



Changing social and gender norms toolkit

Key messaging guide

Transforming Masculinities

How to talk about child spacing, gender-based violence
and gender inequality on social media



tearfund

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Section 1:

Introduction

1.1 Why this guide matters

This guide is designed to support you as a faith-based digital influencer to communicate about family planning (FP), gender-based violence and gender equality in ways that are:

- accurate and evidence-based
- culturally sensitive
- faith-aligned
- non-judgmental
- ethically safe
- appropriate for public digital platforms

It does **not** provide medical advice or promote contraceptive use. Instead, it equips you to share values-based messages, encourage informed decision-making, and refer audiences to appropriate health services when needed. Please note: this guide focuses on soon-to-be-married audiences and is not intended to promote premarital sexual activity.

1.2 The research behind this guide

Backed by Nigeria's official policies and data, this guide helps you communicate about family planning in ways that are accurate, rights-based and non-coercive. Key sources we've used include:

- **Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2024:** Highlights the ongoing unmet need for family planning, especially among married women who want to space births.
- **Nigeria Family Planning Blueprint 2020–2024:** Shows how family planning supports healthy mothers, thriving children and strong communities, while promoting awareness and behaviour change.
- **Nigeria's FP2030 Commitment:** Affirms the country's vision of a Nigeria where everyone can choose freely, access family planning equally, and thrive socially and economically.
- **National Guideline on Self-Care for Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal Health (2020):** Supports sharing accurate information responsibly, respecting individual choices, and connecting people with health professionals instead of offering medical advice online.

1.3 Your role in shaping social norms

As a faith-based digital influencer, you can play a unique role in Nigeria's social ecosystem because you are a:

- trusted voice within communities
- cultural translator of complex issues
- shaper of values and norms
- bridge-builder between tradition, faith, and modern realities

Nigeria's FP2030 Commitment recognises the importance of engaging non-traditional actors, including faith leaders and community voices, to reduce misinformation and stigma and promote informed choice.

As a faith-based digital influencer, you are one of these valued voices. You are not a health provider, but a norm-shaper. Your words, tone, and framing can promote understanding, inspire confidence and make a real difference to your community.

Section 2:

Foundations of family planning

2.1 What is family planning?

Family planning allows individuals and couples to decide freely and responsibly, how many children to have and when, using accurate information and appropriate support.

2.1.1 Why talking about family planning matters in Nigeria

National data consistently shows that many Nigerian women and families want to delay or space pregnancies but lack adequate information or support. Evidence shows that:

- Many married women who wish to space or delay pregnancies are not using any family planning method, which increases the risk of high-risk pregnancies and preventable maternal and child health problems.
- Short birth intervals are associated with poorer maternal and child health outcomes, including higher risks of complications and mortality, as documented in national health surveys.
- Promoting healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies, maternal wellbeing, and family stability is a **public health priority**, not a moral or political agenda.

2.1.2 Why values-based family planning messaging is essential

Evidence shows that when you frame family planning messages around shared values, rather than technical or clinical language, your messages are more likely to be accepted and trusted by your audience.

Values-based family planning messaging lets you emphasise:

- love and care within families
- responsibility and planning
- respect for the body
- mutual consent in relationships
- health of the mother
- wellbeing of children
- faith-consistent stewardship

This approach aligns with national guidance and promotes **community trust, respectful engagement, and positive behaviour change**, rather than confrontation or coercion.

For you as a faith-based influencer, values-based framing helps you to:

- keep family planning conversations aligned with moral teachings
- protect your credibility with your audience
- reduce backlash while still sharing important messages

In Nigeria's national policy frameworks, family planning is seen as:

- a way to protect health
- a strategy for family wellbeing
- a development priority that supports maternal health, child survival, and household stability

Family planning is not about stopping people from having children. It is about timing and spacing pregnancies in ways that protect the health of mothers and children and allow families to thrive.

Things you **SHOULD** say:

- ✓ 'Family planning is about timing and spacing pregnancies.'
- ✓ 'Family planning supports healthy families and mothers.'
- ✓ 'Every family should be able to make informed decisions.'

Things you **SHOULD NOT** say:

- ✗ 'People should stop having many children.'
- ✗ 'Everyone must use contraception.'
- ✗ 'This method is better than that one.'

2.2 How can you support voluntary and informed choice?

All family planning policies in Nigeria emphasise that family planning must be a voluntary and informed choice. This means that:

- No one should be forced or pressured to use family planning.
- Decisions about childbearing should be made freely, with correct information.
- Family planning choices must respect personal beliefs, faith, and values.

Nigeria's FP2030 Commitment clearly states that family planning is about helping people to make informed choices, not coercion.

Things you **SHOULD** say:

- ✓ 'Family planning decisions are personal and voluntary.'
- ✓ 'No one should be pressured into childbearing decisions.'
- ✓ 'Couples should decide together, with accurate information.'

Things you **SHOULD NOT** say:

- ✗ 'Women should convince their husbands.'
- ✗ 'This is what you must do.'
- ✗ 'Using FP is the only responsible option.'

2.3 Spacing or limiting? What you need to know

Family planning discussions often distinguish between:

- Spacing: Allowing adequate time between pregnancies to protect the health of the mother and child.
- Limiting: Choosing to stop having children once a desired family size is reached.

National health evidence shows that short birth intervals are associated with higher risks of maternal and child health complications, while appropriate spacing improves outcomes for both mother and baby

When you talk about family planning, focus on **birth spacing**. It's relatable, positive, and values-driven: about care, recovery, and nurturing families – not restriction. Sharing this message helps families make healthier choices while staying true to their faith and values.

Things you **SHOULD** say:

- ✓ 'Spacing births helps mothers recover.'
- ✓ 'Spacing supports healthier children.'
- ✓ 'Healthy timing is important for family wellbeing.'

Things you **SHOULD NOT** say:

- ✗ 'People should limit the number of children they have.'
- ✗ 'Large families are irresponsible.'
- ✗ 'Spacing is compulsory.'

2.4 How is family planning practised within faith and shared values?

Across Nigeria's diverse faith traditions, there are shared values that align strongly with family planning principles:

- love and care for family
- protection of health
- wisdom and stewardship
- responsibility in decision-making
- respect for the body

National policy documents encourage engaging religious and community leaders as allies in shaping family planning narratives that resonate with faith and culture, rather than framing family planning purely as a medical issue.

As a faith-based influencer, you play a key role in this. Your communication can focus on **values and wellbeing**, helping your audience see family planning as a way to care for their families.

You SHOULD say	You SHOULD NOT say
✓ 'Family planning reflects wisdom and care.'	✗ 'Family planning is commanded by religion.'
✓ 'Healthy families require intentional decisions.'	✗ 'Family Planning replaces faith.'
✓ 'Faith teaches responsibility and stewardship.'	✗ Faith communities oppose Family planning.'

2.5 Values-based messaging framework

This guide uses a values-based framework to help faith-based digital influencers communicate about family planning in a way that is safe, acceptable, and effective.

It focuses on five interconnected values to help guide your messaging and decision-making:

Core Value	Meaning in family planning context
Love	Caring for your partner and future children.
Health of the mother	Protecting women's lives by allowing rest and healing.
Responsibility & stewardship	Planning life with wisdom and caring for blessings.
Family wellbeing	Giving children a strong, stable start, free from stress.
Consent	Ensuring decisions about family planning are mutual and not forced.

2.5.1 Love

You can frame family planning as an expression of love – showing how partners care for each other and their children by making choices that protect health and promote wellbeing.

- Emphasise care, compassion and mutual support.
- Highlight emotional and physical wellbeing.

Example: Love includes planning for the wellbeing of your partner and children.'

Do:

- ✓ Link family planning to care and compassion.

Don't:

- ✗ Link family planning to fear or punishment.

2.5.2 Health of the mother

Emphasise to your audience that protecting a mother's health is key to the whole family's wellbeing. National evidence shows that proper birth spacing leads to better outcomes for mothers

- Emphasise safety and wellbeing, not risk or fear.

Examples: 'A healthy mother is the foundation of a healthy family.'

'Respecting the body includes allowing time to heal.'

Do:

- ✓ Use supportive language.

Don't:

- ✗ Share medical advice or statistics.

2.5.3 Responsibility & stewardship

Talk to your audience about responsibility by showing how planning ahead – emotionally, physically and financially – helps families thrive. Help your audience see that stewardship means using their time, health and resources wisely to support a healthy, thriving family.

- Use every day Nigerian planning examples (school fees, housing, business).
- Align with faith teachings on wisdom and care.

Examples: ‘Responsible families plan ahead so no one is overwhelmed.’

‘Stewardship means planning wisely for the blessings we have.’

Do:

- ✓ Emphasise intentional living.
- ✓ Frame family planning as wisdom.

Don’t:

- ✗ Shame families for their choices.
- ✗ Frame family planning as an obligation.

2.5.4 Family wellbeing

Help your audience see that planning ahead can make life more stable, less stressful and better for their children's wellbeing

- Focus on the importance of nurturing environments for children.

Example: 'Planning helps families create stable, loving homes.'

Do:

- ✓ Highlight positive outcomes.
- ✓ Emphasise health and recovery.

Don't:

- ✗ Criticise family size.
- ✗ Discuss medical side effects in detail.

2.5.5 Consent

Talk about consent – that decisions about having children should be shared, respectful and free from force or pressure.

- Promote communication and agreement within marriage.

Example: 'healthy families are built on communication and mutual decisions.'

Do:

- ✓ Encourage dialogue.

Don't:

- ✗ Suggest secrecy or coercion.

2.6 Family planning basics

2.6.1 Overview of family planning methods (awareness only)

Family planning includes a variety of options that trained health providers may discuss with individuals or couples.. As an influencer, your role is to raise awareness that these options exist, without explaining, comparing, recommending, or promoting any specific method.

At a general level, family planning options may include:

- **Short-term options:** Methods used regularly or for a short period of time, depending on personal preference and life stage.
- **Longer-acting options:** Options designed to provide protection over a longer time, with guidance from a professional.
- **Partner-involving options:** Approaches that encourage shared responsibility and participation between partners.
- **Natural rhythm approaches:** Methods based on understanding natural fertility patterns and cycles.

These examples are for awareness only. Any details about how these methods work, who they are suitable for, or how to use them should always be discussed with a trained health provider.

Things you **SHOULD** say:

- ✓ 'There are different family planning options.'
- ✓ 'A trained provider can explain what is appropriate.'
- ✓ 'Choices depend on personal circumstances.'

Things you **SHOULD NOT** say:

- ✗ Name specific products or brands
- ✗ Explain how methods work
- ✗ Compare effectiveness
- ✗ Recommend any option

2.6.2 Supporting shared decision-making in families

Family planning isn't just a women's issue. Evidence from national and global research shows that successful family planning relies on:

- open communication between partners
- shared responsibility for decisions
- mutual respect and agreement

FP2030 commitments highlight that men play an important role as supportive partners in informed decision-making – not as the sole decision-makers.

As an influencer, you can help families see that **planning together strengthens relationships and supports healthier, happier families.**

Things you **SHOULD** say:

- ✓ 'Family planning works best when couples talk.'
- ✓ 'Decisions should be mutual.'
- ✓ 'Support matters.'

Things you **SHOULD NOT** say:

- ✗ 'Women should secretly plan.'
- ✗ 'Men must decide.'
- ✗ 'One partner should dominate decisions.'

2.6.3 Youth-sensitive messaging: Focus on knowledge, not promotion

This guide recognises that:

- Young people benefit from accurate information before marriage.
- Knowledge does not promote immoral behaviour.
- Understanding health, fertility and responsibility prepares individuals for future family life.

Nigeria's FP2030 Commitment emphasises informed choice and equitable access to information, including for young people, while respecting cultural and faith values

As an influencer, your role is not to promote contraceptive use among unmarried people. Instead, focus your messaging on:

- preparation for marriage
- understanding responsibility
- respecting the body
- future family wellbeing

Things you **SHOULD** say:

- ✓ 'Knowledge prepares people for future decisions.'
- ✓ 'Understanding health is important before marriage.'
- ✓ 'Information supports responsibility.'

Things you **SHOULD NOT** say:

- ✗ 'Unmarried people should use contraception.'
- ✗ 'Young people should be sexually active.'
- ✗ 'FP is only for youth.'

2.6.4 Faith and healthy spacing: Insights from Islam

Faith traditions recognise the importance of care, capacity, and mutual decision-making in family life.

In Islam, the Qur'an acknowledges spacing and shared responsibility between parents. **Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 233** states:

"...Mothers may breastfeed their children for two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing period. The father must provide for them and clothe them according to what is acceptable. No soul is burdened beyond its capacity... And if both desire weaning by mutual consent and consultation, there is no blame upon them..."
(Qur'an 2:233, English – Shakir)

This verse highlights key principles:

- Maternal health and recovery are important
- Decisions should be made with mutual consent and consultation between parents
- Families should recognise human capacity and limits
- Shared responsibility is central to family life

These principles align closely with messages about healthy timing and spacing in family planning, showing that faith values and family wellbeing go hand in hand.

Things you **SHOULD** say:

- ✓ 'Faith values consultation and care.'
- ✓ 'Health and capacity matter in family decisions.'
- ✓ 'Planning aligns with wisdom.'

Things you **SHOULD NOT** say:

- ✗ 'This verse commands FP.'
- ✗ 'Faith requires contraception.'
- ✗ 'Religious texts prescribe methods.'

2.6.5 Refer to the professionals

As an influencer, your role is supportive and educational only. When questions become:

- personal
- medical
- detailed
- emotional

You must refer individuals to trained providers or approved services.

Nigeria's National Self-Care Guidelines emphasise responsible information sharing with referral, not unsupervised medical advice

Example script: 'Thank you for your question. I'm not able to give personal or medical advice, but a trained health provider can guide you properly. Please reach out to [approved referral service].'

Things you **SHOULD** say:

- ✓ 'A trained provider can help.'
- ✓ 'Professional guidance is important.'
- ✓ 'Support is available.'

Things you **SHOULD NOT** say:

- ✗ 'This will work for you.'
- ✗ 'Try this option.'
- ✗ 'Ignore medical advice.'

Section 3:

Myths and misconceptions

Myths and misconceptions about family planning are common in Nigerian communities and can strongly influence decisions, even when people know about family planning options. These ideas often spread through social networks, cultural narratives, and social media, affecting both urban and rural populations.

As an influencer, understanding these myths is key to sharing accurate information in a respectful, faith-aligned way.

Below, you'll find common myths, the facts, and suggested ways to respond. More examples are provided in Table 2 in the annex.

Myth 1:

Family planning is against God/Allah/faith.

Fact:

Family planning is about healthy timing, care and responsibility.

What to say:

'Family planning is about wisdom and protecting families.'

Avoid saying:

'Religion supports contraception.'

Myth 2:

Family planning causes infertility.

Fact:

Family planning supports timing and spacing, not stopping children.

What to say:

'Family planning helps families plan timing.'

Avoid saying:

'Family planning has no risks for anyone.'

Myth 3:

Family planning will stop my menstruation permanently.

Fact:

Some Family planning options may change menstrual patterns (such as lighter, heavier, or missed periods) but this does not mean menstruation has stopped permanently or that fertility is lost.

What to say:

‘Changes in menstruation can happen for some people, and they are usually temporary. A trained health provider can explain what is normal and what to expect.’

Avoid saying:

‘Family planning will stop your period.’

Myth 4:

Family planning encourages promiscuity.

Fact:

Information supports responsibility, not bad behaviour.

What to say:

‘Knowledge prepares people for family life.’

Avoid saying:

‘People will have sex anyway.’

Section 4:

Ethical and safe engagement online

Remember, your role is to inform, affirm values, and refer – not to diagnose, prescribe, or advise medically.

Your online presence shapes how people respond to your messages. The following best practices will help you engage safely, ethically, and responsibly.

4.1 What you CAN do

Share values-based messages about:

- love and responsibility
- healthy timing and spacing
- care for mothers
- family wellbeing
- mutual consent and communication
 - ✓ Use storytelling and relatable examples
 - ✓ Normalize seeking professional guidance
 - ✓ Redirect personal questions to trained providers
 - ✓ Maintain respectful, calm tone in all interactions

4.2 What Influencers MUST NOT do

- ✗ Provide medical advice
- ✗ Recommend or compare FP methods
- ✗ Diagnose health conditions
- ✗ Suggest products, brands, or dosages
- ✗ Engage in religious or moral debates
- ✗ Argue in comment sections
- ✗ Shame or pressure followers

4.3 Confidentiality & Privacy

- Do not ask for private health details in comments or DMs
- Do not screenshot or repost private messages
- Encourage private, professional consultations.

Please see the annex, which has ready-to-use scripts and tips to give you confidence to communicate clearly using the right information.

Section 5:

Addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and gender equality

The tips below will help you navigate conversations around GBV and gender equality with empathy, clarity, and impact. We want you to feel confident, prepared, and intentional with every post.

The golden rules (core principles)

- **Put survivors first:** Always prioritise the safety and dignity of those who have experienced violence. Frame them as empowered heroes of their own lives, not helpless victims.
- **Remember it's a human rights issue:** Violence isn't a 'private family matter' or a 'cultural tradition.' It is a violation of human rights rooted in unequal power.
- **Be a game changer:** Focus on positive, transformative messaging. Challenge old stereotypes instead of just repeating 'don'ts'.

Content best practices

1. Ethical storytelling

- **Consent is mandatory:** Never share a survivor's story without their 100% informed consent.
- **Avoid 'trauma porn':** Do not use graphic images (bruises, crying, etc). They are sensationalist and can re-traumatise your audience.
- **Use warnings:** Always include a 'Trigger Warning' (TW) at the start of sensitive content.

2. Words matter

- **Choose strength:** Use '**survivor**' instead of 'victim'.
- **Be precise:** Use '**perpetrator**' rather than 'abuser'.
- **Don't minimise:** Avoid terms like 'domestic dispute' or 'crime of passion'. Call it what it is: **violence**.

3. Ownership of actions

- **Violence is a choice:** There is NO excuse for violence. Not stress, not alcohol, not mental health, and certainly not 'how someone was dressed.'
- **Name the responsibility:** Never imply a survivor 'provoked' the violence. The responsibility lies 100% with the person who chose to be violent.

Promoting real equality

The new standard of manhood

- **Strength = respect:** Challenge the idea that being a 'man' means being dominant. True strength is found in compassion and equality.
- **Active allies:** Encourage men and boys to call out sexism and harassment when they see it.

Equality at home

- **Shared chores:** Household work isn't 'gendered.' Everyone in the house is responsible for the home.
- **Joint decisions:** True equality means women have an equal seat at the table for financial and life-changing decisions.

Believe people

- If someone tells you they've experienced violence, **believe them.** It is incredibly rare for someone to make these stories up. Your support might be the only support they have.

Safety and accuracy for your platform

- **Self-reflect first:** Before posting, check your own biases. How do you feel about gender roles? Does that show up in your content?
- **Fact-check:** Always verify statistics or legal advice with reputable sources before sharing.
- **Call it out:** Be a role model. If you see misogyny in your comments or your community, address it firmly.
- **It's not bullying:** Don't sugarcoat it. Call gender-based violence by its real name so the gravity of the issue isn't lost.

Section 6:

Annex

Table 1: What to say & what not to say reference table

Topics	What to say	What to avoid saying
What family planning is:	✓ 'Family planning is about timing and spacing pregnancies.' ✓ 'Family planning supports healthy families and mothers.' ✓ 'Every family should be able to make informed decisions.'	✗ 'People should stop having many children.' ✗ 'Everyone must use contraception.' ✗ 'This method is better than that one.'
Informed choices	✓ 'Family planning decisions are personal and voluntary.' ✓ 'No one should be pressured into childbearing decisions.' ✓ 'Couples should decide together, with accurate information.'	✗ 'Women should convince their husbands.' ✗ 'This is what you must do.' ✗ 'Using family planning is the only responsible option.'
Spacing vs. limiting births	✓ 'Spacing births helps mothers recover.' ✓ 'Spacing supports healthier children.' ✓ 'Healthy timing is important for family wellbeing.'	✗ 'People should limit the number of children they have.' ✗ 'Large families are irresponsible.' ✗ 'Spacing is compulsory.'
Family planning within faith and shared values	✓ 'Planning reflects wisdom and care.' ✓ 'Healthy families require intentional decisions.' ✓ 'Faith teaches responsibility and stewardship.'	✗ 'Family planning is commanded by religion.' ✗ 'Family planning replaces faith.' ✗ 'Faith communities oppose family planning.'
Family planning basics	✓ 'Family planning supports healthy timing and spacing.' ✓ 'Information helps families make informed decisions.' ✓ 'Health and wellbeing are important in family life.'	✗ 'Everyone should practice family planning.' ✗ 'Family planning is compulsory.' ✗ 'This is the best option for everyone.'

Topics	What to say	What to avoid saying
Benefits of family planning	✓ 'Spacing helps mothers rest and recover.' ✓ 'Planning supports healthier families.' ✓ 'Communication between partners matters.'	✗ 'Women should secretly plan.' ✗ 'Men must decide.' ✗ 'One partner should dominate decisions.'
Overview of family planning methods	✓ 'There are different family planning options.' ✓ 'A trained provider can explain what is appropriate.' ✓ 'Choices depend on personal circumstances.'	✗ Name specific products or brands ✗ Explain how methods work ✗ Compare effectiveness ✗ Recommend any option
Male involvement and shared decision-making	✓ 'Family planning works best when couples talk.' ✓ 'Decisions should be mutual.' ✓ 'Support matters.'	✗ 'Women should secretly plan.' ✗ 'Men must decide.' ✗ 'One partner should dominate decisions.'
Youth-sensitive considerations (knowledge, not promotion)	✓ 'Knowledge prepares people for future decisions.' ✓ 'Understanding health is important before marriage.' ✓ 'Information supports responsibility.'	✗ 'Unmarried people should use contraception.' ✗ 'Young people should be sexually active.' ✗ 'Family planning is only for youth.'
Faith perspective on healthy spacing	✓ 'Faith values consultation and care.' ✓ 'Health and capacity matter in family decisions.' ✓ 'Planning aligns with wisdom.'	✗ 'This verse commands family planning.' ✗ 'Faith requires contraception.' ✗ 'Religious texts prescribe methods.'
Preset responses	✓ 'Planning supports wellbeing.' ✓ 'Health matters.' ✓ 'Decisions should be mutual.' ✓ 'Professional guidance helps.'	✗ 'This method works best.' ✗ 'You should do this.' ✗ 'Religion supports this.' ✗ Ignore medical advice.'

Table 2: Common myths and misconception about family planning in Nigeria

S/N	Myth	Fact	What the influencer should say	Avoid saying
1	'Family planning is against faith/God/Allah'	Family planning is about healthy timing and spacing for wellbeing, not opposing faith.	'Family planning, as we discuss it, is about caring for mothers and families, not telling people how many children to have.'	'Religion supports child spacing.'
2	'Family planning causes infertility or permanent harm'	Many infertility fears come from misinformation; permanent infertility is not a common outcome.	'There's a lot of fear around this, but trained health providers can explain timing and spacing without stopping future choices.'	'Family planning never has any side effects.'
3	'Family planning leads to promiscuity'	Information doesn't change morals; it supports informed decisions.	'Information doesn't encourage behaviour, it helps people prepare for a healthy family life.'	'Young people should use family planning now.'
4	'Family planning is only for women'	Family planning works best when partners communicate and decide together.	'Family wellbeing is strengthened when couples talk and decide together.'	'Men don't need to be involved.'
5	'Spacing children shows lack of trust in God'	Planning can reflect wisdom and stewardship found in many faith traditions.	'Planning wisely and caring for the family does not contradict faith or trust in God.'	'God expects everyone to plan.'
6	'Family planning is population control'	Family planning is voluntary and based on individual family choice, not government control.	'Family planning is about helping families make healthy choices for themselves.'	'The government wants fewer children.'

S/N	Myth	Fact	What the influencer should say	Avoid saying
7	'Family planning is expensive or unaffordable'	Many services are free/affordable through public health programmes; awareness helps access.	'There are services designed to be affordable, and trained providers can guide you.'	'Everyone should pay for Family planning.'
8	'Methods damage the womb or cause cancer'	Some fears are exaggerated/unfounded; correct information reduces fear.	'Most concerns come from stories. A trained provider can explain real health information.'	'Some family planning methods are bad.'
9	'Only modern methods are 'real' or effective'	People use different approaches depending on circumstances.	'There are different approaches a provider can explain available options.'	'Only one approach is good for everyone.'
10	'Breastfeeding prevents pregnancy entirely'	Breastfeeding may delay fertility, but it's not guaranteed unless specific criteria are met.	'Breastfeeding can delay pregnancy in some situations. A provider can explain how that works.'	'Breastfeeding always prevents pregnancy.'
11	'Family planning destroys sexual pleasure or relationships'	Beliefs about pleasure often reflect social norms rather than evidence.	'Healthy communication between partners is more important than myths about pleasure.'	'Family planning ruins sex life.'
12	'Only women should worry about family planning'	Family planning affects both partners; shared decisions support relationship health.	'Family planning works best when husbands and wives communicate and support each other.'	'Men don't need to care about family planning.'

S/N	Myth	Fact	What the influencer should say	Avoid saying
13	'Older couples don't need family planning.'	Family planning needs depend on personal fertility and health goals, not age alone.	'Every family's situation is different. A provider can help with personal guidance.'	'After a certain age, family planning isn't needed.'
14	'Family planning choices should be private and hidden'	Openness with partners/providers supports respectful decisions and reduces stigma.	'Healthy planning comes from communication, not secrecy.'	'Keep family planning a secret.'

Table 3: Handling sensitive questions

Sensitive scenarios	Safe response	Do not say
When unmarried youth ask questions about family planning	‘Understanding health and responsibility is important as we prepare for future family life. For personal questions, a trained health provider can guide you better.’	‘Don’t worry about it now.’
When married couples ask about family planning methods	‘I can’t recommend methods, but a trained provider can help you make an informed decision together.’	‘You should use this method’
When someone expresses fear or anxiety	‘It’s normal to have concerns. Fear should not guide decisions – correct information helps. A trained provider can answer your questions safely.’	‘It’s not a big deal’
When asked about side effects of contraceptives	‘Everyone’s body is different. That’s why it’s best to speak with a trained health professional who can guide you properly.’	‘Side effects are normal, ignore it’
When faith concerns are raised	‘This conversation is about love, care, and responsibility – not changing anyone’s beliefs. Every family makes decisions based on their values.’	‘It’s not about faith. It’s science’
When challenged or attacked online	‘I respect different views. My goal is simply to promote healthy families and informed decisions.’ Then disengage	‘I’m right, you are wrong’

Table 4: Quick reference sheets

Quick reference guide	What you should do
The 3 golden rules	1. Inform, don't instruct 2. Affirm values, not arguments 3. Refer, don't advise
Universal safe response	'Thank you for sharing your thoughts. Every family is different. My goal is simply to encourage love, responsibility and healthy families. For personal or medical advice, it's best to speak with a trained health provider.'
What to say vs. what to avoid	Say: ✓ 'Planning supports wellbeing.' ✓ 'Health matters.' ✓ 'Decisions should be mutual.' ✓ 'Professional guidance helps.' Avoid: ✗ 'This method works best.' ✗ 'You should do this.' ✗ 'Religion supports this.' ✗ 'Ignore medical advice.'
When to refer immediately	Refer if the question is: • Medical • Personal • Emotional • About methods • About side effects • About fertility concerns

Quick reference guide	What you should do
One-line confidence reminder for digital influencers	‘I am sharing wisdom, not medicine. I am promoting care, not controversy.’

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***Transforming Masculinities* is Tearfund's evidence-based intervention to end sexual and gender-based violence and promote gender-equal societies.**

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