

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Population growth

Malawi has one of the largest number of young people in Africa.

(National Statistical Office-2010).

These youth, especially girls, are at high risk of having unintended pregnancies and being infected with sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) if they do not have enough knowledge about sexual and reproductive health issues (SRH).

Therefore, there is a great need for youth in Malawi to be provided with accurate family planning information.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the importance equipping the youth with contraceptives 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 why young people do not use contraceptives

The Problem: Youth Are Often Not Using Contraceptives

Research has shown that most young people in the country, especially those that are unmarried, are not using contraceptives.

Seventy percent of females and 58 percent of males are not using modern contraceptives. This is according to the 2010 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey.

Therefore, youth need information on the benefits of using modern contraceptives and how they help in reducing rapid population growth.

As we discussed last week, young people in Malawi are engaged in sexual activities

at a very early age, which often leads to children having children.

Many girls between the ages of 15 and 19 have begun having children – and this often means they will have many children in their life time. (MDHS 2010)

Early pregnancy and child bearing also contributes to girls marrying at young ages. This also limits a young girl's capacity to negotiate contraceptive use with their husbands, who are often older.

No access to modern contraceptives often means unplanned pregnancies.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help the youth in your community understand the importance of contraceptive methods in reducing population growth.

Make the following points;

Many adolescents in Malawi need clear and accurate information on contraceptive methods, as this will help young people improve their health and well-being and reduce the adverse consequences of risky behaviors – such as unprotected sex. These risks include: unsafe abortion, pregnancy and sexual transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS.

Young people need to know that there are safe and effective methods of preventing pregnancy, STIs, and HIV/AIDS, and these methods are available to them at any hospital or clinic. They should also know that they are not required to have parental or spousal consent to receive a contraceptive method.

Youth should know they have the right to say no to unwanted sex or to negotiate with a partner about condom use or any other method

of family planning.

Government, communities and parents need to do the following: provide young people with information and understanding about how to avoid unsafe sexual behavior and to use contraceptives, increase access to family planning services and provide youth with effective, youth-friendly health services. These measures will help young people delay childbearing.

According to the 2004 Demographic and Health Surveys report, only 16 percent of married women in Malawi between the ages of 15 and 19 were using a modern contraceptive method.

Interview young people about why they think young people don't use contraceptives.

Invite a tribal leader to discuss why childhood marriage and early pregnancy are bad for the community.

Interview a health care worker about the risks of childhood pregnancy.

Invite a health worker to discuss the process of obtaining modern contraceptives.

- Sandra Mapemba -Population Reference Bureau-PRB- Contact person+265-99-921-9789
- Prisca Masepuka; Banja La Mtsogolo: +265(0)999 367 903
- Jean Mwalabu; Department of Reproductive Health: +265993210392
- <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Reports/2014/malawi-youth-report.aspx>

