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SENEGAL

SNAPSHOT

A Unique Family Planning Ambassador

USAID helps religious leaders convey positive messages on family planning



Imam Kane in Thiamène Santie delivering messages on family planning and Islam.

Photo: Hawa Talla – IntraHealth

“Islam is not against family planning” says Imam Mouhamadou Kane, as he presents specific messages to the community to prove his point.

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With a voice full of confidence, Imam Mouhamadou Takhiyou Kane shares his message with a captivated audience. Like a Master of Ceremonies, he knowingly cites passages from the Quran that provide evidence that “Islam is not against family planning.”

Some critics, however, do not hesitate to use religion as the main basis for their arguments against family planning (FP). It is this continued negative view of FP which led USAID to seek contributions and guidance from Islamic teachers and religious leaders to develop and disseminate key messages and arguments that are based on passages from the Quran.

Since his attendance at a national workshop on Islam and FP sponsored by USAID, Imam Kane has been provided with an interpretation of the verses pertaining to and in favor of FP. The workshop was held in Thiès, just outside of Dakar, in 2008. Equipped with alternative perspectives, understanding, and evidence from the Quran, he works in Kaolack, a town in the center of Senegal, to convince people that these services can have a place in the lives of Muslims.

“Before, I was aware that Islam was not specifically against FP, but I did not know if the arguments were solid and precise enough for me to engage in a real public debate around the topic,” Imam Kane says. However, he discovered the appropriate religious justifications to resolve this issue for himself.

Imam Kane considers that his mission is to act as a religious guide to his students and congregation. “We, as Imams, have the duty to spread the truth about Islam and not allow those who have twisted Islamic teachings about FP to say that Islam is against it,” he explains.

Imam Kane has held several workshops and meetings with support from USAID to engage other Imams to join his mission. He believes the power of a “single sermon” can make a difference.

“Only Imams have the opportunity to speak to a large number of men every Friday at the Mosque and during important religious holidays,” says this true champion of family planning.