

Christian Connections for International Health

promoting international health and wholeness from a Christian perspective



Think you know where Christians stand on Family Planning? Think again!

Healthy mothers and children are the foundation for strong families and, ultimately, strong communities. Family planning is essential to improve the health of mothers and children through healthy spacing between pregnancies and preventing unintended pregnancies and abortion. Family planning is vital for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the values of health and wholeness embraced by Christians.

The term “Family Planning”, as used by Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH), means enabling couples to determine the number and timing of pregnancies, including the voluntary use of methods for preventing pregnancy, not including abortion, that are harmonious with their values and religious beliefs.

Why Support Family Planning?

The use of family planning can dramatically improve the health and chances for survival of both women and children. Benefits include:

- Protecting the health of women by reducing high-risk pregnancies
- Protecting the health of children and mothers by allowing sufficient time between pregnancies
- Enabling women to prevent unintended pregnancy, including women with HIV
- Reducing abortions
- Enabling families to better care for their children
- Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs)

Who supports Family Planning?

In 2008, CCIH conducted a [survey](#) of its member organizations to learn about their attitudes and activities in family planning and reproductive health.

Findings:

- None were opposed to family planning
- The terms “family planning” and “reproductive health” were widely acceptable in the Christian international health community, especially if understood to mean voluntary prevention of pregnancy, not including abortion.

- Members were integrating FP with other activities such as HIV/AIDS testing and care, preventing maternal-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT), child health, and as a part of maternal health services for women receiving postpartum and postabortion care.
- Strong interfaith collaboration and service provision, often with Muslims in Africa and Asia, was an element of several programs. CCIH members often partnered with other groups (secular and other faith-based groups) to make best use of complementary strengths (e.g., a service-based group partnering with a group specializing in drug procurement and logistics).

Ms. Vuyelwa Chitimbire, Executive Director, Zimbabwe Association of Church-Related Hospitals (ZACH), “Our members include 60 hospitals, both Catholic and Protestant, plus 66 smaller institutions... Back in 1982, our programs began to integrate family planning, reproductive health, and human sexuality, then sexually transmitted infections. Later came emphases on gender, HIV/AIDS, antenatal care, and post-natal care... We keep on going... The needs are still many.”

Story

About 5km outside of Kampala, the capital of Uganda, is Hope Clinic Lukuli. Started in the late 1980's, this clinic serves over 60,000 people in a 2 km radius. Their family planning services aim to help households grow at the rate they can afford. A range of family planning methods is available, including ‘moon beads’ (CycleBeads-- the Standard Days Method to accurately identify the fertile days in the menstrual cycle), condoms, pills, injectables, implants, etc. All are discussed and chosen by the individuals, according to their own faith and needs. Muslim, Anglican and Catholic staff serve their neighbors, offering information and counseling to support faithfulness within marriages.



Hope Clinic offers a wide range of services and a neutral environment where staff can raise awareness of a host of issues. The staff's respect for each religion and its attitudes mean that appropriate options are offered and good personal decisions made.

Two women speak about Hope Clinic:

Paula says her faith "discourages people from using family planning." Paula did not want to use family planning, and she now has 6 children. She cannot pay their school fees, and they hardly get one good meal a day. She has now decided to use family planning, and is engaged in a small business to care for her children. But the load is heavy, and Paula regrets that she didn't take that step earlier. She thanks Hope Clinic for offering free family planning methods..."

Sheila says that prayer is a key part of her life and then adds, "At times as Christians we tend to under look important issues that affect our lives daily. We burden ourselves, struggling to make ends meet. Using these methods to have a manageable family should be the desire of every Christian, because even the Bible urges us to have children we can care for.... We are grateful to Hope Clinic for the services they offer in the community".

For more information on the ways Hope Clinic serves its community, please visit: <http://www.ccih.org/Hope-Clinic-Uganda-Case-Study.pdf>

Requests

1. Increase funding for international family planning for public, private, and faith-based organizations to reduce unintended pregnancies and abortion in the poorest

Dr. Marie-Claude Mbuyi, Family Planning Coordinator, Church of Christ in Congo (ECC) spoke about the problem of family planning projects that were funded for only a few years: "We need to work under a permanent family planning program, with more permanent activities and funding. Only that way can family planning be more durable in Congo."

countries with the greatest need.

2. Recognize the importance of faith-based organizations in providing international

health services, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Support funding of faith-based organizations at a level consistent with their overall contribution to health services to strengthen comprehensive health care, including family planning.

CCIH

Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH) is a forum where issues of reproduction can be respectfully discussed in a Christian context with evidence-based information and in light of our common desire to advance health and wholeness from a Christian perspective. CCIH is a 501(c)3 membership association founded in 1987 whose network includes about 300 individuals and over 160 organizations (both Christian and affiliate groups) based in the US and abroad. The CCIH network is diverse: spanning the Christian spectrum, ranging from small to large groups, and comprising a community of people from many disciplines and nationalities, all dedicated to a vision of a world where all, without bias, have access to basic health and prevention services.

For further information about CCIH and about Christian work in family planning, see <http://www.ccih.org/information-sharing/knowledge-bank/family-planning-a-reproductive-health.html>

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