

FORWARD

In August 2003, members of the State Council of Ulama's and the Ministry of Health met to discuss maternal and child health in Kano State. This document is a product of that workshop and was developed to serve as a useful resource for religious leaders interested in improving the lives of mothers and children in Kano State.

This booklet is divided into five sections: maternal nutrition, antenatal and postnatal care, child spacing, child nutrition and immunizations. Each section discusses the situation in Kano State for that particular health issue, defines and describes the benefit of the health issue, cites quotes that illustrate how the issue is related to Islam, and suggests what you can do as a community leader to address the particular health issue.

Suggestions for Using These Materials

- Read through each section of this booklet carefully and familiarize yourself with the health situation in Kano State, and what can be done to improve it.
- Ask questions of the trained health providers in your area to get more information as well as clarify any questions you may have.
- Reflect on your own personal religious views and how they are compatible with the information in this booklet.
- Discuss the topics in this booklet with other leaders in your community. Encourage dialogue amongst community leaders to improve the health of your community.
- Share the information in this booklet with the men, women and families in your community with the goal of helping the community to help themselves.

The Qur'an says:

"Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves".

(Al-Rad) S.13:V11)

INTRODUCTION

We are all responsible for the health of our community. We all have a role to play in keeping our children and women healthy. Health is a blessing from God. Indeed, it is considered the greatest blessing after faith itself. The Prophet said:

"There are two blessings which many people lose: (They are) health and free time for doing good."

Narrated Ibn Abbas in Sahih Al Buhkhari)

He also said:

"Ask Allah for forgiveness and health, for after being granted certainty, one is given nothing better than health"

Good health is something for which we are accountable to God. The Prophet said:

"Ask your Lord for health and for security from evil in this world and the next . . . If you are given health and security from evil in this world and the next, you have attained felicity". (Narrated Anas ibn Malik Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah in Sahih Al Buhkhari).

And also

"There is no harm in wealth for him who fears Allah, Who is Great and Glorious, but for him who fears Allah, health is better than wealth, and a happy frame of mind is one of Allah's favours." (Narrated One of the companions of the Prophet and transmitted by Ahmad - in Sahih Al Buhkhari.)

And He further said:

No one will be allowed to move from his position on the Day of Judgment until he has been asked how he spent his life, how he used his knowledge; how he earned and spent his money; and in what pursuits he used his health. [The Right Path to Health, Dr. Muhammad Haythan Al Khayat, WHO, Egypt 1997]

The Situation in Nigeria

The health of our mothers and children is grim. In Nigeria, it is estimated that one out of every 83 women giving birth to

live infants dies during childbirth. [MICS 1999/FOS/UNICEF, A-2000] In Kano State, the number of women dying during childbirth is even higher than the national average. Records from Murtala Muhammad Hospital show that one woman dies for every 42 live births. [Dr. Auwal & Dr. Masokano MMSH, Kano 2003] This figure is higher than figures from hospitals in Ibadan, Sokoto, Shagamu and Enugu. Between January and July 2003, the Murtala Muhammad Specialist Hospital in Kano recorded over 83 maternal deaths out of 1,640 deliveries. Over 80% of all maternal deaths in Murtala Mohammed Hospital in Kano are directly related to complications during pregnancy, delivery or after the birth. It is important to note that it is often when delivery gets complicated that most cases get referred to or are taken to the hospital. This accounts for the high mortality recorded in Kano hospitals.

The health of our children is also dire. Approximately one out of every five children in Kano State will die before they reach their fifth birthday. Most of these deaths are due to childhood illnesses and could be prevented through good nutrition and immunizations.

Our Community's Response

These alarming facts confirm the need to make maternal and child health a major priority for every community in Kano State. Its importance is captured in the sacred references of the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad and the ijihad, which allows the formulation of independent judgment and interpretation.

Maternal responsibility is well elaborated in marital life of Muslims. Allah in the Holy Qur'an impressively states that:

"And among His Signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts); verily in that are Signs for those who reflect".

(Qur'an, A Yusuf Ali Trans. S:30 (Rum) V:21 see also S:42 (Al Shura) V:11 and S:2 (Baquara) V:228)

Women and children must have access to good health care, decent living conditions and sound education to help enable them to perform their religious duties. As husbands and community leaders, it is your role to provide them with

comprehensive maternal and child health care. As husbands and community leaders, you can make a difference in improving the health and lives of the women and children of Kano State. You can support policies, programmes and activities that meet the health needs of our women and children.

What you can do

- SPEAK during your sermons on the importance of good health for our women and children.
- ADVOCATE for the community to take responsibility for the health of all women and children.
- INITIATE and ENCOURAGE activities in your community that address the health needs of women and children. This includes child spacing, maternal nutrition, antenatal and postnatal care, child nutrition and immunizations.

Join us and the many Mallams who have already taken action towards improving the health of our communities. Remember, as an important leader in your community,

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Council of Ulama’*a* Kano

Ministry of Health, Kano

Child Spacing

The Situation in Kano State

- Kano State is located in the zone with the highest rates of maternal death in Nigeria. Estimates indicate that one in every 65 women giving birth to live infants die during childbirth. (Development Research and Projects Centre (DRPC), 2002, Report of the Expert Panel on Maternal Health in Kano State.)
- About 30% of women in Northwest Nigeria do not rest two years between births. (*NDHS, 1999*).
- According to the NDHS (1999), 64% of births in Nigeria are classified as high-risk births. High risk births are attributed to very young women having babies, very old women having babies, births too close together, and too many births.
- Over 80% of all maternal deaths in Murtala Mohammed Hospital in Kano are directly related to complications during pregnancy, delivery or after the birth.

“Among you, the one who is most dishonored is the one who denies the woman the right to good health.”

Hadith

Child Spacing Methods and Islam

Muslims are advised to organize their lives and their families by legitimate means that will guarantee that the wife, as well as the husband, has the health, strength and free time needed to completely care for the children. This helps to guarantee a stable, functioning and virtuous family life. The issue of child spacing is not new to Islam. There is even agreement among the four great judicial schools (Shafi'e, Maliki, Hanafi and Hanbali) concerning the practice of withdrawal (al'azl) which was nothing more than an authorized form of child spacing.

“We used to practice withdrawal (al uzl) while the Prophet (peace be upon him) was living. He learned about it and did not forbid us.”

Hadith

Child Spacing Benefits

Child spacing benefits the mother, the child, the father and the whole family.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding place many demands on a woman's body. Child spacing allows for time between births so that the mother can rest between pregnancies and maintain good health, be less tired and have more energy. She can give more attention to her children and husband, and help ensure good health for the family.

"Do not voluntarily destroy your children by giving them the milk of a pregnant mother, lest when they are grown and ride on horses they be undone by enemy horsemen."

Hadith

Child spacing allows the new baby a longer time to breastfeed and grow strong and healthy. A stronger healthier baby is much less likely to die before his or her first birthday.

Women need to rest two to three years between births. If births come every year, the mother can become very tired and very sick. The new baby may be born very small and sick. In Nigeria, if a mother waits at least two years between the births of her children, her baby is 75% less likely to die during the first year of life. Waiting three years between births further improves the health of the mother and child. Islam permits temporary child spacing that defines the appropriate time between births as 30 to 33 months. Children are special gifts from Allah, and parents are expected to do all that they can to give them a good life.

"The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months."
(S:46 (Al' Ahqaf) V:15 – A. Yusuf Ali Trans.

What You Can Do

- ❑ Counsel family members in your community to space at least two to three years between births. This helps ensure good health for the mother and the child, and follows the guidance of Islam.
- ❑ Encourage men to discuss child spacing with their wives.
- ❑ Encourage families to visit the health clinic for Information on child spacing services. A service provider is the best person to give correct information on child spacing.
- ❑ Become a voice for promoting child spacing. Inform families that child spacing is permissible on religious grounds.

Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty Allah will soon grant relief.

S:7 (At-Talaq) V:65

MATERNAL NUTRITION

The Situation in Kano State

- More than 50% of all pregnant women in Kano State suffer from malnutrition.
- In Nigeria, 50% of pregnant women have anemia. (Save the Children, 2003)

Not eating enough or not having a variety of healthy foods causes malnutrition. Anemia is caused by not eating enough foods rich with iron such as meat or liver. Without good food to keep them strong and healthy, pregnant women have a difficult time with delivery. Their babies are often born very small and sick.

Keeping Healthy in Pregnancy:

Maternal Nutrition

Pregnant or breastfeeding mothers require a healthy balanced diet and more rest than usual. As the Qur'an notes, a good diet is a mixture of different types of food that God has graciously provided for His creation, so that it satisfies all the needs of the body.

When a woman is pregnant, her body needs additional food to help her baby grow and to keep the woman strong. Eating a variety of nutritious foods will not make the baby too fat or make the delivery difficult. On the contrary, it will help the mother and baby to be strong for childbirth.

When a woman is breastfeeding, her body also needs additional food so that she has the energy and milk to nurse her baby well.

A pregnant or breast feeding woman should eat foods from each of these groups:

- **Protein** – Protein helps the body grow. Protein comes from beans, milk, fish, liver, eggs, chicken and groundnuts.

The Qur'an says that Allah:
"He created cattle, which provide you clothing, food, and other benefits."
(S:16 (An-Nahl) V:5).

It is He who sends down water from the sky with "which He brings up corn, olives, dates and grapes and other fruit. (S:16 (An-Nahl) V:11)

"It is He who subdued the seas, from which you eat fresh fish. (S:16 (An-Nahl) V:14)"

In cattle too, you have a worthy lesson. We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies, between the chyle and the blood: pure milk, a pleasant beverage for those who drink it (S:16 (An-Nahl) V:66)

Eat of these fruit when they ripen (S:16 (An-Nahl) V:141)

...and from it [the earth], we produced grain for their sustenance." S:36 (Ya-Sin V:33)

- **Carbohydrates** -- Carbohydrates provide energy and come from yams, rice, maize, millet, corn and bread.
- **Fats and oils** – Fats and oils also give energy. These include palm oil, groundnut oil, butter, shea butter and soya.
- **Vitamins** – Vitamins help the body fight illness and infections. Fruits such as paw paw, guava and mangoes, and vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, pumpkins and tomatoes have many vitamins.

Most pregnant women continue their regular activities without taking additional rests. Reducing workloads helps pregnant women get more rest and keeps them healthier for delivery.

“And if they carry, then spend on them until they deliver their burden; and if they suckle your offspring, give them their recompense.” S:65 (At-Talaq):V:6-7

The life of the baby in a woman’s body depends on her. The woman depends on her husband to provide for her and the family. It is essential for husbands to provide a variety of healthy foods as well as the opportunity to rest during pregnancy.

Learning More About Maternal Nutrition

In Kano State, health clinics provide antenatal and postnatal care services where pregnant women can learn about good nutrition and how to prepare nutritious foods and other important information to ensure a healthy pregnancy for both the mother and baby.

What You Can Do

- Inform worshipers that a pregnant or breastfeeding woman needs to eat many different kinds of nutritious foods.
- Encourage husbands to ensure that their wives eat more food during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

The Qur’an Says
“And if they carry (life in their wombs) then spend (your substance) on them until they deliver their burden: and if they suckle your (offspring) give them their recompense: and take mutual counsel together according to what is just and reasonable.”
 S:6 (At Talaq) V:67

- Advise husbands to allow their pregnant wives to attend antenatal and postnatal clinics to learn more about maternal nutrition.
- Encourage the formation of community and women's groups that will address issues of malnutrition.
- Encourage women to grow small vegetable gardens in their compounds. This will allow them to have fresh vegetables whenever they want them.
- Speak up publicly in favor of local programs that will encourage farmers in your community to grow food that is more nutritious and make them available and affordable for families. This will increase the number of women eating better food at all times.
- Counsel families on the importance of reducing the workload of women during pregnancy. Added rest helps pregnant women stay healthy for delivery.

ANTENATAL & POSTNATAL CARE

The Situation in Kano State

- About 89% of women in the North West Region do not deliver their babies with the help of a trained health care provider (NDHS, 2003).
- Over 80% of all maternal deaths in Murtala Mohammed Hospital in Kano are directly related to complications during pregnancy, delivery or after the birth.

These deaths could have been prevented if the women had come to a health facility sooner and delivered with the help of a trained health care provider. A skilled provider can prevent infection, manage heavy bleeding, and refer emergency cases to hospital. During childbirth, a skilled provider can help prevent unnecessary death of the mother or child.

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:
“You are all shepherds and you are responsible for your herds.”
Hadith

Antenatal Care

Every pregnant woman should go to a health clinic for antenatal care. Antenatal care is care given to mother and baby before the baby is born. Women should visit the clinic at least four times during pregnancy. A health provider can help if there are any problems during the pregnancy. During antenatal visits, the woman will receive some medicines to protect her and the baby. Some of the services provided to the pregnant woman during antenatal care include:

- Counseling on proper nutrition and breastfeeding.
- Identification of possible complications or symptoms.
- Provide tetanus toxoid immunization
- Provide treatment for malaria. Pregnant women have a much greater risk of getting severe malaria or malaria-related anemia. Both can cause maternal death, spontaneous abortion, and death of the newborn infant and low birth weight babies.

Prophet SAW said
“The most perfect of believers in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives.”
(Narrated by Tirmidhi)

- Provide iron and folate pills. Iron pills provide protection against anemia and make the mother and baby strong. Folate provides protection against birth defects.

During antenatal visits, the health provider will help the mother and her family make a plan for a safe delivery. The mother should plan to deliver at a health clinic where a skilled health worker can help if there is a problem. The mother and her family can also make plans for referral in case of complications during delivery. Families should save money for transport in case the woman needs to go to a hospital.

“O ye who believe, save yourselves and your families from fire” S: 54
(Tahrim) V: 6

In Islam, it is obligatory for husbands to save and be prepared for pregnancy and childbirth.

Postnatal Care

It is important to return to the health clinic after the baby is born. The health care provider can check the mother to be sure she is healthy following childbirth and is able to care for her newborn baby. The health care provider can also begin immunizing the baby against many diseases. She can answer any questions and can provide information on maternal nutrition and exclusive breastfeeding.

What You Can Do

- Encourage husbands to allow and to take their wives to attend antenatal and postnatal care services.
- Encourage husbands and family members to develop a safe birth plan and to share it with their health care provider.

- Counsel husbands and their families to support their wives in delivering at a health facility with a skilled health care provider.

“And make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction.”

S:2: (Baqara) V:195

- Encourage husbands and family members to save money for transport in case there are complications during delivery.

CHILD NUTRITION & WEANING

The Situation in Kano State

- Almost all newborns in Nigeria are breastfed. (NDHS 2003)
- Over half of all newborns born in the Northwest Region are breastfed within one hour of delivery. (NDHS 1999)
- In the Northwest Region, the median duration of breastfeeding for children under three is 22.2 months. (NDHS 1999)
- In Nigeria, less than one out of five babies under 6 months of age are exclusively breastfed. (NDSH 2003)
- Almost 60% of children in Kano State are underweight. (Federal Office of Statistics/UNICEF, 1999, MICS Survey).
- One out of ten children suffer chronic malnourishment before they reach their first birthday. (NDHS, 2003)

The Holy Qur'an says:

The mother shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of his child; and heir shall be chargeable in the same way. If they both decide on weaning, by maternal consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them."

S:2: (Baqara) V:232-3).

Benefits of Breastfeeding

In Kano State, many women breastfeed their babies for two years as Allah has ordained. Islam encourages mothers to breastfeed their babies. It notes that it is from the breast that "the milk of human kindness" literally flows. Mother's breast milk contains many nutrients that allow the baby to grow and develop. Breastfeeding is natural. Breast milk is free and clean, and the baby can feed at any time. Breastfeeding also helps a mother and her baby to form an intimate, emotional bond. Allah has allowed and encouraged mothers to nurture their children and provide warmth, comfort, security, and compassion through breastfeeding.

The Qur'an Says

"There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance dependeth on Allah."

S:11 (Hud) V:6

Exclusive Breastfeeding

Unfortunately, many mothers also give their babies water, herbs, and porridge during their first six months of life. Babies should be exclusively breastfed during their first six months. Exclusive breastfeeding means a baby is given only mother's milk. Mothers should not give water, tea, kamu, herbs, foods or milk substitutes during this time. These can

cause diarrhea. Diarrhea often causes dehydration and even death especially in young children. If the baby or mother is ill, the mother should continue breastfeeding.

Breast milk gives babies all the nutrition they need to grow big and healthy during the first six months of life. Breast milk is the best food and drink for babies until they are six months old. This includes the first milk, called colostrum. Colostrum helps build up the baby's immunity and is the baby's first natural medicine against disease. All babies should take colostrum to help keep them healthy. Fathers and mothers-in-law can help by encouraging mothers to give their babies colostrum and by giving their support for exclusive breastfeeding for six months.

Weaning

After six months, the baby should start to eat other foods as well as breast milk. Good nutrition is extremely important for young children. Children need to eat many different kinds of food to grow well, be active and happy and to prevent disease and malnutrition. Although its dangerous effects are largely indirect and invisible, malnutrition stunts children's growth, impairs their intellectual development, and increases the odds that common illnesses such as diarrhea and respiratory infections become fatal. (Child Health In Northern Nigeria – Mortality and Morbidity by Dr. Kabir A. Masokano, Consultant Pediatrician Murtala Mohammed Specialist Hospital Kano August 2003 Kano.)

“The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years if the father desires to complete the term”.

S:2 (Al-Baqara) V:233

After six months, mothers should continue to breastfeed, and also give other foods such as ground up meat or fish, sour milk, beans, or thick porridge made with oil, sugar, and pounded ground nuts. Other foods such as bananas, orange colored fruits, orange and dark green mashed vegetables such as pumpkins, boiled sweet potato, and cooked leaves should also be given. Parents should be sure to serve their children food that is fresh using clean spoons and cups. Children should never be given food that has been sitting out uncovered. Food should always be covered to protect it from flies.

What You Can Do

- Encourage mothers and their families to put the baby to the mother's breast within a half hour after birth to get the benefits of colostrum.
- Encourage mothers to practice exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months.
- Encourage husbands and their families to support their wives in exclusive breastfeeding.
- Encourage the formation of local exclusive breastfeeding support groups. These groups can provide support to women and their families as they practice exclusive breastfeeding.
- Encourage the parents to visit the health clinic with their newborn to receive important information on exclusive breastfeeding.
- Encourage husbands and their families to provide nursing mothers additional food in order to give the baby the most nutritious breast milk.
- Encourage husbands and their families to provide a variety of nutritious fresh foods for their children.

IMMUNIZATIONS

The Situation in Kano State

- One out of ten children will die before they reach their first birthday. (NDHS, 2003)
- Approximately one out of five children will die before they reach their fifth birthday. (NDHS, 2003)
- In the Northwest Zone of Nigeria, only 4% of children have received all of their immunizations. (UNICEF 2001, Children and Women's Rights in Nigeria).
- Almost half of all polio cases in Nigeria are found in Kano State (WHO and UNICEF, 2003).

Allah says:
“Losers are those who in their ignorance stupidly cause the death of their own children.”
 S:6 (Al-An'am) V:140

The Benefits of Immunizations

When a person falls ill, Islam requires him to seek medical treatment or protection if it is available. Immunizations are medicines that prevent people from falling ill.

Immunizations are the first medicines babies need to prevent many common diseases. These diseases can cause illness, and often death. Immunizations can stop polio, measles, tetanus, and tuberculosis. It is critically important that mothers and fathers regularly take their babies and young children to the health clinic for immunizations. A health worker will explain the schedule for immunization. All babies need immunizations. It can be a matter of life or death.

“Allah has not created an illness without creating a cure for it.”
 Hadith transmitted by Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi

Immunization is not against God's will, but rather functions by God's will. God asks us to take preventive measures to guard against illness, for prevention leads to good health.

“There is no bigger sin than neglecting dependents.” Hadith

| Vaccine | PREVENTS | Age at vaccination | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---------|----------|----------|
| | | Birth | 6 Weeks | 10 Weeks | 14 Weeks |
| BCG | Tuberculosis | Birth | | | |
| DPT | Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis | | 6 Weeks | 10 Weeks | 14 Weeks |
| Hepatitis B | Hepatitis B | Birth | 6 | | 14 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|----------|---------|----------|----------|
| | | | Weeks | | Weeks |
| OPV | Polio | Birth | 6 Weeks | 10 Weeks | 14 Weeks |
| Yellow Fever | Yellow fever | 9 months | | | |
| Measles | Measles | 9 months | | | |

| | | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|----------------|--|--|
| Vitamin A | Blindness and other illness | After 6 months | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|----------------|--|--|

What You Can Do

- Talk with your congregation about childhood diseases and the importance of immunization.
- Advise and encourage fathers to make sure that their children receive all of their immunizations. Remind them that it is the duty of the heads of households to take necessary measures to prevent their families from getting ill.
- Support community mobilization activities promoting immunizations.
- Encourage family members to talk to health providers about routine immunizations.
- Urge parents to take their children to the health clinic for routine immunizations.
- Take personal interest in immunizing the children of your congregation by using messages on routine immunizations during your weekly sermons.
- Encourage the formation of “Immunization Support Groups” in your community. The groups can mobilize mothers and their children to receive immunizations when due.

“He who protects himself from evil shall be spared its effects.”

Authenticated by Al-Khateeb in his history following Abu Huraira.

“...if any one slew a person unless it be for murder or spread mischief in the land, it would be as if he slew the whole people. And if one saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people...”

S:5 (Ma’ida) V:32

WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTH

Good health is the foundation of a decent Muslim community and the basis of community development and progress. As leaders in your communities, you can play an important role in helping to improve the health of mothers and children in Kano State.

The Qur'an says:
Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves."
S:13 (Al-Rad) V:11)

You can:

- **SPEAK** during your sermons on the importance of good health for our women and children.
- **ADVOCATE** for the community to take responsibility for the health of all women and children.
- **INITIATE** and **ENCOURAGE** activities in your community that address the health needs of women and children. This includes child spacing, maternal nutrition, antenatal and postnatal care, child nutrition and immunizations.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.