

CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS PROMOTING MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH



A Sermon/Khutbah Guide Based on the Holy Bible
and the Holy Qur'an



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PREFACE

Respect for God's creation and of life begins with protecting the health of mothers and babies. The ACCESS Program is working with the Rwandan Ministry of Health to improve maternal and newborn health through clinical interventions and community and religious leader mobilization. The Rwanda Faith-Based Organizations Network Against HIV (RCLS) is an umbrella organization for both Christian and Muslim organizations which work with community groups and organizations on HIV/AIDS, maternal and infant care, and other health issues.

It is within that context that RCLS deemed it necessary that key beliefs about marriage, family, and children based on religious teachings should be explained and affirmed so that followers understand their responsibility in protecting maternal and newborn health. Two select groups of Christian and Muslim leaders worked under the leadership of RCLS and ACCESS Program staff/consultant to develop a Sermon/Khutbah (a sermon delivered in mosque before the Friday prayer or at other special occasions) Guide which includes safe motherhood messages approved by the Ministry of Health and matched with appropriate verses from the Bible and Qu'ran.

The decision to undertake this effort was made in a meeting organized by RCLS that brought together representatives of Rwandan religious organizations in Kigali in August, 2007. The meeting participants appointed a committee to develop and write this sermon guide. The Guide, which is in two parts, covers Christian and Muslim sermons and was reviewed by the Ministry of Health and other key individuals and organizations.

Rwanda Faith-Based Organizations Network Against HIV (RCLS)

RCLS is composed of religious organizations operating in Rwanda that belong to five groups: Catholic Episcopal Conference in Rwanda (CEPR), Province of the Anglican Church in Rwanda (PEER), the Protestant Council of Rwanda (CPR), Evangelical Alliance of Rwanda (AER) and Rwanda Muslim Association (AMUR). RCLS, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and donors, is determined to improve maternal and newborn health through the religious organizations that comprise the network.

ACCESS Program

ACCESS is USAID's global program to improve maternal and newborn health and works to expand coverage, access and use of key maternal and newborn health services across a continuum of care from the household to the hospital.

Safe Birth Africa Initiative

To assist the Rwandan MOH with improving and expanding key maternal and newborn health interventions, ACCESS was asked in 2006 to participate in USAID's Safe Birth Africa Initiative (SBAI) in Rwanda. The program is designed to demonstrate large-scale sustainable results, focuses efforts on care of the mother and baby during labor, birth, and the immediate postpartum period, when the risk of life-threatening complications is highest. By using SBAI as a platform, ACCESS/Rwanda is improving the quality of Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmONC), including training on essential newborn care, implementing Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) to improve outcomes for low birth weight babies, involving faith-based organizations in community-based advocacy and to foster behavior change among families.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DHS	Demographic Health Survey
EIDS	Enquête Intermédiaire Demographique et de Santé
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDHS (2007-2008)	Intermediate Demographic Health Survey
IMA	IMA World Health
RCLS	Réseau des Confessions Religieuses pour la Lutte Contre le SIDA (Rwanda Faith-Based Organizations Network Against HIV/AIDS)
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease

FOREWORD

In Rwanda, every 3 hours a woman dies because of the complications linked to the pregnancy and the childbirth. Some of the identified major causes of these deaths include the lack of basic knowledge about maternal child health, the delay to make a decision to undergo pre-natal consultations and assisted labor, the lack of infrastructure, and the lack of skilled personnel at the moment of deliver. Most of these complications can be prevented by senzitation initiatives focused on raising awareness of all stakeholders including individuals, communities, decision-makers, etc.

In Rwanda, 97% of the Rwandan population belongs to different religious organizations both Christian and Islamic. Forty percent of Rwandan Health Facilities are managed by religious organizations as well as 36% of the PMTCT Centres and 37% of the VCT sites.

The book “Christians and Muslims Promoting Maternal and Infant Health” highlights Maternal and Infant Health issues in Rwanda and provides a link between them and the Holy Scriptures that form the basis of our faith: The Holy Bible and the Holy Qur’an. The book aims to provide basic information

and guidance on how we can address some of the major issues of Maternal and Infant Health using our Holy Scriptures.

Hopefully, this publication will promote the understanding of the role of the religious community in saving the millions of mothers who are dying while giving life and children who are not getting the chance to celebrate their fifth birthday.

On behalf of the Rwanda Faith-Based Organizations Network Against HIV (RCLS) I would like to thank the various partners' organizations for their valuable contributions including financial and technical assistance. Our sincere gratitude to the Rwanda Ministry of Health for the technical assistance, especially in identifying the key messages of Maternal and Child Health that are included in this book. We also thank the valuable financial assistance and technical guidance of the IMA World Health and the technical support of the ACCESS and JHPIEGO for the publication of this book.

We highly appreciate the work done by writers, reviewers and facilitators who have worked tirelessly days and nights for the production of this document; checking the most relevant verses

and surats of the Bible and the Qur'an linked with the Maternal and Child Health messages.

May the Almighty God bless everyone who will read this book and take action to improve maternal and infant health.

Reverend Gahungu Bunini

Chairman

Rwanda Faith-Based Organizations Network Against HIV

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Rwanda has one of the highest death rates for mothers and babies in the world. Seventy-five out of every 10,000 pregnant women die during pregnancy, childbirth, or in the period shortly after giving birth. This means that every 3 hours one woman in Rwanda dies from pregnancy and childbirth that should be joyful time. Out of every 1000 infants born, 152 babies die before they reach one month of age. The recognized causes of these deaths are the lack of sufficient knowledge of maternal and infant health, the lack of timely medical care, and the lack of adequate and timely assistance. However, it is possible to prevent these problems and reduce the number of deaths through awareness, education changing some of our behaviors.

On the subject of religion in Rwanda, the Demographic Health Survey (DHS 2005) showed that approximately 97% of Rwandese are followers of an organized religion. Religious groups have played an important role in reducing maternal and infant deaths through the health care services provided at their hospitals and health centers. (40% of health centers are operated by religious organizations). With this Sermon Guide, the religious groups can play an additional role through teaching in mosques, and preaching in churches.

The aim of this guide is neither to teach the faith of any one religion, nor to teach clinical skills on maternal and infant health as that would be done in a medical context. It is rather to use the Bible and Qur'an according to one's faith, and show what God says about protection and care of mothers and babies. A person using the guides can use the recommended verses found in them, or he/she can use other verses from the holy books.

This guide is composed of two parts. The first part consists of a guide based on the Bible while the other is based on the Qur'an. All parts converge on ten themes that complement one another in protecting maternal and infant health. The themes include:

1. The value of a person's health
2. Responsibility of husband for maternal and infant health
3. Family planning
4. Proper ante natal and post natal care
5. Child health
6. Good nutrition for the mother and child
7. Personal hygiene and environmental protection
8. Preventing and fighting malaria

9. Preventing HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD)
10. Mutual Health Insurance
11. Avoiding alcoholic drinks, drugs and smoking

May God help everybody who reads this guide have the courage to use it in order to sensitize others to protect maternal and infant health.

MUSLIM SERMON GUIDE TO PROMOTE MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH

“In the Name of God, Most Gracious Most Merciful”

We would like to reiterate that this part of the guide was developed with the collaboration of the Rwanda Muslim Association (AMUR) and RCLS. The guide aims to demonstrate the role of Islam (the Islamic Faith) in solving some of the problems faced by people in the world today and especially those in Rwanda.

May God bless this guide, helping it bring light to all who read it.

INTRODUCTION

Praise be to God who created man and taught him with a pen what was unknown. May peace be upon Muhammad, the Messenger of God, (Peace Be upon Him), He who came as a messenger and brought valuable messages about life to man. These messages make Islam a complete and perfect religion with rules guiding all aspects of human life; including faith, economy, conduct, social practices and all other needs of everyday life. Islam has clearly explained all aspects of life in the Qur'an since its revelation till the Day of Judgment as God said in His words, "***Nothing have We omitted from the Qur'an.***" (Qur'an 6:38) God also asserted, "***All things have We explained in detail.***" (Qur'an 17:12) Islamic commandments have two origins which are:

- The Holy Qur'an
- Sunnah (practices/ways) of the Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him)

Therefore, it is important to briefly explain what the Qur'an is, and discuss the practices of the prophet of God that relate to this guide. This will help explain our objective.

What Is the Qur'an?

The Qur'an is the word of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) through the angel Djibril (Gabriel). It is the last message of God, including all messages revealed to all prophets who preceded Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him). Therefore, the Qur'an is an eternal miracle lasting from the beginning of time until God takes back the world and all that belongs to it.

The origin of the Qur'an is God. No one is allowed to alter (add or remove) what is contained in the Qur'an. God revealed it to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) in different circumstances and for different purposes for 23 years. It contains rules for a faithful life.

The Qur'an is more than 14 centuries old and always retains its original form without any alteration. God said, ***“We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it.”*** (Qur'an 15:9)

What Is Sunnah? (Practices/Ways of the Prophet)

The Sunnah contains what was transmitted to us by the Prophet of God Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him). It includes His

sayings and deeds and the actions of others that earned His approval. After the Qur'an, the Sunnah is another foundation of Islamic rules because it is the message of God revealed to him. As God said, ***“Nor does he say of his own desire, it is no less inspiration sent down to him.”*** (Qur'an 53:3-4)

SERMON 1 - THE HUSBAND'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE HEALTH OF THE MOTHER AND BABY

A Husband Is Responsible for the Well-being of His Family

Islam has elaborate rules for the family. It has established the way a husband and wife must live together, giving each one his or her rights, and obliging them to collaborate for the education and welfare of their children. This responsibility is common to both spouses, but lies more heavily on the husband as the head of the family. The Qur'an identifies the husband as the head of the family. God said, "***Men are the protectors and maintainers of women....***" (Qur'an 4:34) Since the husband is responsible for the family, he is obligated to fulfill all his duties, including striving for the family's well-being.

Striving for the Family's Well-being and Needs

It is very important in Islam for a husband to provide for his family's financial needs. The husband is recompensed when he fulfills this duty, and he is punished when he does not. God affirms this rule in the holy Qur'an where He says, "***But he (the man) shall bear the costs of their (women) food and clothing on equitable term.***" (Qur'an 2:233) This

verse indicates that Islam requires the head of the family to bear the family's costs according to his means. This means that a man with enough resources must bear the costs for his family in buying what his wife and children need according to the means that God has given him. God said, ***“Let the man of means spend according to his means: and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what God has given him. God puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him.”*** (Qur'an 65:7) This verse of the holy Qur'an shows that, for the family's good health, Islam requires a husband to take care of his family, and to provide it with enough nutritious food.

Providing the Family with Healthy Accommodation

Islam puts much importance on the family and includes providing the family with proper accommodation as being among the obligations of the husband. It means that the husband of means must provide his family with all that is needed in life. God says, ***“Let the women live in the same style as you live, according to your means; annoy them not, so as to restrict them.”*** (Qur'an 65:6)

N.B: Islam requires a man to meet his family's financial needs with money earned legally. This is what makes the family prosperous, lucky, and blessed in life. Using illegal methods such as theft, gambling, selling what is forbidden by God, including drugs or alcoholic drinks, to satisfy the needs of the family is forbidden in Islam. These substances have negative effects on the life of the family and the family's requests will be unacceptable to God. *The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) passed near a man who was on a trip. The man was exhausted, dirty, and his hair was untidy, and he raised up his arms making requests to God. But his food and drinks were illegal, his clothes were obtained in illegal ways, and he was living illegally. The Prophet of God said, "How can God accept his requests?"*

The Husband Is Protector of His Family

Islam emphasizes that a husband should take care of his family, striving for its welfare and prosperity in this world. With respect to the Day of Judgment God said, ***"O, you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who flinch not (from***

executing) the Commands they receive from God, but do (precisely) what they are commanded.” (Qur’an 66:6)

Saving your family from “Fire” means to make family members respect the commandments of God and reject what God has forbidden. In explaining how a husband is a protector of his family, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, *“Everyone is a protector and every protector will give account of what he protected; a husband is a protector of his family and he will give account on the Day of Judgment.”* That is why the husband who dodges his family responsibilities commits a serious sin as Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) asserted, *“The dereliction of your family responsibility is a sin.”* Islam forbids the act of neglecting and denying one’s child or parent.

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, *“Who will deny his child in order to condescend him or her on this world, God will in turn condescend him in the presence of all creatures on the Day of Judgment. God will do the same to him.”* These sayings show the strength of a husband’s responsibilities for his family. They also show that the dereliction of the family

responsibility is a sin and that family members are under the husband's duty. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, *"O men, fear God when treating your wives, and know that God put them under your duty."*

Islam emphasizes that a child is a fruit of both parents because he or she is created *"from a drop emitted proceeding from between the backbone and the breast."* In the holy Qur'an, God tells us, ***"Now let man but think from what he is created! He is created from a drop emitted-proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs."*** (Qur'an 86:5-7) It is this drop that enters the uterus of a woman to form a baby.

Even though the woman becomes pregnant with the baby, the child belongs to both parents. This means that the husband must share and ease the pain and trouble faced by the wife when giving birth. When Mariam (Mary) was facing the pains of childbirth under the palm tree, she said, ***"Ah! Would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten."*** (Qur'an 19:23) Also, in showing that the woman faces pregnancy pains, the Qur'an says, ***"We have enjoined***

on man to be good to his parents. In travail upon travail did his mother bear him.” (Qur’an 31:14) We also read about the pain of childbirth where God said, *“We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents; in pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth.”* (Qur’an 46:15)

Islam commands us to take care of both our own health and our companion’s health. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) called upon people to take care of their health by seeing physicians, and his saying received by Imam Ahmed asserted, *“O people of God! Consult the physicians for your health, because every disease has cure except one, which is old age.”*

The above mentioned points highlight troubles and pains that a woman faces when she is pregnant, at the moment of childbirth, and in the period after birth. How does she share troubles and pains with her husband? Islam says that a husband must share all hard times with his wife in the following ways.

Empathize with His Wife when She Is in Pain

A Muslim husband is required to stay near his wife and feel that he has a share in her pains and trouble. This is highlighted by the saying of God's Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) which said, *"The example of believers' love and pity is like one body; when one organ is aching, the whole body has pain and there is no sleep...."*

Abstain from Sexual Intercourse after Childbirth and During Monthly Cycles

Islamic rules assert that a wife undergoes much pain during childbirth and that her body may be injured and need time to heal. Therefore, sexual intercourse too soon after childbirth can be considered violence, and it is strongly forbidden. God says, *"They ask you (Muhammad) concerning women's courses. Say: they are a hurt and pollution; so keep away from women in their courses...."* (Qur'an 2:222)

Praying for Her

As mentioned above, pregnancy is very difficult and dangerous for a woman. The husband must pray for her to give birth peacefully. We have an example of the need for prayer during childbirth when the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him)

asked Umu Salama and Zainabo to be near his daughter Fatima, and pray for her when she was about to give birth.

Taking Care of the Mother During Pregnancy and After Childbirth

A pregnant mother needs nutritious food in order to stay healthy and carry a healthy baby. After childbirth, she also needs nutritious food in order to regain the energy lost during birth, and to properly breastfeed. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, *“Feel pity for humankind, God will in turn feel pity for you.”* He also said, *“The one who will help a person in trouble will in turn get the help of God who will assuage his pains in this world and on the Day of Judgment.”* Another one of Muhammad’s (Peace Be upon Him) sayings that shows the importance of empathy is, *“God helps he who helps his companion.”*

God commands that a woman experiencing her monthly cycle or who has just given birth must eat during the fasting month of Ramadan. This shows how God is merciful and gracious and how He takes care of the mother’s health. Also, Islam requires a husband to advise his wife to take care of her health in consulting a health center as it is a commandment to each

believer. God said, ***“But remind! For reminding benefits the believers.”*** (Qur’an 51:55) Indeed, reminding is a commandment as it is highlighted by the saying of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) received by Imam Ahmad. The prophet said, *“O people of God! Consult the physicians for your health since every disease has cure except one, which is old age.”*

Receiving the Newborn with Tenderness and Happiness

Islam requires us to be happy to receive a newborn child and to congratulate the mother with joy as Zakariya did. God said, ***“O Zakariya! We give you good news of a son: His name shall be Yahya. On none by that name have We conferred distinction before.”*** (Qur’an 19:7) This joy is also highlighted in the Qur’an where God spoke of the time the Angels said to Mary, ***“O Mary! God gives you glad tidings of a word from Him. His name will be Issa (Jesus), the son of Mariam (Mary), held in honor in this world and hereafter, and of (the company of) those nearest to God.”*** (Qur’an 3:45)

Collaboration between the Husband and Wife in the Household

Before marriage, Islam asks the spouses to appreciate each other. Their life in marriage should be guided by love at all times. They should also take into account that the model of partnership for all creatures is the Prophet. God said, “*And surely thou hast sublime morals.*” Collaboration between the husband and his wife is one of the good customs that we inherit from the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him). This is contrary to the opinion of those who say that a husband who does household work is yielding to his wife or who attribute it to the effect of the magic power of the wife. The Prophet said, “*A good husband is the one who is good to his family (wife and children) as I am good to my family.*” It means that a husband should show goodness to his family before showing it to others, because a husband can be cooperative with others while he is cruel to his family.

The Prophet did all forms of housework, as we see in his various sayings and activities showing the collaboration between him and his wives. Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) helped the wife take care of all manners of household work. An example of helping the wife is in a saying received by Aswad when he

asked the Prophet's wife named Aisha (May God Be Glad at Her) about the Prophet's activities. Aisha said, "*He used to help his wife in her activities and went to pray when it was time for that.*" Also, when Aisha was asked about the kinds of activities the Prophet used to do for his family, she responded that he used to sew clothes, polish shoes, and do all kinds of household work for the family.

Islam also tells us to help our housekeepers. The Prophet said, "*They are your brothers and sisters; God put them under your authority, give them the same food as you eat, give them clothes similar to yours, don't oblige them to do what is beyond their capacity, and help them if that happens.*" All these sayings show that a husband should help others in various activities for the family. He should also be aware that he is the protector of the family, and that the head of the family is also its servant.

Cooperate with the Wife on Safe Birth Spacing

Research shows that it is safer for the mother and baby to have an interval of at least three years between the births of children. The husband should discuss birth spacing techniques with his wife. Islam supports the natural method of family planning and the use of condoms by married couples. Islam asks each Muslim

to use birth spacing in order to control the fast-growing population which strains the nation's natural and economic resources.

SERMON 2 - FAMILY PLANNING

Properly spacing births in a family is a very important way to protect the health of mothers and babies. Fourteen hundred years ago Islam advised that a mother should breastfeed her child for two years. Breastfeeding is healthy for the mother and child. As God said, ***“The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years....”*** (Qur’an 2:233) If we consider this verse and the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) forbidding the mother to breastfeed children while she is pregnant, it is clear that births should be spaced approximately three years or more apart.

Islam and other religions participating in RCLS-Rwanda have an agreement with the Ministry of Health to implement the nation’s family planning program in a way that is consistent with their faith. Islam supports the natural method of family planning and the use of condoms by married couples. Islam asks each Muslim to use the latter form of family planning in order to control the fast-growing population which strains the nation’s natural and economic resources.

The Demographic Health Survey (DHS 2005) showed that new babies are born and the population increases as follows:

- 23% of children have a younger sibling before they reach 2 years old.
- 41% of children have a younger sibling before they reach 3 years old.
- 36% of children have a younger sibling at the age of 3.

It is safer for families and better for the nation for parents to wait to have a baby until their existing children reach three years old. The lives of thousands of mothers and infants can be saved in Rwanda if families practice proper birth spacing.

Family Planning Improves the Welfare of the Family

Islam emphasizes that children are a gift from God and that mankind should receive them with joy. Islam asks people to practice family planning by following a three-year spacing period as advised by God in the Qur'an as mentioned above. Family planning is important to the child for his or her health and future. God highlights this and said, ***“Let those (disposing of an estate) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own if they had***

left a helpless family behind: Let them fear Allah, and speak appropriate words.” (Qur’an 4:9)

The Prophet of God also said, *“It’s much better to leave your offspring in a good situation than leaving them in poverty.”*

Family Planning Requires Consultation for Couples

Islam asks everyone to take care and be responsible for his or her health. The wife is the first concerned with the care of her health as God asserts, ***“... And make not your own hands to contribute to (your) destruction....”*** (Qur’an 2:195)

However, the wife should consult with her husband on the issue of family planning. God orders people to attempt to reach agreement in their affairs saying, ***“Those who respond to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation.”*** (Qur’an 42:38)

This is emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) who said, *“He who asks for advice does not fall into shame or humiliation.”*

Methods of Family Planning

Islam asks mothers to breastfeed their children for two years. The holy Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet forbid pregnant mothers from breastfeeding children. Therefore, it is obvious that the distance between children should be at least three years and that Islam discourages bearing children without enough time between the births.

Family planning techniques were used in the period of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) when people were using the coitus interruptus (or withdrawal) method. Muhammad's companions discussed this with him and said, "*We used the coitus interruptus method,*" at the time the Qur'an was revealed. The fact that the coitus interruptus method was used when the Qur'an was revealed, and that the Prophet did not forbid it, shows that it is accepted in Islam.

In addition, Islam accepts all birth spacing techniques that can be used so that a child can be weaned at the proper time. The ancient method of coitus interruptus can be compared to modern methods such as condoms, counting the days to determine fertility and other methods, since they all have the same objective. Comparing two things that have a similar origin is

accepted in Islam and known as “al qiyasi” or “reasoning by analogy.” Therefore, more modern family planning methods are accepted in Islam as long as there are no negative consequences on the mother’s health, since God would not accept a method which harms the mother’s health, as He said, “***And make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction.***” (Qur’an 2:195)

SERMON 3 - PROPER ANTENATAL AND POST-NATAL CARE

The Ministry of Health recommends:

- Have at least four antenatal consultations
- Make sure she has the Mutual Health Insurance for herself and her child.
- Choose a health center where she will deliver the child.
- Plan how she will get to the health center.
- Prepare all the necessary items she and the newborn will need for childbirth and postpartum.
- Make sure that she has a blood donor in case it becomes necessary.
- Arrange to deliver the baby with the assistance of a skilled attendant.
- Seek healthcare within two days after birth to make sure that there are no harmful postnatal consequences and that she and the baby are healthy.

Although it is clear that pregnant women do try to go to maternity centers for prenatal consultation, it is recorded that only 13% of women who have prenatal care have the

recommended four consultations. This shows that a great number of pregnant mothers do not comply with the recommended program of four consultations, which results in problems many women face during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.

The number of women who were assisted by professional midwives increased to 52% in 2007 and 2008 from 39% in 2005 (IDHS 2008). Forty-five percent of women gave birth in a hospital. It is necessary for every woman to give birth at a hospital with the assistance of a qualified medical doctor who will comply with all requirements.

When a woman becomes pregnant, the baby undergoes various stages of growth in the mother's womb. God said: *“Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (fetus) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out*

of it another creature. So blessed be Allah, the best to create!” (Qur’an 23:11-14)

These verses show that a child undergoes various stages and a mother should be aware of changes that occur as soon as she becomes pregnant. Also, she is asked to go to a health center for advice on how to protect her health and her child’s. This is emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) who said, *“He who asks for advice does not fall into shame or humiliation.”*

A husband is required to help the wife prepare for the needs of the baby before he or she is born. This is affirmed by the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) when he said, *“What a husband provides for his household, his wife, his child, or his housekeeper is a charity done to God.”* Then, God gave His commandment: *“...But he (the child’s father) shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms.”* (Qur’an 2:233)

Newborn Care

We must take care of a child beginning at the time he is conceived and continuing throughout his time in the womb and after he is born. After birth a child must suckle immediately and should not receive any other food besides breast milk for at least six months. The baby must be vaccinated against diseases. A child must be protected, because many children die due to diarrhea, poor nutrition, dehydration, lack of blood and delay in providing them with medical care.

Conclusion of Sermon 3

There is, however, a great number (55%) of pregnant women who do not give birth at a hospital. This is a main cause of many deaths of women and their babies who die in childbirth. Childbirth at a hospital is crucial; every Christian must realize the role they have in educating mothers on prenatal and postnatal consultations and on childbirth at a hospital. All Christians are also requested to teach others by being good examples and following healthy practices. Preaching by example is more effective than speaking without actions.

SERMON 4 · THE CHILD'S HEALTH

In the Islamic faith, both parents are commanded to take care of the child. Islam calls parents to protect the health of their children. Parents should answer this call by providing their children with vaccinations and good nutrition. God said, ***“...And make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction.”*** (Qur'an 2:195)

Also, it is necessary for every person to take care of his or her health as commended by the Prophet of God (Peace Be upon Him) when he said, *“O people of God! Consult the physicians for your health, because every disease has a cure except one, which is old age.”*

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) asked people to take care of their health and protect it from all that is harmful. Then, the Prophet called upon people for vaccination against epidemics and he said, *“Don't go to the region where there is an epidemic.”*

One day, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) refused to greet the person who had a cutaneous (or skin) disease (pain)

in order to teach people to protect themselves from infectious diseases.

Vaccination is an important part of protecting a child's health. According to the Ministry of Health, an epidemic is less dangerous to a village when all the children have been vaccinated against the disease. The Ministry has established a list of diseases that people can be vaccinated against, which includes tuberculosis, measles, whooping-cough, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis B.ⁱ

Although we know the importance of vaccination, the survey shows that there are still many children who are not vaccinated. The consequence of not vaccinating children is the spread of deadly diseases. According to the Ministry of Health, 80% of children were vaccinated in 2007-2008 while 75% of children were vaccinated in 2005.ⁱⁱ

Some of the main reasons children do not receive or finish all vaccinations are:

- The mother did not have antenatal healthcare consultations at all or had less than four visits.
- The mother did not give birth at a hospital.

- Parents (especially the mother) were not aware of vaccinations or their importance.
- Parents forgot the date of a scheduled vaccination.

It is important for children under 11 months old and pregnant mothers to be vaccinated in order to prevent disease.

SERMON 5 - GOOD NUTRITION FOR THE MOTHER AND CHILD

Eating healthy food is another important way to protect health. That is why God encourages people to eat healthy food to protect themselves from damaging diseases. God says, ***“O ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you....”*** (Qur’an 2:172) The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) emphasized healthy food and encouraged others to eat well as we encounter in his various teachings.

Zahada Al Jurumiy received the saying that asserts, *“I went to Abi Mussa’s when he was eating the chicken meat and he welcomed me saying, ‘take a piece of it since I saw the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) eating the chicken.’”*

One day, Umu Salama brought a roast goat meat to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him). The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) used to eat soft meat of various kinds for sufficient protein. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) also drank milk, ate honey and various sugary drinks as is

addressed in his saying, *“If God gives you milk you will say, ‘God, may you bless and increase this milk, since nothing among foods and drinks can replace milk.’”*

In addition, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) used to eat corn and farinaceous food as witnessed by a person prepared food for the Prophet including wheat bread, meat soup and porridge.

Islam emphasizes eating vegetables and fruits to build and protect one’s body as it is found in the saying received by Abdullah, the son of Djafar which said, *“I saw the Prophet eating ripe dates.”* Aisha, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, *“The prophet liked to eat ripe water-melon.”*

Malnutrition can cause disease and death and can be especially harmful to children and pregnant or breastfeeding women. According to the Ministry of Health’s survey “Turwane ku buzima bw’ababyeyi n’abana” (“Let’s protect the health of mothers and children”), five out of 1000 children under five years of age suffer from malnutrition. Another survey by the Ministry of Health in 2007 and 2008 (EIDS 2008) showed that

48% of children between the age of six months to five years old suffer from anemia due to malnutrition. Malnutrition causes kwashiorkor, insufficient growth, weakness, chronic diseases and memory problems. Good nutrition is necessary for children to grow properly and have the energy they need. It is also very important for disease prevention.

SERMON 6 - PERSONAL HYGIENE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Islam requires everyone to take care of his or her body, clothes, and household. In His commandment, God said, ***“for Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.”*** (Qur’an 2:222) He also asserted, ***“And thy garments keep free from stain!”*** (Qur’an 74:4) The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, ***“Hygiene is one of the pillars of the faith.”***

Islam asks people to take care of their hygiene as is asserted by the Prophet when he said that a person should respect five aspects of personal hygiene:

- Circumcision for men
- Shaving pubic hair
- Trimming the moustache
- Shaving armpit hair
- Cutting nails

In addition, Islam asks people to wash their hands after waking up and brush their teeth as often as possible. Abuhurayira received the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) that says, *“Don’t touch any material without washing your hands three times since you don’t know where you put your hands before.”*

Islam asks people to take care of their bodies, including brushing their teeth as emphasized by Aisha when she said, *“The prophet used to brush his teeth whenever he entered the house.”*

Islam requires people to take care of the environment and commands that followers do not damage the environment. God said, ***“Do not make mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order.”*** (Qur’an 7:56)

God created the earth and made it wide and He said, ***“Have We not made the earth as a wide expanse?”*** (Qur’an 78:6) God made pegs of mountains for the earth in order to protect it from shaking as He himself said, ***“Have We not***

made the earth as a wide expanse, and the mountains as pegs?” (Qur’an 78:6-7)

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) told people to take care of the environment and said, *“He who will plant a tree with edible fruits by people, domestic animals and birds will have done charity to God.”* The Prophet also said, *“Do not cut trees and do not kill domestic animals.”*

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) ordered people to protect the hygiene of their surroundings, forbidding them to release themselves (defecate) wherever they wanted. He said, *“Avoid releasing yourselves (defecating) on a path and under the sun-shed since this can make you be cursed to God and people.”* He also asserted, *“Nobody is supposed to urinate or release himself or herself in water....”*

Proper hygiene is crucial to good health. Unhygienic environments cause disease and death. Research has shown that 25% of deaths worldwide are the result of diseases caused by microbes resulting from poor hygiene. Infectious diseases are the second most common killer. Neurological diseases and diseases of the heart are the most common killer, responsible for

31% of deaths worldwide, while cancer is the third most common, causing 13% of deaths. Microbes resulting from lack of hygiene are responsible for 63%ⁱⁱⁱ of the deaths of infants and children under four years of age. The Ministry of Health affirms that seven out of ten people, especially children, suffer from diseases caused by lack of hygiene including diarrhea and worms.^{iv}

Poor hygiene practices that contribute to the spread of microbes that cause disease include failing to wash hands before eating and after using the rest room, the lack of latrines, overcrowding, and the lack of public latrines. Bodily waste is often the root cause of the microbes that cause disease. According to the Ministry of Health (DHS 2005), 21% of children die every year before the age of six from diarrhea and worms.

To protect ourselves and our children from these deadly diseases, the following measures can be taken:

- Bathe at least once a day.
- Wash clothes with soap, dry them appropriately in the sun, and iron them in the sun if possible to kill microbes.

According to the Ministry of Health, the percentage of homes that have adequate latrines is 4% in rural areas and 31% in towns (DHS 2005).

SERMON 7 · PREVENTING HIV/AIDS AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

Research has shown that 80% of HIV/AIDS cases are acquired through sexual intercourse. Islam forbids behaviors that can lead to adultery. God said, ***“nor come nigh to adultery: for it is an indecent (deed) and an evil way.”*** (Qur’an 17:32)

In addition, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) showed that adultery has negative consequences on society and said, *“Epidemics and strange diseases will fall on people as soon as they commit adultery publicly.”*

Islam in Fighting against HIV/AIDS

Islam supports protecting health and the policy of fighting HIV/AIDS, a major problem in the world. Therefore, Islam supports the following measures to fight against HIV/AIDS:

Education

Islam puts great emphasis on education, which consists of teaching and helping people to understand HIV/AIDS, its

consequences, how it is spread, and how to prevent its transmission.

A young man came to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) and told him, *“I ask you permission to engage in prostitution.”* People who were there rebuked the young man saying, *“Young man! Stop talking! What are you asking?”* The Prophet told the young man to come near him and said, *“Can you do to your mother what you wish to do?”* The young man said no and the Prophet added, *“Can you wish it for your sister?”* The young man said no and the Prophet asked him again, *“Can you wish it for your daughter?”* The young man said no and then the Prophet said, *“Don’t do to others what you don’t wish your relatives.”* The Prophet put a hand on the young man and prayed for him saying, *“Oh God! Forgive this young man, purify his heart, and help him to abstain from sex.”* Then, the young man changed so that he did not think about prostitution anymore. The Prophet’s words of advice show how much counsel can change a person’s conduct.

Abstinence

Abstinence is the surest way of preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS. Islam encourages abstinence. Islam does not only

forbid adultery, it also forbids all temptations that can lead to it. God said, ***“nor come nigh to adultery, for it is an indecent (deed) and an evil way.”*** (Qur’an 17:32)

Abstinence is one of the qualities of true believers, as God flatters them by saying, ***“successful indeed are the believers...except with those joined to them in marriage bond, or whom their right hands possess, for they are free from blame.”*** (Qur’an 23:1-6)

In addition, God said, ***“Those who invoke not, with Allah, any other god, nor slay such life as Allah has made sacred, except for just cause, nor commit fornication; and any that does this (not only) meets punishment.”*** (Qur’an 25:68)

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, *“I promise paradise to he or she who will abstain himself or herself from vain talking and adultery.”* The latter verses show that abstinence from prostitution is a commandment and a good way to prevent HIV/AIDS, since prostitution is a major cause of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Fidelity

Fidelity is critical in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS. It is a commandment in Islam as it is addressed in so many sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him). When he was asked about major sins, he said, *“The first is idolatry, the second is killing your child fearing his/her costs, and the third is fornicating with your neighbor’s wife.”* The Prophet added, *“On the day of judgment, God will send a big snake to a man who will sleep with his mate’s wife.”* Those teachings of the Prophet show that infidelity is a big sin in Islam in addition to being a method of HIV/AIDS transmission. Fidelity is one of the ways to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and protect one’s health that is commanded by Islam.

Condoms

The use of condoms can prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. Islam allows the use of condoms by a couple in cases where one or both partners are infected with HIV/AIDS. For those who use condoms in prostitution, it is advised to avoid prostitution, and realize that prostitution is a major sin with negative consequences on the health and lives of people. Condom use is not forbidden in Islam, but those who use them and engage in prostitution remain sinners to God.

Circumcision

Islam has asked males to be circumcised for 14 centuries. Circumcision is among the hygienic practices emphasized by the Prophet, who said, “*Circumcision is among five natural hygiene customs for males.*” This saying is in agreement with a survey by the World Health Organization (WHO), affirming that male circumcision is one of the methods to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. To help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, Islam asks all males to be circumcised. Circumcision reduces but does not eliminate the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission.

The Rwandan Demographic Health Survey (DHS 2005) showed the following:

- 3% of people in Rwanda are living with HIV/AIDS and women and girls are more affected than others.
- 75% of HIV/AIDS cases are the result of sexual intercourse.
- 20% of children are infected when their mothers are pregnant, giving birth, or during breastfeeding.

The Ministry of Health recommends the following strategies to fight HIV/AIDS:

- Education, abstinence, fidelity, and condom use for couples where one or both partners are infected as advised by a health worker.
- Voluntary testing to allow people to take necessary precautions if infected.
- Not isolating infected people.
- Encouraging the use of counseling and testing centers.
- Encouraging pregnant women to be tested voluntarily to learn their status and take precautions in order to decrease the risk of transmitting HIV/AIDS to their children.
- Encouraging people living with HIV/AIDS to go to health centers for antiretroviral therapy, and to avoid transmission to others.

SERMON 8 - MUTUAL HEALTH INSURANCE

In Islam, acts of providing assistance to one another and demonstrating solidarity, especially participating in the Mutual Health Insurance program, are highly valued. Good health is for all believers and Islam calls upon everybody to take care of his or her life by participating in the Mutual Health Insurance program in order to have good health. Being a part of Mutual Health Insurance strengthens the sense of brotherhood among people. God said, ***“The believers are but a single brotherhood....”*** (Qur’an 49:10) It is obvious that you cannot call yourself a believer if you do not help others, especially those who are poor and unable to go to the hospital for healthcare.

Islam called upon people to seek good health. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, *“Ask God to provide you with good health when you pray.”* In Islam, it is a commandment from God to protect health and life, and if a person saves one life, it is as if he saved the lives of all people. You cannot value and save lives without assisting those who are unable to go to the hospital. God said, ***“...help you one***

another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancor....” (Qur’an 5:2) Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, “*God helps those who help others.*”

The Mutual Health Insurance program is in the framework of helping needy people and the weak as the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) commanded, when he said, “*feel pity for others and God will feel pity for you.*” The Prophet called upon everybody to help others, as he said, “*Believers are like one body, when one organ is aching, pain spreads through the whole body.*” Participating in the Mutual Health Insurance program enables believers to help others and help them protect their health.

The Prophet also said, “*He or she will help his mate to solve problems, God will in turn solve his or her problems in the world and on the Day of Judgment.*” Solidarity is a duty for all Muslims and they should consider others outside of their families, such as those who are poor and do not have any assistance. The Prophet said, “*Believers are like one building that has complementary pillars that make it strong.*” Therefore, Islam asks believers not to live individually, but to work

together to find solutions to problems in their communities. God said, “...*and those in whose wealth is recognized right for the (needy) who ask and him who is deprived.*” (Qur’an 70:24-25) It is not acceptable to eat and have means to go to the hospital and forget your neighbor. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, “*It is unfair to eat adequately while your neighbor is starving.*” It is obvious that we should help provide food and healthcare to those in need in our community.

Importance of Mutual Health Insurance

Participating in the Mutual Health Insurance program is an obligation for the following reasons:

- Mutual Health Insurance helps to reduce the number of deaths of poor people. The Prophet emphasized such solidarity by saying, “*Every good deed is charity, and those who call others for it will be recompensed as he or she has done it.*”
- Mutual Health Insurance is a source of love and solidarity between the poor and the rich. Islamic regulations assert that health solidarity is a base for good health. The 1984 Islamic International Decree of Riyadh on human rights contains articles that call upon people, particularly Muslims, to participate in Mutual Health Insurance programs. According

to the 17th Article of that decree, nations and donors should contribute. Everyone has the duty to care for his health. This is similar to Article 25 of the international decree on human rights telling people to respect the rights of all people, taking care of the sick and the health of the poor.

- In Islam, solidarity is sharing common interests, which brings love and a sense of good will among all people. The Demographic Health Survey (DHS 2005) shows that participation in the Mutual Health Insurance program is increasing. However, participation remains low with only 38% of the population participating in the program.

SERMON 9 - AVOIDING ALCOHOL, DRUGS, AND TOBACCO

God created mankind and provided it with honor and intelligence, making it superior to all other creatures because of that intelligence favor. God said, ***“We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred them special favors, above a great part of Our Creation.”*** (Qur’an 17:70)

Islam has prohibited intoxicants and drugs, establishing strong punishments on those who use them and prohibiting the sale of them. God said, ***“O ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, sacrificing to stones, and (divination by) arrows, are an abomination, of Satan’s handiwork. Eschew such (abomination), that ye may prosper.”*** (Qur’an 5:90)

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, ***“Any kind of intoxicants are an abomination.”*** Islam explains that

consequences are innumerable to drug and intoxicant addicts as well as to his or her society. God said, ***“Satan’s plan is (but) to excite enmity and hatred between you, with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, and from prayer. Will you not then abstain?”*** (Qur’an 5:91)

In showing that a drug consumer can be a cause of all evils (assassinating, stealing, raping, etc.) the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) said, *“Intoxicants are the source of all evils.”*

Islam does not allow the consumption of alcoholic drinks and smoking. Muslims, especially pregnant and breastfeeding women are required to avoid alcoholic drinks and smoking due to dangerous consequences to their babies. The Ministry of Health also asks pregnant and breastfeeding women to avoid alcoholic drinks. Alcohol consumed by a pregnant woman may do permanent damage to a baby. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy hinders the growth of the child, especially when it is consumed during critical times when a child’s body parts are developing. However, the child can suffer harmful effects from

alcohol consumption during any point of the pregnancy.^v Signs of harmful effects of alcohol consumption include:

- Low birth weight
- Blood pressure problems, or kidney and other problems
- A small head
- Low intellectual capacity
- Memory deficits
- Poor problem solving skills
- Immature social behavior, stubbornness

The Ministry of Health asserts that it is better for a pregnant woman to completely avoid alcoholic drinks from the time of conception until she gives birth due to the danger alcohol poses to the child, especially to his or her intellect. It is deplorable that some children are born affected by alcohol consumed by their mothers while they are pregnant.

Alcohol abuse causes many problems to families and society. Many alcohol users are not available when their families need them and they have no time for the education of their children. The family's financial resources, which could pay for food, healthcare, clothes and education, are often spent on alcoholic drinks, smoking and other intoxicants.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This Sermon Guide was written to illustrate the role of religion in solving some of Rwanda's problems, in particular protecting maternal and infant health. As mentioned in the general introduction, this guide shows what the Bible and the Qur'an say about maternal and infant health. Christians and Muslims who know the holy writings realize that the recommendations of Maternal and Infant Health experts and the government are also found in the Bible and Qur'an. Everyone who believes in these holy books should promote the policy of protecting maternal and infant health, not only because this is the policy of the government and world health experts, but also because it is the Word of God. Those who respect the Word of God are blessed in this world, and are rewarded forever in paradise.

This guide was written by the Rwanda Faith-Based Organizations Network Against HIV (RCLS-Rwanda) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and assisted by the ACCESS Program. The ACCESS Program is the US Agency for International Development's global program to improve maternal and newborn health. The ACCESS Program works to expand coverage, access and use of key maternal and newborn health services across a continuum of care from the household

to the hospital – with the aim of making quality health services accessible as close to the home as possible. Jhpiego implements the program in partnership with Save the Children, Constella Futures, the Academy for Educational Development, the American College of Nurse-Midwives and IMA World Health.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

We hope that you find this Sermon/Khutbah Guide useful in your role as a Religious Leader and will use it to inform and educate your community of believers. Below are some suggestions for how to use this document, though we think that you will come up with additional ways of using and disseminating this information as you play your part in improving the health of mothers and children. Therefore, some of the ways this guide can be used include:

- Public dialogues and mass campaigns and through radios, television and the internet
- Pre-marital counseling
- Training session for cooperatives of women, men and youth,
- Training of Trainers in the Islamic Community
- Religious Leader training
- Marriage Counseling
- Meeting sessions of the Elders in the Islamic Community

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10. www.statistics.gov.rw/

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Minisiteri y'ubuzima, Inyoboranyigisho y'amahugurwa y'abajyanama b'ubuzima, Kamena p. 75-76

ⁱⁱ <http://www.statistics.gov.rw/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Minisiteri y'ubuzima, Inyoboranyigisho y'amahugurwa y'abajyanama b'ubuzima, Kamena p. 75-76

^{iv} <http://www.moh.gov.rw/mchh>

^v Minisiteri y'ubuzima, Inyoboranyigisho y'amahugurwa y'abajyanama b'ubuzima, 2008, p. 52-54