

Think You Know Where Christians Stand on Family Planning? Think Again!

Healthy mothers and children are the foundation of strong families and communities. *The term “Family Planning,” as used by Christian Connections for International Health means enabling couples to determine the number and timing of pregnancies, including the voluntary use of methods for preventing pregnancy, not including abortion, harmonious with their values and religious beliefs.*



Why Support Family Planning?

The use of family planning can dramatically improve the health and chances of survival for both women and children. More than 225 million women worldwide have an unmet need for family planning.

Benefits of Family Planning

- 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.
- Reducing abortions, which account for 13% of global maternal deaths.
- Enabling families to better care for their children.
- Family planning can be integrated with preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV and as part of maternal health and postpartum/post-abortion care services.

Stories from the Global South

In Uganda, **Hope Clinic Lukuli** serves more than 60,000 people in a 2 km radius. Its family planning services aim to help women have healthy pregnancies and households grow at a rate they can afford. A range of family planning methods is available, such as ‘moon beads’ (CycleBeads, a Standard Days Method®), condoms, pills, injectables, and implants. All are discussed and chosen by the individuals, according to their own faith and needs. Muslim, Anglican, and Catholic staff offer counseling and information supporting faithfulness in marriage. For more information: <http://www.ccih.org/Hope-Clinic-Uganda-Case-Study.pdf>.

FAMILY & ECONOMIC HEALTH

Phyllis Joy Mukaire, former Executive Director of the **Christian Health Association of South Sudan** sees family planning as vital in protecting the health of women and children and for the nation’s economic future.

“Family planning will prevent unplanned pregnancies and reduce the number of abortions, which is a major cause of maternal death and morbidity in South Sudan,” she says. “It can also eventually help the country reap the benefits that occur when the number of people of working age increases in relation to the very young.”

A falling birth rate improves the ratio of workers to child dependents. Known as the “demographic dividend,” this scenario results in faster economic growth and relieves some of the strain on families. But helping families plan the births of their children so pregnancies are safely spaced and families grow at a rate they can afford is a challenge.

According to Mukaire, only 3 percent of women in South Sudan use a modern method of family planning, and a South Sudanese woman has an average of 6.7 children in her lifetime.

Mukaire sees greater access to family planning supplies and information as critical in addressing South Sudan’s high birth rate and related maternal mortality rate of 2,054 deaths per 100,000 live births, the highest in the world.

Christian Relief and Development, Inc. (CRDI) operates a clinic that provides family planning in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which has a maternal mortality rate of 540 deaths per 100,000 live births and a fertility rate of 5.8 births per woman.



According to Armand Utshudi, founder and president of CRDI, without access to family planning services, unintended and closely spaced pregnancies are a threat to women in rural areas of the DRC. “Children of mothers who conceive before their youngest child reaches two years of age can suffer from malnutrition because the child does not receive prolonged breastfeeding with the required appropriate supplemental feeding,” he explains. “When malnutrition affects children and their mothers, their immunities are weakened and they become vulnerable to common infections, often causing illness and death.”

Studies show that a child in a developing nation has an even greater risk of dying if the mother dies, or he or she has brothers or sisters very close in age.

Requests

1. Support funding for international family planning for public, private, and faith-based organizations in order to help reduce the unmet need of women who seek access to family planning, but do not have it. Funding international family planning services reduces unintended pregnancies and abortion in the poorest countries with the greatest need.
2. Recognize the importance of faith-based organizations in providing international health services. 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.

For further information about CCIH and Christian work in family planning, see <http://tinyurl.com/CCIHResources>

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CCIH | www.ccih.org | Christian Connections for International Health is a 501(c)3 membership association whose global network includes over 350 individuals and 200 organizations. The CCIH network comprises a diverse community of people dedicated to a vision of a world where all have access to basic health and prevention services.
ccih@ccih.org



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Photo on front: Family planning user in Nigeria. © 2012 Akintunde Akinleye/NURHI, Courtesy of Photoshare
Photo above: Clinic worker conducts screening tests on a pregnant woman at the CRDI clinic. © 2012 Courtesy of CRDI