

LEARNING CARAVAN METHODOLOGY

In partnership with the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), a team of religious and medical experts from AL-Azhar University and the County Governments, Faith to Action Network has developed and carried out a learning caravan in Kenya's Kilifi, Lamu and Mombasa counties in 2015. The methodology combines individual and institutional learning, awareness raising and advocacy, leading to immediate outcomes:

- 63 imams adopted a 7-point commitment in support of Child Spacing
- Substantial allocations for SRHR in 2016/17 Kilifi, Mombasa and Lamu County budgets
- 4 scholarships for Tawfiq Hospital to study at Al Azhar & Kenyatta National Hospital in 2016/17
- 20 scholarships to study at Al Azhar University in 2017-2018
- Al Azhar agreed to offer a training programme for 20 imams recommended by Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims
- Al-Azhar's mission in Kenya has resumed: 6 Al Azhar missionaries will be stationed in different parts of Kenya to educate imams on interpretations of religious texts

Project period: August 2015

Project implementation areas: Kilifi, Lamu and Mombasa counties, Kenya

Who we are: Faith to Action Network supports faith actors empower people to live healthy, peaceful, quality lives. As a global interfaith network of more than 100 Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu and Muslim faith organisations, we focus on issues that faith actors are grappling with, including sexual and reproductive health and family planning; gender equality and women's rights; pluralism and understanding.

Our expertise: We combine innovative, evidence- and faith-backed community-based programming with national, regional and international dialogue and advocacy to influence change at all levels. We meet international standards of quality and accountability and ensure the relevance of our interventions to the everyday lives of faith communities. We promote:

- Research and demonstration projects that generate evidence.
- Needs-based capacity strengthening to support faith organizations' institutional change and action.
- Communication guided by respect and sensitivity that offers alternative terminology, adapted to different cultural and religious contexts, to increase faith organisations' acceptance of informed content.
- A strong faith-based voice in policy consultations. We create opportunities to engage in policy discussions at international, regional, national and sub-national level.
- Partnership building to create bridges. We broker partnerships and alliances between unlikely parties – interfaith, intra-faith, donors, governments, secular civil society organizations and private sector.
- Interfaith experience sharing, learning and exchanges among faith organizations to increase exposure to different interpretations, methodologies & approaches. We recognise that faith organisations need a joint space to discuss common values and areas of consensus.

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RELIGION IS CENTRAL TO PEOPLE’S LIVES IN AFRICA: Between 69% and 98% of the population in Africa describes religion as “very important” in their lives” (Pew 2010). Given their trusted and strong presence, there is tremendous potential of faith organisations to influence people’s choices on SRHR. Since 2013, the Faith to Action Network supports religious leaders who voluntarily take extraordinary interest in and action for SRHR.

RESISTANCE TO SRHR: Unfortunately, many misperceptions and misinformation on SRHR and interpretation of scriptures prevail in religious circles. Faith leaders, staff in faith organizations, teachers in faith-run schools and health workers in faith-run facilities do not always have access to current knowledge and skills. Many faith organizations’ resistance to SRHR is grounded in inadequate SRHR terminology. Language is not adapted to culture, beliefs, ages and education levels of people.

THE LEARNING CARAVAN METHODOLOGY addresses these challenges, by strengthening faith leaders’ capacity through training and experiential learning. Caravans are implemented in collaboration with Al-Azhar University, the main center of Islamic learning in the world:

- **CAPACITY STRENGTHENING:** In Kilifi, Lamu and Mombasa, 65 imams were trained on family planning, early marriage, female genital mutilation and domestic and sexual violence. The trainings explored the medical and theological foundations of SRHR and helped address myths and misconceptions.
- **AWARENESS CREATION:** The religious leaders paraded through the streets of Mombasa, Malindi and Lamu, and held lectures in mosques during afternoon and evening prayers. This generated substantial media coverage via television, radio and newspaper.
- **ADVOCACY TOWARDS COUNTY GOVERNMENTS:** Engagements with top-level government officials to advocate for increased budgetary allocation for SRHR services in the three counties proved effective with substantial allocations in 2016/17 budgets.
- **COMMUNICATION:** A documentary on the Learning Caravan was prepared as a sensitisation tool, and is now used by Imams to educate their faith communities. Faith to Action Network is specialized in carefully reformulating and repackaging SRHR terminology to adjust it to context and faith. This increases the acceptance of content and empowers champions to reach millions.
- **SOUTH-SOUTH INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION:** During the caravan, faith leaders and county governments described Kenyan imams’ difficulty in offering faith guidance on contemporary issues such as family planning, and called for urgent support in strengthening their capacity. The caravan helped revive institutional partnerships between the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims and Al-Azhar Mosque, and between Pwani University and Al-Azhar University. As the main center of Islamic learning in the world, Al-Azhar University offered scholarships, trainings and the deployment of clergy to Kenya to support Kenyan imams in interpreting the modern world through a faith lens.