Correcting a Myth: Faith Community Supports Family Planning

In unprecedented faith pre-conference, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims step up their advocacy.

It is not uncommon today to hear reports of religious leaders and communities raising objections to family planning. What is less well known is that many faith-based organizations support and provide family planning services because they realize it protects the health of mothers and children and reduces abortions by preventing unintended pregnancies. Many religious leaders in developing nations have become strong advocates of family planning to protect the health of their congregations, who suffer from too many or poorly timed and dangerous pregnancies.

“Biblically speaking, family planning is supported because it helps provide life in its fullest,” said Dr. Tonny Tumwesigye, executive director, Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau (UPMB). “If you have 100 children who are miserable, you have made the world a worse place. If you have the number of children you can successfully educate and who can enjoy good health and fulfill their potential, you are making the world a better place,” he said.

Similarly, there are Muslim leaders and imams who point out that there is nothing in the Qur'an that objects to family planning.

Faith communities have enormous potential to help close the gap and reach millions of women who currently lack family planning services. Faith is integral to the lives of many people, especially in developing nations, and faith leaders are highly respected. This puts faith groups in an ideal position to provide services, educate communities and dispel myths.

For the first time ever, approximately 80 faith leaders and representatives of faith-based organizations will meet in a Faith Pre-Conference at the International Conference on Family Planning on January 24-25 to discuss best practices in faith-based involvement in family planning and how faith communities can advocate for increased support from their governments for services.

More information, resources and publications on faith and family planning
http://www.ccih.org/family-planning-a-reproductive-health.html

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Christian Connections for International Health, the Faith to Action Network and Muhammadiyah are serving as co-chairs of the ICFP Faith Subcommittee. Other organizations represented on the subcommittee include Al-Azhar University, Engender Health, the Evidence to Action Project, the Institute for Reproductive Health, Population Action International, United Nations Population Fund and World Vision US. Participants in the pre-conference include Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist religious leaders, as well as representatives from a variety of faith-based organizations across the globe.