

# Maternal Care

## *Preparation:*

- *In this factsheet, the members will learn the importance of the caretaking of the newborn and his/her mother. After the meeting, the members should understand how to ensure safe maternal care.*
- *The VAG leader should read through the factsheet and make sure that he/ she understands the content.*
- *You will need a flipcard for this factsheet.*

## **What is important for women who just gave birth?**

The period after giving birth is a time of changes for the mother, both emotionally (she just became a mother, how to cope with that?) and physically (the woman is exhausted from the pregnancy and giving birth). Therefore, it is important for a mother and her family to take good care of her, so that she can rebuild her strength as it was before getting pregnant. To get the woman back in her pre-pregnant state, the following cases are important.

## *Write these on a flipcard.*

- Rest and Care
- Nutrition
- Spending time with the baby
- Hygiene

*Ask the members what they think about these different terms. Do they know this is important? Do they also know why? After the discussion the leader explains why, using the following information:*

## **Why does she need enough rest and care?**

Babies have different time clocks than adults. A typical newborn awakens about every three to four hours and needs to be fed, changed, and comforted. This could be exhausting for the mother, since a good night sleep may not be possible for several months and the mother has to breast feed her baby when he/she is hungry. Through resting after pregnancy, the mother reduces the chance of getting health problems, like backache.

### Tips

- In the first few weeks, a mother needs to be relieved of all responsibilities other than feeding the baby and taking care of herself. Chores should be taken over as much as possible by a family member or someone else.
- Try to sleep when the baby sleeps.
- Have your baby sleep close to you for feedings at night.
- Make sure that the place where the mother rests is comfortable.

- It is best for mothers and their healthy baby to stay together after birth. If mother and baby are separated, this might have a harmful effect on their relationship and on breastfeeding.

Drawing 1: Bad situation



Drawing 2: Good situation



### Why is good nutrition important for a woman who just gave birth?

The mother needs to recover from pregnancy and child birth and at the same time has to breastfeed her baby. Therefore the mother is recommended to eat a regular, nutritious and varied diet which contains the staple food (maize, potatoes, bread etc), cereals, vegetables, fruits and possibly also some milk, dairy products, fish, meat, eggs, dry fruits and nuts.

### Why is hygiene important?

Hygiene is very important for the health of mother and baby. Therefore, she is recommended to bath more often/ daily. take a shower every day. If the mother has stitches, she should wash the affected area with water and soap. When the mother breastfeeds the baby, it is necessary that she washes her breasts and nipples carefully with water and no soap.

**Debate: How do we treat women who just delivered in our community?**

*Let the members tell how it is done in the community. How are the women treated. Do they get help after birth, do they rest, get good nutrition, and have access to proper hygiene and sanitation? Discuss what is going well and if there are habits or traditions that possibly endanger the health of the woman and child. Discuss why such habits/ traditions are still followed? Are they still valid or important to be continued or do they need to be reconsidered? What can be improved?*

*Let the members discuss. Try to give the word to women as well as men. Do they agree on this matter?*

**Key information**

In the period after delivery, this is important for women:

- Rest and Care
- Nutrition
- Spending time with the baby
- Hygiene

**What to do**

**What can our community do to make sure women will have good maternal care?**

*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 and agree which actions need follow up and by who.*

**Concluding notes.**

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