

FINAL REPORT:

Caravan/Travelling Seminars to Kenya

Background:

The International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research was founded at Al-Azhar University, the most prestigious and one of the oldest Islamic Universities all over the world in co-operation with the UNFPA in 1975.

The Center objectives are: (1) conducting population and reproductive health studies and research in the Muslim World, (2) add credibility to the population/reproductive health information obtained before its dissemination in Muslim countries, and (3) to dispel misconceptions about Islam and certain population/reproductive health policies that can be adopted in the Muslim World. Furthermore it functions as an inter-regional organization with a view to serve the whole Islamic World.

The Centre does not limit its activities to Egypt but extends them to the other institutions all over the Islamic World, interested in developing and promoting awareness of population/reproductive health issues among their staff and students. Since it was establishment, IICPSR has carried a lot of activities in dispelling the rumours and correcting the misinformation that surrounded the population policies in the Muslim countries. In the Year 2012, it was awarded a United Nations Award for Population.

The word of religion has its effect within souls, and Religious Leaders possess a degree and have an effect on peoples' hearts, thus their role is significant and effective in this sphere.

Islam has always encouraged discussions on matters which will help protect health and life. Muslim men and women never felt shy to ask the Prophet (pbuh) about intimate sexual matters. The Holy Qur'an has discussed reproduction and sexual health. These facts would be of much help for the reproductive health and rights, gender issues and family planning programs where the knowledge and the lack of it are crucial.

The difficulty in establishing effective family planning, eradication of harmful practices and safe motherhood programs, is a lack of openness, in many of the Muslim Countries, regarding sexuality, male-female relationships, illness and death and taboo subjects deeply rooted in the culture. Religious Leaders are the gate keepers for many social and cultural issues. The role of Religious Leaders is not restricted on calling for prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage and other religious commandments and juristic regulations; but this role extends to include inviting people for various medical, social, cultural and religious fields of life. In belief of the role of religious leaders, bringing them to the fields of family planning, safe motherhood and eradication of harmful traditions and networking with them, the efforts to tackle these problems would be more successful.

Why Train Religious Leaders on RH/FP?

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that religious leaders (RLs) and communities of faith play an important role in shaping health-seeking behavior. Religious leaders are often arbiters of morality and ethics, defining what is prescribed or proscribed by a faith. This is particularly relevant with respect to maternal and child health, reproductive health, and family planning as they are at the juncture where science, religion, culture and morality intersect. Consequently, maternal and child health, and family planning information and practices that are supported by religious leaders and religious institutions are more likely to be accepted by the community. It is therefore imperative that religious leaders have accurate and appropriate information and skills to help their followers make informed choices on matters related to their health and well-being.

Traveling Seminar (Caravan) Goal:

To build the capacity and leadership of RLs in family planning, safe motherhood and eradication of harmful traditions to support couples and community members in making informed decisions on reproductive health issues such as safe motherhood, child spacing, and to discourage harmful behavior.

Caravan Objectives:

At the end of the seminar, participants will be able to:

- Be aware about safe motherhood including child survival; birth or child spacing (family planning); and the discouragement of harmful traditional practices;
- Dispel myths and misconceptions about RH/FP;
- Describe the Islamic perspectives on RH/FP information and services;
- Identify ways in which religious leaders can help mobilize the community around safe motherhood, RH/FP;

Topics to be covered:

The seminars will address FP, eradication of FGM, and early marriage, safe motherhood including the importance of ante and post natal care from Islamic and Christian perspectives, co-existence of communities from different faiths, and child delivery within health facilities.

Theological Team:

1. **Prof. Dr. Hamed Abu Taleb**, ex-dean of Faculty of Shari'ah and Law, Al-Azhar University Assiut Branch, and ex dean of faculty of shari'ah Al-Azhar University, Cairo Branch and Ex dean of Faculty of Islamic and Arabic studies, Al-Azhar University, Asswan Branch, a member of Al-Azhar High Research Academy and

a member of Senior Religious Leaders Committee, he is also the legal consultant of the University Chairman, he is author/co-author of more than hundred book in Fiqh. He is also, ex-member of the morality court, assistant to General Secretary of the International Islamic Council for Breaching and Human Relief.

2. **Prof. Dr. Abdullah El-Nagar**, Ex- Dean of Faculty of Higher Islamic Studies in Egypt, Prof. Of Fiqh and Law, Faculty of Shari'ah and a member of Al-Azhar High Islamic Research Academy, a member of the Council of International Islamic Fiqh Academy, Geddah. He authored/co-authored more than 150 books addressing Fiqh subjects. He supervised and discussed more than five hundred Master and Ph.D degrees. He is a member of the Al- Azhar University Council and a member of the board of the Shari'ah faculty. He is also a member of the Egyptian constitution committee. He is also a member of the Fiqh Study Committee, the High Islamic Council and a member of the Fiqh Research Committee, the High Islamic Research Academy, Al-Azhar.
3. **Dr. Ahmed Turk**, Director General of Preaching Department, Ministry of Religious Affairs (Awqaf), he is also a member of High Islamic Council. His contribution to the religious media is well recognized (more than 1000 hour's Islamic programs on prominent TV channels). He is also a member of several committees, like Ethical committees, reproductive health committee. He trained hundreds of religious leaders and contributed to many national programs that addressed national needs, especially in health. His work in Interfaith Dialogue and human rights is well recognized.

Medical Team:

1. Professor Gamal Serour, FRCOG, FRCS, FFIGO, FACOG, FSOGC, FJSOG

M.D. Cairo University 1963; MRCOG 1970; FRCS, Edinburgh 1972; FRCOG 1990, FACOG 2009, FISOG 2010, FSOGC 2012, FJSOG 2013. Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Director International Islamic Center For Population Studies and Research, Al Azhar University (IICPSR), former Chairman of Obstetrics and Gynecology department and Former Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Al Azhar University.

He authored and co-authored 371 papers published in international, regional and national journals and 30 Chapters in international books. He edited and co-edited-22 books. He is a reviewer and member of the international Editorial Board of several International journals in Obstetrics and gynecology, Human Reproduction, Infertility, population science and Ethics. He has been an invited speaker and keynote speaker at national, regional and international conferences organized by ESHRE, IFFS, ASRM, RCOG, FIGO, JSOG, and other societies of Ob/Gyn around the world, IAB, WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, UN.

Egyptian professional activities:

- Established Al Azhar Endoscopy and microsurgery training unit 1974 which in 1976 became the Al Azhar-JPIEGO (Johns Hopkins University) regional training centers for physicians from Asia and Africa.
- With two of his Colleagues, he established the first IVF Center in Egypt March 1986 and delivered the first IVF baby in Egypt in July 1987.
- Established the IVF unit at Al Azhar University as one of the leading public IVF Units in Egypt since 2003. As a training ART Center he organized five nine hands on ART training workshops in collaboration with Lubeck University, ICMART, WHO FIGO RMC Committee, and SEUD.
- As a chair of the Egyptian Representative Committee of the RCOG 1999-2007 he developed a continuing educational and professional development program and training courses for obstetricians and gynecologists in Egypt and organized and chaired the 6th International RCOG Congress in Cairo.
- As a Secretary General and founder of the Egyptian Fertility and Sterility Society since 1994 he organized training courses and regular annual International conferences with large international contribution every year. Some of these conferences were in collaboration with RCOG, ESHRE, IFFS FIGO and EBCOG. Currently he is the President of the society since 2009.
- Member of the National Bioethics Committee 1996-2010.
- Judge member in the Supreme Court for morality 2002-2004
- President of Egyptian Post Menopause Society 2003-2006.

Regional activities

- As director of Al Azhar-JPIEGO (Johns Hopkins Program for Education of Obstetrics and Gynecology) Program (1976-1988) he trained more than 400 physicians on endoscopy, microsurgery and endoscopic surgery from Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria, Turkey, Lesotho, Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, He subsequently field visited many of these doctors in their own countries and helped them in establishing their own units.
- As WHO consultant he spent 3 weeks in Yemen for the study of perinatal and maternal mortality and two weeks in Libya for upgrading of the national IVF Center.
- Member of ACHR, WHO EMRO 2012-2015.

- Chair of EACHR of EMRO, WHO since 2015.

He conducted several hands on training workshops on operative endoscopy. He conducted nine hands on training workshop on ART in collaboration with Lubeck University, ICMART, WHO and FIO Reproductive Medicine Committee and SEUD for physicians and embryologist from several countries in Asia and Africa.

International activities

- He organized and co-chaired with the president of the RCOG the 6th International meeting in Cairo 2005 which was attended by more than 2000 delegates from 54 countries.

- He leads at IICPSR the work on reproductive health, population policy, population education, women's rights, empowerment of women, Reproductive and sexual health, gender issues and children's rights, and medical ethics in the developing countries particularly the Muslim world through projects and programs funded by UNFPA, WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, Ford Foundations, IDRC (Canada), DANIDA (Denmark), USAID, GTZ (Germany), IPAVS, EMRO, ISESCO, African Faith Based organization, and African Regional Sexuality Resource Center. He organized and chaired 26 (update) workshops for doctors, researchers, midwives, community leaders and policy makers from various Asian and African countries and supervised Fellowships for candidates from Canada, USA, Australia and UK.

- Member: WHO Scientific Group on Recent advances in ART; IPPF International Medical Advisory Panel (2000-2002); Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee UNESCO (1999-2005); International Bioethics Committee (IBC) UNESCO (2006-2009), UNFPA External Advisory Panel (2008-2010) and Global Center for Development.

- Member of STAG of HRP/RHR/WHO since 2011 till now.

- Chair of FGM Guidelines Development Group (GDG) WHO since 2015.

- Treasurer and member of the Board of Directors of the International Association of Bioethics (IAB) (1992-1999).

- Assistant Secretary General IFFS (2001-2004); Secretary General of IFFS (2004-2007).

- Member of FIGO Ethics Committee (1994-2009); Chair, FIGO Ethics Committee (2003-2006). Under his chairmanship the Committee published 16 ethics guidelines in the IJGO and submitted three resolutions for adoption by the FIGO General Assembly and organized joint workshops with Middle East Fertility Society (MEFS), ASRM, and ESHRE.

- Member WHO EMRO Health Research Committee since 2006.

Awards

He received recognitions and awards from several organizations including:

- Honorary Fellow of American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (FACOG).
- Honorary membership of The Italian Society of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FSIGO)
- Honorary membership of The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (FSOGC)
- Honorary membership of The Japan of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (FJSOG)
- IFFS Honorary Membership
- MEFS Honorary membership
- RCOG Singapore Golden Medal
- Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lahore, South Africa, India, Obstetrics and Gynecology Societies Membership.
- Several National Awards
- FIGO President Elect 2006-2009.
- FIGO President 2009-2012.
- FIGO Past President 2012-2015. UN Population Award (Institutional category 2013).

2. Prof. Dr. Ahmed Ragab:

Prof. Dr. Ahmed Ragaa Ragab, Professor of Reproductive Health, IICPSR, Al-Azhar University: As a staff member of the international Islamic Center for population studies and research, under the leadership of Prof. Gamal Serour, our experience in this regard is rich. In addition, as a member of the African Faith Based Organization and the Global Network for Faith Based Organizations he, participated in different activities that proved to be effective.

He shared in development of several curricula for religious leaders in Egypt (With IICPSR, UNFPA and Aghakhan Foundation), Darfur Camps in Eastern Chad (with CCF), Afghanistan (with UNICEF) and Kyrgyzstan (with UNFPA). In addition, he shared in designing and implementing training of trainers courses in Egypt and abroad.

He carried tasks in Somalia, Kenya, Chad, Nigeria, Senegal, Gambia, South Africa, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Sudan, Oman, Qatar, Kyrgyzstan, Yemen, Pakistan and Indonesia. He, also, participated in drawing road maps/strategies for reduction of maternal mortality in countries of the Horn of Africa (MENA Region), mainly

Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen as a part of a consultancy for UNICEF Joint Program MENA and ESARO for the Horn of Africa (2003) and for the Arab Countries (2011, Arab League in Collaboration with UNFPA). His past experience covers different areas of reproductive and sexual health (including safe motherhood), mainly training, advocacy, research and services/programs. His work on eradicating female genital mutilation in Somalia was recognized by UNICEF in their report of 2002 pp 19 under the sections of “leaders on behalf of Children” section. He work on dealing with the rumors and removing the misconceptions in Somalia, 2007, regarding immunization campaigns is well documented on many of the web sites.

3. Prof. Dr. Mervat Mahmoud:

Assistant Director of the International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research, (IICPSR) and Coordinator of the Caravan.

She is Director of Biochemistry lab, Assisted reproductive unit (IICPSR) and Professor of Biomedical Research in Human Reproductive Research Unit, she is Secretary General of the semi-Annual Journal “Population Sciences” funded by the International Islamic Center with the help of UNFPA.

She shared in almost all publications and curriculum and training materials of the IICPSR concerning Religious Leaders to dispel misconceptions about Reproductive Health components and shared in implementing all TOT trainings for RLDS from Ministry of Religious Affairs and Al-Azhar Students.

She had Master degree In Medical Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), USA and Contributes to ongoing research projects in the National Cancer Institute-funded Biomarker Core Laboratory, at the Center for Human Nutrition, University of California, Los Angeles.

She is Director of the Rural Branch of IICPSR she is also Coordinator of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNDP) projects, UNICEF projects and WHO and USAID. She is Member of the Board of the African Regional Sexuality Resource Center (ARSRC), Fadeyi, Lagos, Nigeria. She carried tasks in Indonesia Niger, Somalia, Niger, Nigeria, Kenya, Gambia, South Africa, Syria, and Sudan.

She was Coordinator of Visionary Leadership (VLP) program for the project “Considering Religious as a Positive Change Factor for Leadership in Population and Reproductive Health” funded by Partners in Population and Development (South To South) to develop an abridged and comprehensive training module for potential Leaders selected from Sudan and Nigeria., and also of the project “ Support to Muslim religious leaders for the promotion of reproductive health and family planning among the Muslim community of partner countries” which was

also funded by Partners in Population and Development (South To South) to sustained improvements in Reproductive Health for FPAB (Family Planning Association of Bangladesh), and CFPA (China Family Planning Association), and FPAI (Family Planning Association of India), and PPAT (Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand) as collaborating agency.

She worked as Short term consulting appointment with the staff of the World Bank to assist in review of health sector documents, arrange meetings with local counterparts, assist and participate in field visits (in and out Cairo), and any other duties related to the mission assigned by the task manager .

4. . The Activities

Date	Location	Activities
23 rd August 2015		<p style="text-align: center;">Coordination meeting between SUPKEM and F2A</p> <p>IICPSR Prof. Dr. Gamal Serour Prof. Dr. Mervat Mahmoud Prof. Dr. Ahmed Ragab</p> <p>F2A Peter Muene</p> <p>From SUPKEM</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Prof. Abdulghafur Hemed Sales El-Busaidy – Chair SUPKEM</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Latiff Shaban – Director General</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Sharif Muhdhar Khitamy Coast Region Chairman</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Mohammed Ali – Mombasa County Chairman</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working dinner at Barka Restaurant
24 th August 2015	Mombasa	<p>Training of Mombasa based clergies at Pride Inn seminars/workshop facilities.</p> <p>Major topics that were covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe motherhood including the importance of ante and post natal care from Religious perspectives - Family Planning

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harmful Practices including FGM, and early marriage, - Co-existence of communities from different faiths <p>Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Reproductive Health Issues.</p>
25 th August 2015	Mombasa	<p>Flag-off of Caravan - in Mombasa at Maganlal Tudor – County Traffic Inspectorate. 15 Tuttuks and 15 motorbikes led by Country traffic police Inspectorate escort car in the procession. Professor Serour gave the signal for starting the Caravan by a short talk about the mission and its objectives, specifically to deal with the rumors and correct the misinformation regarding the stand of Islam regarding the family planning, gender issues and harmful traditions.</p> <p>In order to gain political support , a meeting with Officials was conducted: Mombasa County Government: Meetings were held with: Ai Hassan Joho – Governor, Dr. Khadija Sood Skikely – Chief Officer of Health, Dr. Hafsa Zuber – Obstetrician & Gynecologist</p> <p>Then another meeting with the National Government Representative: Nelson Malwa – County Commissioner</p> <p>The meetings with policy making personnel aimed at gaining their support and raising their awareness about the true stand of Islam and the value of faith approach for women’s and children health and eradication of harmful practices and support for family planning.</p> <p>Prayers and lecture at Markaz Swalihin Islamiy: It was attended by approximately 200 people: This was conducted by His Excellency Prof. Dr. Hamed Abu Taleb, Prof. Dr. Abdallah El-Nagar and Prof. Dr. Ahmed Turk and highlighted the stand of Islam regarding women’s and children health and the harmful traditional practices and affirmed that Islam is full of Mercy.</p>
26 th August 2015	Malindi	<p><u>Kilifi County</u></p> <p>Official Meetings with: Owen Baya - County Secretary, Malingi – Chief Officer Health, Ustadh Sharif Salim – Chumani Islamic Center, Ustadh Rashid – SUPKEM Kilifi, Mohammed Abdullatif</p>

		<p>- Community Counselor & Community Public Relations</p> <p>Then a courtesy visit to National Government Deputy County Commissioner – Mr. Mativo.</p>
26 th August 2015	Malindi	<p>Caravan flag off: 15 Tuttuks and 15 motorbikes in procession: Professor Serour gave the signal for starting the Caravan by introducing the mission and its members and objectives and that Islam is supporting women’s and children health and against harmful traditional practices.</p> <p>Evening prayers and lecture at Masjid Rawdhwa attended by approximately 300 people. The theology team gave presentations, each dealt with one subject: Islam and women’s and children health, Islam is the religion of Mercy and Islam is against harmful traditions.</p> <p>Tawfiq Hospital – met Ahmed Aboud Hadi, Administrator: Tawfiq Hospital is a charity one that was built as a community initiative and is serving poor community free of charge, Prof. Serour supported this initiative and discussed with the officials ways to ensure sustainability and how IICPSR can support.</p>
27 th August 2015	Lamu	<p>Lamu County</p> <p>Training of about 25 senior Imams of Lamu was conducted. The training was conducted by:</p> <p>Professor Dr. Gamal Serour: He gave a lecture on medical aspects. He emphasized the importance of marrying in a suitable age and highlighted the complications of child marriage. He also stressed on safe motherhood and affirmed the need of antenatal, natal and post natal care. Finally he pointed to the hazards of the harmful practices. This was followed by three theological presentations. Prof. Dr. Hamid Gave a Presentation about safe motherhood, Prof. Dr. Abdallah El-Nagar gave a presentation about family planning and Dr. Ahmed Turk gave a presentation about harmful traditions. This was followed by a discussion.</p>

28 th August 2015	Lamu	<p>Professor Dr. Hamid Abu Taleb Gave the signal for the Caravan flag off: approximately 30 donkeys in procession.</p> <p>Meetings with Officials: County Secretary & Head of County Public Service – Siyat Osman Ibrahim and County Executive for Health – Dr Mohammed Kombo</p> <p>Friday prayers held at Riyadha Mosque and attended by approximately 700 people. Prof. Dr. Hamid Abu Taleb gave a talk highlighting that Islam is against terrorism and Islam is the religion of peace and respect the others. Islam is against discrimination and the terrorism is harming Muslims and Islam.</p> <p>Then Dr. Ahmed Turk led the Friday prayer with a talk that aimed to pave the way for health programs to improve family health.</p> <p>Professor Ahmed Ragab and Professor Mervat Mahmoud led a Lecture and discussions with women held at Munawara Madrasa attended by approximately 120 women supported by Imam - Abubakr Shekue and Abubakr Mukhisin. The lectures were about safe motherhood, family planning and other women’s health issues.</p> <p>Evening prayers held at Riyadha Mosque and attended by approximately 250 people and led by Dr. Ahmed Turk.</p>
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Three Major Components of the Caravan:

1. **The process of launching of the Caravan:** This process utilized the popular means of transportations, in Mombasa and Malindi, the Tuktuk and in Lamu Island, the Donkey. Posters of the Caravan were put on the Tuktuks and Donkeys and the drivers and riders were shirts labeled with the Caravan label. Al-Azhar Team Leader used to give the signal for starting the Caravan with a short recorded speech.
2. **Gaining political support:** Courtesy visits to the local authorities in the three sites were done. The team leader started each visit by introducing the IICPSR and the team and the objectives of the Caravan. SUPKEM and F2A representatives present themselves and their requests, mainly to increase the

allocated budget for health. In all the visits promises to increase the allocated budget for health are taken.

3. **The Scientific Component of the Caravan:** Different modalities in presenting the scientific part, but mainly it were a combination of Medical aspects with Religious Aspects. These took several forms:
 - **Workshops:** A full day workshop in which lectures were given on the topics from medical and theological aspects, the lecture starts by the medical part and based on it the Theological part is given. Discussion followed each lecture.
 - **Seminars:** The seminar also is a combination of medical and theological aspects of the topics are given and are followed by a general discussion.
 - **Lessons in the Mosques:** These are given by the theology team, following Asr and Maghreb Prayers.
 - **Friday Prayer Talk:** The main talk of the Friday Prayer is devoted to talk about the topics of the Caravan.

4. Visits to Health Facilities:

a. Tawfiq Hospital is a charity one that was built as a community initiative and is serving poor community free of charge and serves a large population.

b. Health facility in Lamu is a public hospital serving the people of the Island of Lamu along with other nearby Islands.

Both hospitals are helping in ensuring safe-motherhood and are providing ante-natal and natal care. However, they lack staff and equipment. There is a concern regarding sustainability. They need also building capacity of the existing staff.

Questions and Concerns of the Participants of the Seminars, Workshops and Lectures:

- **Religious Leaders Questions and Concerns:**

One major concern of the religious leaders was about family planning. Some considered it as a western attempt to control the Muslim numbers and they expressed that there is a call by the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) **To Multiply** so he will be proud at the day of the Judgment. In this regard, Professor Serour explained some demographic data that are against this statement. Another concern was that FP is considered like killing or abortion of fetuses; however, Prof. Serour and Professor Ragab affirmed that, no single method can cause abortion or killing of the fetuses. Religious experts explained with evidence

from Quran and Hadith that, quality is much more important than quantity in Islam. Islam doesn't only need more valueless and weightless births; it calls for strong good births in body, mind, spirit and ethics, not to be like the foam of torrent referred to in the Prophet Hadith that states that the Prophet (PBUH): "The people will soon summon one another to attack you as people when eating invite others to share their dish. Someone asked: Will that be because of our small numbers at that time? He replied: No, you will be numerous at that time: but you will be scum and rubbish like that carried down by a torrent, and Allah will take fear of you from the breasts of your enemy and last enervation into your hearts. Someone asked: What is wahn (enervation). Messenger of Allah (PBUH): He replied: Love of the world and dislike of death."⁽¹⁾

Speech of number of fellows- may Allah be pleased with them- included their warning against more children with less money.

On the Authority of Ibn Omar, may Allah be pleased with them, he was asked about the supplication of the Prophet (PBUH): "I take refuge with Allah from the difficulties of severe calamities". Ibn Omar said: "I means the more children with less money"⁽²⁾

Amr Ibn Al Ass- May Allah be pleased with him- is reported that he said in his oration when he conquered Egypt to the people of Egypt: "O people I warn you of four traits that call to unrest after rest, insolvency after solvency, humiliation after glory, I warn you against more children, deterioration of conditions, waste of money, and gossip out of context or purpose"⁽³⁾

Ibn Abbas Said: More children is one of two poverties and less children is one of two sources of solvency⁽⁴⁾.

Another concern was the young age at marriage, participants mentioned that the Prophet (PBUH) Married Aisha, his wife, at age of 9. Religious experts debated the issues and gave evidence that Aisha was about 18-19 when she married the Prophet (PBUH). They also indicate that rules and regulations in Islam are dynamic and not fixed and when evidence emerges that an issue is harmful, the rule can be changed to **prohibit** it. Since

¹Reported by Abu Daoud in his Sunnas- Book of Epics- Chapter on the people will summon one another to attack Islam, 4/108, Hadith 4297

²See: Kashf Al Khafaa, Part 1/ p. 402

³See: Al Tamhid, by Ibn Abdel Borg, 21/p. 29

⁴Faidh Al Qadhir, Part 3/ p. 352

evidences emerged from medical experts that the “**Child Marriage and FGM**” are harmful, they are prohibited.

2. FGM: The participants did not debate on the issue of FGM, it might be the message was strong and the argument that was given was strong from both medical and Islamic perspectives.
3. The experts called for more male participation/role in family planning indicating the importance of “condom” in both preventing STDs and pregnancies. The participants accepted the idea as there were no questions in this regard.

Women Questions and Concerns: The main concern of women was about the side effects of contraceptive methods. Women were concerned mainly with the IUDS (Intrauterine contraceptive Devices), bleeding and spotting were alarming them. They fear that this bleeding would prevent them from prayer, fasting and having martial relations (sex) with their husbands)

Prof. Ahmed Ragab and Prof. Mervat Mahmoud responded by explaining the mechanism of actions of the methods and that women has the right to choose between methods but they must consult their health providers as there are some contraindications for some methods. For instance, women with any of these diseases varicose veins, diabetes, hypertension and breast masses or family history of breast cancer should not have hormonal contraception. For IUDs user, any bleeding other than the menstrual cycle does not prevent women from prayer, fasting or having sex with their husbands.

There were a wide spread lack of information about reproductive health and there were also spreading misconceptions and wrong information. For instance, women do not know much about the anatomy and physiology of their body and believe that pregnancy can occur when there is sexual relation during menstruation and this can result in having children suffering from “albinism”. The faculty corrected this information and taught women self-examination of the breast.

After the seminar, some women expressed their own health problems as stress incontinence, irregular bleeding and breast mass.

Recommendations:

1. One major issue was raised by policy makers and participants which is “Sustainability”. To deal with this it is suggested to do:
 - Study tour for senior religious leaders, as role models, to the International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research, Al-Azhar University. This study tour will expose the senior religious leaders to the Egyptian experience and will meet senior religious leaders, among them the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Grand Mofti and the Chairman of the University. They will also visit the Population Council and Ministry of Health.
 - Monitor and Evaluation and refreshing courses can be done jointly by IICPSR, SUPKEM and F2A. One of the senior staff of IICPSR can visit Kenya to conduct the M&E and refreshing courses in collaboration with staff of SUPEKM and F2A.
 - Conducting training of trainers course, at the IICPSR, for mid-level Imams, who will be well selected, preferably with higher education and serving in major Mosques.
2. Building capacity of young generations was another concern, in this regard; Al-Azhar delegates would raise this issue with Al-Azhar authorities and the Egyptian government to increase the fellowships to the Kenan Students of Islamic Studies.
3. Health system needs to respond to the urgent health needs for women and children. In this regard, providing more health providers, building capacity of the existing staff and providing with needed equipment are needed. Protocols and guidelines should be used to improve the quality of services and to ensure proper counselling which is badly needed.