



WORLD FAITHS  
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DIALOGUE



Cadre des Religieux  
pour la Santé et  
le Développement

## **How do Religious Attitudes and Beliefs Influence Family Planning in Senegal? Excerpts from Endline Focus Groups February 2018**

### **Kédougou**

#### *Women: Group 1*

##### **Does anyone know a woman who experienced complications during pregnancy?**

I was faced with a miscarriage. I was seven months pregnant, but in the eighth month, the baby died and was in my stomach for two or three weeks. The baby was no longer moving and I felt a heaviness. I started having complaints about my body. I felt terrible stomach pains. I went to the hospital with my husband and they told me that the baby had died in my stomach. I stayed at the hospital for five months as I recovered little by little. Despite all these problems, you can't refuse to have sexual relations with your husband. And six months later, I became pregnant again. But during that pregnancy, I went to the hospital and I meticulously took all the medications that the doctor told me to. I didn't have any problems during delivery and neither did my baby.

##### **How can closely spaced pregnancies affect the health of mothers and children?**

Having closely spaced pregnancies is very difficult to bear. If you breastfeed your child while still having sexual relations with your husband, the child's health will suffer from it. The child will suffer regularly from diarrhea and he'll be weakened from vomiting. The mother will also be in poor health.

##### **Has the imam ever held a workshop or event with you on maternal and child health?**

Not at all.

##### **I'm going to present a scenario to you: a married woman wakes up one morning and decides to practice birth spacing. Why do you think she made that decision?**

She did it to have time to get her health back. And so that her children will be spaced two or three years apart. At that pace, her health would improve because she'd get her strength back before becoming pregnant again.

In my opinion, she should talk to her husband about it before anything else. If he consents, she can use family planning. In the opposite case, the woman can't do it.

Because she's exhausted.

If she made the decision all of the sudden, it's because she's been confronted with a difficult situation linked to closely spaced pregnancies. And her husband continues to have sexual relations with her. She realizes that if she continues down this path, her health will deteriorate further.

**Before a couple makes a decision on maternal and child health, do you think they should be obligated to consult the imam?**

Yes. As the imam can't interfere in their married life, the couple should be able to ask for the imam's advice on whether certain acts are legal in Islam. If he tells you that there's a better path to follow, you're going to follow that path so you'll be at peace with your conscience and have your life spared here and in the afterlife.

**Have any of you ever spoken with your husband about how many children you'd like to have? Or discussed birth spacing?**

We've never talked about it because we're not in the habit.

Sometimes people are fearful of talking about it. The men won't accept it.

**Some people think that those who practice family planning will never have a child?**

That's right. That's actually what they believe.

For them, if a woman uses family planning, she's spoiled everything.

*Men: Group 1*

**What does Islam say about pregnancy and maternal and child health?**

I believe that all religions are against dying while bringing life into the world. I believe that, above all, health and well-being are essential. Women should have their reproductive abilities. And I believe all religions are like that. Because we've seen that the mortality rate is fairly high.

I've heard Islamic scholars say that birth spacing isn't forbidden in Islam. There's a divergence between religious schools. Some say they're against and others for. I believe that in today's world, our perceptions must evolve in line with the times.

Women must first be in good health before becoming pregnant. And they need to be at least 18 years old so that they'll have the strength for the delivery. This supports the mother, and the child won't have a lot of problems upon his birth either. After birth, religion asks us to space births three to four years.

**Have any of you seen complications during pregnancy? Your wife or a neighbor, for example?**

My wife was far along in her pregnancy. We ate breakfast together and I left her at home and went to the garden. They found me there to tell me that my wife was in the hospital. She was in good health when I left her. When I arrived at the hospital, the health worker told me I couldn't see her. The baby had died in her stomach before delivery. They gave me prescriptions and she delivered. But at the time, we weren't well informed. They didn't tell me the cause, and I didn't ask either. I don't know why it happened like that.

**Have the religious leaders ever addressed the topic of closely spaced pregnancies?**

They talked to us about it once at the mosque. It's not every day, but sometimes we meet. If there are problems, they call for a meeting to be held at the mosque. And they often work with health workers. They're raising awareness about birth spacing.

I went to talk to a marabout about it once, but he told me that births are a gift from God. It's God who guarantees food for these children and spacing shouldn't be practiced.

**Closely spaced pregnancies are a taboo subject?**

Women are ashamed to speak to their daughters and fathers are also ashamed to speak with their sons. That's why there are a lot of things that are done here, but it's because people don't know. It's mothers who can educate their daughters, just as it's fathers who can educate their sons.

**I'd like to present a scenario to you. A married woman decides on her own to practice birth spacing. In your opinion, what pushed her to do this?**

This can be linked to concerns about health or her professional activities. If she is a student in school and wants to pursue her studies... Or it could be linked to economic concerns if she knows that she can't support a lot of children. So she prefers to put a pause on pregnancies for a period of time.

**Is a woman required to speak with her husband before making a decision about birth spacing?**

If her husband refuses at first, she can attempt to persuade him with different arguments. But if she decides without consulting him, I'd conclude that she's having extramarital relations.

**Do you discuss with your wife or wives the number of children that you'd like to have?**

I made the decision with my wife. She told me that she'll stop at five kids. I told her that's not a problem. Before, I didn't understand. But today I understand because I'm evolving in my understanding of health.

I've discussed birth spacing with my wife. When we talked about it, she told me that for the moment, she's going to use family planning for two or three years and wait for me to see what happens with her health and our finances. We agreed and I took her to the hospital.

**What is the position of your community or of society on birth spacing?**

Society is evolving in the right direction. There's a certain level of awareness among people about the need to space births because it's a guarantee of health.

*Religious Leaders***Imam 1****In your opinion, how does Islam think about reproductive health?**

What used to be known in religion was for couples to have a child every four years. But today, people do as they wish.

**What did religion use in the past so that children were spaced out three to four years?**

At that time, couples were in the habit of breastfeeding their babies for three years. Even if that's barely mentioned in the holy books, it was a custom among our people.

**What period of time has our religion set for breastfeeding?**

Two years firm so that the child can be weaned. That's what sharia taught. After weaning at the end of two years of breastfeeding, women can become pregnant again.

**With respect to the methods offered in hospitals, can we say that nothing was said about them? Islam doesn't say if it's favorable to this practice or not?**

My opinion is that if the hospital helps the couple to space their pregnancies through this process with no harm to the couple or the child, I see no problem with it.

**If the Ministry of Health worked with you, the religious leaders, and you came to an agreement, what would your approach be to educating people?**

We'd organize workshops, but we don't have a lot of information on reproduction because it's a couple's business. You can't tell the head of the household that he should manage his household in such and such a way.

**Imam 2**

**What is the position of Islam on birth spacing?**

God didn't decree marriage to place a burden on people or weigh them down with difficulties. Even for those who aren't Muslim, God doesn't instruct anyone to carry a burden they can't handle. If a husband and his wife agreed together to do it, there's no problem. God says that if the couple consents for the child to be breastfed for at least two years, then they do it.

If a mother secretly goes to the hospital with the goal of spacing her pregnancies, but her husband didn't give his consent, Islamic law condemns this. Or if a husband retaliates against his wife and asks her to use family planning when she doesn't consent, sharia rejects this. Or a husband who washes his hands of his wife once she's pregnant. The husband goes about his daily activities while his wife suffers without medical care. Sharia condemns this type of treatment of women.

**Do you think that birth spacing can be a factor in the social welfare of a community?**

Let's say that you spend 1500 fCFA to feed three children and that you'll need 3000 fCFA to support six children. But you can only afford 1500 fCFA. You risk not being able to carry the burden if you want to double the number. From this perspective, birth spacing could be a relief for couples so that they can lead a life without constraints. If a couple firmly believes that God will ensure the livelihood of everyone who is born, to space or not won't have any effect on the couple.

**Do people ground themselves in religion when practicing birth spacing?**

For me personally, my wife once had an illness and she asked me to allow her to practice birth spacing until she got better. I allowed her to; she practiced it for five years. She's now healed and I give thanks to God. And she's still having children. Each person has intimate knowledge only of his own household.

**If we wanted people like you to participate more actively in workshops, what advice would you offer?**

It wouldn't be an easy thing at all to want to talk about it openly in public.

**Will people follow what you, the imams, say?**

They'll tend to follow their carnal desires. And you always see the damage where sexual libertinism is left to run free. The problem resides in the fact that people will act differently than what they're advised to do. I'm not sure, but I've heard that young, single girls go to the hospital to get medications so that they won't become pregnant. If you give a woman these medications, it's as if you were offering her the ability to freely have sexual relations outside the bonds of matrimony. Or maybe these young women want to continue their studies and use these medications to continue their work without the risk of becoming pregnant. This type of behavior is far from what sharia would consider a virtuous example.

**What can be done so that a couple unfamiliar with what religion advises on birth spacing becomes educated on family planning?**

By doing radio shows and going into communities to meet women to educate them. Because it's definitely women who suffer from it the most. And women must speak to their husbands about it in order to adopt birth spacing.

### Priest 1

#### **What is the Church's position on family planning?**

The Church's position is clear: natural planning that tracks cycles is needed. Methods like condoms can lead to disorder and infidelity in marriages. Likewise, modern methods are not 100 percent effective. We're already involved [in this area]. We have nuns who conduct prenatal visits with women and offer reproductive health services. Through programs for girls, we also provide sexual education that follows the Church doctrine.

### **Mbacké**

#### *Women: Group 1*

#### **What does religion say about pregnancies and maternal and child health?**

On family planning, the religious leader tells us that if a pregnancy is high-risk and could cause complications for a woman's health, you can use it. But if it's just to take a break and be free, however, religion forbids it.

Birth spacing is a good thing for women's health because it allows mothers to care for their children and themselves. This is necessary because if you aren't able to take care of yourself and your kids, you won't be able to take care of your husband properly.

It hasn't been long since I started using family planning. My husband refused at the beginning. Between my first and second child, there was no spacing. Even my twins resulted from closely spaced pregnancies. When I was weaning my twins, I didn't even know I was two months pregnant. Since I've started practicing family planning, I've felt better because of the spacing, thanks to my husband's agreement.

#### **Do any of you know someone who developed complications while pregnant?**

The doctor called in my husband to inform him that the structure of my placenta wasn't thick. And that I was going to stay there if I didn't avoid giving birth. But my husband told me to lend no credit to doctors and that it was out of the question to use family planning. I talked to his mother about it and she told me to follow my husband's order. I told her that it was out of the question and that God alone could run my life, not a baby. I then returned to the hospital and was advised to come back later during my period to be able to use family planning. I later got divorced.

I have a neighbor who often has complications when she's pregnant. She's even had two babies who have died after birth. One of the babies passed away at one month 13 days, and the other lived just a month. She said that a midwife had advised her to avoid multiple pregnancies or risk suffering painful consequences from them. Because she's not able to do anything when she gets pregnant. She's even ill right now. She used to use family planning, but she ended up stopping.

#### **What do you think of closely spaced pregnancies?**

Closely spaced pregnancies bring about many consequences. I saw a woman who had just delivered her first baby, and they told her to use family planning. But her husband was resistant to it. She then became pregnant again soon after, but the first baby who was weaned was very fatigued.

They say that if a woman starts out with closely spaced pregnancies, they'll stop after the third or fourth child. I believe these hypotheses to some extent because my older sister had four children in five years of marriage. But since then, she hasn't become pregnant and she hasn't used any form of family planning.

**Do you think that there are positive aspects of closely spaced pregnancies?**

I view it simply as something that's inevitable and required for all women. And family planning can't do anything about it.

**Does the religious leader in this village talk to you about maternal and child health?**

We've drawn inspiration from a religious leader known as Oustaz Alioune Sall. I heard him respond once to a question from women on this topic. He said that if a pregnancy carries risks for a woman, Islam allows you to avoid this risk. But Islam forbids it if there's no problem that justifies it.

**How can religious leaders participate in productive exchanges that benefit the health of the community?**

Every religious leader should, in principle, sit down with his followers to discuss the subject.

**I'm going to propose a situation to you. A married woman decides on her own to practice family planning. What could be her reasoning for it?**

Maybe she experienced pain and she wants to remedy the problem. Or she's not ready to have children. Or maybe she's even looking to have an extramarital affair unbeknownst to her husband.

Every woman would like to have a child and there's no one that dislikes that. If a woman decides to do it, it's because she's living with extreme pain. Or her health doesn't allow her to take care of her children. Women sometimes get to a point where they want to stop becoming pregnant because of the suffering they're experiencing.

**Who should she talk to about it before making a decision?**

You can get your parents' opinion on the subject. Your father can be left out of the conversation, but you should never hide these things from your mother.

Married women are under their husband's authority. Any woman who wants to use family planning should first discuss it with her husband, who is the head of household and, in principle, the supreme authority. If, however, he isn't in favor of it, at that point she can consult with her mother or another close relation about it.

I would talk to my husband about it to tell him what I planned to do. If he refused, I'd seek my mother-in-law's support because my mother is far away. If my mother-in-law expressed her disapproval, at that point I'd consult with a religious leader to get his advice.

**What should be the role of religious leaders in couples' decision-making on questions of maternal and child health?**

Whatever the issue is, you should discuss it with your husband and mother-in-law. Men know nothing. They always say that the goal of marriage is to have offspring. My husband tells me that he doesn't believe in these ideas of gender, like family planning. However, it's up to women to take their health into account if their husband refuses. They have the right to consult with a charismatic authority who can discuss it with the husband or, if need be, the mother-in-law.

**Have you ever talked to your husband about the number of children to have?**

We've discussed it time and time again. I told him I wished to have seven kids. He replied that it depended on God.

I once told my husband that I wanted to have five children. He said, "And if I wanted more than that?" I told I would add others. And he said, "And if God wanted you to stop there?" I replied that I would accept the divine will. He kept going: "The second wife would have the rest." I responded to him, "No, I'd prefer to have all the offspring myself." And he burst out laughing.

**Who's spoken to their husband about the need to space pregnancies?**

"Isn't family planning harmful for your health?" I replied to him that family planning isn't the only method of spacing. "And what other method do you know?" I told him that I had heard my mother talk about wearing a talisman before the invention of the method of family planning. My husband said that that method was the worst of all and that he would allow me to use family planning from that point forward.

I discussed it one time with my husband because of closely spaced pregnancies. After my last delivery, I let him know that I wanted to practice family planning. And that this time, I'd choose five years of spacing. He replied, "If you want, because giving birth is painful."

**How do people in your community perceive a woman who uses family planning?**

My neighbors think that anyone who practices family planning wants to stop their pregnancies. That I want to be free and have no children that I have to take care of. I leave everything in God's hands. People think that it's more about my laziness than a legitimate reason that might have pushed me to it. They don't think about the consequences of closely spaced pregnancies.

My family views it positively.

**What's your judgment on family planning?**

In my opinion, family planning is a good thing. Since I've used family planning, my mind is at peace. And I'm convinced that I won't become pregnant at the moment because I've fulfilled my responsibility and taken measures. Without family planning, though, I was always worried and stressed. And I was only at peace when I saw my period.

*Men: Group 1***Has a religious leader hosted a workshop on maternal and child health?**

Absolutely, that happens often. People must understand this topic even before getting married.

**I'm going to present a scenario to you. A married woman decides on her own to use a method to space her pregnancies. What do you think about that?**

Islam rejects family planning that's done for a dozen years. Or like some couples who only have two children in twenty years of marriage. That's not normal. If a woman is suffering from fragile health, it's authorized. But otherwise, Islam condemns it.

**What could have motivated her to make that decision?**

It's possible that she's had successive pregnancies and her husband doesn't take care of things properly. And if the children aren't well looked after due to a lack of means, she'll be required to find a way of easing the burden.

**Have any of you talked to your spouse about the number of children to have?**

Islam commands us to have children. The number of children should increase because that's what makes the religion live on. Wanting to stop at two children doesn't help propagate the religion. Islam calls upon men to marry women to spread the religion throughout the world.

**So you've never spoken with your husband about the number of children to have?**

Our religion forbids it because God doesn't really consult on what's predestined for his creation. If we take a wife, it's only to contribute to growing the Muslim population. He who recommended that you marry up to four wives did it with the sole intent of populating the earth. And he who marries a woman is motivated by the desire to have lots of children.

### **How does your community perceive the practice of birth spacing?**

What could lead a woman to practice spacing is if her husband does properly care for their offspring.

It's a practice reserved solely for women whose health is fragile. However, if women are in good health, it's a banned practice.

### **What do you think about a woman who uses family planning?**

If my wife was gone from home for five or six months while she was using this method, she could turn to libertinism. And religion forbids that. To be clear, religion only recommends family planning when a woman is having sexual relations with her husband. However, it's not permissible to do it while turning to sexual vagabondage.

## *Religious Leaders*

### *Imam 1*

#### **In your community, how would you go about educating the masses?**

We'd speak about it with the adult women who attend the mosque so they can advise their children about it. If the older women came, we would talk to them about Islam's position on it. They can then educate their daughters, who will talk to other women about it. And so on and so forth. The communication should come through the women because they're the ones that give birth and live with their daughters, daughters-in-law, and other neighbors. If it's transmitted well, good results will follow.

### *Imam 2*

#### **What is religion's position on birth spacing?**

According to Islam, anything that is constraining for a believer is prohibited for the person who uses it. As closely spaced pregnancies have negative impacts on women, it's better to space them. But if there's no constraint to justify it, it becomes a sin.

#### **How could birth spacing contribute to improving a household's standard of living?**

Health is essential there. If women have closely spaced pregnancies when the means can't support household expenses, it would be difficult. As good nutrition is essential to children's development so that they'll be in good health, couples can't allow themselves to increase the number of mouths to feed.

#### **Do people here consult with you before practicing birth spacing?**

We don't talk about this subject much, to tell the truth.

#### **Do you think that the State listens to religious leaders?**

No, the State doesn't listen to us.

#### **How can we support you to better educate communities on birth spacing?**

I'd need to consult with those more learned than myself on the topic of science to increase my knowledge on the subject. Even if we become involved in this program, I would try to dive deeper into my research with those most educated on religious matters.

## **Ranérou**

### *Women: Group 1*

#### **What does religion say about pregnancy and maternal and child health?**

If you consult [your husband] and he gives you authorization for it, you can practice family planning. But if you don't ask, religion forbids it.

Religion allows women whose pregnancies are closely spaced the possibility to practice family planning to have a break to recover their health.

**Have any of you seen a women develop complications during a pregnancy?**

I experience serious problems when I become pregnant. When I go to the hospital, the health worker forbids me from working. I keep myself calm and I do nothing. I would only move when I was about to deliver, by the grace of God, after being taken to the hospital. When I was pregnant with my last child, I stopped all activity until the ninth month. In the hospital, I gave birth, but I had a lot of difficulty and was really exhausted. They advised me to use family planning after delivery to recover my health, and I did.

**Have the religious leaders in your area held a workshop on maternal and child health?**

That's never happened.

**What should religious leaders do to support the community in improving maternal and child health?**

They should organize themselves into a community to increase awareness in such a way that the medical care is compatible with our religious practices. And the community will certainly follow. Rather than listen to someone who claims that family planning injections kill unborn babies. And that inspires fear. But if a religious leader decides to hold a workshop to promote women's health, the women will take measures to do it.

**I'm going to present a scenario to you. A married woman one day decides to get a birth spacing method. What could her motivations be?**

It's because the woman suffers enormously from successive pregnancies. So she went to get something that could help her save her life.

If pregnancies are spaced, women don't have the right to practice family planning. If not, they risk confrontation with their husband. Family planning is intended for women whose pregnancies are closely spaced. It negatively affects the health of the mother and child. However, if pregnancies are spaced, women should not use family planning unless they want to leave their husband.

She probably wants to fight with her husband.

She's disavowed her religion. Someone who one morning says that she wants to use family planning but whose pregnancies are spaced? There's no religion left in that case.

**Who should she talk to about it before acting?**

Women must consult their husbands; if the husband gives his approval, she'll do it. And if he refuses, she'll do it somehow because she's decided to use a method of birth spacing.

**Have any of you ever discussed family planning with your husband?**

I became pregnant when my baby was just six months. When I gave birth, the doctor informed me that my pregnancies were spaced closely together and that I needed to use family planning. I said that I would speak to my husband about it, but I couldn't do anything if he refused. The doctor replied that I risked facing serious complications in the future and having another unplanned baby. My husband gave me permission to use family planning, and I've used it since then.

**If you and your husband needed to make an important decision on your health or your children's, do you consult a religious leader to do so?**

Indeed, if you decide to use family planning and you seek your husband's prior consent but he refuses, you can seek the imam's advise on the matter. If the imam gives you a favorable answer, then you can go ahead and do it. If not, you have to change your decision.

**Why do you avoid speaking to religious leaders about family planning?**

Because they say that family planning consists of killing children who should be born. It's a sin. That's why we don't want our marabouts to know and we do it in hiding.

**You hide it?**

We hide it because our mothers-in-law don't accept it. Only our husbands support us, knowing that closely spaced pregnancies are harmful to the wife's health.

It's the same for everyone. When you decide to use family planning, you hide it. You slide your health record booklet into your pocket and wait for your husband to leave the house before making your way to the hospital.

**So you don't make decisions with your husband?**

We're not that brave. They forbid us from doing it if they're aware. It's difficult to have a bunch of children when you're a young woman. Over time, taking care of the children becomes overwhelming for women; they won't be well nourished and won't even have shoes to wear.

**Are there many women who secretly use family planning without their husband knowing?**

There are more who use it secretly than those whose husbands have given their permission. Because not everyone accepts that his wife is using family planning. I often developed complications when I was pregnant, but my husband always refused. As he worked at the hospital, the doctors told him, "Your wife is small. She'll face difficulties later on. Better that she uses family planning." But I didn't do it. God has made it so that things are going better now.

**You say that the figures of women who use family planning don't look like those of women who don't. What's the difference?**

The difference resides in the fact that women who turn their backs to family planning are permanently sickly and vulnerable to every little illness. However, those who go two, three, or four years without becoming pregnant again will be healthy and have a more fulfilling life.

**So the community views family planning positively?**

People really admire you when you look radiant. Even if you don't really use family planning, women will say that you use family planning. And having seen the splendor of their neighbors, others will hurry to go do it so that their bodies thrive, even if their husbands are against.

*Men: Group 1*

**What does religion say about closely spaced pregnancies and maternal and child health?**

Religion urges women whose pregnancies are closely spaced to get hold of a capable person who can help them to find a birth spacing method.

**Have any of your wives suffered during their pregnancy?**

My wife. When she had complications during her pregnancy, I took her to the health center in a cart. Once there, I found a doctor who monitored her until she delivered.

**What was your attitude during that time?**

I sold some of my belongings to cover all the medical expenses, the doctor gave her assistance, and she got through it well.

**What attitude should religious leaders adopt to contribute to maternal and child health?**

Refuse to give girls away in marriage at an early age.

If they want to help women, they need to urge them to use family planning, even if it doesn't exist at all in religion.

**I'm going to present you with a scenario: a married woman just decides one day to use a method of birth spacing. What could have motivated her to do this?**

That woman felt exhausted. That's why she'd like a solution to ease her suffering, whether it's from a marabout or a doctor.

The woman in question is exhausted because of back-to-back pregnancies, her blood volume is down, and she'll show signs of aging very early. She needs to find a way to remedy it by spacing her pregnancies by at least two or three years. And to go off family planning if she'd like to become pregnant again. Even that also requires the couple to discuss it so that the husband can advise his wife to go to the doctor to observe a rest period.

**Who do you think this woman should have spoken to before making the decision to use a birth spacing method?**

She should have talked to her husband about it first; if he refused, she could consult the imam for his opinion. If she doesn't get a satisfactory answer there, she can use planning on her own at that point.

**Have you ever seen an important decision on maternal and child health made with a religious leader's input?**

The imam discusses with the women. He urges the young women to get vaccinated at the health center and take their medications. And to give birth in health facilities. And to get a birth certificate for the child after birth. The imam is in the habit of talking about these subjects.

**Who has already spoken with their spouse about the number of children to have?**

We've never discussed it because no one knows the number of children they'll have. You can marry a woman and have children right away. You can also have a wife until you get old and marry another one before having children. So wanting to decree the number of children is a mistake and no one can know it.

**What do you think of women who use the method of family planning?**

All I know is that they tend to gain weight.

Rumor has it that it's not good.

Religion rejects this practice because a marabout or saint could have been born, but this possibility was drowned by family planning. That's what accounts for the illegality of it.

*Religious Leaders*

*Imam 1*

**What does Islam advise doing with regards to birth spacing?**

Islam teaches followers to avoid anything that will drastically affect the health of an individual. I don't have the proper knowledge to speak out about how God or the Prophet said to space pregnancies.

**In your opinion, what should be done to engage you more in this area?**

I can't understand the pertinence of getting involved in a cause you don't know the ins and outs of. It's up to doctors who are experts on this and Ministry employees to clearly explain this to us so that we can easily understand and add our contributions on this.

**Imam 2**

**If a woman experiences closely spaced pregnancies, does religion give her the right to speak with her husband to get his favorable opinion before using a planning method?**

Women have the right to ask for their husband's understanding when they're plagued by successive pregnancies and want to practice family planning. It's like doing C-sections for deliveries, which has become routine. She can say to her husband, "Since we already have two children and C-sections are risky procedures, I would like you to grant me permission to close my uterus." My daughter underwent that operation. When I suggested it to the doctor, he told me, "No, no. That's not your role. That's her husband's responsibility." And it's her husband who must give that order.

**Do all religious leaders share the same opinion about what you just said?**

It's my own opinion because it falls within sharia. If a woman is prone to closely spaced pregnancies, she can speak to her husband about it in order to use family planning. However, if she's only able to deliver via C-section, she has the right to consult her husband about putting a stop to becoming pregnant out of concerns about having complications that can't be resolved.

**In terms of religion, what could be an obstacle to supporting a birth spacing program?**

We can't defend the idea of drowning children.

**I'm speaking about birth spacing, not abortion.**

Family planning seems to want to restrict childbirth, doesn't it?

**Who is the person that your community has the most confidence in?**

Only people I have a strong relationship with will listen to me. The others don't care at all.

*Established in July 2014, the Cadre des Religieux pour la Santé et le Développement (CRSD) is an interfaith association that brings together the different religious families, Islamic associations, and the Catholic and Lutheran churches of Senegal. Since 2014, CRSD has worked with Senegal's Ministry of Health and Social Action to improve maternal and child health throughout the country. CRSD aims to encourage dialogue and cooperation among Senegal's religious communities to advance development; improve maternal and child health; protect and support vulnerable populations; and promote social cohesion and peace.*

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