REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM
Islam, Demographic Dividend and Family Wellbeing

N'Djamena, CHAD
Islam, Demographic Dividend and Family Wellbeing were the theme areas addressed during the N’Djamena regional symposium. It was an opportunity to highlight the fundamental role Muslim leaders play in accelerating the demographic transition, to develop their skills on such issues as family planning, maternal and infant mortality, and to also promote women’s rights to sexual and reproductive health services.
Over 1,200 religious leaders attended a three-day symposium on “Islam, Demographic Dividend and Family Wellbeing”, that took place from 25 - 27 July, 2017, in N’Djamena, Chad. It was organized by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Government of Chad, the Chadian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA) and the World Bank, in support of the Sahel Women Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) regional initiative, which aims to accelerate the demographic transition in the six Sahel countries of Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

“Islam encourages family planning and any initiative for the wellbeing of women”.
Cheick Hisseine Hassan Abakar,
President, Chadian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA)
At the opening ceremony, Regional Director Mabingue Ngom commended President Idriss Deby Itno and the Government of Chad on the nation’s leadership in harnessing the demographic dividend. Mr. Ngom also praised the efforts of Muslim leaders to seriously address the demographic dividend and family wellbeing. He promised to support the refurbishing of the CSIA health centre to enable them to improve their basic health care services and preserve human dignity for community members.

Islam accepts family planning; It is the best means to prevent maternal and infant mortality.
Cheick Hissein Hassan Abakar thanked UNFPA for its commitment and support, particularly in organising the regional symposium. He saluted the Imams and preachers from Chad and abroad for participating massively in the event, saying the symposium was an opportunity for them to share their knowledge and experience on dignity, gender and the values of the Republic. It is time to give women the respect they deserve in society.

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Opening the symposium officially, on behalf of the Prime Minister and the Government of Chad, Public Health Minister, Ms. Ngarmbatina Carmel Sou IV, congratulated UNFPA, SCAI and other partners for putting the emphasis on an issue that is of particular interest to President Idriss Deby Itno and the Government of Chad. “This initiative will support the government’s efforts to improve wellbeing for the people of Chad and stimulate our domestic economy, starting from the household economy”, she said.

Uncontrolled population growth is a real time bomb. Birth control is tied closely to family wellbeing and to development.
KEY HIGHLIGHTS: THE THREE THEMES OF THE SYMPOSIUM

1. Women’s empowerment and factors of maternal and infant mortality, birth spacing and the demographic transition;
2. Youth education, empowerment, employment and radicalization
3. Role of Muslim leaders in implementing the AU roadmap on “Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in the youth”
To achieve the sustainable development goals, those of the AU's agenda 2063 and the demographic transition in Africa, it is vital to reduce maternal mortality by investing in family planning and promoting the empowerment of women.

To address these socio-cultural and even faith-based challenges, religious leaders must be involved, for they are the guides who shape the customs and practices of communities, based on deeply rooted beliefs.
Countries such as Indonesia, Egypt, Mauritania and Chad have developed good practices for koranic education on:

- Sexual and reproductive health, including family planning,
- Preventing gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation/cutting,
- Ministerial departments for health, education and gender integrate life skills trainings and health education.

These experiences have enabled a country like Indonesia to capture the demographic dividend and become a reference in this area.

**Family wellbeing is achieved when the family decides freely to have the number of children it wants within the limits of its means, to allow each family member (man, woman and child) to enjoy their rights in line with the teachings of Islam.**

**Recommendations:**

- Need for holistic and inclusive approaches with the full participation of men, in interventions to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality, promote family planning and the empowerment of women.
- Mobilize internally financial resources to religious authorities and leaders through Zakat (as an example).

The problem of maternal mortality is not a religious problem, but a challenge for society to address, and the deeply humanist and peaceful religions hold solutions that protect the right to life for children, women and men.
Recommendations:

- Access to information and to quality reproductive health services is a fundamental right;

- Imams, religious leaders and Islamic associations are urged to engage in awareness campaigns and get involved in creating an enabling environment conducive to the promotion of family planning, maternal health and family wellbeing, and to the prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

- Islam accepts Family Planning (FP) for birth spacing and maternal health to suit available resources and improve quality of life for families, but it must be a deliberate and voluntary choice for each individual.

- Religious leaders strongly support all efforts to give women access to healthcare during pregnancy, to receive emergency obstetric and neonatal care in case of complications (during pregnancy, childbirth and post-delivery), and to provide men and women with the means to make informed decisions about birth spacing. These services must be accessible to all who need them.

- Traditional and religious leaders should initiate efforts within their communities and congregations to empower women and enhance their status. In particular, girls' education and schooling, access to employment, credit opportunities and respect of their reproductive rights should be pursued with the utmost vigour.

- Provide universal health coverage for comprehensive reproductive, maternal and neonatal healthcare by ensuring sustainability through an innovative strategy such as mobilizing a portion of Zakat.

- The media should be used to make everyone understand that family planning is accepted by Islam.

- Religious leaders are committed to providing education for a good understanding of Islam's perspective on human rights and contributing to family well-being.

- Promote an integrated approach to social actions, drawing on the Chadian model using the mosque, health facilities, community radio, and training.

- Prepare preaching guides on the topics addressed at this symposium (FP, maternal health, Dividend Demographic (DD), women empowerment) and make them available to imams.

- Accord importance to pre-nuptial blood analysis for couples;

- Koranic education for children enables them to adopt safe behaviour and to better understand sexual and reproductive health.

- Ensure prevention of cervical, breast and prostate cancer.
Youth Education, Empowerment, Employment and Radicalization

Today, more than ever before, investing in the youth is a necessary step to keep them from enrolling in conflicts, joining radicalized movements and fleeing to Europe. To do so, UNFPA has developed several strategies and partnerships for adolescents and young people, particularly in collaboration with the African Union, on the theme demographic dividend, on preventing radicalization among young people, and the empowerment of women through the regional initiative, Sahel Women Empowerment and Demographic Dividend in the Sahel (SWEDD) with World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the West African Health Organisation (WAHO). These initiatives and projects contribute to inform, educate, build skills and harness the potential of young people by creating jobs for their empowerment and the sustainable development of Africa. There is a need to emphasize that Koranic education for adolescents and young people, is pivotal not only as it places value on and encourages knowledge, but it also condemns all forms of violence.
Recommendations:

Gender equity/equality and Education based on the standards of Islam

- Include gender-responsive budgeting in national budgets.
- Strengthen the development of profit-making micro-projects and programmes.
- Strengthen the development of micro-projects and economic programmes for women and young people.
- Strengthen programmes for women's access to reproductive health, including the community component and religious norms.
- Support the implementation of a programme to strengthen women's leadership according to religious norms.
- Support widow and orphan care programmes with the backing of religious leaders.
- Develop the youth and women literacy programme in all languages.
- Strengthen the technical and material capacities of Islamic media for adequate communication on the demographic dividend and the prevention of radicalization.
- Support the training of religious leaders for public statements and communication to young people.

Youth Vocational Training and Empowerment

- Provide support on vocational training for young boys and girls, using official Islamic institutions.
- Provide support by granting scholarships for vocational training to deserving girls from disadvantaged groups.
- Use Zakat to fund projects and programmes for the youth in order to empower them.
- Strengthen the legal status of Imams and offer them a salary to make them free from want and malicious requests.

Preventing the Instrumentalization and Radicalization of young people

- Reform the education curricula to include togetherness, a culture of peace and the prevention of radicalization.
- Strengthen the curricula in Koranic and denominational schools to promote inter-faith tolerance.
- Conduct studies to identify the underlying reasons why young people follow the doctrine of radical groups.
- Assist in developing and implementing regional programmes and projects to prevent young people from religious radicalism and extremism, and give them holistic care.
- Support orphan care and support programmes (based on Islamic standards) to prevent radicalization and extremism.
- Strengthen the enforcement of legal, judicial and social measures to combat the consumption of narcotic substances, alcohol and drugs among the youth.
CONCEPT “For preventive education against the encroachment of extremism in the Lake Chad basin”

Preventive education is "a cognitive process whereby the teacher leads the learner to value social cohesion and dialogue by constructing a narrative for peace, collective initiative, the general interest, and shared values among different identities to identify opportunities for living together”. Professor Kodi Mahamat, Chancellor, Mongo University.

The Professor explains that the existence of unresolved disputes may have significant implications in re-igniting conflict to the point where it could be a decisive trigger of major conflicts. The fact that political, politico-military, and criminal forces can intervene whenever things are calm means these forces can manipulate people on an issue in any given context.

To be able to use education in building bridges, Professor Kodi Hamat explains that we need to have boxes which represent all the situations experienced in trans/inter-identity partnerships in order to show the linkages in culture and language, and to explain, not justify the differences.

Therefore, we need to give a better representation of national and regional history, which has so far been focused on decolonization, independence and violence, and to encourage education, centred on the history of people in the Lake Chad Basin.
The decisive role of religious leaders in implementing the African Union’s Roadmap on: “Harnessing the demographic dividend through investment in the youth”.

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The African Union Roadmap requires countries to achieve four goals:

- Prioritise investments in young people,
- Optimise the family planning process,
- Accelerate economic development, and
- Align countries on the key actions for capturing the demographic dividend.

The four goals correspond to the four vital pillars for capturing the demographic dividend, namely:

★ Employment and entrepreneurship;
★ Education and skill development;
★ Health, wellbeing and rights;
★ Governance and youth empowerment.

Islam is not against family planning. The many interpretations of the issue result from a lack of harmony in Koranic school curricula.

**Recommendations:**

**Employment and Entrepreneurship**

- Promote access to credit for women and young people, including those in vulnerable and rural areas, and for the youth to make the most of funding opportunities offered by credit institutions in accordance with Islamic principles.
- Advocate for a review of the conditions for granting loans to young people.
- Advocate for Governments to create favourable conditions for maintaining young people in rural areas.
- Raise young people’s awareness of the dangers of clandestine migration and radicalization.
Recommendations:

Education and skill development
- Harmonize teaching/learning curricula in Koranic schools within and across countries.
- Include training on the demographic dividend and girls’ schooling in Koranic education.
- Work towards modernizing Koranic schools by adapting them to the requirements of the labour market and by developing youth-specific technical and vocational education and training curricula.
- Promote entry into the workforce for the young people trained in Islamic institutions.
- Strengthen intergenerational dialogue.

Health and Wellbeing
- Train religious leaders by giving them the right message on Islam’s perspective on reproductive health issues (preparation and dissemination of guides).
- Strengthen the capacities of religious organizations on reproductive health rights, male involvement in women’s reproductive health (RH), and the demographic dividend.
- Facilitate collaboration between governments and religious organizations on health and the Demographic Dividend.
- Make the most of community, denominational, and social media to convey messages for awareness of RH and the demographic dividend.
- Give health facilities improved capacities for providing RH / FP services.
- Promote Chad’s model for creating denominational health centres that offer RH/FP services.

Rights, Governance and Youth Empowerment
- Use sermons to denounce corruption and its consequences on development and on capturing the Demographic Dividend.
- Strengthen the establishment and operationalization of African networks of religious leaders.
- Promote South-South cooperation

Demographic Transition and Demographic Dividend
- Include the Demographic Dividend and girls’ schooling in sermons in order to foster ownership by religious leaders and communities.
- Intensify advocacy and resource mobilization for the demographic dividend.
- Raise the awareness of parents and families on the responsibility of parents and religious leaders in capturing the Demographic Dividend.
- Advocate for the admission, inclusion and maintenance of girls in school.
- Promote the involvement of religious leaders in the elaboration of national development policies and programmes.
Recognising also that Islam accepts family planning for birth spacing, maternal and child health in order to adapt it to the resources available, improve quality of life for families, and ensure each individual makes a deliberate and voluntary choice.

Recommend that a strategic partnership, compliant with the principles and teachings of Islam, be established with various national and international actors to consolidate current gains, promote innovative approaches, and scale up good practices and successful experiences on initiatives for the demographic dividend.

- More specifically, the participants in the symposium recommend: Engagement in awareness-raising and information campaigns to create an enabling environment conducive to promoting family well-being, in particular, through a policy of promoting maternal health, including family planning, in line with the precepts of Islam and the eradication of all forms of violence.

- The promotion of integrated approaches (mosque, health facility, community radio to support awareness, harmonised training of members) for universal access to health care and the empowerment of women to give most of them the ability to generate their own funding.

- The promotion of innovative approaches to finance projects and programmes that can contribute towards country goals for capturing the demographic dividend. In this context, particular emphasis should be placed on the potential in using Zakat, which is one of the five pillars of Islam, to meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups, especially young people and women who face severe challenges in getting access to conventional sources of funding.

- Efforts to modernize education and training systems based on Islam (Koranic schools, madrassas, etc.) to adapt them to the requirements of the labour market and provide vocational training to young people.

- Easier means of sharing experience and promoting good practices at the regional level through South-South cooperation on initiatives for harnessing the demographic dividend, especially those on birth spacing for family planning, women empowerment, keeping girls in school, and promoting decent work for young people and women.

- The improvement of technical skills for imams, religious leaders and Islamic media outlets to promote social and behaviour change communication that is conducive to the demographic dividend and universal access to health, including reproductive health and family planning, the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism, harmonized training in Koranic schools and better social and professional integration of women and young people.

- The provision of financial and technical support to the religious organisations on this platform.

Excerpts of the N’Djamena Declaration,
27 July, 2017
Visit to the Obstetric Fistula Prevention Programme, funded by UNFPA, N'Djamena

“These women are extremely courageous, and they deserve our collective support!”
Mabingue Ngom,
UNFPA Regional Director for West and Central Africa

The National Fistula Treatment Centre in N’Djamena is a UNFPA-funded multi-dimensional facility where young girls and young women receive counselling, surgical repairs and skills training in batik, sewing, weaving and embroidery.

During the seven-day regional symposium on Islam, demographic dividend and family well-being, a total number of 28 women underwent surgery for fistula at the centre, which included:

- 71% operated are women from rural areas.
- 54% of girls married before the age of 15.
The workshop, located at the Centre, empowers young women who have received treatment by rebuilding their confidence and giving them financial self-reliance, as they sell their finished products to generate income.
“We are going to help refurbishing and expand the health centre of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs to enable them to improve the coverage and quality of services they provide to the children and women in Chad”. Mabingue Ngom
The Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA) started working on family health and well-being as far back as 1985. In 1995, they trained preachers to facilitate awareness of family planning. At the Abuja conference in 2005, SCIA played an active role in the creation of the Network of Islamic Associations for Population and Development. This multi-denominational platform maintains social cohesion to promote peace, education and health.

In N'Djamena, 92 Koranic schools raise women’s awareness of reproductive health. A school can have between 50-150 women. They cover topics such as family planning, girls’ education and women empowerment.

Drawing on the verses of the Koran, the instructors explain the different topics. On family planning, they agree that Islam does not oppose it. On the contrary, Mohammedanism encourages this practice, for it recommends that a mother should breastfeed her child for up to 2 years.

On women empowerment, Mrs. Khalia Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Secretary-General of the Chadian League of Ulemas and Preachers, and founder of several Koranic schools in N'Djamena, explains that the epitome of women empowerment is Khadidja, the Prophet’s wife, who helped her husband thanks to her trade.
Girls Koranic school
Boys Koranic school
THE N’DJAMENA SYMPOSIUM IN THE RADIO, TV, PRINT MEDIA
Media coverage
Regional Symposium on “Islam, Demographic Dividend and Family Wellbeing”

PRINT MEDIA

• L’Info 27-30 July 2017
  Planification Familiale: Islam Pour ou Contre
  L’Islam et Dividende Démographique ?

• Le Progrès
  Le “Dividende Démographie”, Sous un Angle Islamique
  Implication de Leaders Religieux dans “La Planification Familiale” au Tchad :
  Des Imams au Secours de “Dividende Démographique”

• N’Djamena BiHebdo
  Allah, Fécondité et Développement

• TCHADINFO.COM
  25/07/2017

  Tchad : Fin du Symposium Islam, « Dividende démographique et bien-être familial »
  28/07/2017

• Timbuktu Institute
  Timbuktu Institute Intervient au Symposium régional « Islam et Dividende Démographique » à N’djamena
  25/07/2017

TELEVISION

• Télé-Tchad, TV Al Nasr, Electron TV

• Voice of America (VOA) – ‘Washington Forum’

• TV5 MONDE: Juillet et Août 2017
  Le Symposium, Islam et Dividende Démographique à N’djamena

• OUEST -TV : Juillet et Août 2017
  Le Symposium, Islam et Dividende Démographique à N’djamena

• Le Symposium, Islam et Dividende Démographique à N’djamena
  28/07/2017

• QUESTIONS’ - A Directeur régional de l’UNFPA, sur symposium de N’djemena
  2/07/2017 - 3/07/2017

• Le Symposium, Islam et Dividende Démographique à N’djamena
  3/08/2017 13’ min

RADIO

• Radio Nationale Tchadienne, FM Liberté, FM Al Nasr, FM La Voix de l’Espérance, Oxygène FM, FM Al Quoran, la Voix de l’Amérique, BBC Afrique, Deutsche Welle (a réalisé une longue émission sur l’événement), Radio France Internationale, RFI.

• Voice of America (VOA)
  27/07/2017

• Arret Sur Info 072817 Sur Démographie Afrique Suite Propos Macron
  28/07/2017

• West Africa Democracy Radio (WADR)
  Arrêt Sur Info 072817 Sur Démographie Afrique Suite Propos Macron
  30/07/2017
Mr. Mbingue Ngom, UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Director, thanked all the participants, country office delegations, and the Chad Country Office and Regional Office teams for their contribution and support. He also expressed gratitude to the Panellists for their participation in the N'Djamena symposium:

1- Women empowerment and factors of maternal and infant mortality, birth spacing and demographic transition
Technical panel (Session Chairperson: Minister of Public Health, Chad)
Dr. Saleh Abdel Salam: Causes and prevention of maternal mortality in the Sahel region
Mahamat Koyalta & Prof. Gueye: the Obstetric Fistula problem in Africa
Dr Kono Sephora: Family Planning and maternal mortality
Panellists: Minister of Public Health, Chad
Religious Panel: Session Chairperson - Cheikh Hissein Hasan Abakar, President, (SCIA)
Furkan Faried (BKKBN Indonesia): Islam and Family Planning
Mohamed Hamid (Al-Azhar University, Egypt): Maternal and infant mortality
Imam Moustapha Gueye (Association of Imams in Senegal): Role of Religious Leaders in Family Planning
President of Religious Leaders in Mali: What role What is the Role of the alliance of religious leaders in promoting maternal and infant health for DD?

2- Youth Education, Empowerment, Employment and Radicalization
Technical panel: Session Chairperson - Minister of Education and Civic Promotion
Hakima (Morocco): Family Life Education and girls’ schooling
Bakary Sambe: Factors of radicalisation and youth perceptions of terrorism: What implications for development policies?
Dr. Latif Dramani: How youth employment can contribute in capturing DD in the Sahel
Panellists: Minister of Education and Civic Promotion
Religious Panel: (Session Chairperson - Cheikh Ahmad Annour, Mufti of Chad)
Dr Mahamat Nour Adam Sakine: Education in Koranic schools and radicalisation
Dr. Youssouf Belmahdi, President, Ulemas of G5 Sahel: Fight against radicalization among the youth
Dr. Abakar Walar: Radicalisation: the case of Chad
Mrs. Zenaba Youssouf: Role of Koranic Schools in girls’ education
Imam Cissé Djiguiba: The role of the media in communication on the DD and empowerment of women

3- Role of Muslim leaders in implementing the AU roadmap on “Making the most of the demographic dividend by investing in the youth“
Joint panel (Session Chairperson: Minister of Economy and Development Planning)
Pr. Mbacke/Dr. Latif Dramani: What are the factors of the demographic transition in the Sahel and the implications for development policies
Dr. Kofi Justin (UNFPA): How to better involve religious leaders in initiatives for empowerment and DD
M. Abdeldaim, SG, CSAI: Demographic Dividend: The Islam perspective
Dr. Latif Dramani (How the AU roadmap can inspire national policies for development)
President of Religious leaders in Mauritania: The role of religious leaders in the implementation of SCARP in Mauritania
President Déby’s message of congratulations

In the aftermath of the symposium, President Idriss Déby Itno on the occasion of the monthly health meeting at the Presidency, commended UNFPA for organizing the regional symposium on "Islam, Demographic Dividend and Family Well-Being" to address such sensitive issues. President Déby pointed out that he was glad UNFPA and its partners had succeeded to convince Chad’s Muslim religious leaders of the importance of the demographic dividend and family planning, for these are issues on which the government was finding it hard to build consensus. The President also instructed the Government to keep a close eye on the commitments from the symposium, including the N'Djamena Declaration and its related recommendations. He urged government members also to count on the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and religious leaders in their efforts to change attitudes across the nation.
From left to right: Cheikh Abdeldahim Abdoulaye, SCAI Secretary General (Tchad) et Mr. Ismaila Mbengue, UNFPA Representative in Tchad.

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Sahel Women Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD)

Demographic Dynamics and the Crisis of Countries around Lake Chad

From crisis to development around Lake Chad
#PutYoungPeopleFirst