

Case Study: Hope Clinic in Uganda

Multi-faith Cooperation for Family Planning & Health Services



Hope Clinic Lukuli is about 5 kilometers outside Kampala, Uganda. The clinic is overseen and staffed by a multi-faith group who combine their Muslim, Church of Uganda (Anglican) and Catholic concepts of service and care for neighbors. The people of the area are self-employed, often reliant on cash sales of surplus crops from their small plots of land.



Hope Clinic serves more than 60,000 people in a 2 km radius. Services include family planning, malaria prevention, clinic admission for severe fevers, child and maternal health, nutrition education, sanitation, income improvement for low-income households, and comprehensive HIV/AIDS services. The nurses refer serious problems to the government hospital 4 km away.

Family planning services aim to help households grow at the rate they can afford, and a range of family planning methods is available -- 'Moon Beads' (to help a woman follow her monthly cycles), condoms, long-acting implants, etc. All are discussed and chosen by individuals, according to their own faith and needs. Staff offer information and counseling to support faithfulness within marriage.

Humble Beginnings

Local health work started in the late 1980's, with one dedicated, self-employed midwife trying to serve the 13,000 people within a half mile of her home. She was able to help about 50 people and deliver five babies a month, but the community had no access to child vaccinations or HIV services.

To expand services, the midwife needed guidance and support – in working with the Ugandan government and with donors – to deliver efficient, good quality healthcare, free or at fair prices. A multi-faith group of “founders”, not medics themselves, formed in 2000, to bring business and marketing skills to help their community. St. Francis Catholic Hospital visited each week to immunize children. In 2004 the Anglican diocese granted land for a new family health and maternity unit.

Faith Motivation and Donor Resources: A Winning Combination

The nurses and midwives at Hope Clinic, some Muslim and some Christian, are motivated by their faith. They do not hesitate to discuss their personal faith choices and to support each other. Area churches with their women's groups, the village council with its elected Women's Representative, and the madrasa and mosque are key groups that offer faith-motivated promotion of family health.

Voices from the Community

Here's what two women told the nurses at the clinic:

Paula says her faith “discourages people from using family planning.” Paula did not want to use family planning, and she now has six children. She cannot pay their school fees, and they hardly get a 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. She concludes, “You have to make individual decisions, because the load will be carried by you, not the church. Take a step today.”

Sheila, a Christian, says that prayer is a key part of her life. She says, “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.”

USAID funds, through the PEPFAR program and the Malaria Initiative, have enabled this indigenous effort to grow steadily, as the community better understood its rights to access health services and chose to utilize them. With USAID's help, Hope Clinic Lukuli now offers free HIV services and child immunizations, while other services are provided at fair prices, through collaboration with the District Health Office. US and UN funding of family planning means Hope Clinic can offer a wide range of contraceptive methods, from condoms to injections and multi-year implants



In the past year, more than 5,000 people were tested for HIV, including 380 pregnant women. Of those 380 women, 46 were found to be HIV infected but because of the care they received, all gave birth to healthy babies who were not infected.

Hope Clinic now serves more than 1,000 out-patients per month, helps deliver 15-20 babies a month and serves more than 50 family planning clients. Hope Clinic's founders do not receive any money themselves from the clinic. Their faith and commitment to serve others motivates them and the staff to keep prices low.

Hope Clinic Staff Members Share Their Views

Some staff members say that their religions do not allow family planning. One staff person went on to say that, in the past, very few children from Muslim families attained a high level of education, due to lack of resources.

Today, the world is changing, and every child deserves better education, so Muslim couples are using family planning. Other staff members, from various Christian faiths, have the same view: family planning is important and helps everyone to plan ahead to have the right sized family. The staff members are happy to be part of Hope Clinic, as they interact with people from all backgrounds and encourage them to use the services.

Philip Mitchell, director of Hope Clinic Lukuli writes, "In my opinion, we really need to focus on the benefits of working with faith-motivated people; they generally work harder! Faith and belief in helping others motivates Hope Clinic to respond to the needs of the community. It helps us bridge their needs and the available services, we don't experience faith as a barrier to helping others."

Case study written by Philip McMinn Mitchell of the Hope Clinic in 2010 www.hcluganda.org/clinic
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Photos courtesy of the Hope Clinic Lukuli

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

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