

Introduction

The rights of Muslim women to attain a high standard of sexual and reproductive health, make their own decisions regarding marriage, motherhood, contraception and sexuality free of coercion, and to end discrimination and violence are encompassed by the basic principles of Shari'ah. Yet, Muslim women the world over lack the power to express views on sexual relations, child bearing, contraception and other areas of reproductive and sexual health. Muslim women must be able to claim control over these issues as they have a direct impact on the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of women, and consequently on the entire family.

Deaths due to pregnancy and childbirth (maternal mortality) remain high, access to safe and legal termination of pregnancies is limited, family planning and contraceptive use is low, and safe, consensual and satisfactory sexual relations continue to elude most women. In addition, domestic violence and sexual coercion contribute to health problems such as the risk of miscarriage and the contraction of STDs and HIV/AIDS.

While it is true that most of these problems are common to women from all walks of society, Muslim women are often observed to be further hindered in their quest for claiming rights over their own bodies and their sexuality by alleged religious dictate. Serious discussions on the reproductive and sexual rights of Muslim women are rare and these issues have seldom been analysed within the framework of religion by progressive Muslim scholars, or dealt with in the context of the local situation in Asia.

It was in order to address these concerns that Sisters in Islam organised a Southeast Asian workshop on Islam, Reproductive Health and Women's Rights in 1998. The timing of the workshop was occasioned by the concern that the caveat respecting cultural relativity in the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 might reinforce the areas of constraints in the matter of reproductive health and right, and marriage and family in Muslim communities. The goal of the workshop was to put forth progressive understandings of Islamic teachings on reproductive health and women's rights through an exchange of perspectives, analyses and experiences of scholars and activists working in the area.

Forty-three participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Egypt, Pakistan and the USA attended the four-day workshop. They included five international Islamic scholars, activists in the areas of women's health and women's rights in Islam, Shari'ah lawyers and policy makers. A report of proceedings of the workshop was published in 1999 and a book comprising the papers presented was published in 2000*.

This Question and Answer booklet is the third publication that resulted from the workshop. In this booklet, we hope to provide answers to deal with everyday questions regarding the Islamic standpoint on issues relating to reproductive health and rights, sexuality, family planning and the use of contraception. We hope the booklet will be particularly useful to health and family planning service providers and to women and men interested in the issues of reproductive health and women's rights.

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Sisters in Islam
Kelantan Family Planning Association
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Islam and Family Planning

1. Is there any verse in the Qur'an which forbids family planning?

No. There is no verse in the Qur'an forbidding family planning. The silence of the Qur'an on the issue of family planning has been interpreted by many ulama to mean that the Qur'an does not prohibit its practice.

The former Mufti of Egypt and Grand Imam of al-Azhar University, Sheikh Jadel Haq Ali Jadel Haq, issued a fatwa in 1979 and 1980 in which he stated:

"A thorough review of the Qur'an reveals no text (nas) prohibiting the prevention of pregnancy or diminution of the number of children, but there are several traditions of the Prophet that indicate its permissibility."¹

It is, therefore, fair to conclude Islam allows the use of contraception to space the number of children in a family or to limit their number according to the physical, economic or cultural abilities of the family.

The late Dr Abdel Rahim Omran, who was the Chief Population Adviser to al-Azhar University, conducted an in-depth study of family planning in the legacy of Islam which was completed in 1991. He studied the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet *saw* and gathered 14 centuries of views on family formation and planning from leading Islamic theologians and jurists.² Based on a comprehensive survey of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) texts over 14 centuries, Dr Omran concluded that the majority of theologians (*al-jumhour*) had the opinion that contraception is permissible with the consent of the wife (or husband in case of female method).

2. Was any form of birth control practised during the time of the Prophet Muhammad *saw*?

There are some 32 authenticated hadith concerning the practice of *al-azl* (withdrawal, coitus interruptus) as a contraceptive measure used by the Muslims at the time of the Prophet *saw* and also by some of the Companions. This method of preventing pregnancy was repeatedly mentioned to the Prophet *saw* and he did not prohibit it.

One hadith states that:

"We [the Companions of the Prophet saw] used to practise al-azl during the time of the Prophet saw while the Qur'an was being revealed." (Authenticated by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja and Ibn Hanbal.)

Another hadith states that:

"We used to practise al-azl during the time of the Prophet saw. The Prophet saw came to know about it, but did not forbid us [doing it]." (Authenticated by Muslim)

3. What is the significance of this hadith?

Revelations correcting or banning popular practices of the time were something that the Companions of the Prophet *saw* were used to. For example, verses were revealed that at first

discouraged gambling and drinking alcohol, and then eventually prohibited the acts. The fact that no verse was revealed to ban the practice of *al-azl* as a form of contraception at a time when the Companions and Muslims of Medina were practising it meant that Allah *swt* permitted the practice.

The fact that the Companions sanctioned and some actually practised *al-azl* -- with the Prophet's *saw* knowledge and approval -- is considered by the majority of theologians as confirmation of the permissibility of *al- azl*.

4. If *al-azl* was permitted to prevent pregnancy, what is the Islamic position on other forms of contraception?

By analogical reasoning (Islamic jurisprudential tool of *qiyas*, which is the extension of a Shari'ah ruling from an original case to a new case), the ulama have concluded that alternative methods of contraception can be allowed as long as the purpose is to prevent pregnancy.

Therefore, modern day types of contraception -- including barrier methods like diaphragm and condom, spermicide, pills, injectables and IUDs (intrauterine devices) -- are allowed. Also allowed are the traditional natural methods of rhythm, basal body temperature, and controlling cervical mucus.

Proponents of family planning amongst the ulama state that any form of contraception that does not permanently destroy the ability to procreate is permissible. Modern methods of contraception are considered better than *al-azl* because they are safe and effective and allow normal and complete marital sexual relations.

5. Does this mean that I can take the pill as a form of contraception?

Yes. It is not a sin to practice family planning by taking the contraceptive pill. The pill works by preventing ovulation and thickening the cervical mucus, thus making it difficult for the sperm to enter the uterus. The pill makes sure that there is no meeting of the egg and the sperm at all. In fact, not only does no fertilisation take place, the issue of killing either the sperm or the egg also does not arise as the pill ensures that there is no production of an egg and that the sperm does not even enter the uterus. No fertilisation takes place.

6. What are the ingredients in the contraceptive pill?

The contraceptive pill contains one or two artificial hormones, similar to the hormones produced by the body at the time of pregnancy. The artificial hormone is a chemical product. It does not contain any animal by-products. The ingredients in the contraceptive pill have all been certified by the Drug Control Authority of the Malaysian Ministry of Health.

7. Does Islam allow the use of the Intrauterine Device (IUD)?

The use of an IUD is permissible. Any form of family planning method that prevents pregnancy and blocks fertilisation between the egg and the sperm is not forbidden in Islam, based on the explanation in question 4. The IUD method is also a temporary method of contraception which does not permanently destroy a person's ability to procreate.

While the exact working of the mechanism still remains unclear, the IUD does not prevent

ovulation. Research shows that the IUD can prevent fertilisation by quickening the movement of the egg in the fallopian tubes and therefore preventing it from meeting the sperm. It can also change the uterine wall and affects its ability to receive the egg, as well as impede the movement of the sperm through the uterus and fallopian tubes.

8. What is the Islamic ruling in the case of a woman who dies with the IUD in her body? Should the IUD be taken out?

The IUD is made of plastic and copper and does not contain any medicine or forbidden ingredients. When a woman dies, her IUD does not have to be taken out of her body, just as an artificial bone or pacemaker need not be removed from the body of a Muslim at the time of death.

9. If my husband wears the condom, does this mean that we are killing an embryo?

The condom acts by collecting the semen that is ejaculated at the time of intercourse. The sperm is not an embryo. Only by fertilisation with the egg can an embryo be formed. The semen does not enter the vagina and therefore fertilisation does not take place and no embryo is formed. The issue, therefore, of killing an embryo does not arise.

10. Is it true that it is a sin to use the condom because the semen is thrown away?

This is not true. Prophet Muhammad *saw* himself permitted the ummah to practice family planning by using the withdrawal method, in which the semen is ejaculated outside the vagina.

11. Why is there a misconception that Islam forbids contraception?

This misconception is propagated by some ulama globally who have taken certain verses in the Qur'an to indirectly imply prohibition on the following grounds:

- family planning is like infanticide or *wa'd* which is prohibited;
- family planning contradicts predestination (*qadar*) and reliance on Allah *swt* (*tawakkal*);
- family planning denies the ability of Allah *swt* to provide for any number of children (*rezeki*);
- family planning is against the call for multitude (*kathrah*).

Due to such teachings, some Muslims, men and women, believe that Islam forbids contraception. We will show that these ideas are not substantiated in the Qur'an.

12. Is contraception equivalent to infanticide?

Those who oppose family planning argue that any practice that prevents pregnancy is infanticide. They quote several Qur'anic verses which prohibit infanticide such as *Surah al-An'am 6:140, 6:151, Surah al-Isra' 17:31, Surah al-Mumtahinah 60:12, Surah al-Takwir 81:8-9*, to justify why contraception is not allowed in Islam.

Preventing pregnancy is not infanticide. Infanticide occurs when a live child, already born into this world, is slain, buried alive, or abandoned. These were common practices, especially with the girl child, during the time of *Jahilliyah*. Allah *swt* abhorred such practices and the above verses were revealed explicitly prohibiting infanticide and declaring it a great sin.

Contraception prevents fertilisation. This means an embryo is not formed, and there is no

question of it going through the stages of becoming a foetus and being brought into this world as a child. The prevention of fertilisation cannot therefore be considered infanticide.

Infanticide also occurs when a fully formed foetus (medically, this is defined as three-months-old) is aborted. Proponents of family planning cite Imam Ali who, in the presence of Caliph Omar and other Companions maintained that infanticide could only apply once the foetus reached the seventh stage of creation, i.e. the stage of being "another creature" (*khalqan 'aakhar*). He based his opinion on the verses in *Surah al-Mu'minoun*, 23:12-14 which explain the stages of creation:

Man We did create from a quintessence [of clay]; Then We placed him as [a drop of] sperm (nutfa) in a place of rest firmly fixed; Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood (alaqa); Then of that clot We made a [foetus] lump (mudgha); Then we made out of that lump bones; And clothed the bones with flesh; Then we developed of it another creature (khalqan' aakhar); Blessed be Allah swt , the best to create.

13. Can the use of contraception be regarded as opposing the concept of predestination (*qadar*), reliance on Allah swt (*tawakkal*) and the belief that Allah swt will provide for everything?

All Muslims believe in *qadar* and *tawakkal*. Ulama who support the use of contraception see its use as only a means to space out one's children. The result of the use of contraception is still in the hands of Allah swt. Contraception can succeed or fail, as Allah swt wills.

Islam does not encourage helplessness or idleness stemming from the belief that Allah swt will provide for human beings regardless of their own efforts. Such an attitude would prevent the ummah from progress as well as benefiting from human and technological advances. To deepen rivers, to build dams and retaining walls to control flood waters – none of these acts constitute a denial of Allah's swt will or reliance on Allah swt. *Surah al-Imran*, 3:159 states:

"And when you have made a decision, rely on Allah swt [for achieving your objective]".

This means one is expected to use one's wisdom to take the initiative to achieve one's objectives, and only after that to rely on Allah swt . Caliph Omar explained this verse to mean that,

"Reliance on Allah swt means to plant the seed in the earth, then trust in Allah swt [for a good crop]."

In another hadith a man who came to pray in the mosque asked the Prophet saw whether to tie his camel or just put his trust in Allah swt, the Prophet saw replied,

"Hobble her and rely on Allah swt ". (Authenticated by al-Tirmidhi)

In other words, the Muslim is supposed to take the initiative first, and thereafter rely on Allah.

14. Does Islam advocate the ummah to have many children?

Those who oppose family planning proclaim that Islam ordains that the Muslim ummah procreates multitudes (*kathrah*) and that failure to do so is a deviation from the right path. They quote a popular hadith which states:

"Marry and multiply, for I shall make a display of you before other nations on the Day of Judgement." (Authenticated by Ibn Mardaweih with narration considered weak by al-Iraqi)

According to Dr Omran, however, the word "multiply" in the hadith is open to differing interpretations. It could mean marry and procreate, have children, but not necessarily so many that this becomes a burden to the family and society.

Others have argued that while people usually hope to have children in marriage, this wish is not always fulfilled. This can be due to infertility, genetic illness, or a child's death. If the purpose of marriage is to have children, should all marriages that fail to produce children be dissolved? Should men and women who are infertile be prevented from marrying even though the inability to have children is not due to their intent? In fact, in Islam no one may be asked to carry a burden which is beyond their own capacity to handle (*Surah al-Baqarah, 2:286*).

Opponents of family planning also claim that family planning is a Western conspiracy to reduce the number of Muslims and diminish their power. Proponents of family planning, however, believe that the future of today's Muslims has more to do with the quality of the ummah, its strength and progress, the ability to compete globally, and its piety and solidarity rather than mere quantity of people.

15. Can the use of contraception be justified for other reasons?

In his research, Dr Omran compiled a list of 10 justifications acceptable to Muslim jurists:

- to avoid health risks to a suckling child from the "changed" milk of a pregnant woman;
- to avoid health risks, mental and physical, to the mother from repeated pregnancies and pregnancies at short intervals or young age;
- to avoid pregnancy in an already sick wife;
- to avoid transmission of disease to the progeny from affected parents;
- to preserve a wife's beauty and physical fitness, for the continued enjoyment of her husband and a happier marital life, and to keep the husband faithful;
- to avoid the economic hardships of caring for a large family which might compel parents to resort to illegal means to take care of many children; or exhaust themselves in earning a living;
- to allow for the education, proper upbringing and religious training of children which is more feasible with a small rather than a large family size;
- to avoid the danger of their children being converted from Islam in enemy territory;
- to avoid having children in times of religious decline;
- to provide separate sleeping arrangements for children, a practice that is more feasible with fewer children.

In 1988, Dr Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, then Mufti of Egypt (currently the Grand Imam of al-Azhar University), issued a progressive fatwa which sanctioned family planning for economic,

cultural or health reasons. He also approved contraception for demographic reasons. According to this fatwa it is justified for a rich couple with three children to use contraception not because they cannot afford more children, but because of the larger national interest to control population growth in the country in which they live.

16. What are the unacceptable reasons?

According to Dr Omran, they are:

- to avoid bearing female children;
- to avoid pregnancy out of resenting the parental role.

17. Is there any fatwa on the use of contraception in Malaysia?

The Malaysian National Fatwa Council in 1981 issued a fatwa permitting contraception under the following conditions:

- the wife is too weak or ill;
- the husband or the wife carries a hereditary illness;
- a pregnancy would endanger the life of the mother;
- the wife has pregnancies too frequently;
- the husband and the wife decide to space the children for reasons of health, education, and family happiness.

18. Should the use of contraception be a shared responsibility of a wife and husband?

It is best that any major decisions in the family are made with mutual consultation and consent between the husband and the wife. Since *al-azl* was the common form of contraception in the early years of Islam, the juristic opinion was that it was permissible for men to use the withdrawal method, but with the consent of the wife as her pleasure would be affected.

Today, very few men take responsibility for contraception. Currently, there are only three family planning methods for men (condom, withdrawal and vasectomy), while many exist for women. The burden of contraception usually falls on the woman.

Sometimes the concept of mutual consultation and consent may pose a problem when a conflict arises between the husband and wife, and especially in situations when the wife is regarded as unequal to her husband. In these circumstances it is likely that the husband's wishes will be the dominant factor in deciding whether or not to use contraception, which method of contraception to use, or who should be responsible for contraception.

This of course violates the concept of mutual consultation and consent in Islam.

19. Is it a woman's right to make a decision that is in her best interest and the best interest of the family when she fails to obtain consent from her spouse, even after consultation?

According to Dr Omran and other Islamic scholars, in cases of necessity, exceptions to the rule of consent and consultation can be made. ³

One justification for such an exception could be for reasons of health or welfare of the woman and/or the children. It was pointed out that the Hanbali school also holds the position that a

wife can bypass consent of the husband in extraordinary situations, for example, for the welfare of the family. Thus, if having another child will adversely affect the woman's mental or physical well-being or the family's ability to provide adequately for the children, then a woman has the right to use contraception without the consent of the husband.

Clearly, it is the woman who will get pregnant and bear the children. It is she who will be primarily responsible for and most burdened by the upbringing of the children, as most men still do not share equally the daily responsibility of childcare and housework. It would be logical, therefore, to assume that there would be cases where the woman should have the right to make such a decision if she and her spouse could not reach mutual agreement.

20. What do women themselves think and do?

In 1992, the International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRRAG) undertook a major international research project on grassroots women and their sense of entitlement or self-determination in everyday decisions about childbearing, work, marriage, fertility control and sexual relations.

The study on Malaysia revealed that Malaysian women showed a strong sense of entitlement, a consciousness of their right or authority to make decisions regarding fertility. Most of the 71 women interviewed in the study decided to limit their childbearing through contraception, sterilisation or abortion. More often than not they decided on their own, without the knowledge or consent of their husbands.

It was found that they based this decision on the fact that as mothers, they were the ones primarily responsible for and most burdened by the upbringing of the children. This resolve cuts across ethnicity and religion and was reflected in the six other countries in the study, Egypt, Nigeria, Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines and the United States.

The hundreds of women interviewed rationalised that God is forgiving and was sure to understand the compelling grounds for the use of contraception; for the refusal of unwanted sex with their husbands; and, in some unavoidable circumstances, for their resorting to abortion. Thus, even though religious beliefs, as well as the teachings of the ulama may prescribe otherwise, the women in the study had developed a practical morality based on their own bodily suffering and their strong sense of social responsibility for their children and families.

21. Is sterilisation allowed in Islam?

Sterilisation was unknown during the time of the Prophet *saw*. Contemporary theologians have virtually no guidance from the usual sources of jurisprudence. Nevertheless, the majority of theologians prohibit permanent sterilisation because they liken it to castration and therefore a change in Allah's *swt* creation.

But Dr Omran and other Islamic scholars point out that vasectomy or tubal ligation do not impair the man or the woman's hormonal functions. Neither do these methods of sterilisation affect the man or the woman's sexual desire or ability to have normal sex. Therefore, they argue, sterilisation cannot be equated to castration, which is the removal of the testicles, a

procedure that clearly affects the man's sexual abilities.

22. Is there a fatwa on sterilisation in Malaysia?

The National Fatwa Council in 1981 ruled that sterilising a man or woman is forbidden (*haram*). This is because sterilisation is regarded as a permanent form of contraception as it permanently impairs a person's reproductive function. However, exceptions can be made in certain situations. For example, when a woman cannot use any form of contraception for health reasons and a pregnancy could endanger her life, sterilisation is permissible.

23. Why do some jurists say that sterilisation is permissible as a contraceptive method?

A small minority of jurists permit sterilisation on the grounds that:

- there is no text on prohibition of sterilisation either in the Qur'an or Sunnah;
- sterilisation is a form of prolonged contraception and is resorted to after the desired number of children is achieved;
- sterilisation protects a woman in her thirties, for e.g., from prolonged use and cost of contraceptive methods;

Sheikh Ahmad Ibrahim, a leading Egyptian theologian in the first half of the 20th century, concluded that he saw no religious objection to sterilisation as it is not a crime against a being already in existence, nor a crime against a living child as the procedure avoids having children by avoiding the element that produce them in a generally accepted manner. The Imami (Shi'i Islam) school of law allows sterilisation. It is assumed that such a serious decision is made voluntarily and for acceptable reasons.⁴

24. Now that sterilisation can be reversible, what do the jurists say about it?

According to Dr Omran, there are new arguments among jurists that sterilisation could be a permissible form of contraception. This is because advances in medical technology have made it possible for sterilisation done by surgical procedure to be reversed. A surgeon can recanalise a woman's fallopian tubes and a man's sperm duct should they later decide to have more children. Some methods of sterilisation are, in other words, no longer a permanent form of contraception, thus negating the old arguments against sterilisation being an unacceptable form of contraception on the basis of it permanently impairing a person's reproductive functions.

25. Is abortion allowed in Islam?

If the life of a woman is in danger, there is consensus that abortion is permitted in Islam. In other cases, opinions differ.

There are varying opinions about the permissibility of abortion before 120 days. These include:

- permitted unconditionally, according to views of the Zaydi and some Shafie and Hanafi scholars, and also a few Maliki and Hanbali scholars.
- permitted conditionally if there is an excuse, according to some Hanafi and Shafie scholars.
- permitted under 40 days only – a minority opinion of Maliki scholars and Sai'id al-Boutti (Syrian Shari'ah scholar).⁵

Abortion is prohibited under the following circumstances:

- forced abortion done against the woman's will;
- abortion as a routine method of family planning;
- unsafe abortion that will endanger the woman's life;
- unsafe/unsanitary abortion due to medical circumstances under which it is conducted;
- gender selective abortion, i.e. abortion carried out based on the sex of the foetus;
- pregnancies that have passed the fourth month (120 days) which is considered the time of ensoulment by most jurists.

Dr Omran pointed out that there is now debate among contemporary scholars on the time of ensoulment. Medical technology has shown that the quickening of the foetus takes place long before 120 days and therefore some scholars now believe that abortion is not permitted even before the earlier acceptable timeframe.

26. What does the Malaysian civil law say about abortion?

Abortion is legal in Malaysia if carried out by a registered medical practitioner who judges that "the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman, or cause injury to the mental or physical health of the pregnant woman, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated." (Penal Code [Amendment] 1989 [Act A727]).

27. Are the concepts of Reproductive Rights as articulated at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, 1994, compatible with Islam?

The concepts of reproductive health and rights recognise four basic principles:

- the right to freely decide the number and spacing of children, and the right to have the information and means to do so;
- the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health;
- the right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of coercion, discrimination, or violence; and
- the right to have satisfying and safe sexual relations.

Dr Omran said in the SIS workshop that these rights are all compatible with Islamic principles and the objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid al-Shari'ah*). The rights are encompassed by the five basic objectives of Shari'ah which are meant to benefit the individual and the community:

- To preserve life
- To preserve intellect
- To preserve faith
- To preserve lineage
- To preserve property

In Islamic jurisprudence, laws and policies that serve the goals of Shari'ah are considered valid in Islam. It is clear that the four basic principles of reproductive health and rights do not violate the five objectives of Shari'ah, nor the Islamic principles of justice, equality, freedom and dignity.

28. Is the concept of equality between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction as underlined by the Platform for Action of the Women's Conference in Beijing, 1995, compatible with Islam?

The Beijing Conference placed the concept of reproductive rights firmly within an overall framework of gender equality and women's human rights. Does this contradict the teachings of Islam? It is the contention of Muslim reformists and women activists that the principles of equality and justice do not contradict the teachings of Islam. Rather, these principles are insistently and repeatedly enjoined by the Qur'an.

Several Qur'anic verses talk about mutuality in the relationship between women and men. In *Surah al-Imran 3:195*, *Surah an-Nisa' 4:124*, *Surah al-Tawbah 9:71-72*, *Surah an-Nahl 16:97*, *Surah al-Ahzab 33:35-36*, *Surah Ghafir 40:40*, Allah swt specifically addresses both women and men, giving them equal roles and responsibilities in spiritual life and in the Islamic struggle, as well as equal rewards and punishment for their actions.

Other verses in the Qur'an talk about their mutual relationship. In *Surah al-Baqarah, 2:187*, the Qur'an describes Muslim men and women as each other's garments; they are for mutual support, mutual comfort and mutual protection, fitting into each other as a garment fits the body (commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali). In *Surah al-Imran, 3:195*, the Qur'an states

“Be you male or female, you are members, one of another”.

In *Surah al-Tawbah, 9:71*, the final verse on male-female relationship, the Qur'an talks about women and men being each other's *awliyya* – protecting friends and guardians. Such values imbedded in the message of the Qur'an therefore cannot justify inequality of women and men as demonstrated in acts of discrimination against women, or, indeed, domestic and sexual violence against a wife.

Based on this understanding of the ethical message of the Qur'an, many Islamic scholars believe that the concept of equality between women and men, justice, and the rights of women are all compatible with Islam. They believe that the concept of equality, justice, mutual consent and consultation can be developed within marriage in Islam so that a more stable, safe and satisfying family relationship can evolve.

Endnotes

¹ Omran, 1992:6

² Abdel Rahim Omran, *Family Planning in the Legacy of Islam*. London: Routledge, 1992. The bulk of the answers to theological questions in this booklet comes from Dr Omran's paper on *Contraception, Abortion and Reproductive Issues in the Legacy of Islam*, presented at the Sisters In Islam Regional Workshop on Islam, Reproductive Health and Women's Rights, Kuala Lumpur, August 20-23 1998, and also from the above book.

³ Conclusion reached among Islamic scholars at the Sisters in Islam Regional Workshop on Islam, Reproductive Health and Women's Rights.

⁴ Omran 1998: 23-24

⁵ Ibid., 22

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