

[STATEMENT]



Religious Leaders Support Access to Family Planning

World Population Day and London Summit on Family Planning, July 11th 2012: Religious leaders from Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist constituents have come together to express their support to the London Summit on Family Planning, an event hosted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the UK Government on the occasion of the World Population Day, July 11th. The Summit will mobilise global policy, financing, commodity, and service delivery commitments to support the rights of millions of women living in the world's least developed countries to achieve access to family planning methods. In approach of the Family Planning Summit, religious leaders have called on the international community to commit to this crucial health issue.

“Many people hold the view that faith based organisations, religious leaders and religious institutions oppose family planning...but it has been proven wrong”, said Karen Hoehn, Vice Executive Director, DSW. In 2011, 120 faith-based organisations, religious leaders and institutions and a further 100 supporting secular welfare and civil society organisations adopted a ground-breaking “Interfaith Declaration to Improve Family Health and Well-Being” in Nairobi, Kenya. The Declaration reaffirms the important role of family planning information, supplies, and services for improving health in the world's population. It states that:

- health is a universal value held by all faiths and a universal right for human beings;
- access to education and services, and thereby averting unintended pregnancies, have proven health benefits: each year the lack of family planning services and education in developing countries results in an estimated 600,000 newborn deaths; 150,000 maternal deaths from abortion and other pregnancy-related causes; and at least 340,000 children having to suffer the loss of their mother;
- information and means for couples to control the timing and spacing of their children consistent with their own faith and needs should be provided;
- access to family planning services is important for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

The Declaration, supported by faith-based groups like Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH) and Muhammadiyah, calls on other non-state actors and stakeholders to endorse this initiative and support governments and donors alike in maintaining their commitments through both policy and funding. Further information about the Summit and the Declaration is available online at: www.dsw-online.org/interfaith.

DSW (Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevoelkerung) has been working together with some of the world's poorest countries on issues of health and population for the last twenty years. We empower young people and communities in low- and middle-income countries by addressing issues of population dynamics and by improving health as a way to achieve sustainable development.

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