At 39 years of age, Marilyn is five months pregnant with her 13th child. She lives in an urban poor area in Mindanao, Philippines.
Marilyn is one of 23 million poor Filipinos who struggle daily just to survive and maintain their health.

To reach her home, we had to walk along wooden planks and raised footbridges to avoid the sewage and drainage running along the narrow road. Marilyn is a gracious host, welcoming us to her modest home to hear her story.
Her first son was born when she was 14. She never visited a health care facility for antenatal care or immunizations until her sixth pregnancy ended with the deaths of twins during a home birth.

Raising a large family is tough for Marilyn and her partner Dindoy, with money tight and work hard to find. To support their family, Marilyn and Dindoy take on odd jobs.
Marilyn sometimes makes a little money by ferrying passengers short distances in a borrowed “trisikad,” a passenger tricycle. On a good day, Dindoy brings home about US$ 4, not enough to feed everyone. They cannot afford to make health care and child education a priority for the family.

Lakbay Buhay Kalusugan (LBK), or Journey to a Healthy Life, helps families like Marilyn's. LBK uses a bus as a platform for the Philippine Department of Health and local government units to reach out to poor families and communities.
LBK is a public-private partnership that catalyzes action by business communities, health workers, volunteers, and local leaders. It was developed and launched with support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Health Promotion and Communication Project.

Customized as a mobile consultation clinic for women and children, LBK offers antenatal, postpartum, and child care services with integrated family planning and nutrition counseling.
LBK also promotes health through an interactive health exhibit, health education classes, radio spots, and video, all presented in fun, fiesta-like settings typical of Filipino culture.

Managed by trained local health volunteers, the interactive exhibit offers a unique way of learning and processing health messages in groups.
During LBK, nurses and midwives conduct health classes on safe motherhood, family planning, and child health, providing another opportunity to educate families about healthy practices and behaviors.

The health classes recommend at least four antenatal care visits and facility-based delivery, teach women how to recognize the signs of a medical emergency during pregnancy, and offer other pregnancy- and family care-related advice. The classes stress that pregnancy is safer when the family is prepared.
During LBK, children receive check-ups, vaccines, vitamin A supplements, and deworming tablets.

Since March 2011, LBK has travelled to 19 different areas across the Philippines, reaching over 44,000 poor women, men, and children – like Marilyn and her family – with key health messages and services.
Having learned from her painful experience of losing her twins during pregnancy and having learned more from her LBK experience, Marilyn now attends antenatal visits at the health center where she plans to deliver her next child.

The LBK has contributed to an increased awareness about family health among the beneficiaries that has led them to do specific actions including starting to use a family planning method, visiting health care facility, practicing exclusive breastfeeding, and going for antenatal care visits.
Inspired by LBK’s success, the Philippine government is allocating funds to the program in 2012 and beyond to bring LBK to other areas. Local governments in Muslim Mindanao and Bicol have started to adopt and implement local versions of LBK. More local governments are expected to follow.

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