

# Child Immunization

## Preparation:

- In this factsheet, the members will learn the importance of immunization for infants and young children.
- Before the meeting, the VAG leader should have all the information on where vaccinations are given and the costs in the community, if there are any.
- The VAG leader should read through the factsheet and make sure that he/ she understands the content.
- A vaccine is a medicine that is given to prevent disease. Immunization means to make a person immune to diseases, through vaccination.

## Why is immunization important for a child?

- Vaccines give protection against many very dangerous diseases by building up the child's defenses (immunization), so the child is not likely to get ill.
- A child that is not immunized may survive these diseases, but it will be weakened by them. The child will be undernourished and will not grow well.
- Prevention is the best cure: It is better to take the child for vaccinations while it is healthy, than to take it for treatment when it is sick or dying.



## Information on vaccination.

### Our children need immunization for the following diseases:

- Tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, measles, meningitis, hepatitis B, pneumonia.
- Measles can cause a child to have mental problems, can cause blindness, and often the child dies.
- Polio can cause the child to be crippled for life.

*(There is a factsheet about tuberculosis that you can use in another meeting.)*

*Show the two drawings.*

### What is vaccination:

- A vaccination is usually an injection of medicine in the child's arm.
- There is also a vaccine that consists of drops in the mouth (that is the one for polio).
- For some diseases, the child needs several vaccinations.

### Possible side effects after a vaccination:

- After an injection the child may cry, develop fever, a rash or small sore. It is normal.
- The child should be given plenty of foods and drinks; breast feeding should continue.
- If the problem seems serious or lasts more than 3 days, the child must be taken to the health center.

**When and where can we take a child for vaccination?**

*You should have the information ready about how and when parents in your community are informed that they can take their child for immunization, and the location.*

- There is a schedule of vaccinations that parents should follow for their child's immunization.
- A child needs vaccinations several times.
- It is very important for the child to complete the full course of vaccinations, otherwise the vaccines may not work.
- The child should be brought for immunization on the given day even if the child has a mild illness.
- It's very important to bring the child for immunization, even if you are behind schedule. The health worker will advise you what to do and will change the schedule if necessary.
- Pregnant women should be vaccinated for tetanus during each pregnancy, to protect the unborn child.

**Key information.**

Vaccines build up the child's defenses against very dangerous diseases. If a child is not immunized:

- It runs the risk of getting these diseases.
- Even if it survives, it will remain weak or handicapped for the rest of its life.

**What to do.**

- *Make sure that the members have understood the importance of child immunization.*
- *Plan for actions to ensure that people in our community take their children for vaccination. You should have information about costs, if there are any (e.g. a contribution or travel expenses) and let the members discuss about ways to afford the costs. Let the members discuss freely about any actions they want to take. Write the actions down in the action list in the VAG meeting report.*

**Concluding notes.**

- *Remind the members about the action points they have decided on.*
- *Ask if there are any further questions.*
- *Agree on the date, time, place and topic of the next meeting.*
- *Close the meeting.*