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**Are you willing to pay this price to get a baby?**

**By ASUNTA WAGURA**  
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I CANNOT RUN away from this. Not any time soon. I have received many emails and calls inquiring how I was able to have babies.

This is because, at the age of over 40 years, God blessed me with a son, Issa, and then my twins, the latest blessings. Some people are specific: “Are they yours kabisa?”

Well, I need to talk to these folks to understand what they mean by kabisa. My grandmother visited me recently “to greet the twins”. She told me how in the village the gossip is that my babies were fathered by a Chinese man just because I live near the Thika superhighway.

I could not explain to her how science helped me to get my babies. And, though I will try, I still do not think I will have a big enough forum to explain this to the Doubting Thomases.

When I was blessed with Issa, I was candid and shared about my struggle to conceive. Issa cost me a neat pile of money, plus the psychological toll was great. I made it clear that I went for ART, meaning assisted reproductive technology.

My grandmother knows that children are given by God. Period. To her, struggle and science are not part of the conception equation. So I did not see the need to give her this information.

For those who can identify with me, when you go knocking on the doors of ART practitioners, it only means one thing: You cannot conceive naturally.

You need help. And I mean help in terms of technology to make you behold this baby that you want so badly. You may not know a lot about the medical field, but you are sure that it is your baby and it is “stuck” somewhere.

ART practitioners in Kenya are few, with additional seasonal ones who come during specific months. God forbid if you do not have tonnes of cash during their set visiting season.

They come, make a killing, then leave for their countries. Most times they leave behind broken hearts and marriages, empty bank accounts, and loans that will be serviced until Jesus returns.

I know of only two permanent ART practitioners here in Nairobi. And I do not mean gynaecologists who offer Clomede — a fertility prescription drug — and the next thing you know you are pregnant.

These are experts who offer specialised technical help. The process lasts for at least 14 months until you get your “miracle baby”. That is, if you are fortunate to get one at the first bite of the cherry. So, your patience is on trial here.

By the time you find yourself on their doorstep, you have lost count of the times you have been put on Clomede and money-eating supplements. You have visited countless doctors, to no avail, and you have decided to move on and do whatever it takes to get this baby.

Early one morning you join the long queue. Sometimes this demands that you be there by 6.30am, but the doctor will see you at 8pm and put you through to the next step. And remember you did not have a lunch break.

That is why you must be psychologically prepared. You will be sleeping on the waiting room’s seats and waking up countless times before you realise that there are 10 more people ahead of you before you get your golden chance. You will be lucky if the gynaecologist does not leave in a hurry to attend to an emergency call.

Normally, these calls coincide with when you are just about to see the expert for the first time. You are sure this doctor holds the key to your childlessness. But when emergency calls make light of your own personal emergency, you are encouraged by the queue for one reason; you are not alone. There is strength in numbers.

**Dealing with stigma**

These practitioners have another associated stigma. You go here and whoever wants to say they saw you going there can go ahead. You have already set your goal. Nothing can stop you, not even an uncooperative spouse.

These clinics are visited by only one type of people: Those who want a child, either the first or next one, and they simply cannot get it. Their eternity of trying has only yielded frustration.

You cannot lie to anyone who sees you walk in that you were there for a malaria check-up or a vaccination. This does not work. When you walk in, you simply put on a face that says, “Yes, I also want a baby”, with a “So-what?” attitude. As some of my girlfriends like to say, “unaweka sura ya kazi”.

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