

The report of the Sensitization meeting with Muslim Clerics on Family Planning and Reproductive Health organized by Nigeria Urban Reproductive Health Initiative, Ibadan.

Date: 16/05/2011

Venue: Grand serene Hotel Ibadan

The Nigeria Urban Reproductive Health Initiative (NURHI) is a 5 year project founded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that aim to develop cost effective integrated intervention for increased contraceptive prevalence rates (CPR) among urban poor in Nigeria. The main targets are five cities namely, Abuja, Kaduna, Ibadan, Ilorin, Zaria and Benin City with objective of increasing the CPR by 20%.

HERFON, as a fore-runner in health reform, accepted to partner with others to implement advocacy activities at the key project sites in the states selected.

To this end, the Ibadan group organized a one day sensitization meeting for Islamic Clerics on maternal Health and Family Planning, in Ibadan on Monday 16th May 2011.

Rational: Islamic Clerics command a large following in the Community and therefore, it is important to present them facts of maternal and child health, the stand of Islam on challenges of family planning and good health. It is therefore important that this group support the objective of the program.

Objective: The objective is to solicit the support of the Clerics in disseminating the subject to their followers having been convinced that it does not depart from the tenets of religion as laid down by Prophet Mohammed and the Hadiths.

Methodology: consist of:

(a) Lectures by Islamic scholars on the topics below:

- ❖ Family planning in the Muslim world: the Nigeria situation - Alhaji Salaudeen O. A Busairi, Director General, World Islamic Peace Foundation (WIPF)
- ❖ Islam view on Family Planning and Birth Control - Dr. Lateef Wole Abbas, lecturer in Arabic and Islamic studies University of Ibadan.
- ❖ Reproductive Health Issues in Nigeria – the Islamic perspectives – Pathfinder international, Policy project and Islamic scholars, may 2004

(b) Discussions and interactions.

Expected outcome: It is expected that the clerics will have more knowledge about family planning and be able to disseminate the same to their followers.

Issues raised:

- ❖ Misconception of family planning with promiscuity and abortion
- ❖ Over publicization and commercialization of contraceptives and population explosion.
- ❖ Prescription of number of children is unacceptable in Islam.

Findings:

- ❖ Islam as a religion is not against family planning
- ❖ Spacing of child birth is good for the mother and the child
- ❖ Misconception of family planning and the idea of limiting number of children is un – Islamic.

Resolutions: The clerics:

- Express gratitude to the donor for the project and challenged wealthy Nigerian to emulate such.
- Appreciate the sensitization meeting
- Understand the motive and objectives of the program
- Accept to be the mouth piece on the programs to their followers in Mosque and fellowships.

- Ask that the project covers more than the present location i.e. Ibadan metropolis.

Recommendations: In view of the high acceptance of the sensitization meeting and the similarity in the misconception by various religious sects, similar meetings should be organized for Christian Clerics and others. Such other leaders in the community will serve as good advocate if sensitized.

Conclusion: The sensitization meeting organized by the Ibadan center of NURHI was successful and it is expected to increase awareness and demand for family planning by the Muslim Umar through the Clerics.

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