



April 2011

## IRH Hosts Consultation on Faith, Family Planning and Family Well-being

On April 11-12, 2011 at a consultation hosted by the Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) and supported by USAID, leaders in the field of global health gathered together at Georgetown University to discuss the intersection of faith, family planning and family well-being. Religion plays an important role in the health of people around the world, both through actual health services provided by faith-based organizations as well as the influence religion has on behavior. However, for many development practitioners and healthcare providers, the role of faith has been considered either irrelevant or misperceived as a barrier. Recent findings have shown the opposite; faith is relevant to improving family health, and the faith sector is willing to lead efforts to improve family health, including family planning.

For people of Muslim and Christian faith, the family is the cornerstone of a stable and peaceful society. Therefore, family health is something that is essential to the faith community. If family planning is seen as a voluntary decision-making process that begins between couples about the appropriate timing, spacing and number of children in order to maximize the health and welfare of the family, many groups are able to come together around this previously controversial issue. Through appropriate timing and spacing of pregnancies, infant and maternal morbidity and mortality is reduced. Furthermore, family planning allows parents to devote ample time, attention and resources to each child as they grow.

During this meeting, participants from over 30 global health organizations were able to find common ground on the role of faith, family planning and gender in global health. Numerous examples were shared about successful partnerships between secular and faith-based organizations as well as interfaith collaboration resulting in improved access to family planning information and services.

To learn more about how faith-based organizations and religious leaders are promoting access to family planning information and services in creative and culturally appropriate ways, [view these presentations](#) from World Vision, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Islamic Relief, and the Extending Service Delivery Project. These presentations were given at the Global Health Council event on April



Rajiv Shah, USAID Administrator, gives opening remarks at IRH's consultation on Faith, Family Planning and Family Well-being April 11, 2011.

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13 titled "[Faith-based Approaches to Family Planning](#)." IRH will also be releasing a report synthesizing key findings of a [qualitative study](#) which explores the role of faith in perceptions and activities related to family planning among development organizations.

Blog posts on the event can be read in the [Washington Post](#) and the Global Health Council's [Blog4GlobalHealth](#).

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## Announcements

### CycleTel™ Launch in India

CycleTel, the mobile health service that offers the Standard Days Method® (SDM) directly to women's mobile phones, was launched this month in India. The service will be pilot tested before being launched more widely. Read the updated brief titled, [CycleTel: Effective Family Planning via Mobile Phones](#).

### Guatemala Consultation on Youth

On April 8, 2011, IRH hosted a consultation on "Working with Very Young Adolescents (VYAs) on Health Issues" in Guatemala City in collaboration with APROFAM. The meeting's objectives were to:

1. Present results of the 2nd Edition of *My Changing Body*, evaluated in Guatemala and Rwanda with 10-14 year old adolescents and parents,
2. Share experiences and best practices from working with this age group on sexual and reproductive health, and
3. Identify next steps and priorities for research, resource mobilization and existing projects in this field.

The meeting was attended by youth-serving organizations from throughout Guatemala as well as the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education. IRH disseminated the advocacy brief titled, "Promoting the Health and Well-Being of Very Young Adolescents (VYAs)" which is now available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

### New Publication on Evaluation Methodologies

Are interventions to increase access to family planning successful in addressing unmet need? Many studies have suggested that interventions have relatively little effect on reducing unmet need, but this may be for methodological reasons. A study conducted by IRH in Jharkhand, India shows that when only women who want to avoid pregnancy and are at risk of pregnancy are included in the analysis, effects can be significant. Read the new *Evaluation Review* article titled, "The Role of Need for Contraception in the Evaluation of Interventions to Improve Access to Family-Planning Methods" that features results of this research [here](#).

### FAM Training in South Africa

IRH is hosting a training workshop as an auxiliary event at the [International Confederation of Midwives Conference](#) in Durban, South Africa. This workshop will highlight three simple methods of family planning, the Lactational Amenorrhea Method, Standard Days Method® and TwoDay Method® - fertility awareness-based methods of family planning (FAM). For more information on how to register, [click here](#).

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## Upcoming Events

Come visit IRH's exhibit or hear us present at the following upcoming events:

- [American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology Annual Clinical Meeting](#), April 30 - May 4, 2011, Washington, DC
- [CCIH 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference](#), June 9-12, 2011, Buckeystown, MD
  - Panel: "Global initiatives to engage the faith sector in family planning advocacy, networking and service delivery"
- [Global Health Council 2011 Conference](#), June 13-17, 2011, Washington, DC
  - Round Table: "Faith, family planning and family well-being: Maximizing effectiveness through collaboration"
- [Access for All: Supplying a New Decade for Reproductive Health & the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition Annual Membership Meeting](#), June 20-25, 2011, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- [International Confederation of Midwives Conference](#), June 19 - 23rd, Durban, South Africa
  - Panel: *Advancing Family Planning through Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancy* on June 21st, 2011 with Jhpiego, Pathfinder/ESD Project, MSH, and World Vision.

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Sincerely,  
Your colleagues at IRH

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