

Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa makes an institutional commitment to promote family planning

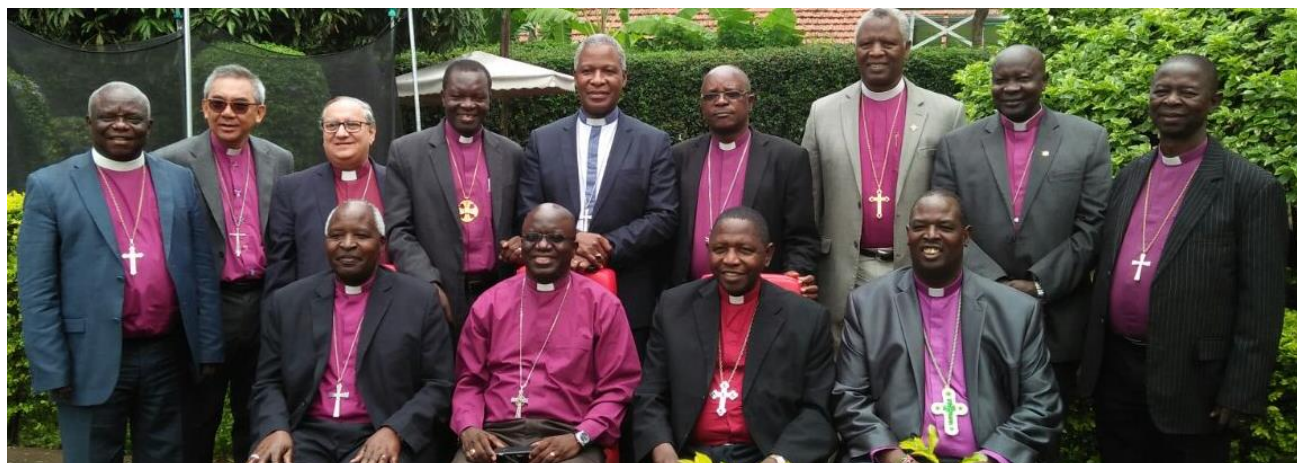
In 2017, the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA) adopted a resolution on family health and family planning services and information. This resolution was shared with all the 13 provinces, dioceses and departments of Anglican churches in Africa, reaching over 36 African countries. Follow-up initiatives have been undertaken in, among others, Ghana for institutional change and Uganda for revision of the theological curriculum and advocacy in policy and budgeting processes in Mityana diocese. CAPA is a founding member of Faith to Action Network, and serves on its Steering Council.



CAPA is a continental faith-based organisation established in 1979 that coordinates and creates space for primates and other church leaders to engender fellowship and articulates issues affecting the church and communities across the region. CAPA operates through 13 Anglican provinces, representing 36 African countries. Decisions of the Council are shared with all structures and institutions of the Anglican Church in Africa. These recommendations and resolutions offer guidance to the provinces and dioceses and reach over 40 million followers.

On 10 May 2017, the CAPA Standing Committee met in Kitwe, Zambia, and adopted a resolution calling on the Anglican Church to actively promote family planning services and information.

‘The Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa Standing Committee meeting at Kitwe, Zambia on the 10th May 2017 deliberated on the impact of large populations on the meager resources both at family and national levels and notes that this is partly responsible for the impoverished living that characterizes the continent and the degradation of the environment. In keeping with CAPA’s mission of building thriving families and communities on the continent and our stewardship role of mother nature, it was resolved that CAPA Provinces take responsibility for enabling efforts towards a campaign for child spacing and responsible stewardship of the environment on the continent of Africa.’



Anglican Primates’ meeting, Nairobi, 2018

Stimulating family planning initiatives across the continent

Adoption of the resolution followed a process in which religious leaders from churches in different African countries shared their experiences and raised their voices on the importance of addressing family planning and family health. This long-term internal process within CAPA was important to building ownership and buy-in of family planning services and information to improve the life and health of the continent's people. The resolution allowed for and further stimulated initiatives in different provinces with respect to family planning services and information. In Ghana, a regional meeting of 35 senior clergy, including primates and bishops, was held in August 2017 to identify ways to make the recommendation operational. The consultation was informed by the experiences of Bishop Kaziimba of Uganda and Reverend Andrew of Rwanda related to their dioceses' family planning interventions, as well as a detailed report of the Anglican health system in Ghana. The consultation led to the development of an institutional change plan to address the issues that had come up.

An important input was a mapping of adolescent pregnancies in Ghana, with data collected in nine dioceses. CAPA repeatedly met with religious leaders in Accra, including Archbishop Albert Chama, and agreed to incorporate family planning into its agenda. The plan included a reinforcement of the commitment of all relevant stakeholders to work collaboratively and in consultative forums on strategies to reduce high rates of adolescent pregnancy in Ghana. It also included an in-depth assessment to inform the development of innovative programmes for adolescents.



CAPA, youth congress, Nairobi, 2018

In Uganda, two important initiatives concern advocacy for family planning in Mityana diocese the revision of the theological curriculum. In the first, the Church of Uganda convened and educated faith leaders and encouraged them to advocate the district government and their congregations on family planning. In 2017, Mityana diocese together with the Faith to Action Network engaged the District Health Office to prepare and launch a District Family Planning Costed Implementation Plan. This aims to accelerate universal access to family planning services in order to increase the modern contraceptive prevalence rate and reduce unmet need.



CAPA, youth congress, Nairobi, 2018

Continuous information-sharing with and education of district decision-makers contributed to a tripling of the district budget for family planning, and hence increased people’s access to family planning services. Mityana diocese engaged local government representatives as well as other civil society stakeholders in 23 technical meetings and consultations to develop the plan, which also included a gender budgeting session. The launch of the plan offered the opportunity to gain the commitment of not only six senior district officials but also Anglican and Muslim faith leaders. The diocese organised five interfaith meetings to join voices in promoting family planning. The diocese also instigated processes of social accountability with local leaders and citizens, on, for instance, identified shortages in contraceptives or raising awareness and increasing demand for family planning.



Rev Moses Ssemugooma, speaking at Uganda’s second national FP conference, 2017



CAPA, youth congress, Nairobi, 2018



CAPA, youth congress, Nairobi, 2018

In the second important initiative, the Church of Uganda engaged the Uganda Christian University (UCU) School of Divinity and Theology to strengthen components in its curriculum on SRH and family planning. This was supported through Faith to Action network’s grant. The dean of the UCU School of Health Sciences and Theology agreed to review the curriculum to include family planning as a foundation course. The revised curriculum engaged the House of Bishops and has been approved by the National Council for Education. The revised foundation course has significant potential, considering that graduates from UCU take on roles as clergy and lay leaders across the country. The new curriculum aims to equip religious leaders with skills and knowledge so they can start ministering on these subjects to their future congregations.

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