



Child Spacing in Islamic Context

A Learning Caravan at the Kenyan Coast (Mombasa, Kilifi and Lamu)



Al-Azhar University



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Acknowledgement

The organisers extend their appreciation to all the partners, sponsors and participants for enabling the first ever caravan at the Kenyan Coast to be successful

This report is a result of a Participatory Learning Caravan on, Islam and Child Spacing, at the Kenyan coast carried out during the month of August 2015 organised by SUPKEM and Faith to Action Network in partnership with Al-Azhar University and in collaboration with the County Governments of Mombasa, Kilifi and Lamu



Al-Azhar University



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS.....	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
Program Objectives.....	6
Program Specifics	7
General Overview of the Caravan and Approaches	12
Rationale of Identifying Imams.....	18
General Summary of Results and Successes.....	18
Major Challenges, Constraints and Lessons Learnt.....	20
Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).....	21
Program Management.....	21
Conclusion.....	23

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FOs	Faith Organizations
FP	Family Planning
IICPSR	International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
RH	Reproductive Health
RLs	Religious Leaders
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SUPKEM	Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals,
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Faith to Action Network recognises that family health and wellbeing is critical for any significant development to be implemented and be sustained. It also recognises that human existence has religious, scientific and moral aspects that form the whole person. Reproductive health is one of the pillars of family health and wellbeing. In acknowledging this fact, Faith to Action Network in conjunction with other partners and donor agencies engaged the religious leaders both internationally and locally to look into promoting dialogue around issues pertaining to family health and wellbeing based on Holy Scriptures and medical expertise. Faith to Action Network recognises that on matters of reproductive health, there is need to have a common front amongst faith leaders and scientist in addressing the challenges and lack of knowledge that might come with provision of SRHR education and services.

On this basis, Faith to Action Network, Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) and Al-Azhar University organized a caravan intended to inform the large Islamic community at the Kenyan coast (Imams as well as Islamic health stakeholders) on scientific and scriptural basis of family planning.

By doing this, the caravan which comprised of processions, training workshops, sessions at the mosques, sermons, and seminars, meetings and discussions with government officials, and meetings and discussions with service providers in public and private health facilities aimed at



Delegates from Al Azhar univeristy, SUPKEM and Faith to Action Network pays a courtesy call to Dr. Mohammed Kombo, County Executive for Health, Lamu

generating support for SRHR advocacy, policy influencing and embracing reproductive health programming in line with the Islamic faith.

In the devolved system of Kenyan governance structure, the county governments are key stakeholders in the health sector managing health facilities up to level five hospitals in Kenya. This means the Counties are budget holders and decision makers on health issues at County level. As such, strategic engagements with County government officials were made. These included courtesy visits to the Governors in the mentioned counties and meetings with health experts. During the visits, appeals for increase in budget allocation for health and creation of specific budget for sexual reproductive health and family planning were made. The meetings were planned to establish the environment for trained Muslim Clergy to engage in decision and policy making on health and SRHR development at the county level.

The overall objective of the caravan was to build the capacity of leadership of Islamic Religious leaders in family planning, safe motherhood and deploy interventions of harmful traditions practices in SRHR and highlighting of Islamic partners and trends of SRHR provisions.

Specific Caravan Objectives:

1. At the end of the seminar, participants will be able to:
2. Be aware about safe motherhood including child survival; birth or child spacing (FP); and the discouragement of harmful traditional practices;
3. Dispel myths and misconceptions about reproductive health (RH)/family planning (FP);
4. Describe the Islamic perspectives on RH/FP information and services;
5. Identify ways in which religious leaders can help mobilize the community around safe motherhood, RH/FP;

Topics covered:

The seminars addressed FP, eradication of female genital Cutting (FGC), and early marriage, safe motherhood including the importance of ante and post natal care from Islamic and Christian perspectives, coexistence of communities from different faiths, and child delivery within health facilities.

Faith to Action Network in partnership with SUPKEM and experts from Al-Azhar University empowered the leadership of Muslim community in the coastal region of Kenya in the three counties; namely Mombasa, Lamu and Kilifi on "Child Spacing and Reproductive Health, The Islamic Way".

A documentary on the Caravan was also developed for use in awareness creation and education purposes. The documentary will be a tool for Imams to use in reaching out to communities. Other audio visual tools developed include one on eradication of FGC; early marriage; safe motherhood including the importance of ante and post natal care from Islamic perspective; coexistence of communities from different faiths.



Rev. Canon Grace Kaiso, Faith to Action Network chairperson and delegation from Al-Azhar University in Egypt during the first day of the Caravan in Mombasa

The main recommendations include:

- **Policy making and Budgetary allocation for SRH, MCH and FP:** National and country governments should increase allocation of funds for SRH, MCH services and FP. This will improve health facilities in faraway communities reducing maternal and child deaths that result from complications arising out of long distances to health facilities and services.
- **Religious leaders as gatekeepers of knowledge:** Religious leaders are key in Informing the public (congregations) about the importance of SRH, MCH and FP. County and national government should involve them in decision and policy making on SRH, MCH and FP. The leaders should leverage on the time they have sermons or other interactions with the congregations to popularize SRH, MCH and FP.
- **Synergy between science and scripture:** Communities and their gate keepers thirst for both scientific and scriptural knowledge. It is recommended that religious leaders should invite medical and other experts to explain technical issues to the congregations and medical and other experts should invite religious leaders and scholars to explain scriptural basis for issues being addressed. In short, science and religion should compliment.
- **Capacity building of religious leaders:** Capacity-building initiatives should be organized for Imams and other clergy on contemporary issue such as SRH, MCH and FP. The capacity building should be undertaken jointly by medical and theological experts to help clarify both aspects in issues addressed.



Prof. Dr. Gamal Serour facilitating a training for Imams in Mombasa during the Caravan

- **Experience sharing and learning:** Study tour for senior religious leaders, as role models, to the International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research, Al-Azhar University (IICPSR). This study tour will expose the senior religious leaders to the Egyptian experience and will meet senior religious leaders, among them the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Grand Mufti and the Chairman of the University. They will also visit the Population Council and Ministry of Health
- **Establishment of religious courses for Imams in local institutions of learning:** advocate with Al-Azhar University and the Egyptian government to help local institutions of learning such as Pwani University to establish a faculty or department for training Imams. The course can be offered in partnership with Al-Azhar University to reduce costs of educating Imams in Egypt and build local capacity for sustainability. Specialized trainings for Imams can be conducted as training of trainers at the Al-Azhar University IICPSR, for mid-level Imams, who will be well selected, preferably with higher education and serving in major Mosques

- **Organise Seminars for specific members of congregation, (men, women and youth):** during the Caravan, it emerged that men, women and youth requested for special sessions with the Ulamas (theological experts) and with medical experts. Such a session was organized for women in Lamu County but not in other Counties. It is recommended that such sessions should be made part of future Caravans.



Women seeking personal clarifications and medical advise from Prof. Dr. Mervat Mahmoud after the special seminar for women at Munawara Madrasa in Lamu

- **Combine Caravan with medical specialized clinics and training:** women recommended that since the Caravan included specialized medical experts on sexual reproductive health, future Caravans should include specialized medical clinics organized jointly with local health facilities. This will also serve as training for local medical personnel.
- **Lessons in the Mosques:** during the Caravan, the medical and theological experts held lessons in various mosques during Asr, Maghreb and Friday prayers. The lessons were devoted to lectures/talks on the topics of the Caravan. These talks proved popular and complementary to the training the Imams were given. The talks prepared the congregations to be receptive of the sermons to be given later by the Imams that carry SRH, MCH and FP messages. The lessons help to dispel myths and misconceptions held by the members of the congregations. The lessons with the congregations are highly recommended in future Caravans.



Delegates from AL-Azhar University address the cogregants at Masjid Rawdhwa Mosque in Malindi

BACKGROUND

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that religious leaders (RLs) and communities of faith play an important role in shaping health-seeking behavior. Religious leaders are often arbiters of morality and ethics, defining what is prescribed or proscribed by a faith. This is



Sheikh Khitamy, Coast Regional Coordinator- SUPKEM, welcomes the delegates and Imams in Mombasa for the training particularly relevant with respect to maternal and child health, reproductive health, and family planning as they are at the juncture where science, religion, culture and morality intersect. Consequently, maternal and child health, and family planning information and services that are supported by religious leaders and religious institutions are more likely to be accepted by the community. It is therefore imperative that religious leaders should have accurate and appropriate information and skills to help their congregations make informed choices on matters related to their health and well-being.

Partnership with Al-Azhar University and Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM)

The International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research (IICPSR) was founded at Al-Azhar University, the most prestigious and one of the oldest Islamic Universities all over the world in cooperation with the UNFPA in 1975. The Center objectives are: (1) conducting population and reproductive health studies and research in the Muslim World, (2) add credibility to the population/reproductive health information obtained before its dissemination in Muslim countries, and (3) to dispel misconceptions about Islam and certain population/reproductive health policies that can be adopted in the Muslim World. Furthermore it functions as an inter-regional organization with a view to serve the whole Islamic World.

The Centre does not limit its activities to Egypt but extends them to the other institutions all over the Islamic World interested in developing and promoting awareness of population/reproductive health issues among their staff and students. Since its establishment, IICPSR has carried a lot of activities in dispelling the rumours and correcting the misinformation that surrounded the population policies in the Muslim countries. In the Year 2012, it was awarded a United Nations Award for Population.

SUPKEM was registered on 12th November, 1973 under the laws of Kenya Society Act Section 10 as the umbrella body of all Muslims organizations, societies, Mosque Committees and groups in Kenya. It was formed in 1973 following a general conference held at Qur'an house, Mfangano Street in Nairobi

One major focus has been in building the capacity of its member organizations to respond to

the emerging challenges and associated nuances and also to provide a viable platform for Muslim citizens in Kenya not only to voice their issues and concerns, but provide space for the pursuit of viable solutions to the myriad problems that have faced Muslims since independence. SUPKEM has also been directly implementing a variety of programs tailored at addressing challenges unique to different regions and localities in Kenya. Responding to emergencies and perennial famine and related disasters particularly in the North Eastern, Upper Eastern and northern Kenya, has been a persistent feature of its work.

The work of SUPKEM has had significant impact on issues of concern through varied approaches key amongst them being devolution as central plank of democracy and development. In its determination to leverage the socio-economic and political status of the poor and the marginalized, SUPKEM has adopted a process of organizational and context assessment and scenarios appraisal on a periodic basis. This periodic assessment has enabled SUPKEM to be contextual, relevant and led to integration of the needs and aspirations of its reference communities in its organizational and programme functions. SUPKEM commands authoritative experience in stakeholder engagements including sustained partnerships, community mobilization and sensitization and structured community dialogues, which has no doubt contributed to social



A section of TukTuk riders during the Caravan procession in Mombasa

transformation and participatory development. In its quest to implement Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SUPKEM intends to activate and involve its grass roots networks and membership and will work within the purview of transformative paradigm upon which SDGs are anchored so as to cultivate a culture of sustainable human development within the Muslim Community.

Faith to Action is a global interfaith network of faith organizations¹ (FOs) committed to improve family health and wellbeing. The network promotes dialogue, builds the technical and financial capacity of FOs and facilitates sustained joint advocacy and programming in support of family health and wellbeing. It supports families to among others have increased access to information and quality services on family planning and reproductive health consistent with their faith. Faith to Action Network's vision is 'Available, affordable and accessible quality services on family health and wellbeing for all'. Its mission is to 'mobilise faith organisations' support for integration and streamlining of policies, services and funding for family health and well-being'.

¹ 'Faith Organisations' (FOs) include faith based organisations, institutions or networks committed to uphold the vision and mission of the Network and accept the guiding principles of the Network.

The Faith to Action Network has the following internal, external and cross cutting objectives;

Internal:

- Engage leaders of FOs in dialogue and mutual learning on shared values, goals and common messages for family health and well-being

External:

- Advocate for integration and mainstreaming of family health and well-being in funding, policies and programming within governments and donors

Cross-cutting:

- Serve as a multi-faith platform to advocate for family health and well-being in collaboration with key stakeholders at global, regional, national and local levels
- Increase awareness on the role of FOs, interfaith commitment and collaboration in support of family health and well-being to internal and external stakeholders
- Improve understanding of scientific and/or faith-based evidence for family health and well-being to internal and external stakeholders
- Mobilise sustained resources for family health and well-being for the Network
- The three organisations leveraged their strengths, networks, experiences, resources and shared objectives to organise the Caravan at the Kenyan Coast.



Prof. Dr. Ahmed Turk speaking to Imams in Lamu

Islam and Reproductive Health

The word of religion has its effect within souls, and Religious Leaders possess a degree and have an effect on peoples' hearts, thus their role is significant and effective in this sphere. Islam has always encouraged discussions on matters which will help protect health and life. Muslim men and women never felt shy to ask the Prophet (pbuh) about intimate sexual matters. The Holy Qur'an has discussed reproduction and sexual health. These facts would be of much help for the reproductive health and rights, gender issues and family planning programs where the knowledge and the lack of it are crucial.

The difficulty in establishing effective family planning, eradication of harmful practices and safe motherhood programs, is a lack of openness, in many of the Muslim Countries, regarding sexuality, male-female relationships, illness and death and taboo subjects deeply rooted in the culture. Religious Leaders are the gate keepers for many social and cultural issues. The role of Religious Leaders is not restricted on calling for prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage and other religious commandments and juristic regulations; but this role extends to include inviting people for various medical, social, cultural and religious fields of life. In belief of the role of religious leaders, bringing them to the fields of family planning, safe motherhood and eradication of harmful traditions and networking with them, the efforts to tackle these problems would be more successful.

"The Holy Prophet (PBUH) thus permitted "Azl" despite some of its inconveniences on both husband and wife. Well, then Allah (SWT) guides man to discover methods of preventing pregnancy and which achieve two good things: first, stops the meeting of the sperm cells with the ovum thus avoiding conception and secondly, do not deny the couple an opportunity to enjoy sex, Will these methods be lawful or unlawful? They are lawful and a priority. ...

Consequently, if we have discovered a method, a gadget or a thing which can prevent unwanted pregnancy we should use it. If Allah (SWT) has guided man to discover things or methods which serve the same objectives to that of "Azl" and are not of any inconvenience to the couples, are they lawful or unlawful? They are lawful on the analogical basis of priority". Prof. Dr. Abdullah El-Nagar, Ex- Dean of Faculty of Higher Islamic Studies in Egypt, Prof. of Fiqh and Law, Faculty of Shari'ah, Member of Al-Azhar High Islamic Research Academy and Member of the Council of International Islamic Fiqh Academy, Geddah

General Overview of the Caravan and Approaches

The programs took a unique caravan approach; it incorporated seminars with the imams, Mosque open sessions, use of TukTuk² riders and donkey processions.

Experts from Al-Ahzar University in Egypt took identified Imams from the coast region through RH/FP awareness. The experts also trained the Muslims during the open sessions in the Mosques. The Mosques visited included Swalihina Mosque in Kisauni-Mombasa, Rawdha Mosque in Malindi-Kilifi and Riyadh Mosque in Lamu.

² A TukTuk is a three wheel motorcycle that very popular in Mombasa for transporting passengers. The name TukTuk comes from the original engine sound of the TukTuk. it is classified as a motorized tricycle (trike). And therefore it is allowed to drive on all roads, even highways.

Major Components of the Caravan:

- **Caravan Procession:** This process utilized the popular means of transportations, in Mombasa and Malindi, the Tuktuk and in Lamu Island, the Donkey. Posters of the Caravan were put on the Tuktuks and Donkeys and the drivers and riders were shirts labeled with the Caravan label. Al-Azhar Team Leader used to give the signal for starting the Caravan with a short recorded speech.
- **Collaboration with County and national governments:** Courtesy visits to the local authorities in the three sites were done. The team leader started each visit by introducing the IICPSR and the team and the objectives of the Caravan. SUPKEM and Faith to Action Network representatives present themselves and their requests, mainly to increase the allocated budget for health. In all the visits promises to increase the allocated budget for health are taken.



Delegates from Al Azhar university, SUPKEM, and representatives from Faith to Action Network after a courtesy call to Mr. Owen Yaa Baya, (in the middle front row, in white shirt), County Secretary of Kilifi

- **The Scientific Component of the Caravan:**

Different modalities in presenting the scientific part, but mainly it were a combination of Medical aspects with Religious Aspects. These took several forms:

- **Workshops:** A full day workshop in which lectures were given on the topics from medical and theological aspects, the lecture starts by the

"In this visit, we have managed to meet with some county governors; that is the governors of Kilifi and Mombasa and our talk focused on ways of strengthening and promoting health institutions so as to deliver services to everyone; including those in the villages. However, when it comes to the issue of educating the masses, then the religious scholars and Imams will have to bear the biggest burden and responsibility in this field.

It is important that continuity in holding similar seminars should be maintained in the various counties. We talked to the governors and asked them to continue holding seminars for religious leaders and Imams in all counties and we hope some of these scholars and will be charged with the duty of training others.

Meanwhile, we hope to carry out more similar visits and workshops in the future to ensure continuity is achieved". Professor Dr. Gamal Serour, FRCOG, FRCS, FSGO, FACOG, FSOGC, FJSOG

medical part and based on it the Theological part is given. Discussion followed each lecture.

- **Seminars:** The seminar also is a combination of medical and theological aspects of the topics are given and are followed by a general discussion.
- **Lessons in the Mosques:** These are given by the theology team, after Asr and Maghreb Prayers.
- **Sermon Friday:** A sermon was given on Friday devoted to talk on family health and wellbeing.

"I would like to urge you after this experience, to go out there and train the other Imams who are not present with us here so that they can be able to grasp the message and convey it through Friday prayer's speeches. For example if an Imam gives a speech on the topic of treating women well, don't you think such a speech is suitable for a Friday prayer's speech?" Prof. Dr. Hamed Abu Taleb, ex-dean of Faculty of Shari'ah and Law, Al-Azhar University Assiut Branch, and ex dean of faculty of shari'ah Al-Azhar Univeristy, Cairo Branch and Ex dean of Faculty of Islamic and Arabic studies, Al-Azhar University, Asswan Branch, a member of Al-Azhar High Research Academy and a member of Senior Religious Leaders Committee.

Visits to Health Facilities:

- Tawfiq Hospital is a charity one that was built as a community initiative and is serving poor community free of charge and serves a large population.
- Health facility in Lamu is a public hospital serving the people of the Island of Lamu along with other nearby Islands.
- Both hospitals are helping in ensuring safe-motherhood and are providing ante-natal and natal care. However, they lack staff and equipment. There is a concern regarding sustainability. They need also building capacity of the existing staff.

Question and answer sessions with Religious Leaders:

- One major concern of the religious leaders was about family planning. Some considered it as a western attempt to control the Muslim numbers and they expressed that there is a call by the Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him (PBUH) To Multiply so he will be proud at the day of the Judgment. In this regard, Professor Serour explained some demographic data that are against this statement. Religious experts explained with evidence from Qur'an and Hadith that, quality is much more important than quantity in Islam.
- Another concern was the young age at marriage, participants mentioned that the Prophet (PBUH) Married Aisha, his wife, at age of 9. Religious experts debated the issues and gave evidence that Aisha was about 18-19 when she married the Prophet (PBUH). They also indicate that rules and regulations in Islam are dynamic and not fixed and when evidence emerges that an issue is harmful, the rule can be changed to prohibit it. Since evidences emerged from medical experts that the "Child Marriage and FGC" are harmful, they are prohibited.
- FGC
- Male participation

Seminar for Women:

A designated seminar was organized for women in Lamu County. During the seminar, the main concern of women was about the side effects of contraceptive methods. Prof. Ahmed Ragab and Prof. Mervat Mahmoud responded by explaining the mechanism of actions of the methods and that women has the right to choose between methods but they must consult their health providers as there are some contra indications for some methods. For instance,

women with any of these diseases varicose veins, diabetes, hypertension and breast masses or family history of breast cancer should not have hormonal contraception

There were a wide spread lack of information about reproductive health and there were also spreading misconceptions and wrong information. The faculty corrected this information and taught women self-examination of the breast.

After the seminar, some women expressed their own health problems as stress incontinence, irregular bleeding and breast mass.

"It is true that a woman has the right to choose between contraceptives. However, the doctor has the duty to advise her on the suitable method. For example, if a woman's womb has fibroids – in case you go out now into the streets you will get about 30 women out there who have fibroids – for that reason, in case you try to fix a coil she will bleed. Consequently, a coil will not be suitable. You might as well find a woman who has swollen veins in the leg, has a heart problem, breast cancer and so forth; such a woman is prohibited from taking hormones because they will further complicate her condition. Therefore, we choose a suitable contraceptive for such a lady in such a manner that will lower the side effects and complications". **Prof. Dr. Ahmed Ragaa Ragab, Professor of Reproductive Health, IICPSR, Al-Azhar University**



Al Azhar University delegates address the women during a special women seminar held at Munawara Madrasa in Lamu

THE ACTIVITIES

Date	Location	Activities
23 rd August 2015		<p>Coordination meeting between SUPKEM and Faith to Action Network</p> <p>IICPSR Prof. Dr. Gamal Serour Prof. Dr. Mervat Mahmoud Prof. Dr. Ahmed Ragab</p> <p>Faith to Action Network Peter Munene</p> <p>SUPKEM Prof. Abdulghafur Hemed Sales El-Busaidy – Chair SUPKEM Latiff Shaban – Director General Sharif Muhdhar Khitamy Coast Region Chairman Mohammed Ali – Mombasa County Chairman Working dinner at Barka Restaurant</p>

24 th August 2015	Mombasa	<p>Training of Mombasa based clergies at Pride Inn seminars/workshop facilities.</p> <p>Major topics that were covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe motherhood including the importance of ante and post natal care from Religious perspectives • Family Planning • Harmful Practices including FGM, and early marriage, • Co-existence of communities from different faiths • Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Reproductive Health Issues.
25 th August 2015	Mombasa	<p>Flag-off of Caravan - in Mombasa at Maganlal Tudor – County Traffic Inspectorate. 15 Tuktuks and 15 motorbikes led by Country traffic police Inspectorate escort car in the procession. Professor Serour gave the signal for starting the Caravan by a short talk about the mission and its objectives, specifically to deal with the rumors and correct the misinformation regarding the stand of Islam regarding the family planning, gender issues and harmful traditions.</p> <p>In order to gain political support , a meeting with Officials was conducted: Mombasa County Government: Meetings were held with: Ai Hassan Joho – Governor, Dr. Khadija Sood Skikely – Chief Officer of Health, Dr. Hafsa Zuber – Obstetrician & Gynecologist</p> <p>Then another meeting with the National Government Representative: Nelson Malwa – County Commissioner</p> <p>The meetings with policy making personnel aimed at gaining their support and raising their awareness about the true stand of Islam and the value of faith approach for women’s and children health and eradication of harmful practices and support for family planning.</p> <p>Prayers and lecture at Markaz Swalihin Islamiy: It was attended by approximately 200 people: This was conducted by His Excellency Prof. Dr. Hamed Abu Taleb, Prof. Dr. Abdallah El-Nagar and Prof. Dr. Ahmed Turk and highlighted the stand of Islam regarding women’s and children health and the harmful traditional practices and affirmed that Islam is full of Mercy.</p>
26 th August 2015	Malindi	<p><u>Kilifi County</u></p> <p>Official Meetings with: Owen Baya - County Secretary, Malingi – Chief Officer Health, Ustadh Sharif Salim – Chumani Islamic Center, Ustadh Rashid – SUPKEM Kilifi, Mohammed Abdullatif - Community Counselor & Community Public Relations</p> <p>Then a courtesy visit to National Government Deputy County Commissioner – Mr. Mativo.</p>

26 th August 2015	Malindi	<p>Caravan flag off: 15 Tuktuks and 15 motorbikes in procession: Professor Serour gave the signal for starting the Caravan by introducing the mission and its members and objectives and that Islam is supporting women's and children health and against harmful traditional practices.</p> <p>Evening prayers and lecture at Masjid Rawdhwa attended by approximately 300 people. The theology team gave presentations, each dealt with one subject: Islam and women's and children health, Islam is the religion of Mercy and Islam is against harmful traditions.</p> <p>Tawfiq Hospital – met Ahmed Aboud Hadi, Administrator: Tawfiq Hospital is a charity one that was built as a community initiative and is serving poor community free of charge, Prof. Serour supported this initiative and discussed with the officials ways to ensure sustainability and how IICPSR can support.</p>
27 th August 2015	Lamu	<p>Lamu County</p> <p>Training of about 25 senior Imams of Lamu was conducted. The training was conducted by:</p> <p>Professor Dr. Gamal Serour: He gave a lecture on medical aspects. He emphasized the importance of marrying in a suitable age and highlighted the complications of child marriage. He also stressed on safe motherhood and affirmed the need of antenatal, natal and post natal care. Finally he pointed to the hazards of the harmful practices. This was followed by three theological presentations. Prof. Dr. Hamid Gave a Presentation about safe motherhood, Prof. Dr. Abdallah El-Nagar gave a presentation about family planning and Dr. Ahmed Turk gave a presentation about harmful traditions. This was followed by a discussion.</p>
28 th August 2015	Lamu	<p>Professor Dr. Hamed Abu Taleb gave the signal for the Caravan flag off: approximately 30 donkeys in procession.</p> <p>Meetings with Officials: County Secretary & Head of County Public Service – Siyat Osman Ibrahim and County Executive for Health – Dr. Mohammed Kombo</p> <p>Friday prayers held at Riyadhha Mosque and attended by approximately 700 people. Prof. Dr. Hamid Abu Taleb gave a talk highlighting that Islam is against terrorism and Islam is the religion of peace and respect the others. Islam is against discrimination and the terrorism is harming Muslims and Islam.</p> <p>Then Dr. Ahmed led the Friday prayer with a talk that aimed to pave the way for health programs to improve family health.</p> <p>Professor Ahmed Ragab and Professor Mervat Mahmoud led a Lecture and discussions with women held at Munawara Madrasa attended by approximately 120 women supported by Imam - Abubakr Shekue and Abubakr Mukhisin. The lectures were about safe motherhood, family planning and other women's health issues.</p> <p>Evening prayers held at Riyadhha Mosque and attended by approximately 250 people and led by Dr. Ahmed Turk.</p>

RATIONALE OF IDENTIFYING IMAMS AND COUNTIES

The Caravan was held at the coast region owing to the fact that coast has a large population of the Muslim communities. The selected counties were Mombasa Kilifi and Lamu.

The imams were identified as key pointers because they command a large following and their community listen and follow them ardently. Generally, men make the main decision at the family level including matters of family health and wellbeing.

The regions/counties earmarked for the caravan included:

- Mombasa county
- Kilifi County
- Lamu County
- Respective County governments

“For the work we carried out in these regions to bear fruit, these kinds of activities and training workshops should be continued. We also asked the Imams who received this training and knowledge to carry it forward to other Imams, who are in turn expected to pass it to the rest of the Imams. Then, all the Imams should disseminate the knowledge to the general public. Meanwhile, it would be preferred that these types of training seminars be held from time to time in order to replenish them and make them acquire more knowledge on these important issues”. **Prof. Dr. Hamed Abu Taleb**

General Summary of Results and Successes

- Successful meetings with County government officials in Kilifi, Lamu and Mombasa with promise of increase in budgetary allocation for health and improvement of sexual reproductive health services especially maternal and child health.
- The experts had open sessions with the Muslim male community in three major mosques in Mombasa, Malindi and Lamu with over 1,600 people members of congregation participating.
- A total of 65 Imams from the coast region were trained on FP and other SRH issues including early marriage, FGM and domestic and sexual violence.
- 120 women participated in a special session designed for them.
- Tuktuk and donkey rider were engaged in community advocacy on RH/FP.
- The one on one courtesy call with the respective county government was made to lobby for partnership and embracement of RH/FP the Islamic way.
- The Islamic women community in Lamu had an opportunity to interact and engaged the experts on an open one on one session.
- Community advocacy was done through the use of Tuk Tuk rider and donkey.
- Video and still documentation for the caravan on RH/FP was produced.
- Al Azhar University gave two scholarships to Tawfiq Hospital and one to Faith to Action Network to train medical staff on IVF. The scholarship beneficiaries were Tawfiq Hospital and Kenyatta National Hospital medical personnel.
- Al-Ahzar promised to revive the training program for the imams at Al-Ahzar University.
- imams made commitments to :

1. Leverage the structures and ensure that FP is integrated in all Muslim based events.
2. Build the capacity of Muslim religious leaders on FP from both medical and theological aspects from the authenticated texts to enable them educate the Muslim community on FP.
3. Ensure partnership with County government, development partners and other service provider to enhance referral and access Islamic friendly FP services.
4. Promote Safe motherhood including the importance of ante and post natal care from Religious perspectives
5. Promote co-existence of communities from different faiths.
6. Provide a plat form to collectively influence family planning policies and decisions in regard to quality service provision, access and budget allocation.
7. Eliminate all harmful traditions, misconceptions and wrong information that hinder uptake, access and utilization of family planning and reproductive health services including early marriages and female genital mutilation.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SUPKEM Mombasa Commitment to FP

[وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُنْمِ الرِّضَاعَةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعُهَا لَا يُنَارُ وَالِدَةٌ يَوْلِيهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ يَوْلِيهِ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا إِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا اتَّيَمُّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ]

“And mothers shall suckle their children for two full years, for those who wish to complete breastfeeding.” (Q.S. Al Baqarah: 2/233).

Muslim religious leaders united in our common goal and mandate to save the lives of women and children in need, we pledge to take action to advance Family planning interventions in context with the holy Quran. We need to ensure that *every pregnancy is wanted, every birth celebrated, every mother and baby survives, all children thrive and reach their full potential*. Thus, we commit ourselves to ensure that our respective communities embrace FP practices according to Islam perspective sustainably.

1. Leverage the structures and ensure that FP is integrated in all Muslim based events.
2. Build the capacity of Muslim religious leaders on FP from both medical and theological aspects from the authenticated texts to enable them educate the Muslim community on FP.
3. Ensure partnership with County government, development partners and other service provider to enhance referral and access Islamic friendly FP services.
4. Promote Safe motherhood including the importance of ante and post natal care from Religious perspectives
5. Promote co-existence of communities from different faiths.
6. Provide a plat form to collectively influence family planning policies and decisions in regard to quality service provision, access and budget allocation.
7. Eliminate all harmful traditions, misconceptions and wrong information that hinder uptake, access and utilization of family planning and reproductive health services including early marriages and female genital mutilation.

We the Muslim religious leaders converging in Mombasa for the Caravan on FP, re-commit to work in collaboration with government, intergovernmental and civil society bodies to increase access of FP information and change the attitude of the Muslim community towards Family Planning and reproductive health.

Major Challenges, Constrains and Lessons Learned

- High demand for the information both from the Imams and Islamic community.
- Separate and dedicated session to address youth issues could not be organised .
- Time constraint- One week was too compressed for trainings of Imams and open sessions with Islamic community in the three counties.
- Emergence of contemporary during the Caravan, some of immediate concern to the community. These included the negative influence of tourism that has contributed greatly to early marriage especially in Malindi, radicalisation of youth, insecurity, and conflict resolution approaches

"From among the most important outcomes and benefits of the meetings which we held was that we as representative of Al-Azhar were able to identify the problems which have befallen this region as a result of the freezing of Al- Azhar activities in this country, as well as scarcity of scholarships for students from the region so that they can acquire knowledge, academic qualifications and certificates. We will convey this wish to His Eminence the Grand Imam (Professor Ahmad al-Tayyib) and explain to him the conditions prevailing in these regions and God willing, we hope he will agree to resume the activities of Al-Azhar mission and the provision of higher number of scholarships for its sons and students." **Prof. Dr. Hamed Abu Taleb**

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

- Constant feed back to Supkem and F2A on what the trained Imams are doing.
- Bring local practitioners on board for continued RH/FP promotions.
- Develop action plan on advocacy on RH/FP
- Have database of clinics that are offering RH/FP services and of personnel trained.
- develop audio-visual issue catalogues on topics covered accompanied by short booklets of teaching on the topics.

Recommendations

The main recommendations include:

- **Policy making and Budgetary allocation for SRH, MCH and FP:** National and country governments should increase allocation of funds for SRH, MCH services and FP. This will improve health facilities in faraway communities reducing maternal and child deaths that result from complications arising out of long distances to health facilities and services.
- **Religious leaders as gatekeepers of knowledge:** Religious leaders are key in Informing the public (congregations) about the importance of SRH, MCH and FP. County and national government should involve them in decision and policy making on SRH, MCH and FP. The leaders should leverage on the time they have sermons or other interactions with the congregations to popularize SRH, MCH and FP.

"First, I know that the Imams have the duty of taking the message to the pulpits. Definitely, more efforts are also required outside the mosque since there are other Imams not here with us but deserve to get this information. We hope efforts to reach them will be enhanced. We also hope higher Islamic leadership bodies will issue relevant direction in promoting education in this regard. I also hope that this kind of information should be published in pamphlets in all local languages". **Dr. Mohamed Ali – Makerere University, Uganda**

- **Synergy between science and scripture:** Communities and their gate keepers thirst for both scientific and scriptural knowledge. It is recommended that religious leaders should invite medical and other experts to explain technical issues to the congregations and medical and other experts should invite religious leaders and scholars to explain scriptural basis for issues being addressed. In short, science and religion should compliment.
- **Capacity building of religious leaders:** capacity building initiatives should be organized for Imams and other clergy on contemporary issue such as SRH, MCH and FP. The capacity building should be undertaken jointly by medical and theological experts to help clarify both aspects in issues addressed.
- **Experience sharing and learning:** Study tour for senior religious leaders, as role models, to the International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research, Al-Azhar University. This study tour will expose the senior religious leaders to the Egyptian experience and will meet senior religious leaders, among them the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Grand Mufti and the Chairman of the University. They will also visit the Population Council and Ministry of Health.
- **Establishment of religious courses for Imams in local institutions of learning:** advocate with Al-Azhar University and the Egyptian government to help local institutions of learning



The Caravan delegation and a team of experts from Al Azhar, SUPKEM and Faith to Action Network pays a courtesy call to Hon. Hassan Ali Joho, Governor of Mombasa County.

such as Pwani University to establish a faculty or department for training Imams. The course can be offered in partnership with Al-Azhar University to reduce costs of educating Imams in Egypt and build local capacity for sustainability. Specialized trainings for Imams can be conducted as training of trainers at the Al-Azhar University IICPSR, for mid-level Imams, who will be well selected, preferably with higher education and serving in major Mosques

- **Organise Seminars for specific members of congregation, (men, women and youth):** during the Caravan, it emerged that men, women and youth requested for special sessions with the Ulamas (theological experts) and with medical experts. Such a session was organized for women in Lamu County but not in other Counties. It is recommended that such sessions should be made part of future Caravans.
- **Combine Caravan with medical specialized clinics and training:** women recommended

that since the Caravan included specialized medical experts on sexual reproductive health, future Caravans should include specialized medical clinics organized jointly with local health facilities. This will also serve as training for local medical personnel.

- **Lessons in the Mosques:** during the Caravan, the medical and theological experts held lessons in various mosques during Asr, Maghreb and Friday prayers. The lessons were devoted to lectures/talks on the topics of the Caravan. These talks proved popular and complementary to the training the Imams were given. The talks prepared the congregations to be receptive of the sermons to be given later by the Imams that carry SRH, MCH and FP messages. The lessons help to dispel myths and misconceptions held by the members of the congregations. The lessons with the congregations are highly recommended in future Caravans.

Conclusion

The Caravan proved a unique initiative, one that had never been done in Kenya. It came out clearly in the training and caravan session that faith leaders are very key in disseminating messages and information on RH/FP to their congregations. There is great need to build the capacity of the leaders; basing it on their religious doctrines and scientific research.

Men make very key decisions in their families and therefore having them on the centre of RH/FP proved very instrumental and they were very eager to learn more of what was previously only thought to be a women's affair as compared to be looked at as a family issue. Documentation for the whole educative sessions and advocacy caravan is a unique and noble idea that will go along way in sharing information for even future Islamic generations to come.

As their name suggests, "Faith to Action Network", created an enabling environment for Islamic Leaders to interact with the experts and also established a network for these religious leaders and their Faithful in the coastal part of Kenya start engaging themselves in the matters of Reproductive health and Safe Motherhood.

"We have all studied Islamic jurisprudence and our reverend scholars have clarified that. Is a boy capable of adequately fulfilling the duties and responsibilities which come with marriage? What about a young girl? Supposed we assume a girl is an adult by merely looking at the adolescent features; for example that she has started seeing her periods and other features of adolescence start appearing on her. However, she is not in a position to bear the burdens of marriage, and if she marries she will get ruined. She does not have the ability to bear the responsibilities and duties that come with marriage.

The customs prevailing at the moment have ruled that she can get married. What about a small boy? What about him? Why don't we let him marry at either ten or eleven years?

No one is talking about that. Thus, oh religious leaders, I would like you to be cautious on this issue. There are some customs and traditions which can be advocated in religion but are not valid whatever the justifications." **Dr. Ahmed Turk, Director General of Preaching Department, Ministry of Religious Affairs (Awqaf) and Member of High Islamic Council.**

The background is a solid green color. In the lower right quadrant, there is an abstract graphic composed of several overlapping shapes: a large orange circle, a medium blue circle, a large orange curved shape resembling a 'C' or a partial circle, and a smaller blue circle. These shapes are arranged in a way that they appear to be part of a larger, stylized design.

Faith to Action Network
Hatheru Court (Lavington)
Hatheru Road, Off Gitanga Road,
P.O Box 2438-00202 Nairobi-Kenya
Tel: +254 736 616 491/ 20 35723002
www.faithtoactionnetwork.org