

Perspectives on partnering with the faith community to advance family planning

IRH's lessons learned from 30 years of partnership





**Institute for
Reproductive Health**
Georgetown University

“Fertility awareness methods, in effect, jump-started the active participation of church-run facilities in the national family planning program.” -Stakeholder in Rwanda

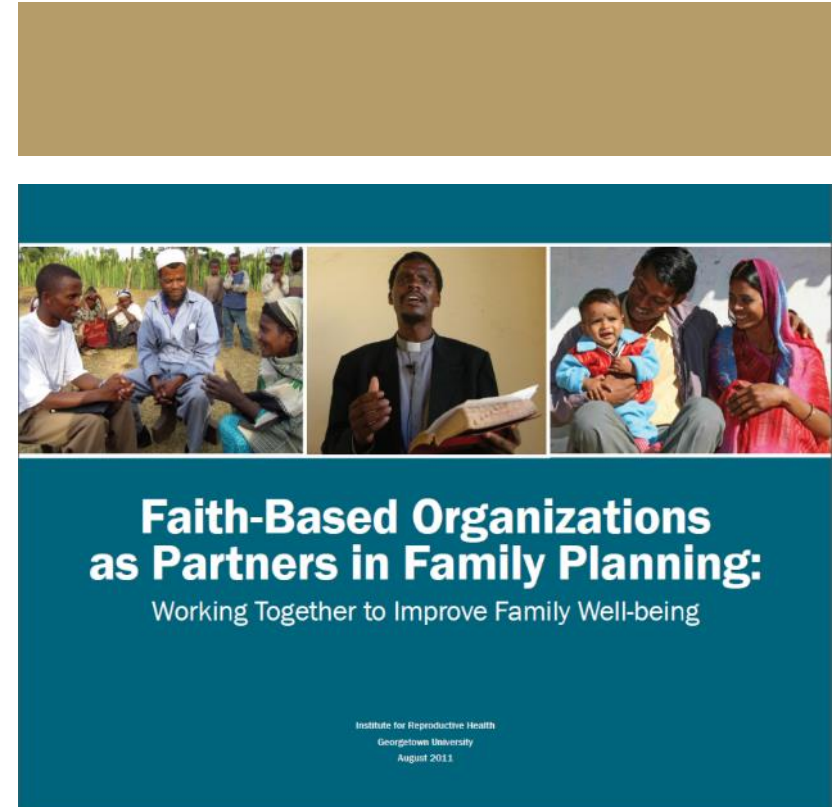


Key informant interviews & technical consultation

Study explored:

- What motivates engagement in family planning?
- How is the faith sector engaged in family planning?
- Where are areas of common ground?
- Where are areas of discord?

Consultation in 2011 brought together over 100 religious leaders and FP practitioners



What do FBOs say?

“Whether a Muslim is liberal or conservative, their core values come from the Koran and religious teaching. **Islam supports the health of the mother.** If we can show that the mother’s health is improved by timing and spacing of pregnancy, **we can make the case.** We **talk to Muslims in our own language.**” – Muslim FBO

“I think there is an **issue of language.** The moment you talk about family planning, there are still so many, even in the U.S., who think abortion, **a lot of it is misperceptions** and ignorance. From my perspective, what helps us is we don’t do anything without **involving the local community.** The partnership building and **listening to our partners** is extremely important. That **dialogue** informs us how to move forward.” – Christian FBO

“It is rare to find a woman in a health center accompanied by her husband! For a year now, we have been **talking to men about coming with their wives.** We show the men that even the imams accompany their wives. We persuaded them that they should accompany their wives to the health centers for prenatal consultations and vaccinations. We have found **there are men who are not negative,** they don’t refuse family planning.” – Muslim FBO

Training religious leaders in family planning

- Sensitized Muslim leaders in Northeastern Province **Kenya** in partnership with Pathfinder International
- Sensitized Muslim leaders in **Mali** in partnership with Futures Group
- Sensitized Christian and Muslim leaders in **Uganda** and **Kenya** in partnership with health bureaus
- Sensitized priests in **Rwanda** in partnership with AFR and Caritas



Developing a family planning strategy with Catholic Relief Services

IRH and CRS collaborated to develop and test a couple-friendly, effective family planning approach in line with Catholic teaching for integration into multi-sector programs led by CRS around the world.



Strengthening the family planning capacity of Christian Health Associations

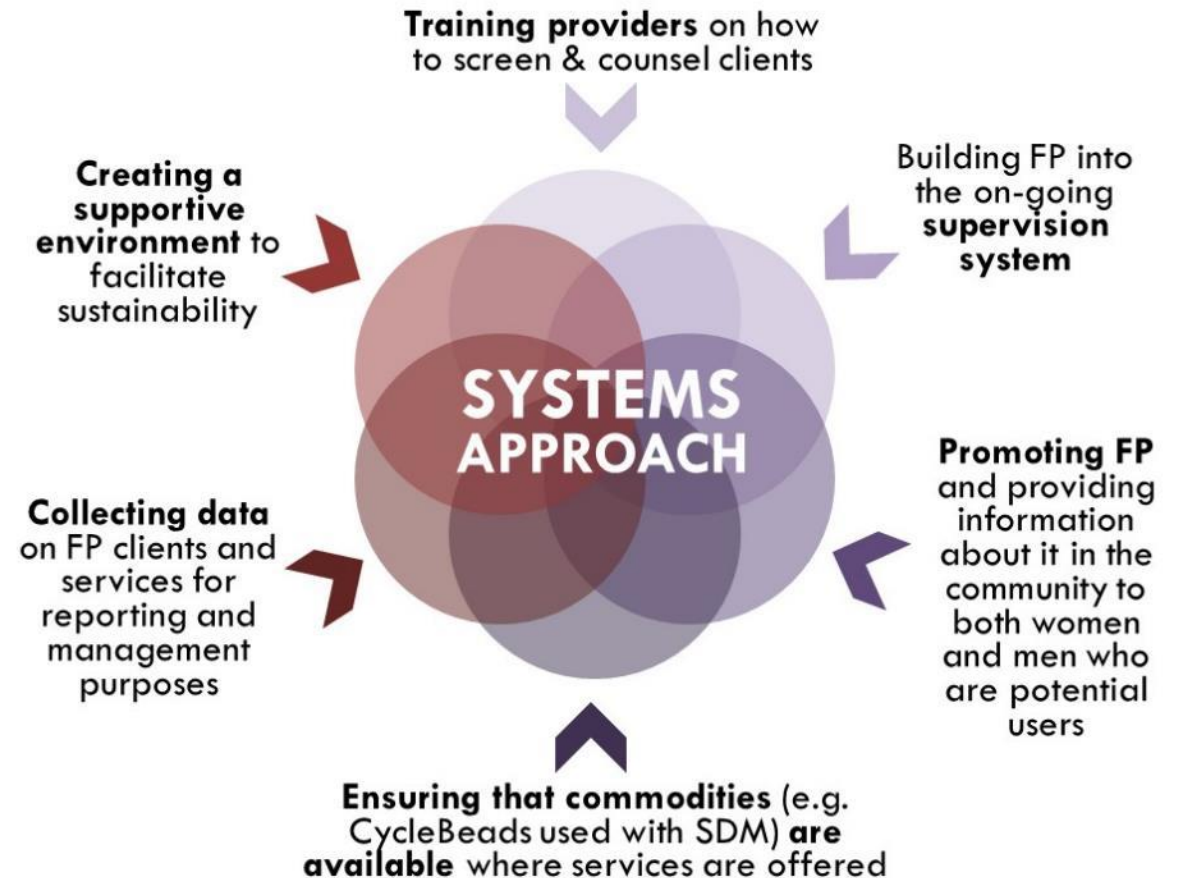
Christian Health Association of Kenya: 2011-2012

Caritas Rwanda: 2014-2017

Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau: 2014-2018

Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau: 2014-2018

Intervention Design



Value Add:



**Strengthen FBO-MOH
collaboration**



Increase FP access
(method mix + CHWs)



**Engage religious leaders as
champions**



**Improve couple
communication & involve men**



**Activate Catholic FP service
delivery**

Lessons learned from our experience with FBOs

Lessons Learned

- **Family planning can be acceptable** among many Christian and Muslim organizations and religious leaders, and **FAM is an acceptable entry point** to increase their involvement.
- FBOs and religious leaders are important partners in **reducing barriers** to family planning use and can **improve male involvement**.
- **Language** related to family planning **is important** to consider when FBOs and public institutions collaborate.
- When FBOs are involved in family planning, **uptake increases**—often among women who have never before used family planning.



THANK YOU



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