

# The Weekly

## Information Resource Bulletin

### FOCUS: Population growth

Malawi has one of the largest population of young people in Africa. (National Statistical Office-2010)

Malawi has a population of over 16 million and 40 percent of this population accounts for youth.

Young people in Malawi are having sex at young ages, resulting in a high number of adolescent pregnancies, which in turn leads to rapid population growth.

The average age of first sexual intercourse in Malawi, for both boys and girls, is 17 years. (Population Reference Bureau 2010)

### The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the importance equipping the youth with family planning knowledge
- To help create a positive attitude towards planning births, having smaller families and using the modern family planning methods
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about the importance of family planning to the young people

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### The Problem: Youth Lack Knowledge on Some Family Planning Issues

Early sexual activity is high, particularly among young men in Malawi, according to a Population Reference Bureau (PRB) publication titled: "A Vision for the Health and Well-Being of Malawi's Young People."

PRB findings indicate that among the 15-to-24 age group, 14 percent of young women were sexually active by age 15, this early sexual debut could also be attributed to early marriages. Therefore, there is need for young people to

be knowledgeable about family planning methods so as to prevent unintended pregnancies and to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections – including HIV/AIDS.

For example, by using modern, long-acting, reversible family planning methods, young people can delay having children. This will in turn allow them to complete their education, increase their prospects of getting a good paying job and contribute to the development of Malawi.

## Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand the benefits of providing young people with information about modern family planning methods.

Make the following points;

It is a fact that most young people in the country are engaged in sexual activities and if they are not given enough and correct information on family planning, many of them will be at risk of having unintended pregnancies.

Family planning can prevent ill-timed pregnancies and births among the youth, which may contribute to rapid population growth.

However, a PRB publication indicates that nearly 40% of adolescents in Malawi do not know of any place to obtain contraceptive methods.

It is further stated that 63 percent of women who are 20 years old have had a child. Among them, 18% wanted the child later, and 15% did not want to have a child at all.

This tells us that there is a greater need to make young people aware of family planning options.

Let the youth know that they can access family planning methods and information from government, private and mission hospitals. Assure them that they will meet health care personnel at these places who will be able to help them.

Remind the youth about modern family planning methods that are available in the country -- such as pills, injectable, Intra Uterine Device, condoms, vasectomy and tubal ligation.

Do a vox pop with young people about the importance of family planning methods.

Have a round-table discussion with several young people from your area – males and females -- and the District Youth Officer of your district

The discussion should be about the benefits of making young people aware of family planning and how the government and other stakeholders can help the youth on this issue.

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