



## International Conference on Family Planning, 2018

### Title: Norm entrepreneurs - faith actors' role in family planning

#### Objectives:

- Present recent normative change processes in family planning promoted by faith actors
- Investigate strategies applied and lessons learnt by faith actors
- Identify main drivers of normative change in family planning within faith actors
- Engage participants in reflection on future steps to promote change in family planning norms through faith organisations

#### Description:

The World Bank suggests that 'fertility transitions may be better viewed as a norm-driven process than as the aggregate outcome of autonomous decisions' ([2015 World Development Report](#)). Social norms are people's shared expectations and beliefs on how people should behave ([ODI 2015](#)). In particular, religious beliefs often affect individuals' behaviours which impact health, including age at marriage, family structure and roles and preventive health practices like strategies couples use to achieve their preferred family size. Furthermore, misinterpretation of religious teachings fosters harmful practices including child marriage and female genital mutilation.

As "norm entrepreneurs" faith actors are well-suited to leading the change of social norms in family planning. Passionate individuals, who are well connected or highly central to a faith organization, or who have high status can play a key role in catalysing normative change in family planning. In this panel, four norm entrepreneurs will describe processes of normative change they are promoting. They will describe main milestones, lessons and results and provide an outlook on future developments.

Recent developments within the Anglican Church comprise the Council of African Provinces of Africa's resolution to promote family planning coupled with practical actions in universities and dioceses. Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims has changed its interpretation of child spacing in Islam and has renewed its theological and scholarly ties with Al Azhar University-Cairo. Using its Faith for Life model, Christian Aid has enabled local faith groups to embrace maternal and child health and family planning in Isiolo and Narok counties, Kenya. In turn, Tearfund and Église du Christ au Congo champion positive masculinities, denounce intimate partner violence and promote family planning with institutionalization in mind.

#### Implications:

These are powerful examples promoting normative change in family planning from within faith organizations. Faith to Action Network encourages and supports such organizational transformations at all levels so that these interventions are applied widely. Family planning needs to be integrated into theology and pastoral care, institutional policies and practice, faith-run schools, universities and health facilities. Exposure to these new ideas and practices on family planning need to be discussed through formal and informal channels, including through places of worship and media.



## Presentation 1

### Title: Kenyan Muslim clergy embraces child spacing after exchanges with Al Azhar University

**Presenter:** Prof. Ahmed Ragab, International Islamic Centre For Population Studies and Research, Al Azhar University

#### Background:

While all major schools of Islamic thought agree that family planning is permissible within Islam, many Muslim scholars, clerics and followers in Kenya believe that Islam opposes family planning. This misperception affects the acceptance of family planning and contributes to low contraceptive prevalence rates in Kenya's Muslim communities.

#### Methods:

In partnership with the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, a team of religious scholars and medical experts from AL-Azhar University and the County Governments, Faith to Action Network has carried out a learning caravan in Kenya's Kilifi, Lamu and Mombasa counties in 2015.

The methodology strengthens faith leaders' capacity through training and experiential learning:

- 65 imams were trained exploring the medical and theological foundations of family planning and addressing myths and misconceptions.
- Engaging with senior religious leaders increased their acceptance and ownership.
- Religious leaders paraded through the streets of Mombasa, Malindi and Lamu, and held lectures in mosques generating large media coverage, creating community awareness.
- Engagements with top-level government officials to advocate for increased budgetary allocation for family planning services in the three counties proved effective.
- A documentary was prepared as a sensitisation tool, and is now used by Imams to educate their faith communities.
- A South-South exchange visit to Al Azhar University was organized to find joint solutions to imams' capacity gaps in Kenya's coastal counties. The partnerships between the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims and Al-Azhar Mosque was revived as they met the most senior religious authorities (the Grand Imam of AL-Azhar and the Grand Mufti of Egypt).

#### Results:

63 imams adopted a 7-point commitment in support of child spacing. County decision makers allocated substantial budgets for FP in their 2016/17 county budgets. 24 scholarships were awarded to study at Al Azhar University for the academic year 2017-2018. Al Azhar agreed to offer a training programme for 20 imams recommended by Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims. 6 Al Azhar missionaries will be stationed in different parts of Kenya to educate imams on interpretations of religious texts. Substantial increases in uptake of and demand for family planning commodities in Tawfiq Hospital in Malindi and in Lamu Level 4 Hospital have been recorded.

#### Conclusions:

Collaboration between Muslim institutions and Al Azhar University can achieve fast and deep normative change in family planning. Local imams are thirsty for guidance on how to address contemporary issues from Al Azhar as a trusted and authoritative source of information in the Muslim world.



## Presentation 2

### Title: Faith leaders as key influencers of social norms linked to family planning – the case of Narok and Isiolo counties, Kenya

**Presenter:** Charles Opiyo, Christian Aid

#### **Background:**

Christian Aid has contributed to a remarkable uptake in family planning methods in Isiolo and Narok counties. Within a context of high maternal and infant mortality associated with deeply rooted harmful social norms and disempowering faith beliefs, both counties record low contraceptive prevalence. In Narok, only 23.1% of women of reproductive age and 15.1% of young women reported that they were using modern family planning methods in 2014 (baseline study).

Empowering faith leaders to challenge their own personal attitudes and misinterpretations of faith scriptures has increased positive dialogue among their followers and improved uptake of family planning services in the counties. Faith leaders believed that the Quran and Bible did not support the use of family planning, quoting passages such as Genesis 9:7 (NIV), "As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it."

#### **Methods:**

Using the Faith for Life curriculum, Christian Aid empowered 122 Christian and Muslim faith leaders to influence their congregants' positive health seeking behaviours. They identified scriptures that supported healthy living, healthy family and health practices. They gained skills in using their spaces of worship to disseminate health messages integrated into scriptural teachings. 700 FFL manuals were adapted to include messages on maternal and child health and family planning. Integrating health messages into scriptural teachings conferred legitimacy to the content.

#### **Results:**

Disseminating messages from "the pulpit" has increased dialogue on the use modern family planning methods. The 2018 end-line survey recorded significant improvement in the uptake of FP services in 30 community units in Narok. By 2018, 45.6% of women of reproductive age (15-49years) report using FP methods (up 22.5%) and 46.7% of young women aged 15-24 (up 31.6). Moreover, 43.0% of married women say they use modern contraceptives. Family planning messages have sustainably been integrated during sermons and ministering sessions with the faith leaders continued use of the manuals.

#### **Conclusions:**

Faith leaders are key social norm shapers. Working with them to interrogate scriptural basis for FP can increase uptake. The faith for Life model is effective in enhancing inter-religious dialogue and advocacy for socio-cultural norm and practice transformation. Leveraging the widespread dominance of Muslim and Christian faith practices in Narok and Isiolo has helped increase the uptake of essential services including FP. Faith leaders can become powerful agents of behaviour change on basis of scripture if spaces and systematic models to do this are developed.



## Presentation 3

### **Title: Increasing ownership of family planning within the Anglican Church in Africa**

**Presenter:** Rev Canon Grace Kaiso, Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA)

#### **Background:**

Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa is engaged in a long term normative change process, which aims at building church ownership and buy-in of family planning, with multiple change processes happening simultaneously at many levels among its 13 primates, 500 bishops, 20,000 pastors, over 100,000 lay leaders and over 40 million followers in 31 African countries.

#### **Methods:**

The normative change process is multi-layered and complex. This presentation includes three examples. In order to develop an Africa-wide FP mandate, CAPA engaged its standing committee to develop a recommendation on FP. This is the executive arm of the Anglican Church's general assembly and offers guidance to provinces and dioceses. The recommendation was prepared in a series of meetings, and subsequent regional senior clergy consultations helped identify ways in operationalizing it. This was informed by South-South exchanges from Ghana, Rwanda and Uganda, and by a mapping on teenage pregnancies in the Internal Province of Ghana and the Internal Province of West Africa. At the same time, CAPA engaged individual Bishops to increase FP service provision in their health facilities and raise awareness in their churches, radio stations and schools: For example, Bishop Kaziimba from Mityana diocese started rolling out the resolution in his parishes, after gaining skills in communicating and advocating for family planning through several trainings. Another example is the integration of family planning into the curriculum for future faith leaders at Uganda Christian University's (UCU). CAPA won senior leaders' buy-in, including the Dean of UCU, the National Council for Education and the House of Bishops, before technically developing a new curriculum.

#### **Results:**

CAPA's Standing Committee has adopted a recommendation calling on the African Anglican Church to promote family planning. This recommendation has been shared with all the Provinces, Dioceses and Departments of the Anglican Church in Africa. Family planning messages are now disseminated through Mityana Diocese's radio programmes and youth events, mass weddings, premarital sessions and post marital visits by religious leaders, during young marrieds, Mothers' union, and Fathers' union meetings. UCU School of Divinity and Theology has revised its religious leaders' curriculum, including reproductive health and family planning as a foundation course for religious leaders.

#### **Conclusions:**

Several simultaneous developments within the Anglican Church in Africa, point towards accelerated ownership of family planning. CAPA's family planning recommendation serves as a mandate to promote FP at many levels. Experiences from Uganda and elsewhere can be replicated and promoted elsewhere.



## Presentation 4

### **Title: Masculinité, Famille et Foi - engaging faith leaders to improve family planning and promote gender equality in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

**Presenter:** Francesca Quirke, Tearfund

**Background:** As part of the USAID-funded Passages Project, Masculinité, Famille et Foi is a normative intervention aiming to increase use of modern FP and decrease intimate partner violence by transforming gender norms. Tearfund, in partnership with the Institute for Reproductive Health, l'Association de Santé Familiale, and the Église du Christ au Congo (ECC) network, is implementing Masculinité, Famille et Foi in 17 Protestant congregations in Kinshasa, DRC, targeting newly-married couples and first-time parents aged 18 – 35 years. Tearfund developed the Transforming Masculinities approach to transform harmful gender norms by engaging faith leaders. Masculinité, Famille et Foi adds FP and reproductive health as core topics into this approach and provides strong links to health services.

**Methods:** Masculinité, Famille et Foi enables local faith communities to engage with newly-married couples and first-time parents to address intimate partner violence, to promote uptake of appropriate FP services and prioritize dialogue and shared decision-making. The couples participate in 8 weeks of facilitated group discussions, with an FP presentation by community health workers in the final week. Faith leaders at the national, regional and local level attend reflective scripture-based workshops to champion gender equality, positive masculinities, denounce intimate partner violence and addresses misconceptions about FP. Messaging from the pulpit are reinforced by couples who have completed the dialogues sharing testimonies and community mobilisation events which engage the whole congregation on FP and intimate partner violence.

**Results:** Formative research from a Social Norms Exploration Guide & toolkit and the mixed-methods baseline show that faith leaders and faith communities are key influencers on behaviours around FP uptake and intimate partner violence.

Ethnography and qualitative monitoring data indicate improved couple relations, joint decision-making, changes to attitudes on gender roles and shared household work and childcare. Data is also showing increased interest in FP services. Diffusion activity data shows increased instances of faith leaders preaching on intimate partner violence and FP.

End line data collection begins in September 2018.

#### **Conclusions:**

Engaging people from within the framework of faith is a critical starting point for addressing sensitive issues of intimate partner violence and FP. Masculinité, Famille et Foi was designed for scale; ECC is the DRC's Protestant network with a total membership of 20 million adherents. The proposed scale up aim is both to embed the intervention in ECC's numerous congregations, but also advocate for institutionalisation within ECC. Current focus is refining the core intervention, strengthening appropriation and handing over ownership to ECC.