

Discover Newsletter for colleagues in Africa

February 2024



How to reduce the rate of population increase. Comments from colleagues in Uganda

I am grateful for the responses I received to my December newsletter, in which I highlighted the massive challenges caused by the very high birth rate in Uganda.

Kenja Thomas is based in Kasese and works with several groups at the southern end of the Rwenzori mountain range. He wrote:

“I work with several community groups. At first, we talk about the situation as a group. We hear each and everyone's views. After the group discussion, some couples ask me to meet them in their homes. They want to understand more about the importance of using safe birth control methods that have no side effects.

I teach them how to use the baby necklace. Each partner is trained to agree to satisfy each other's sexual needs only during the safe days indicated on the beads. Both wife and husband must be able to interpret the colours of the beads, so that the husband does not need to keep asking his wife when it is safe.

Sometimes the man is a drunkard, in which case he has little interest in the safe periods. Such a couple needs a special visit to discuss the dangers of alcoholism in family building. After such counselling, many men have reformed and stopped drinking.

Traditionally, men's sexual rights have played a dominant role. Today, however, we must help couples to understand the importance of a mutual understanding of each other's feelings. Our work as social agents is to help couples to understand that respect for each other's feelings is an aspect of love and not a denial of rights”.

Emmanuel Masereka in Kirembe, near Kasese, and Christopher Nyakuni in Nyirivu, near Arua, described the challenge of overcoming traditional ideas.

Emmanuel wrote,

“Uneducated people think that when they have many children, they are more secure, while educated people find security in knowledge, wisdom and wealth.”

Christopher wrote,

“The number of teenage mothers is very alarming. Some enjoy the sexual pleasure and have one child after another. Many are single parents. Others do have husbands who are also teenagers and marry just for sexual pleasure. Husbands and their relatives put pressure on their partners to produce children. They believe that the little dowry (cows and goats) they pay must be rewarded with many children. There is a saying here, ‘animals given as dowry are producing and so the wife must also produce.’”



Kenja Thomas with the community group in Kasemire village

The key factor here is LACK OF EDUCATION! Many boys and girls do not go to school and if they do, they drop out early before completing primary school education”.



Staff meeting at the Green Star Nursery and Primary School

To ensure that more children in Nyirivu are educated, Christopher has established the Green Star Nursery and Primary School. He started with the nursery school, and as the children grow older primary school classes are opened. The school has already over 100 pupils.

Finally, because education plays such an important role in family size reduction, I must mention the work of Eric Kihuluka in Kaliro District. Over several years, he and his colleagues have encouraged over 200 schools to establish school vegetable gardens and to plant trees. This action has been a great success. Because both pupils and teachers now enjoy being at school much more, school enrolment

has increased substantially and the dropout rate has fallen.

Eric also emphasises the impact of livestock management and the development of security in animal feed as a major component of agroforestry. Men have become more active, more engaged with their families and are recognising the disadvantages of polygamy.

In summary, important factors related to reducing the size of families include:

1. Frank, open discussions on the topic of family planning in which all contributions are listened to carefully and taken seriously.
2. Challenging the traditional view that accords status to men who have fathered many children.
3. To do everything possible to increase school attendance and reduce the drop-out rate. To this end, school gardens play a pivotal role.

The following two pages are taken from the excellent booklet “Knowledge as a Chance” which is published by the group “Aktion Regen, Association for International Cooperation” which is based in Austria.



The first shows the baby necklace. Every day, the black ring over the full red bead is moved forward to the next bead. When menstruation occurs again, the black ring is returned to the full red bead. Perhaps your women’s group could manage to make such necklaces and then distribute them to couples represented in the group – at the same time as teaching them in detail how to use the necklace!

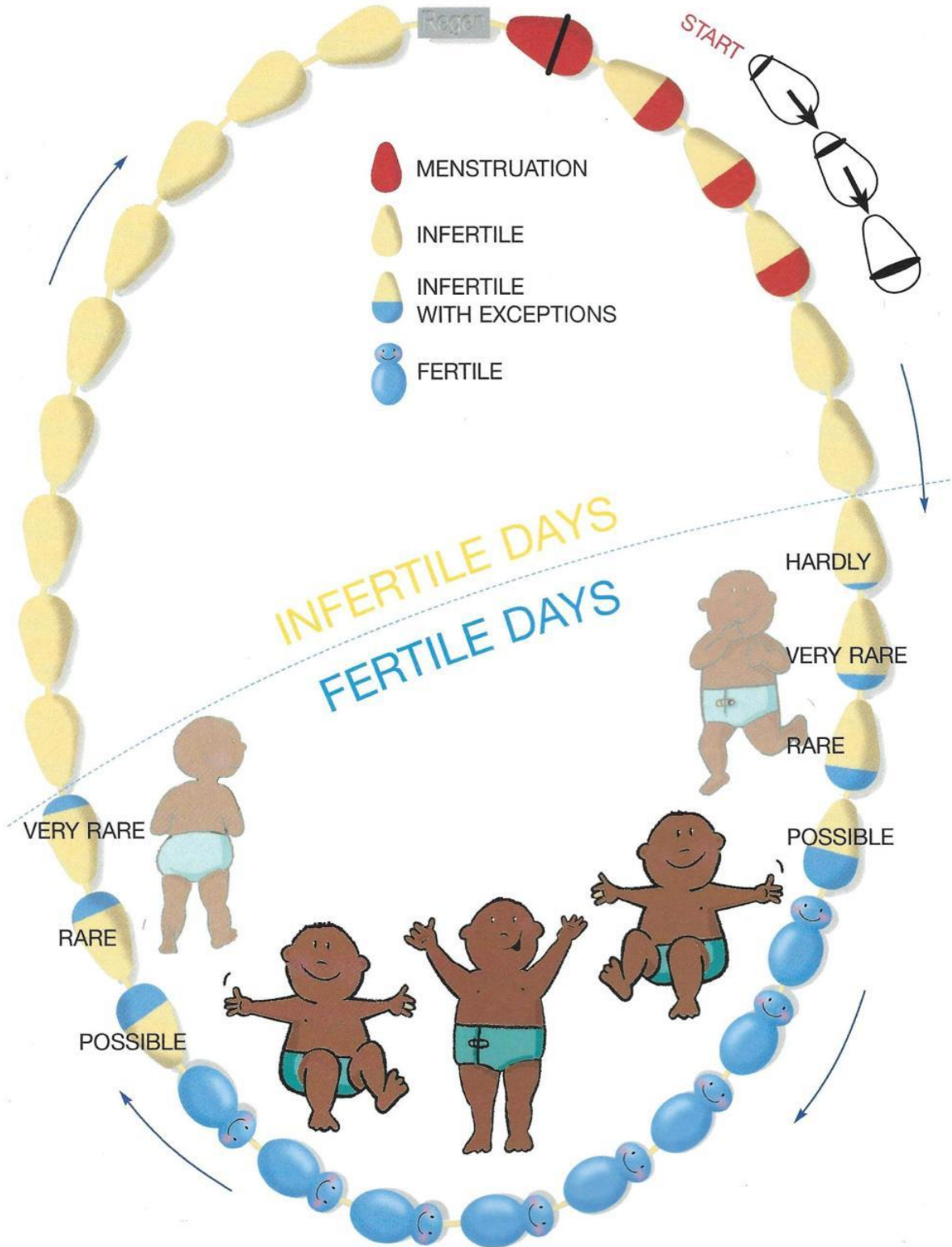
The second lists questions that parents should answer before having a child. You may like to invite your group to “think of your childhood and your family”, in the way suggested at the bottom of the chart.

Best wishes,

Keith Lindsey

AKTION REGEN TOOL

The Baby Necklace

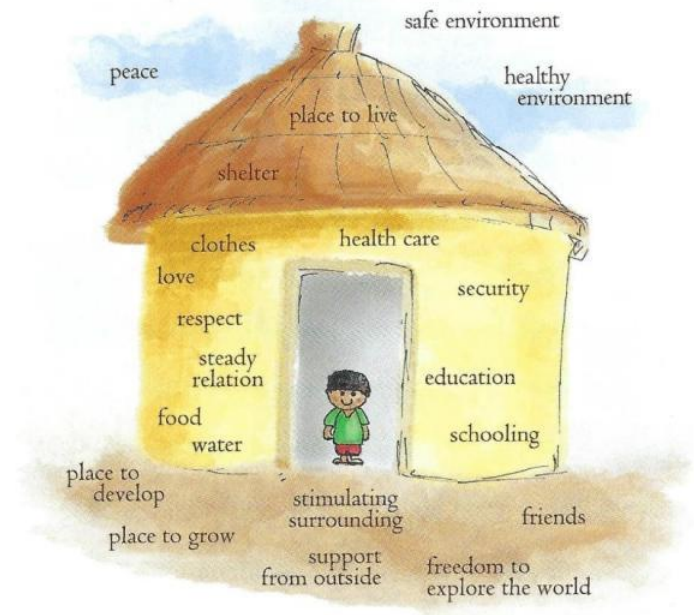


Every child has needs!

Before getting a baby you should ask yourself the following questions:

- » Can I offer my child/children a sheltered upbringing?
- » Do I have enough living space in my flat/ house/room for another child?
- » Do I have a safe and healthy environment?
- » Do I spend enough quality time, such as playing, talking, encouraging them to learn, with my children?
- » Do I show mutual love and respect to each other?
- » Do I have enough income to support or finance my child's/children schooling and education?
- » Am I able to earn my daily living? Can I therefore provide the basic needs of children (nourishment, clothing, education)?
- » Do I have health care facilities in my area?

WHAT DOES A CHILD NEED?



Every child is protected by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child!

Every child has the right to be protected, to be educated, to be healthy, to be treated fairly and to be heard!

Think of your childhood and your family!

- Draw your own house with you and your parents in it!
- Did you get what you needed when you were a child? What did you miss?
- Discuss the role of father and mother in your society. What are traditional roles, what can or should be changed?