

GCC/SLaB Nigeria scholars share experiences with the Gates Foundation supported global partners at the 3rd Annual International Muslim Religious Leaders Forum on Primary Health Care

Venue: Tahir Guest Palace, Kano, Nigeria

Date: 18th – 21st December 2015

3rd Annual International Conference on Muslim Religious Leaders Forum on Primary Health Care

Eight scholars of the Grand Challenges Canada (GCC) attended the third Annual International Conference of Muslim Religious Leaders Forum on Primary Health Care. The Muslims Religious Leaders



Forum on Primary Health Care, is chaired by His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto. The Forum was formed in 2013 in Abu Dhabi, UAE to address health related misconceptions in Northern Nigeria. The Forum aims to sensitize the general public on health issues in Northern Nigeria and brings together Muslim scholars from all orthodox sects in Northern Nigeria (Tijjaniyya, Qadiriyya, Izala etc). The Forum had, in the past, convened meetings that sensitized Muslim Scholars about polio, routine immunization and other health related issues around which there was a need create awareness.

The gathering, of 18th to 21st December in Kano, Nigeria was chaired by the representative of His Eminence, the Sultan - '*Sarkin Kafin Argungun*'¹ The theme of the gathering was 'Girls and Women Education as Instrument for Improving Maternal and Child Health'. The meeting highlighted misconceptions associated with the status of girls and women and explored the strategy of education for reducing maternal mortality and morbidity. The Chairman of the occasion, *Sarkin Kafin Argugun*, set the tone of the meeting by noting that the collaboration between traditional leaders and Muslim Scholars is the most significant factors to occur in addressing maternal health in Northern Nigeria.

Global Partners at the International Conference

The conference was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation through a grant to Sunnah Global Media Services. Present at the Conference was the Nigeria Country Manager of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Dr Mairo Mandara who made a presentation and set the tone for the conference. Also in attendance were the executive members of the International Interfaith Peace Corps (IIPC). The IIPC is a non-profit devoted to safeguarding the sanctity and dignity of human life and facilitating the actualization of its fullest potential, by employing religious diplomacy and working with religious and traditional leaders in various communities. IIPC began full operations in 2014 with funding from the Bill and Malinda Gates Foundation to organize a Vaccine Summit in Dakar, Senegal, for influential Muslim religious leaders in Sub-Saharan African to address mistrust, misconceptions, misinformation and the general lack of awareness

¹ Emir of Argungu is first class emir

of vaccines with a view to minimize or possibly eliminate religious-based and other forms of resistance to administering vaccines in the region. IIPC's mission is to "Facilitate Coexistence" globally by promoting and rewarding collaborative interfaith work. IIPC has its headquarters on Herndon, Virginia 20170, USA. Sunnah Global Media Ltd. is a grant recipient of the Gates Foundation under the Global Policy, Advocacy and Country Programs funding stream².

GCC- SLaB Nigerian Scholars presentations at the Conference

GCC/SLaB scholars at the Conference contributed to plenary discussions where they shared experiences of their work training health providers at point of care on the correct Islamic position on Maternal, Neonatal and Child health. In their contributions the GCC/SLaB scholars endorsed the theme of the International Conference by arguing for education as a strategy for keeping girls in schools and training them to be health workers.



Dr. Mashi presenting the Training Manual on the Islamic Precepts on MNCH

Expeirence sharing of the GCC/SLaB Project

Dr. Mashi, one of the GCC/SLaB Nigerian scholars also made a presentation to the general house elaborating the work that dRPC GCC/SLaB Scholars are doing in Katsina state around building the capacity of Health Care Providers on Islamic Misconceptions in MNCH services. He also told the history of the GCC/SLaB project, explaining how they were supported by dRPC/GCC for a study tour to Egypt in order to interact with other internationally renowned Scholars of the Al-Azhar University, Muslim Scholars based in Al-Azahr University, Muslim Health care providers and Medical doctors in Egypt. He explained the selection of Egypt in terms of fact that uptake of MNCH services were high, non-compliance was low and misconceptions of health practices permitted or not permitted in Islam was relatively low compared to Nigeria.

Dr. Mashi also informed the gathering that based on the training they underwent, the Scholars on their own decided to form an Organisation, which is a network of Scholars from different sects who went on this training. This organisation is called Muslin Scholars Network for Development (MNSD) and has already started implementing activities within the state.

GCC/SLaB scholars as a progressive voice at the Conference

In response to a leading paper by Professor Hadiza Galadanchi on the Nigerian situation pertaining Girl child education and the health participants questioned the accuracy of statistics she presented on maternal mortality and morbidity in the North. Shiek Nassurideen Adam Funtua of the GCC/SLaB program supported Professor Galadanchi's findings by stating

that the reality is even worse than official statistics. He then told the participants that while the Scholars of the GCC/SLaB were going about doing their trainings for Health workers, they discovered that in all the Facilities visited there saw a lot of female health workers. But on further inquiry it was found out that these women are either CHEWs, JCHEWs or just volunteers without adequate education but committed to help. He noted without female Nurses and Midwives maternal mortality is set to increase in Northern Nigeria. He went on to complain that most of the parents in the rural areas and even some urban areas are still not taking their girls to school. Sometimes it is out of ignorance and sometimes they claim poverty. He gave an example of a man who took his wife to a Hospital in Katsina.



Gidado Magaji Zandam One of the dRPC GCC Scholars Presenting the Workplan developed by them to the Northern Nigeria Muslim Leaders forum

The man insisted that his wife should not be attended to by any Male officer and the woman was in a critical condition. He still insisted even when a male doctor arrived, so the female nurses had to explain to him that her condition can only be treated by a doctor and not a nurse, as there were no female doctors available. After much persuasion he agreed and the doctor treated her and she was saved. The doctor then asked him whether he has Children and he said yes he has four. The doctor then asked him if they are in school or not and he said no they are not in school and the three are married while the fourth one is at home. The doctor now wanted to know from him if people like him do not send their girls to school where will he get a female doctor to check his wife. The man was so ashamed that he immediately came and told him this story.



GCC/SLaB scholars disseminate Manual and Toolkit on Questions & Answers for Health Providers in MNCH

In addition the GCC/SLaB scholars disseminated key project documents to the forum for feedback and pre-testing from the audience. The documents produced are as follows:-

- a. A training manual for Muslim Opinion Leaders (MOLs) towards building the capacity of Health Providers in reducing Islamic Misconceptions.
- b. The training Manual has been abridged into a smaller manual and this has been translated into Hausa Language also.

- c. A question and answer booklet has also been developed just to take care of Frequently asked Questions when the people come to facilities and the kinds of Misconceptions Identified. This document has also been translated into the Hausa Language

Dr,Mashi then presented the documents to the Organizers of this meeting informing them on the need to look at the document and make use of it in the region. He went on to say that this document is a very good document and it is the contribution of the dRPC/GCC SL@B project's contribution to Health care especially MNCH. These documents were developed to guide other scholars in rolling out trainings for health providers in facilities.

Dr. Mashi also presented copies of the documents to His Royal Highness the Sultan of Sokoto who is the Foremost Muslim Leader in Nigeria for it to be reprinted and distributed to others sects and Big Scholars who are not here. He then urged the participants to fill-in the questionnaire circulated to the forum to give feedback on the documents either in writing here or by mail to the dRPC/GCC SL@B team for the improvement of the manual.



Sheik Ishaq Nuhu from Katsina Making a presentation or clarification on the documents submitted for further distribution.

Dr Azeez Mashi the Leader of the dRPC/GCC SL@B Scholars in Katsina Presenting Documents to the Rep. of the HRH Sultan of Sokoto and other distinguish Personalities at the Northern Muslim Leaders Forum

GCC/SLaB scholars developed 1-year work-plan to support girls education for the reduction of maternal mortality and morbidity

Participants carried out group work to develop 1-year work-plans for supporting girls' education to encourage girls to stay in schools and develop a core of community level maternal health female providers. The dRPC scholars were encouraged to also develop their own and present it to the general house. It should have a timeline of one year. The organizers informed that these work-plans will be collected to be monitored and at the end of one year another program like this will be organized to determine the level of success. No, funding was provided for work-plan implementation.

Conference conclusions

The conference concluded with the participants being informed of the date for the 4th Annual International Conference to monitor progress of work-plans.

GCC/SLaB scholars identified key activities such as advocacy to policy makers, networking and community based data collection on attitudes to male providers in their work-plans, which they incorporated into the GCC/SLaB project.

APPENDIX TWO:- PHOTO GALLERY



Figure 1:- Dr Mairo Mandara Country Rep of BMGF Making a presentation during the Opening Ceremony



Figure 2The hairman Of the Forum Meeting Sarkin Kebbin Argungu Representing the Sultan Interacting with the female dRPC/GCC SL@B scholars and others on the problems of Female Health workers in Katsina state

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Figure 4:- Group Picture of dRPC/GCC SL@B team, Scholars and Imam Magid of IIPC.



Figure 3:- Group Picture of dRPC/GCC SL@B Scholars at the Forum of Northern Muslim Leaders Forum in Kano

