

## INTERACTIVE ETHICS CASE FOR FEBRUARY – APRIL 2009

Posted Comments: 03/08/09 – 04/22/09

### **Background Information:**

Many national and international organizations report that higher rates of disease and poor health outcomes in general, are associated with both low income and low rates of education. The problem is that education and promoting business can threaten traditional beliefs in Third- World countries. This can create a challenge in balancing ideas about universal rights with cultural diversity. For more information on population and development, see <http://www.iisd.ca/Cairo.html> . For more about cultural diversity and human rights, see <http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1627e.htm>

### **Ethics Case:**

You are working on a five-year project of the World Health Organization's UN Development Program (UNDP). The project addresses population health and growth by supporting community organizations in the Northern Sudan in Eastern Africa. A plan has been designed to establish a women's health clinic to provide reproductive health education and empower women there. The education would involve teaching about the biology of reproduction, sexually transmitted diseases, care of pregnancy, and birth control/family planning. Your coworker, Emily, reminds you that Northern Sudan is predominately Islamic and draws your attention to objections from local Sudanese authorities who are concerned that this project will threaten the traditional role of women in the family and will involve direct harm to the women. Emily wants to know how you intend to present such information to Sudanese women, including the risks and benefits they might face.

Then, two years into the project, data suggests that area women are not implementing family planning measures. Recent studies have shown that successful population control measures are correlated with increased economic development among rural women. UNDP recommends initiating a small-business crafts market scheme targeted at rural women. A Sudanese public health official working in Khartoum (Sudan's capital) is concerned about the changes such economic development may bring to traditional Sudanese values, like the practice of extensive maternal childcare. Is it appropriate for a health program to undertake economic development activities? Why or why not? You talk with your coworkers about different perspectives. Bob is concerned that interference with Sudanese women's roles will make the UNDP unwelcome in the region. Ayisha is concerned that promoting women's businesses will be threatening to men and may provoke violence. Emily says "Smaller steps can be made to help the women without upsetting the men. " Dion counters saying, "Women's health is linked to family planning which depends on resources- women need more economic independence."

You and your co-workers have identified several competing issues. Now, where do you come down on implementing the clinic education initiative, with or without the crafts market option? Why? Is a compromise possible? What would it look like, or what changes would you make to the plan?

### **Student Responses**

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4-22-09

I do not believe that we should move in and disrupt how they are running their society. I do believe that the women should be informed about the risk of sexually transmitted disease, but I do not believe that it would be in the women's best interest to give them more power. I think that giving them a way to make money for themselves and hold a sustainable income will cause uproar from the men. It will, in turn, unsettle the men. They would not have the grasp over the women and their lives like they have had in the past. We should go in and set up a clinic for the women to inform them of risk and hazards. If we give

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them an option to have birth control or anything of the sort it will give them the chance to rebel against their religion and the men. This is not looking out for the safety of the women.

S. W.

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4-22-09

I agree with all of their opinions. I think that there are smaller steps that can be taken because we don't want to upset the men! That could cause greater problems between our countries and the women could be hurt worse. Bob is correct in thinking that it could cause us not to be allowed into the country if we interfere too much. Dion is also right in saying that women need more independence it is not fair for them to be sold and bartered for money. Someone needs to step in and help out some but we don't want to contradict anything like religious beliefs and/or country or personal beliefs. I think we could start by trying to have a session for the men and a separate for the women. During these sessions you could explain in ways that they will understand that this is better for them all. Have like a weekly night session!

W. P.

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4-22-09

I agree with Emily on how they should handle this case. She believes that smaller steps should be made to allow women more economic dependence. The culture in Sudan is one where the men are superior to women. As long as we start small, then work our way up I think we will be successful in establishing a program without hurting religious views or values. This idea should first be presented to the women of this society and the benefits of reproductive health. Maybe the men can see how important this clinic could potentially be. Along with this new program, I would advise that men should take a class too to understand the changing roles of women and to comprehend the importance of a health care facility dedicated solely to women and their medical needs. I think this new clinic could make positive lifestyle changes to the women and men in the community.

C. M.

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4-22-09

I think that they should take things slow and not jump into it so fast. This will be a big step for their culture and some people will not agree with it. Most men of this religion are in charge and women have very few rights. This is a good idea to make the women feel like they aren't worthless. They make these crafts that take so much of their time and don't even get a dime for it. In America mostly anything that we make gets sold. There's husbands are going to be upset if this goes through. The women will be making money and can be able to free themselves, and this is what the men are scared of. I think women deserve this and to have a choice to make their own life if the men are holding them back.

L. D.

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4-22-09

As I read this article, I did notice a couple obstacles interfering with the project Emily, Dion and Ayisha are trying to accomplish. I do believe there is a compromise that can be worked out. For example, setting up other facilities for men too, so they won't get an impression that they came to make women superior. I believe that just because women are seen as a minority that shouldn't be a reason to deny them proper

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healthcare, for them and their infants. It is essential for them to get the proper information to decrease the number of death rates, STD victims and among other health risks. At the same time they should do their research about their culture and views of what is wrong versus right and try to make it more convenient.

S. P.

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4-22-09

As I read the case, I was shocked to learn about how some cultures are very different from ours. I feel very horrible for the women but they think nothing of it. Women should be educated on this information about sexually transmitted diseases and not just have sex at will so maybe they will understand the major consequences. Compromising seems reasonable and I would hope that the men would listen. Also, I would try to explain to the men that it's ok and although your laws are being broken, the women will not overpower men but be made as equal to them. As I see it, women are human beings, too.

S. S.

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4-22-09

I think that the World Health Organizations UN Development Program is on the right track by helping these women become aware of health care problems they may face, but constructing this project too quickly could cause uproar especially with the men. Allowing them to still have the structure of men being the leader of the household but also keeping women healthy would keep a more peaceful relationship within Sudan. I do though believe that implementing a crafts market for the women to sell specialized items for an income is not raising their power above men even though it still is a large step for individual women's' rights. It is rather misleading to believe that by teaching women about reproductive health issues would lead to the destroying of family traditions. Just because the program is teaching them about the diseases and health issues do not mean that the women do not reserve the right to act as they wish. Allowing this program could greatly influence the overall health of women within Sudan.

R. H.

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4-22-09

I think that you can't force people to do something, or change the way they live just because you think you are right and they are wrong. If you think what they are doing is morally wrong, you should go explain to them what you think and why you think that. You may be able to compromise with them and get them to change one or two things that is hurting or restricting certain people. If they refuse your advice you should let them be so that you don't make people mad.

L. K.

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4-22-09

I believe that Emily is correct. If the UNDP were to come in and make huge changes all at once it would upset the men in the community. There needs to be communication between the men and UNDP because they might not approve of women learning about health issues. If one were to present the information in a no threatening way of their culture then the men should be willing to allow women to learn about health concerns and family planning. If they presented to the Sudanese men that helping women

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learn about health concerns could allow them to live longer and keep the men healthy as well, then I believe some of the men would allow it. The men might just ask UNDP to not teach about birth control.

S. G.

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4-22-09

In my opinion the clinic is a good plan. There will be decreased birth rates and increased rates of income. Education will grow and encourage better health. Smaller steps can be made to help the women without displeasing the men. I believe that women have the rights to express themselves. Involving the women in Sudan with small-business crafts market will open the economy to a new level. These activities will help the economic aspect in Sudan. I believe that this plan will give happiness to the women after long maternal care and make money that can help in their finances at home.

M. M.

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4-22-09

As a health science student who has recently studies ethics and cultural diversity, I have come to this conclusion:

The crafts market option would most likely be detrimental to men's treatment of women. I believe that it would do more harm than good and that it would only make woman's lives harder. I do believe, however, that a compromise could be reached. I believe that clinics should be provided to inform women of the reproductive system, birth control, and sexually transmitted diseases, but leave the economic and family structure up to the culture. Although we may not agree on the beliefs of another person's culture, we must respect what they believe and not try to change their beliefs, but rather provide the necessary elements to keep the people healthy. Instead of embarking on a plan to change the economy and the structure of the family in Sudan, I would simply do everything possible to provide the best holistic health care possible without making drastic changes to the culture.

C. H. –LTC HST

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4-22-09

I think that we should not go into Northern Sudan and try to make activities to help women and upset the men. If we do participate in helping Sudan, we should help with small steps that do not make the men completely upset. If we were to go into any area with the idea that changes will be turned around can make Sudanese people upset. They will have doubts and many will be upset, but taking small steps at a time over a course of time will do greater benefit. These small changes will help the Sudan progress. When making a plan, it needs to be clear who will be touching the females because in this society contact may be seen badly. This program will make women feel meaningful and important. This program can help women in society to rise up and provide for themselves. Educating women on birth control and STDs can help save Sudan women. Introducing this plan will be helpful, and if too many problems arise changes may need to be made.

L. L.

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4-22-09

I think the appropriate way to handle this situation is that they should have a clinic for the women so that they can learn about reproductive health education. They shouldn't have the markets thou because that can cause a huge conflict with the men of the Sudanese, if the market were created there should be limitations so that the men wouldn't have such a problem with it but the women also can have money and help support the family in different ways.

G. C.

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4-22-09

They should follow through with the clinic to educate women about their reproductive system and birth control. However, caution should be used because this goes against many beliefs that people in this culture believe. Going against what they believe could bring harm to women who attend the clinic. It is an object of health care to not bring about harm to patients. The education provided by the clinic could improve the quality of life of these women.

J. B.

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4 22 09

I agree with Emily. I think some steps should be taken to help the women without hurting the men. It would not be a cake walk to do this. As long as they do not go too far it would not cause harm. Their Children should be raised the right way and also the adults know the risk of STD's.

R. W.

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4-22-09

The women need to know about the risk of pregnancy and STD's. The women need to learn how to control what they do. There should be some type of health education organization for them so they will understand the risk involved with intercourse. All the women deserve to be educated about their personal risks that they could become involved with. However, the plan should be set up in small steps so it's not such a dramatic change for the men and women of the region.

J. C.

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4-22-09

I think we should not push these practices too hard on the women. Pressuring to change their religion is not good for relations. We would not be welcomed back to help out in any health emergencies. Though I say this, I do believe it is right for us to present them with the information. Giving the option to know more about child health and STDs is good, but give them the option to pursue it or not. It is all about choice.

A. M.

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3.12.09

“World Health Organizations UN Development Program.” Should avoid suppressing the people of Northern Sudan in Eastern Africa, but health is linked to family planning, and should provide women with more resources and economic independence. Sudanese authorities state that this might cause a threat to the traditional role of women, but it is rather absurd to conclude that knowledge on the biology of reproduction given to women will destroy a family tradition. However, they persist that men would break out in violence for the ‘education’ the women would receive. More over will the women would be at greater threat with the men, or their health? The true nature of violence should be tested, and then an education provider should be confirmed.

J. L.

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3.11.09

I don't really know what the thing is about. It seems like if it's asking women over there should know how to take care of children and the risks about STDs and pregnancy risks. I think they should because they can learn things they didn't know before and help them on raising their children.

Y. A.

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3.11.09

What I think is that they should implement the idea for women, that they should have the reproduction health education; so they clinic should be created, but at the same time there should be one for men as well. So that the men won't feel like their women/wives are being taken away. The market though, I believe shouldn't be created because doing that would create a huge conflict, because the beliefs that the Islamic have, go against having women being independent.

N.G. - Med High - HST 1

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3.11.09

Well, as I read the case, towards the end I figured that both Emily and Dion are speaking correctly and it makes sense. Because smaller steps can be made to help the women without upsetting the men and the woman's health is linked to family planning which depends on resources; they should definitely have more economic independence.

A.M. South Texas High School for Health Professions

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3.11.09

I agree with Emily. I think smaller steps should be taken to help the women but at the same time not upsetting the man. Of course, this is a difficult situation since women's roles are different in their religion. It'll be a tough challenge. I think if I was in this group, I would choose the crafts market option if limitations are created. As long as we don't go too far, I think we will be successful in not hurting their religion but at the same time, keep peace between us and the people in the region. First, start out small with the business targeted for rural women. Let them be involved in it first, and let those around them be comfortable with it little by little. We should not start out big because it might be a little too hard for those people who like the traditional ways of women. Who knows, there might be a few childcare practices that their Sudanese values may allow? We will test the waters, but carefully. We will definitely not stop to a halt all of a sudden because we see what's best for them. We won't push it hard at first either because it

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is against their beliefs, and it can create tension, jeopardizing the whole plan in the first place. Emily is right. Little by little is the best way for people to be comfortable and trying not to push it past the borderline.

A. A. Med High, HST

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3.10.09

In the case of educating the Sudan women I would reassure Emily that women; no matter what ethnicity or financial status, are concerned about their health and that of their families. I would certainly present the information to these women in a level in which they would understand. I would use case history, pictures, and I would also involve the women themselves. These women have the power to educate one another from their own health and personal experiences. I would assure these women that if they practice what they learn their lives and that of their families will change dramatically. As for the objections from the Sudan men, I would provide a class for the men so that they can understand that we are not trying to change the role of women we are only trying to educate them so that they can live longer, healthier, and more productive lives for their household.

In this instance, I do not believe a health organization should involve itself at this time in economic development activities. Yes the women could and should have better success with economic independence but like Ayisha stated, "it will be threatening to men and may provoke violence." I believe if you want change, change needs to start with the Sudan men. If you can make the ideals and reasoning of these men change from one of closed mindedness to one that is more open then changes can occur. If I was in charge of this program I would not just educate the women but the men as well. The men need to be taught that in order for them to succeed their wives and daughters also need to succeed. It appears to me that in this situation we would need to involve the men. What is the point in educating the women when they are submissive to the men? Bringing education to all would give the program a higher success rate and maybe a chance at a crafts market involving couples at a later date. It would not be easy but a slow change is better than no change.

E.P. High School for Health Professions

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3.10.09

Having recently studied ethics in HST, this case presents several problems to society. However, with caution the project could take place. For example, Muslim men, with several lectures, should be able to understand the importance of sex education. With the lectures, they would be told of the simplicity and intentions of the project. It would be only to help their society to further expand their age expectancy and health.

Living in an interracial area, coming in contact with Muslims is not rare, and they are some of the most understanding people. It's just like adapting; society has faced that case before. Besides, women would not be forced to go, simply encouraged. In the health care field, no one can be forced to do anything they refuse to; therefore, only those with the willingness to learn would be accepted. Also, some of the information provided is vital to society, like that of STD's.

With the objective of undertaking economic development activities, the risk shouldn't be taken for that. First of all, it would be important to establish a strong clinic before even worrying about other issues. Also, if making a clinic for women angers the men, economic activities would just make things worse. It would just be better off if only the clinic was established, since health is the main concern for health care professionals, leave the rest to other people.

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M. V., Med High, HST

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3.10.09

I personally don't know why this organization wants to work in on a five-year project in a place such as Northern Sudan in Eastern Africa. There is no way some foreign people can change the way of living in a place where they have being having a traditional role of women and more if the project is going to harm the women in Sudan. Is not appropriate for a health program to undertake economic development activities because it's not any of their business to mess with other people's economic development.

K.H. South TX.H.S. Health Professions (Med. High)

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3.10.09

Well, the answer is simple. I believe the definition of Bureaucracy, is specialized departments handling specialized issues. The World Health Organization UN Development program, the keyword is Health; in actuality the real question is as follow: should HEALTH bureaucrats strive to develop women's economic status? Not to mention the Islamic hostility to change of tradition. I have learned that Ignorance shall not be warred with pens, for ink shall be wasted, but with the tongues of ignorant, whereas they then be civilized. In retrospective, The UNDP should do what is safe, and get this feminist Sudan economic development plan out of their heads. Attempting to change the social tradition of Sudan's culture is an act of assimilation; the complete opposite of tolerance and choice; thus this plan being the enemy, of liberty.

A. L.

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3.10.09

First of all, in Islam religions, man are very strict about who has contact with their woman, it would be very hard for one of these programs to be allowed in their culture if they are allowed by a lucky chance, you would have to be very careful, cause if you're disrespectful somehow, consequences can be lethal. I wouldn't actually change anything from the program, maybe the personal. The persons who actually teach the classes and have personal contact with the woman.

E.G.

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3.10.09

I believe that women have the rights to expressed themselves, either through maternal care or other works such as making crafts. I believe that making the women in Sudan involve in the small-business crafts market will open Sudan's economy to a new level. Not only that these activities will help the economic aspect in Sudan, but give happiness and enjoyment to the women after a long day of maternal care, as well. In addition to the enjoyment that they'll experience, they'll also earn some money that can help in their finances at home, especially with their husbands.

There is a possibility of a compromise to develop when the initiation of the small-business craft market is complete. If we, the workers of the five-year project of the World Health Organization's UNDP, are able to show the Sudanese people of the many advantages and good that this project can do to their economy, as well as their country, then a possible settlement of differences can be achieve.

I agree with Emily that "smaller steps can be made to help the women without upsetting the men." The plan will make that it will make sure that the women have time for both maternal responsibilities as well as the responsibilities with the business. The women can start by making small and simple crafts during their

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free time. This way the men still are the bread winner of the family with the women as the homemaker and support as well.

K.K., Med High, HST

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3.9.09

It wouldn't hurt to mention beforehand that the organization and project has no intentions to harm their way of life and culture. Then they'd be more understanding when they're presented with the information, instead of feeling insulted. I agree with what Emily was saying "Smaller steps can be made to help the women without upsetting the men." I agree because it's better to keep the peace and interfere at the least possible. I would go with whatever would benefit the people most. We're there to help them, not cause them any more trouble. Even if we did get our way, there'd be no point if it causes conflict in the process.

S.O. South Texas High School for Health Professions, HST

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3-9-09

I would still like to try and get the whole reproductive program with or without the without the crafts market going because we are letting the Sudanese be aware of situations that can occur from diseases to pregnancies. I believe that a compromise can be reached because although they think it will change traditions of women's role in the society; they will see the positive effects of the program to the society. There would be no changes to the plan. If the women take the program and become aware then the goal of the plan has been achieved. It is the option of women to go to the program and get something out of it.

E.R. Med High (HST 1)

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3.8.09

The clinic is a very good idea. It will increase education and promote better health in general. There will be lower birth rates so there will be higher rates of income. The crafts business is good idea also, but maybe if the women made something they could use around the house the men would be more inclined to let the women learn. The UNDP should try talking to the men of the community and reach an understanding instead of just acting.

M. H. South Texas High School for Health Professions HST1

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3.8.09

I think that Emily and does are correct. They should take things slow and not see like they are trying to force them to do something because that's just going to lead to fighting and arguments fighting.

M. K.