



Learning Paper on Engaging Muslim FBOs and Leadership A Reflection by Faith for Family Health Initiative (3FHi)

A. 3FHi Collaborative Work with Muslim Faith leaders/FBOs

At Faith for Family Health initiative (3FHi), we had an opportunity to involve and engage Muslim Faith Leaders in our advocacy work. Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC) and her senior leadership has, for over 2 years now, remained a close partner in our FP budget and policy advocacy across Uganda.

At the sub-national level, 3FHi through PAI funded Faith + Family Planning Project (March 2018-Oct 2019) supported UMSC to implement FP Budget and Policy Advocacy in Iganga District.

His Eminence the Deputy Mufti Ali Waiswa led other faiths and civil society-organizations in the development of the District Costed Implementation Plans for FP (DCIP), establishment of the FP Technical Working Groups - (FP-TWGs) and allocation of the 110M UGX in 2019/2020 budget.

In other 7 districts including Mityana, Mubende, Kyenjojo, Kabarole, Kagadi, Namayingo and Busia, the respective Muslim District Council and their leadership has collaborated with 3FHi Faith FP Partners to advocate for better and greater investments in FP. As in the case of Iganga, the district Muslim faith leaders (Sheikhs and Imams) have made significant progress by influencing domestic investments for FP and changing community norms to support uptake of FP. Specifically, the action of Muslim faith leaders and other allies led to the development and launch of six District Costed Implementation - Plans for FP (DCIPs) in Kyenjojo, Mityana, Kagadi, Mubende and Kabarole, establishment of the FP Technical Working Groups (FP-TWGs) in Mubende, Kyenjojo, Namayingo and Kagadi as well strengthening of FP-TWG in Mityana and Kabarole.

Crucially, FP is now integrated in the district budget with a cumulative allocation of approximately 450M Uganda shillings in the FY2019/20 in the districts of Mityana, Kagadi, Mubende, Kabarole, Namayingo, Busia and Kyenjojo.

At the national level, UMSC is one of the 8 3FHi strategic partners spearheading national FP budget and policy dialogues.

The national advocacy work is funded by UN-Foundation/FP200 RRM Grant. Through its top leadership, His Eminence the Deputy Mufti Ali Waiswa continues to play a crucial role in leading other faiths and non-faith partners in FP budget and policy dialogues. For instance, the Mufti played a crucial role during the formation of Inter-faith Alliance for the Advancement of FP (iFAP). He is currently providing overall faith leadership in national FP policy and budget dialogues. Today, UMSC is part of the iFAP Policy Reference Group, which, through the Deputy Mufti is leading other faiths in spearheading the national conversation on adolescent reproductive health.



His Eminence Sheikh Ali Waiswa (Deputy Mufti, UMSC), Dr. Michael Bukonya (Chairperson-Health Committee of Parliament of Uganda) and Fr. Mbonabingi (Secretary General- UJCC) during the launch of DCIP in Iganga

Additionally, the Deputy Mufti was nominated by the government to provide theological inputs into the on-going policy dialogues on Adolescent Reproductive Health.

During the 3rd National Conference on FP held in Kampala on 18th and 19th of Sept 2019, his Eminence the Mufti was a panelist during the conference plenary session that focused on Community and Cultural perspectives of FP. Other religious leader's panelist included: Dr. Joseph Serwadda (Born Again Faith Federation), Rev. Ssemugooma (Associate Director-3FHi and Bishop Amos Magezi (Church of Uganda). We are privileged to have His Eminence the Deputy Mufti Ali Waiswa serves as a Vice-Chairperson of the Board of 3FHi.

The web links and images below highlights some of the work that 3FHi have collaborated with Muslim FBO (UMSC) and its leadership in SRH/FP policy and advocacy work in Uganda:

1. Capital Radio- UMSC participation during the launch of Iganga FP-DCIP <https://capitalradio.co.ug/religious-leaders-want-family-planning-directed-youths/>
2. New vision - UMSC participation during the launch of Iganga FP-DCIP https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1506225/activists-demand-accountability-family-planning-funds

Video Documentary - UMSC FP Budget and Policy Advocacy

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHaegl5Xclo&list=PLjTLE-WHv11TQfcb_QJB93J8W0Z7vwPjW&index=
2. <https://youtu.be/eoj5itdJ1oY>
3. <https://youtu.be/loFpprR7H->

ENGAGING MUSLIM FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND LEADERSHIP



Religious leaders, district Leadership, members of parliament, Civil Society Organization representatives, Funding partner representatives and other stake holders at Iganga District Costed Implementation Plan Launch



Uganda Muslim Supreme Council(UMSC) participation in the National Breakfast meeting on Civil Society Organizations and Faith Based Organizations co-ordination on Family Planning budget advocacy



First: UMSC participating during the 3rd National Conference on FP, Kampala 18/19 Sept 2019.
Next: Eminence Sheikh Ali Waiswa (Deputy Mufti, UMSC) leading a panel discussion on Community and Cultural perspectives of FP during the 3rd National Conference on FP, Kampala 18/19 Sept 2019.

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B. Experiences and Lesson Learnt while engaging Muslim faith leaders/FBOs in FP budget and policy dialogues

Our engagements with the Muslim FBO and its leadership has taught us some key lessons including:

- (i). As Muslim and its leadership is well structured and overly hierarchical, we have found that any meaningful engagement with the Muslim faith ought to target the top leadership, say Mufti, scholars and Theologians. Any directive 'decree' cascaded to the lower levels (often to the sheiks and Imams) are taken as commands. We have also learnt that it's very important that Muslim formal structures, e.g., national Council, District Council, etc. are engaged and supported to drive change and transformation in the community. For instance, it's important to engage Muslim District Council at the local level in the implementation of the advocacy activities
- (ii). Muslim Faith and its leadership are receptive to information on SRH and FP, and are willing to be guided and supported to make meaningful change in the community.
- (iii). We have also learnt that the Muslim and its leaders are willing and ready to collaborate with other faiths and other actors in FP budget and policy dialogues, and in changing the community norms to support FP uptake and utilization.
- (iv). The senior Muslim leaders are well aware of the unique reproductive health needs that Muslim Adolescent, Young People and Women experience through-out their live. They often speak about it and are leading national conversation to improve Adolescent Sexuality and Reproductive Health Policies, including dialogue on ending teens pregnancy.
- (v). We also found that Muslim faithful are sensitive to FP/SRH language, and often would prefer use of certain words and not others. For instance, they oppose the use of words such as Family Planning, Comprehensive Sexuality Education, etc. More often they prefer use of such words as child spacing, family life education, adolescent reproductive health, etc. It is in this respect, that one of the principle guiding our work is faith-sensitivity.
- (vi). We also found that Muslims are willing to deploy, utilize and leverage on their institutions and structures (media stations,schools and universities, health facilities, mosques, madrasa etc.) to advance FP/SRH budget and policy work, as well as demand creation for FP.
- (vii). 3FHi has learnt that Muslim leaders are highly regarded and respected by the government owing to their subtle way of engagement. Any faith-led engagements must then include Muslims especially their top structures(Council) and senior leaders including scholars and theologians.

Conclusion

Our experience has shown that Muslims and their leaders desire to be part of the true-faith movement committed to creating change and transformation in the society.



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