

Establishing good relationships

Preparation:

- *In this factsheet, the VAG members learn about the importance of good relationships for the welfare of people. Especially the relationships within the family are important. After this meeting, the members should be able to plan and implement actions on improving their relationships on different levels in the community.*
- *The homework assignment requires paper and pencil for every member.*
- *The VAG leader should read through the factsheet and make sure he/ she understands its content.*

Part 1: Relationships.

Definition of relationship.

Relationship means the connection between people. Every person is connected to other persons in various ways. So, we all have several relationships. There are also relationships between groups of people, for instance between families, communities, etc. and also between a leader and those who are led.

When we're talking about the relationship between people we usually mean the way one party treats the other, or the way they think of each other. In short, we are discussing the nature of that relationship.

What are important relationships in our lives?

Encourage the members to come up with all kinds of examples, like below:

Relationships between:

- Family members.
- Children and parents/ guardians.
- Husband and wife.
- Men and women.
- Neighbours/ other community members.
- Teachers and pupils.
- Employer and employee.
- Village leader and community.
- Religious leader and community.

Why is it important for us to have good relationships with people?

Where relationships between people are good, respect for human rights and peace will prevail. Good relationships between people in all levels of the community bring about development. On a personal level, having good relationships with the people around you breeds trust in yourself and in others.

Why is it sometimes difficult to have, or build, a good relationship with others?

It is easier to have a good relationship with someone who is similar to ourselves, because it is easier to reach an understanding. It's more difficult to build a good relationship with people who are different, or whom we think are different from us. It

can also be difficult to have a good relationship with someone who holds different views from ourselves. Furthermore, we all make mistakes and this can lead to a deterioration of our relationships.

How to build good relationships.

- Building good relationships is a day to day task for everyone and it is hard work.
- To be able to improve our relationships, we need to be aware of the fact that all human beings are equal.
- We accept differences between people and we understand that nobody is perfect. We all have weaknesses and we make mistakes: this is human.
- The two key components of a good relationship are respect and communication.

Respect means:

Acknowledging that we are different, but equal, human beings. It also means that you treat the other the way you want to be treated.

Communication means:

That you talk with each other and listen to each other, so everyone feels that their opinions and feelings matter. It also means that you don't withhold information from each other and that you are honest.

Respect and communication are important in all levels of our community: on a personal level, the family level, and the community level.

Can you give examples of good communication in different levels of the community?

You may give them clues to the examples below. Like "how can the village government communicate well" or "how does a person communicate well".

Possible examples:

- A person who is willing to listen to others and to respect their views, especially when they are of the opposite sex.
- A person who takes an interest in all that's happening in families and the community as a whole.
- In family and community level, all members participate in decision-making.
- In family and community level, all members participate in planning strategies for development.
- Village government is transparent in community matters, it informs the community about decisions and plans.
- Husband and wife/ parents are open about all family affairs, also with their children.

Part 2: Establishing good family relations.

What does it mean to you to have a family?

Let the members discuss. You may add the question "What would it be like to have no family?"

End the discussion and show the members the two drawings of an unhappy family and a happy family; ask them to look carefully and compare the two. Then ask the questions below.



What is a bad family relationship?

This is a family situation in which there is a lot of arguing and fighting, or domestic violence. There is no respect for each other and no communication at all. There is no cooperation between the members and all the work is being done by one person (the wife/ mother). As a consequence, the household and the family members are untidy and living conditions are unhealthy. The family members are unhappy.

What is a good family relationship?

This is a family situation in which there is care and attention between the members. There is respect and communication. They share household duties. The family members can develop their skills and they feel safe. This family is at peace and they live in dignity. They are happy. Furthermore, family members support each other in good and in bad times and they share the pride of each other's success.

Why are good family relationships important in our community?

- Families that function well, are the basis for a community that functions well.
- Family members who feel loved and safe at home, will try to achieve the same feelings for everyone in the community as a whole.
- Children from happy families make a better start in life. They will benefit from their upbringing later in life and this will ensure a better future for the community.
- Everyone can have his/ her needs met at home and doesn't have to go elsewhere.

How important is a good relationship (respect and communication) between a wife and husband?

This relationship is very important, because a couple are the builders of their family. If this relationship is unstable, their children and the other family members will suffer. Furthermore, parents set the example for their children.

How can a wife and husband improve their relationship?

- They can communicate better by listening to each other.
- They can make plans together for the future of the family by putting down strategies and both taking an active role in implementing their plans.
- They can help each other out.
- They can raise the children together (in stead of one parent taking full responsibility).
- They can accept each other's differences, try to forgive each other for mistakes and move on.

Exercise: Sharing household duties.

Give every member paper and pencil and ask the members to make a table like the example below. Let them list below their tables the household chores of their household (they can also use small symbols for this). They can take the empty table home with them and discuss the division of the chores with their partners, children and other household members and fill in the table. Give the members the following instructions:

- *It is important that all family members agree with the table.*
- *Duties can be shared if necessary. Younger children should have an older child help them with heavy chores.*
- *There should be variation in the chores of every family member.*

Once the table is completed, the whole family can adhere to it. This is basically a homework assignment and should be followed up in a next meeting.

While making the table, the members can discuss the following questions:

What kind of household duties are there?

How are household duties usually divided among family members (husband/ father, wife/ mother, children, grandparents, other family members)?

Example of household table.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
Father							
Mother							
Oldest child							
Second child							
Third child							
Grandparent							
...							

Examples of chores:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| cleaning the floor | sweeping around the house |
| washing clothes | washing dishes |
| cooking | fetching water |
| disposing waste | etc. |

In a next meeting, the members can discuss how negotiations about the division of household chores went and how agreements were reached.

Key Information.

- A relationship is the connection between two or more people.
- It is important to have good relationships with each other in the community, because this will help us move forward and to live in dignity.
- To build a good relationship is hard work. It requires respect and communication. It is important that we accept each other's differences and forgive mistakes.
- The family relationship is especially important because the family is the building block of society. It is the starting point for development.

What to do

- *Ensure that all the members have understood the importance of working on good relationships in the community.*
- *Plan actions for achieving better relationships within the community on every level listed below. Let the members discuss freely about any actions they want to take and decide which actions need to be followed up and by whom. Write the actions down in the action list in the VAG meeting report.*

Possible actions for improving relationships on the following levels:

The community as a whole

- We can come up with strategies on how to help vulnerable community members (orphans, widows, handicapped/ chronically ill people, the elderly, the poorest, etc).
- We can engage and cooperate in the planning and implementation of development strategies on the family and community levels.
- We can encourage the village government to account regularly for their actions, for instance by informing the community of different policies, reading out income and expenditure reports, etc.

The school environment

- Teachers can build trust with their pupils by encouraging them to ask questions and to come to their teachers when they need help.
- We can encourage our children/ pupils to do their best in school, to do their homework and help each other in and outside of class.
- Parents can follow up on their child's progress with the teacher.

Parents and children

- Parents/ guardians can be patient with their children and encourage them to ask any question or to ask for help, without fear. Parents can listen to the opinions of their children.
- Parents can take an interest in their children's education (e.g. follow up what the child learns at school, help with homework, encourage the child to learn, find out how the child is being treated in school).
- Children can be encouraged to adhere to the teachings (on life skills) of their parents, by explaining these teachings to them.

Husband and wife

- We can encourage couples to respect each other and to communicate; we can give the good example ourselves.

The family/ household as a whole

- We can set up a housework table with our family and agree to adhere to it. Every once in awhile the family can decide together to improve/make alterations in the table.
- We can hold family meetings where the focus is on discussing family matters by using the principles of respect and communication.

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.*