Correcting a Myth: Faith Community also Supports Family Planning:

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

More than 289,000 women needlessly died from complications during pregnancy and childbirth in 2013, according to the World Health Organization. Without family planning methods, women face poorly timed or closely spaced pregnancies, which endanger both mothers and children. Unfortunately, more than 222 million women lack access to family planning methods for healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies.

ICFP and the Faith Community

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

Faith Communities and Family Planning

Faith communities have enormous potential to help close the gap and reach families with family planning services. Faith leaders are highly respected influential leaders in communities and faith is integral to so many communities, especially in developing nations. Faith groups are in an ideal position to provide services, education, and dispel myths about family planning.

Key Messages

Faith Community Provides Enormous Opportunity for Progress in Meeting Unmet Need for Family Planning

Faith leaders and representatives of faith-based organizations will base their discussions on the following key messages and commitments.

i. Family planning is essential in improving health, ending extreme poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Voluntary family planning is consistent with faith values as it protects the lives and health of mothers and children.

ii. Many faith-based organizations provide voluntary family planning services and have access to hard-to-reach and marginalized communities.

iii. Faith leaders and other people of faith can become influential advocates of voluntary family planning when they have the correct, evidence-based information.
Faith Community Commitments

i. We will educate our own faith communities, including youth, on reproductive health and its importance in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals just approved by the United Nations.

ii. We will continue to provide quality family planning services to the communities we serve and we ask governments and the international development partners to support us in improving the quality of these services.

iii. We will continue to advocate with our own governments for access to voluntary family planning services, and work within our communities to increase the numbers of faith-based advocates.

ICFP Faith Community Participants

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, United Nations Population Fund, the Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University, the Evidence to Action Project, Population Action International, World Vision US, and Engender Health.

Participants in the pre-conference include Christian, Hindu, Islamic, and Buddhist religious leaders, as well as representatives from a variety of faith-based organizations across the globe.