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THE ITESO OF THE KENYA-UGANDA BORDER  
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1 Introduction of Family Planning among the Iteso  
(Answer to Question 35)

The introduction of family planning ideas and practices in the Iteso area strikes us as an exceptionally difficult task. First, we shall list the obstacles that must be overcome and then offer some suggestions on how to go about it.

It seems to us that these obstacles can be listed under three categories: religious, attitudinal and organizational.

The religious factor is exceptionally important because it has a direct effect on values which influence the fertility rate. Both traditional and modern religion among the Iteso place a high value on fertility for the people. The traditional religion of the Iteso consists primarily in the cult of fertility centred round a number of domestic ceremonies in which the role of woman as an agent of fertility is the dominant symbolic theme. The cult defines her role as being responsible for the well-being of the home through the production of children and food. Traditionally the religious role of man emphasized his duties as protector of the home and its representative in the larger society. In addition to traditional religion, probably 75 per cent of the Iteso are professing Roman Catholics. Among the people of neighbouring tribes, they have a reputation for being devout Christians. To what extent this is true we cannot say. One reason for the success of the Catholic church among the Iteso may simply be that Catholic rituals do not conflict with traditional rituals.

If Catholic dogma has made any impact on the Iteso, then the religious problem will be two-fold. One problem will be to overcome values which traditional religion places on high fertility and which to some degree define the role of women. The other problem will consist in counteracting negative attitudes spread by Catholic religious teaching against techniques of limiting the family size.

The second obstacle is that there are few traditional factors which could lead to attitudes congenial to family planning. Unlike many of the other societies in Western Province of Kenya, the Iteso have always had plenty of land. Theirs has always been the area of lowest population density. Moreover, land has always been distributed equitably. This is because there were no traditional land ownership rights and, under conditions of exhaustion of soil or overcrowding, they have simply moved to another place. Also, since the Iteso as farmers have until only recently been barely integrated into the cash economy, their land requirements have been minimal. These economic aspects are most important when considering the chances of creating a favourable attitude toward family planning.

The third obstacle is organizational. There are few links between the administration and the Iteso neighbourhoods of 15 or 20 homes. Any campaign that is to be effective must penetrate deeply into the local level and, to some degree, ignore administrative difficulties.

Therefore, we would suggest that a family planning campaign should rely highly on the techniques of education and persuasion. Unfortunately, there are few indigenous institutions that can be utilized with much prospects for success.

A family planning campaign should operate at a neighbourhood level and use, if at all possible, young married men and women from that neighbourhood as family planning aides. One would need to engage in a great deal of education before simply making available the techniques of family planning. This education campaign would have to be designed not to go against traditional Teso values. First, and this applies especially to men, the Iteso must be made more aware of the problems that they will be confronting in modern Kenya. Difficulties of limited access to land, limited opportunity for capital formation and limited resources must be related to the problem of large families. Secondly, an education programme should be aimed at women that will help to redefine their role. We suggest that the dominant theme of the campaign be to point out that a woman is not only responsible for production in the home, but also for the well-being of its inhabitants - especially the children - and that this goal is incompatible with large numbers of children. Thus, the campaign would emphasize one aspect of Teso values and play down another.

## 2 Iteso Concept of Sociability and Separation of Generations (Answer to Question 56)

Teso rules of politeness are interesting for two reasons. First, general ideas of proper behaviour are expressed within an ideology of sociability that illustrates Teso notions of proper social behaviour; and second, the behaviour that is expected between specific sets of people strikingly illustrates some of the principles of Teso social organization.

In general, the Iteso have an ideology of sociability which for them defines the manner in which people should generally relate to one another. There are two contrasting adjectives which people use either to condemn or to praise others. A man is either EPAPARONE (social) or he is EPOG (proud). A man who is 'social' is friendly and co-operative, willing to help his relatives and neighbours as much as he can; he responds to his neighbour when he is asked to help in some agricultural activity. Most of all he has beer in his home and often drinks with other people in their homes; he will also share his food with others. The Iteso often eat outside in the cleared area of the home so that they can share their food with any visitor. An important aspect of local life in Teso neighbourhoods is the continual round of commensal sharing of food and beer. The Iteso say that a man who always eats inside is 'selfish'. This attitude toward eating is in marked contrast to some other African peoples who regard eating outside as a disgusting habit.

The 'social' man contrasts strongly with the one who is 'proud'. People will describe the latter as someone who regards himself as self-sufficient, who is unwilling to help other people and feels that he does not need their help and does not engage in co-operative activities; he is unwilling to share food and has no beer in his house and, if he does drink beer with other people, abuses them by belittling them and boasting of his own superiority. To call someone 'proud' may be one of the worst insults among the Iteso, and we have recorded a number of instances in which people have beaten others who have even indirectly called them 'proud'.

Added to this general framework in which manners are considered, rules of politeness also derive from a number of specific principles of behaviour. The most important, and the one which will probably concern family planning workers, is what we call 'separation of generations'. Adjacent generations, parents and children, are separated both in the formal sense and even spatially among the Iteso. This separation applies most particularly to people who have close kinship relations and also to those who have not. The Iteso express this separation in an ideology of 'fear' and 'respect'.

They say that the people of these adjacent generations have an obligation to 'fear' each other and that the senior generation especially is entitled to 'respect'. In ceremonies and other occasions these generations are spatially separated so that fathers and sons, and mothers and daughters are seated on opposite sides from each other. They may not wear each other's clothing, sit on each other's beds or inquire into each other's affairs. Some Iteso will not even allow their fathers to enter their sleeping houses, but this is rare.

Particularly important for family planners are the tabooed topics and expressions which may not be mentioned in front of a member of an adjacent generation. These matters concern sex and procreation especially. Body parts and sexual matters are always referred to by a series of euphemisms and alternate expressions, if at all. Violation of these norms of behaviour is ritually polluting and must be cleansed by the sacrifice of an animal paid as a fine by the offender. Even outsiders, such as family planning workers, will be placed into this structure of relations. The delicacy of the subject in the Teso view will require them to be very careful to whom they are talking about such topics.

While the separation of generations is an overriding principle of Iteso manners, there are a few others which deserve mention here. One of them is the remarkable equality of relations within the same generation. Behaviour is very democratic and almost all matters can be discussed freely. Another is separation of affines (in-laws). While in-laws of the same generation relate freely, those of adjacent generations are separated even more strictly than parents and children. Finally, there is the alliance of alternate generations. Grandparents or people of the grandparents' generation are allowed to joke moderately with each other and to discuss many matters that are forbidden to parents and children. From the above, it can be seen that the most important principle ruling Teso manners is that of relative generation.

### 3 Channels of Communication

(Answer to Question 59)

One of the most difficult problems in introducing an innovation or spreading information among the Iteso is to determine the channels of communication. The Iteso have a traditional form of social organization most properly described as 'fragmentary'. In the immediate pre-colonial period, their political system consisted of a number of territorially discrete units which

were primarily sufficient unto themselves. There were perhaps eight or ten units for all the Iteso of Kenya. Relations among these units were absolutely minimal and consisted only of co-operation for warfare under the authority of a prophet. There was no Maasai or Karamojong type age system that could unite people of different political communities into one group. In addition, all clans and sub-clans tended to be scattered throughout different parts of the Teso area and, as far as we can tell, never united for any purpose. Even these fragmentary traditional political units have now disappeared after the Iteso were absorbed first in the colonial and then the independent political systems.

The Iteso have not in the meantime developed forms of organization on a larger scale. For example, clans or sub-clans have not increased in importance to any degree. Instead there has developed a form of social organization based on what we call 'neighbourhoods', which in some ways are not dissimilar to the kind of phenomena found in Western European urban areas. The conception of who forms the neighbourhood is oriented to whoever is being asked at the time. Thus, if I and the man living immediately next to me are asked to list all the people of our neighbourhood, each list would include some people who are not on the other person's list. Teso neighbourhoods are best understood, we think, if they are thought of as a series of overlapping circles. There are groups of people, however, who do tend to co-operate and associate with each other more than with others. Memberships in these groups are shifting and rather hazy, but we do find that in each neighbourhood there is a core of people to whom the neighbourhood is oriented.

The above description of Teso social organization is necessary to show where the location of the channels of communication is to be found. While the Iteso are absorbed into the administrative system of modern Kenya to the degree that their traditional political units have disappeared completely, there are almost no lines of communication between administrators and the small groups of people that form the core of the neighbourhoods. Any attempt to propagate information and educate people about family planning only through administrative channels is doomed to failure. Yet, without an understanding of the rather unusual neighbourhood aspect of Teso social organization, the search for alternate channels of communication is bound to be unsuccessful.

While there are some informally influential men through whom people can be convinced of the advantages of family planning, there can be no substitute for simple hard work to ensure the even spread of family planning information. It seems to us that the largest local unit that a family planning worker can work on is 30 households; a more reasonable size is 20. Within a unit of this

size, some younger husbands and wives can be utilized to spread information and organize meetings, and see to it that instructions are understood and followed. Conflicts between people of the same and adjoining neighbourhoods and lack of personal communication between them are the major reasons for not utilizing larger units. We have worked primarily in the Amukura area where population density is rather high for the Teso locations. In other areas, because of the distance between homes, a unit of 10 or 15 homes may be more reasonable.

#### 4 Sex Education and Information for Girls (Answer to Question 64)

There is no formal education given to girls regarding matters of sex, menstruation, childbearing and childbirth. The only way a girl finds out about these things is by talking to a friend or to an older sister. A young girl will probably learn about intercourse before other matters because she is expected to, and nearly always does engage in, sexual intercourse before she begins to menstruate, especially if she has had no formal education. She will usually hear about menstruation from an older sister or a friend. When she actually begins to menstruate, she will tell her TATA (grandmother). Such matters are never discussed with one's own mother or the other women whom she calls TOTO (mother). If a young girl has begun to menstruate and misses her periods, she will tell her grandmother who then informs her that she may well be pregnant. The grandmother then goes to talk to the boy whose name she has been given, or to his parents. If he fails to assume responsibility for the girl's pregnancy, the grandmother must then inform the girl's parents of her condition.

There are no formal rules for behaviour toward a man. Girls may ask the advice of friends on this matter. We have found young girls to be very flirtatious and we think they tend to decide for themselves how they will behave toward a man or boy. There may be some pressure exerted on them by their friends to act in one way or another.

If an unmarried woman wants to learn of sexual matters, she can ask not only sisters and friends, but also the wives of her brothers. Married women tend to find out these things from their AKAIN (co-wives), especially the ones who have already given birth.

There is no free discussion between husbands and wives on matters of menstruation or pregnancy. When a woman has her first menstrual period after

marriage, she tells her husband so that he may inform his mother and a special ceremony is held. A wife also informs her husband when she is pregnant and he, in turn, tells his mother. The woman can then discuss these matters with her TATA (mother-in-law).

If a girl wants to avoid pregnancy, there is no one whose advice she can seek, for there are no traditional Teso methods of contraception. A few of the educated girls are aware of birth-control pills, but these are not used at all in the area, as far as we can tell. Some educated boys are reputed to take advantage of less well-informed girls by giving them aspirin, telling them they are birth-control pills and that the girls will not become pregnant for a specified period of time. There is also great faith among the Iteso in the efficacy of injections and people believe that there must be some kind of injection that will stop pregnancy.

It appears then that a young girl or woman can find out about sexual matters and those regarding childbirth and child rearing from her own generation - friends, sisters, sisters-in-law and co-wives. She is not allowed to discuss these matters with any of the generation adjacent to herself - anyone she calls 'mother' or with father's sister. She may however talk about these subjects with her mother-in-law who is called tata, which is the same as the word for grandmother. We think that in the past the grandmother played an important role in the sexual education of young girls, especially as adolescent girls used to stay in the sleeping house of their tata. However, as older women who are inexperienced in modern affairs, grandmothers, along with most parents, have tended to lose some of their moral authority.

#### 5 A Short Teso Vocabulary for Family Planning

(Answer to Question 68)

Abortifacient - EKEYA K'ACAKUN, medicine for abortion, either causing or preventing it; EKEYA LOCAKUNET, medicine for causing abortion. Both terms are in general use

Abort - ACAKUN, to throw out; used with ACAKUN AKQAK, to throw out of the stomach. Expression in general use

Afterbirth - ANGASIEP, pl. ANGASIEPA, actually the word for human as well as animal placenta. Term in general use

Barren - AKOLIPANUT, one who is without children. Term in general use and can apply to animals as well as people

Barrenness - AKOLIP, to be without children. Term in general use and can apply to animals as well as people

- Birth - AKIDOUN IDOUTE, one who has been born. In general use
- Birth, to give - AKIDOUN, to bring forth. In general use
- Breast feeding - AKITANAK, to cause to suckle; commonly used with EKISINIT, pl. EKISIN, which means breast. In general use
- Chastity - The word does not exist in Ateso vernacular
- Child - ETELEPAT, male child and boy, used until marriage; APESE, female child and girl, used until marriage; IKOKU, small child, term of address to either son or daughter; IKOKU N'IKALIANAN, infant, child that is suckling. All these terms are in general use
- Circumcised, to be - AKITUB, to cut. Possibly an ad hoc application, as circumcision is not practised by the Iteso
- Circumcision - ATUBO, a cutting. Possibly an ad hoc application, as circumcision is not practised by the Iteso
- Clitoris - ETEELET, exceptionally rude word although very exact, never to be used to a person of adjacent generation; AKWAN NAK'ABERU, body of a woman, a vague term that applies to other private parts too. The latter is in general use
- Coitus - AKIDUR, very rude word that may only be used with age mate of the same sex and perhaps to a lover. The following words are euphemisms listed in order of decreasing rudeness: APERO, to sleep with; AKITEFER, to cause to lie down; ABOLIA, to play; AKIMORIKIKIN, to be together
- Conceive, to - APOTI, to become pregnant; ATUBOR ELAP, to pass by the month, to miss a period; AWORIKINO, to become pregnant outside of wedlock, refers only to unmarried girls and those who have committed adultery. All terms in general use
- Contraceptive - EKEYA, medicine, injections to prevent conception given in hospitals; AKIROBOKIN, to prevent. No equivalent word for contraceptive could really be found, but informants gave these two words
- Divorce - AKIRENYAR, to drive out, expel; ANG'EROKIN, one who was driven out. Words in general use
- Ejaculation - AKILUASKIN ABERU, passing into the woman, which is a rude word; AKILUATA, to urinate, socially allowed euphemism
- Erection - AKIDAK, to lift up. In general use
- Fecundity, fertility - ABERU NAK'EDOT, one who gives birth often; TOTO K'IDWE, mother of children, used of one who has had twins or many children; APOTUN, one who is pregnant often. In general use
- Foetus - IKOKU, child; ITUAN K'AKOK, little person of the stomach. In general use
- Frigidity - MAM ETAU K'EMINA, the heart does not like; ETACI ETUAN, the person is cold. In general use
- Genitals (f) - ALIPONG, female genitalia, very rude; AKWAN K'ABERU, body of a woman, euphemism

Genitals (m.) - ELONG'OT, penis, very rude; AKWAN K'EKIOKIT, body of a man

Gestation - APARASIA NUK'APOTU, days of pregnancy. In general use

Labia - EMANERIT sing., IMANIR pl., meaning both labia minora and labia majora, very rude and used only with age mates. IMANIR KA TO KON, your mother's labia, is an expletive to apply to someone else; AKWAN K'ABERU, body of a woman, euphemism

Menopause - APALIKI ELAP, to completely stop monthly periods. In general use

Miscarriage - AMUNOUN, to become spoiled. In general use

Parturition - AKEDOUN, to give forth; ATELUM, to give forth one; AKIMUN, to give forth two or many. In general use

Penis - ELONG'OT, pl. ILONG'OI, very rude, used only among age mates; EKILIOKANE, place of a man, euphemism; ELOMOCAR, a bull's penis, vulgar

Placenta - ANGASIEP. Cf. Afterbirth

Pregnancy - APOTIU. In general use

Pregnant - EPOTIE, to be pregnant; AKITOPOT, to render pregnant; APOTUUN, to become pregnant. In general use

Semen - ADWA, rude, used only in front of age mates; AOKOT, blood, euphemism

Sterility - ARAKAKIN, to stop growing; ARARAKIN, to commit suicide. In general use

Stillbirth - EDUCNO ETUANIT, to give forth a dead one. In general use

Suckling - AKINAK, to suckle; NIKANAKANE, one that is suckling; AKITANAK, to give suck. In general use

Testes - ETOUT, pl. ITOU, rude unless referring to animals; AKWAN NAK' EKILIOKIT, body of a man, euphemism

Twins - IMWATOK, pl.; EMWATONIT (m.); AMWATONIT (f.); AKIMUT, to bear twins. In general use

Uterus, womb - TOTO K'ITUNGA, mother of people; APERIT, the sleeping place. In general use

Vagina - EOSIN, very rude; AKWAN K'ABERU, body of a woman

Venereal disease - EDEKE, also the Teso word for 'high god'

Weaning - APETOR, to wean, may be used for animals and people; AKISINYEKIN IKOKU, to refuse the child to suckle