

3 - Engaging Communities & Community Leaders in Dialogue

Storyline

A frontline worker (FLW) is transferred to a new area. He is eager to start working but is informed by the other FLWs that there is an influential elder in the community who has been telling people to not take their children for immunization. Knowing that it may be difficult to get through to the elder, the FLWs reach out to a few other community leaders to find out about the attitudes in the community. One of the other leaders offers to introduce the FLWs to the elder so that they can find out first-hand what the issue is.

During the meeting with the elder, he is at first suspicious of the motives of the FLWs. The elder says that while he has not told people not to vaccinate their children, he was opposed to some of the vaccinations and is concerned about the number of required vaccines. He is, however, willing to hear what the FLWs have to say. As the new FLW addresses the elder's concerns, the elder expresses his appreciation for the fact that vaccines will help his grandchildren be better protected than he was when he was growing up. The elder also expresses his gratitude that the FLWs came to talk to him. The elder offers to work with the FLWs and other community leaders to organize a community dialogue to clear up the rumors about his opposition to vaccination and to promote vaccination.

Characters

Abraham	FLW who just got transferred
Agnes	FLW 2
Mohammad	FLW 3
Bina	(Community Leader) Women's group leader
Arjun	(Community Leader) Councilor
Malik Ji	Elder of the Malik family
Harish	Community member 1
Anna	Community member 2

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Scene 1 – Exterior – On the road enroute to the health facility

(Abraham and other FLWs have just met at a tea shop in the morning and they are seen talking and walking to the health facility to start their day)

Agnes: Good morning, Abraham!

Abraham: Good morning Agnes! Good morning Mohammad!

Mohammad: Looks like this is **your** favorite tea shop too. Agnes and I always stop here in the morning before we go to work.

Agnes: So, how is our village treating you, Abraham? Hope the move from your old area hasn't been too hard on you?

Abraham: Not at all, it's been great so far! *(he pays for his tea and they start walking together)* But I am a bit surprised that not many parents bring their children for immunization.

Agnes: You're right. Sadly, many parents here don't get their children immunized.

Mohammad: There is an influential elder called Malik who has been telling people not to get their children immunized. We have talked to him in the past but none of us have been able to convince him so far. Do you have any ideas that we can try?

Abraham: I'm still new here but are there any other local community leaders who we can ask for help?

Agnes: How will they be able to help?

Abraham: Well, with their credibility and our knowledge, we may be able to approach the elder together to clear any misunderstanding and put the rumors to rest. Then we can do the same with the community members as well.

Agnes: That sounds like a great idea! I can try talking to Bina – she's a teacher and also a women's group leader.

Mohammad: And I'll talk to Arjun – he's a religious leader. We can then take Bina and Arjun to meet with Malik.

Abraham: Great! Then let's get to work!

(All 3 have arrived and are seen entering the health facility premises)

Narrator: One month later.... *(Text One month later... appears on the screen).*

Malik convenes the meeting.

Scene 2 – Exterior – Community gathering

Malik, Arjun and Bina use their influence to gather the community for a discussion

Community members are confused – Malik ji is opening the meeting when they thought that he had a problem with vaccination.

Malik: Brothers and sisters, thank you for coming today. I wanted to talk to you about an important concern regarding our children's well-being. These community health agents have brought to my attention that our children are not protected against diseases, because we are not getting them vaccinated. So, I have brought you all together so they can talk to you about the importance of immunization.

(Malik gestures towards Abraham to take over)

Abraham: Hello, everyone. My name is Abraham and I'm the new health worker at your local clinic. I understand that several children around here are not vaccinated which leaves your children at risk of harmful diseases. My colleagues and I are here to answer any questions or concerns that you might have about immunization.

(Community members mutter indistinctly, until one of them speaks up)

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Harish: I have some questions. Will these medicines harm our children in any way? I know that a child in my neighborhood had a fever after receiving one of these vaccines.

Abraham: It's a good thing you brought that up. We always inform the family that some symptoms may emerge in some cases after the vaccinations. A mild fever is one example of what we call a side-effect, which may occur in rare cases. However, we assure you that these mild side-effect are normal, they are manageable and almost always go away in one or two days. If the fever persists, you can always seek help from a health provider or bring the child to the clinic as it could be unrelated to the vaccine.

Agnes: Thank you for raising that question. We need this kind of open discussion, so we encourage you to ask as many questions as you would like.

Mohammad (to camera): In this way, the health workers patiently addressed all of the community members' concerns one by one until the community was convinced. Then Harish puts his hand up again with a final question.

Harish: I would like to know how Malik ji has organized this meeting when we all thought he had some hesitations about vaccination.

Malik: Good question Harish. As you know I had some concerns in the past, but these health agents were able to address them and convince me of the safety of vaccines. Let me tell you what happened...

(Flash back begins with sound and visuals moving to indicate we are about to see a flashback)

Scene 3 – Interior – Malik family house

(The community leaders and the FLWs arrive inside the Malik family house. All of them settle down in the courtyard. The Malik family head walks out to the courtyard)

Malik: Hello everyone! So, Bina told me you wanted to speak to me, what's this about?

Abraham: First of all, sir, thank you for taking the time to speak to us. I just moved to this area and I heard that the children of this community are not being vaccinated, so we wanted to talk to you all and understand why this has become a trend in the community.

Malik: Oh no, not this again. I am getting tired of talking about this.

Bina: Brother, please hear them out. They only mean well for our community and our children.

Malik: I don't have a lot of patience for this, but since you have come all this way, I will hear you out.

Abraham: Thank you, that means a lot. Well, it's just that we have heard some people here are refusing immunization because of the concerns you have voiced and...

Malik: What? Hold on. Listen here, young man. Let me be very clear, I have never told anyone not to vaccinate their children.

Abraham: Malik ji, I certainly do not mean any disrespect. I am just trying to understand why people are hesitating to vaccinate their children, so we can fix it and do what's best for the children of our community. I know that you do a lot to support and promote the wellbeing of this community. And I am very sorry to see that people are using your name to refuse immunization.

Malik: Mmmm...look, I may have expressed some concerns but I have the right to do so.

Bina: Of course you do. Why don't you tell them what your concerns are?

Malik: Well, I have a concern over the frequency of these vaccinations. If you trust the vaccine, why do you need to give the same thing over and over again?

Abraham: Sir, firstly there are different vaccines for different illnesses. Sometimes vaccines need to be given multiple times in order to be effective to fight some of these diseases. But once the child has received his or her full schedule of vaccines the protection usually lasts a lifetime.

Malik: But then, why do these children fall sick after being vaccinated?

Agnes: Sir, that is because some vaccines need time to take effect, and others may sometimes have side-effects like a mild fever but that is easily manageable. However, if parents don't bring their children

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for routine immunization, then children are prone to much more dangerous diseases like polio, tuberculosis, and measles.

(Malik is seen nodding and his expression softens as he understands it better now)

Bina: Do you remember sir, when there was that bad outbreak of measles two years ago in the neighboring village?

Malik: Yes, that was horrible.

Mohammad: Well, you see sir, we were just lucky that it was brought under control quickly before it reached our village, otherwise the situation would have been very bad, considering that many parents in our village have refused to have their children vaccinated.

Malik: We cannot allow that to happen!

Abraham: That is why we need your help. If you give us a chance, we'd like to sit with you and the community together and address all your concerns. Everyone in this community respects you and your family. We feel the community would listen if you talk to them.

(Everyone waits in suspense for Malik's response)

Malik: Mmmm... *(Pause)* What do you think Bina and Arjun?

Arjun: We agree with them, Malik ji– it will be good to address the community together.

Malik: Okay then, we can organize a community meeting. I also want to clear any rumors about my opposition to vaccinations.

Arjun: I think I should be able to arrange a location that'll be convenient for everybody.

Abraham: That sounds perfect!

Flashback ends and we are back at the community meeting

Malik: That's how they were able to convince me about the importance of vaccinations.

Anna: That's great. Well if vaccines protect from dangerous diseases then I don't see a reason why anyone should oppose them now.

Harish: Yeah, if that's what our children need then we will ensure they get vaccinated.

Malik: Good! We owe our children that.

Mohammad: Thank you everyone and thank you Malik ji, for taking the time to listen to us and for your understanding.

Malik: *(Gesturing to the community)* We should be the ones thanking you for caring about our community! I'm glad that you brought us all together for an open discussion and helped allay all our concerns. I assure you, you'll get all the support from all of us.

Anna: Yes! Let's not wait. Let's vaccinate.

Everyone claps and fade out.

The End.