



# Challenging social norms on the path to health for all

A note from the Program Director

Born on Time targets what are known as the **preterm birth LINC factors** — **unhealthy Lifestyles, maternal Infections, inadequate Nutrition and limited access to Contraception** — that can lead to babies being born too soon.



Rawshan Ali, 35, and his wife Rokaya Begum, 30, in Bangladesh

Many of these lifestyle risk factors have been normative across Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Mali for generations. Born on Time is helping to reframe what equality looks like and the health dividends it can have for women, adolescent girls and their newborns for the long term.

In partnership with women, girls and their families for better health,

Marie Bettings

## Changing cultural beliefs in Bangladesh



Rubel and Aduri with their newborn daughter, held by Rubel's mother, Romena

During Aduri's second pregnancy, she was identified as at risk by a Born on Time Community Health Worker (CHW) and registered in the program, despite pushback from her husband and mother-in-law, Romena. Aduri was eager to learn all she could about safe and healthy pregnancy and delivery. The CHW arranged for a well-known member of a local Household Decision Maker Group, Abdur Razzak, to visit Rubel to discuss safe delivery and male involvement and support. Due to Abdur's status in the community, Rubel listened to his advice and took Aduri for regular antenatal care checkups. The CHWs continued to visit Aduri's mother-in-law to discuss pregnancy and safe delivery. Romena eventually relented and stopped forcing Aduri to do heavy housework, and ensured she got enough rest and food. Rubel made sure they had a smoke-free cooking stove and did the heavy chores.

On March 12, 2019, Aduri delivered a full-term baby girl, weighing 3.2 kilograms, at the local health facility and was able to breastfeed her baby within one hour of birth. Aduri and Rubel are open to learning more about family-planning methods, and have attended regular postnatal checkups. The whole family is pleased about the healthy baby girl, who is growing well.

*"We are very happy to see the radical change [in Rubel and Aduri]; we want to see that every pregnant mother gets on time and safe delivery services, and full mental support from her partner, like Aduri."*

Abdur Razzak, member of local Household Decision Maker Group who visited Rubel, Bangladesh



## Key highlights from Quarter 1

### Bangladesh

- Formation of 372 new Fathers' Groups and 248 Young Married Couples' Groups
- Orientation on Infection Prevention and Waste Management for Family Welfare Visitors for 229 participants (175 female and 54 male) at 62 health facilities.
- Conducted 62 daughter / mother-in-law fairs, known as *Bou-Shashuri Melas*, in which young husbands also participate, with the participation of 73,625 people (45,214 women and 28,411 men).
- Supported female and male CHWs to facilitate 62 trainings for peer leaders.

### Ethiopia

- Basic emergency obstetric and newborn care training (BEmONC) using newly-revised curriculum.
- Supportive supervision and clinical mentoring visits in 66 health centres and 149 health posts.
- Development of adolescent nutrition training material and discussion guides for teachers and education focal points.

### Mali

- Fund management for 2,345 solidarity funds management committee members from women's associations.
- Quarterly fora held in the four intervention health districts to disseminate preterm birth data and progress on its prevention.
- Completed rehabilitation / building of 51 maternity wards and two kangaroo care units and officially handed over to the communities.



Training session in Mali



# Ethiopian priest fights against early marriage to help girls thrive

Child marriage has been illegal in Ethiopia for years, and it carries heavy penalties. Despite this, it is still a common practice, driven by poverty and discriminatory social norms that have far greater weight than the rule of law or penalties.

No one knows the devastating consequences of the practice more than priest Jejaw. The religious leader lost his eldest daughter to a protracted labour when she was just a teenager.

“We didn’t know what to do. She bled in front of our eyes and we didn’t know what to do. I still hold the pain of losing a child,” Jejaw recounted with sorrow.

The girl’s small and weak baby struggled to survive over the next few weeks, ultimately winning the fight to live. The child is now moving through life without her young mother.

Many in these communities are not aware of the dangers of such a young girl birthing a child of her own. Jejaw explained how, with the help of Canadian funds, he now spends his time working with Christian and Muslim religious leaders to teach about the dangers of early marriage for girls and their babies.

“I tell my [three surviving] daughters to learn from their sister, because I don’t want them to have the same fate.” Using Born on Time’s training about delayed marriage, nutrition, birth spacing and a lower workload during pregnancy, Jejaw is making a difference for women and girls in his community. “My dream, and what I’m fighting for, is for girls to thrive.”

Together, many religious leaders in the area have vowed to no longer bless any early marriages, which often take place in secret from the law.



Priest Jejaw is determined to continue his fight against early marriage

# Can home renovations impact preterm birth rates?



A mud block house in Ziasso village, with new ventilation window in kitchen

Worldwide, approximately 50% of all households and 90% of rural households utilize solid fuels such as wood, charcoal and dung for cooking or heating (WHO). This number is even higher in Mali, at 99% (Every Premie Scale). Solid fuels are commonly burned in inefficient simple stoves and in poorly-ventilated conditions. In these situations, solid fuel use generates substantial emissions of many health-damaging pollutants (WHO), which are a risk factor for increased preterm births.

Similar to most rural villages in Mali, houses in Ziasso village are built from mud bricks with little ventilation, and cooking is done with firewood. Community health workers and members of community associations shared the knowledge they gained from Born on Time trainings regarding the effect that cooking smoke has as a contributor to preterm birth. Preterm births have been increasing in Ziasso village recently. With their enhanced awareness, the men of the village worked together to add a kitchen window to each house in Ziasso.

“We did not know that smoke could lead to premature births ... We thank the Born on Time project for that.”



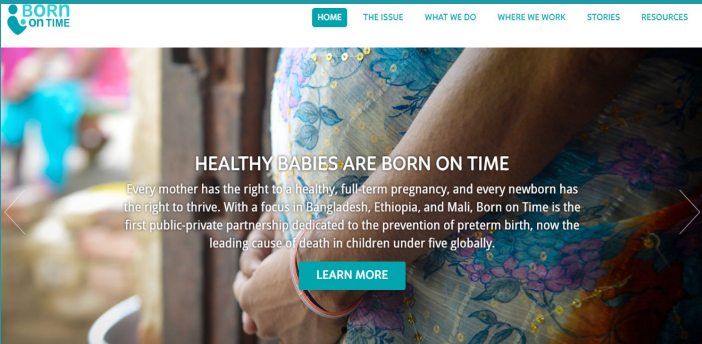
Priest Jejaw’s second-youngest daughter, who graduated after her father renounced early marriage

## SPREADING THE WORD



**Born on Time annual report**

Check out our recently released annual report! It’s full of highlights, stories and statistics from 2018. You can download it from the Born on Time website.



### Born on Time website

The Born on Time website has a new look — check it out at [bornontime.org](https://bornontime.org)



**CONTACT:**  
Marie Bettings, Program Director, Born on Time  
1 World Drive | Mississauga, Ontario | L5T 2Y4 | [Marie\\_Bettings@worldvision.ca](mailto:Marie_Bettings@worldvision.ca)

[bornontime.org](https://bornontime.org)