



The meeting was attended by renowned religious experts and the WHO secretariat, including Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean (fifth from right).

A meeting was held on 25 September 2014 at the WHO Regional Office in Cairo to review a communication package and trainers' guide developed for religious scholars.

The objective of the package and guide is to provide religious scholars, as agents of change, with the necessary knowledge and skills to address targeted groups with the aim of eradicating harmful practices that affect women's and child health. The training package will be piloted at the end of 2014, and during the consultation participants had an opportunity to provide their feedback and contribute to its development. The meeting was chaired by Professor Gamal I. Serour, Head of the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research, Al-Azhar University.

The training package builds on decades of previous work by WHO to promote health from a religious perspective. In 2013, the WHO Regional Office and the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research partnered to strengthen and scale up religious approaches to address key risk behaviours hindering the health of women and children from an Islamic perspective. Some of these practices include child marriage, female genital mutilation and domestic violence.

At an earlier consultation, convened by WHO, the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics and the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research, in January 2013 in Cairo, experts had recommended greater collaboration between all stakeholders to address key risk behaviours negatively affecting women and child health, including governments, religious scholars/leaders, representatives of international organizations, media professionals and health care providers. Experts agreed that the three most influential groups

who could raise community awareness, facilitate behaviour change and promote dialogue would be religious scholars, health care providers and media professionals.

The meeting was attended by renowned religious experts, including: Professor Dr Hamid Abu Taleb, Former Dean of Faculty of Islamic Shariaa and Law, Al-Azhar University; Professor Dr Abdallah El Nagar, Professor of Islamic Shariaa and Law, Al-Azhar University; Dr Salem Abdel Guellil, Under Secretary, Ministry of Awqaf; Dr Mohamed Wessam, Secretary-General, Dar Al-ifta; and Sheikh Amed Tork, Director General of the Department of Da'wah Research, Ministry of Awqaf. Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director, appears fifth from right.

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