

Discover News-sheet for colleagues in Africa

December 2016

Family planning



Dear Friends,

As we think of good health, we need to think about Family planning (FP). The topic Family planning is important for the health of a mother and her children, as well as the family's economic situation. Many people say that a child is a gift of God, and we have no right not to accept these gifts. Others know that many children die very young, and so it is necessary to have several pregnancies. Tragically, in African countries especially Kenya and Uganda many women die during childbirth. We are responsible for our children. And we can also say that we are responsible to God for our children.

Why Family planning ?

1. Seasonality for motherhood

In farming there is a time for the rains and a time for the dry season, a time to plant, to weed, and to go to market. This seasonality gives a rhythm to our lives. If we do things out of season – plant too soon or too late – it disturbs the rhythm of our life and causes problems. And so there is a seasonality to motherhood. There's a time when it is safe and healthy for a woman to become pregnant, and there are times when it's not good. Our rallying cry should be 'everything in its season: births not too soon, births not too close together, births not too late'. (And that is: family planning)

2. Reduction of Maternal deaths and unwanted pregnancies

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), family planning is the most cost effective way of preventing maternal mortality and unwanted births. Increased access to contraceptives would reduce unintended pregnancies. Then 54% of preventable maternal deaths and 47% of preventable child deaths could be avoided. As well as preventing unwanted pregnancies, using methods like condoms are also important in preventing sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDs.

3. Health and education

It is well known that well-educated parents have well-spaced children that they can take care of. Each family should therefore do their very best to provide the best possible education for their children, both boys and girls. If children are healthy, then they remain strong and there is no need for a family to have more children to replace them in case they die. Hygiene and good nutrition, through eating lots of fruit and vegetables, are very important.

Because many pregnant women are weak and, as said above, many die in childbirth, the health of mothers is very important. We recommend that pregnant women eat lots of moringa, either as leaf powder or as a vegetable, or porridge made from grain amaranth and millet or maize. Also, drinking artemisia tea regularly, either from *Artemisia annua* or *Artemisia afra*, helps one to remain free of infections.

What is our responsibility in family planning?

1. Sex education and access to information

Sex education should take place in both the home and the school. If it does not, then community groups can help. Very often men will approach girls. It happens everywhere. Girls need the courage to say no to sex, or to demand that a condom be used. Boys need to know that they are also responsible if pregnancy occurs.

Many young people are uncertain or even anxious. Sometimes they need someone to talk to. It is often easier to talk to someone not in the family. Does your group have people who are willing to listen without judging? And people who are willing to keep all they hear confidential?

2. Access to a family planning method

Each person and each couple must choose and use a method of contraception.

Here is an unusual method which is very simple.

Discover works with Rehema Namyalo in Masaka, Uganda, who is a very competent and experienced herbalist. She has discovered that one can drink tea of *Artemisia annua* for general good health, for treating malaria and for preventing pregnancy. To prevent pregnancy, the morning after intercourse, the woman should drink a cup of artemisia tea, made by pouring boiling water over a heaped teaspoonful of dried artemisia powder and a level teaspoonful of chopped, dried lemon grass.

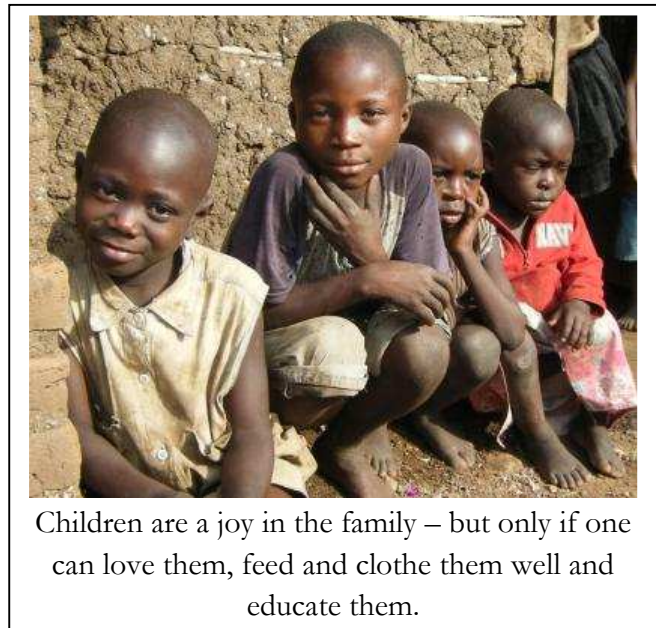
This is a strong recommendation from Rehema, but Discover, of course, cannot be held responsible if it does not work!

I look forward to receiving your comments on this very important topic. Many thanks to Kawira Njeru and Sally Njiri for their help in writing this paper.

Many blessings,

Keith

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Children are a joy in the family – but only if one can love them, feed and clothe them well and educate them.