mother. Amani and her toddler have bonded well and the whole extended family is united in parenting approaches. Amani's child meets all age-related milestones for physical and psychosocial development. Amani is mentally well, with research questionnaires confirming this.

