

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

Family Planning Focus

Repeated childbirth is dangerous to the health of the mother. Women are more likely to have problems during childbirth when they have had more than four children. In fact, the more children a woman has, the more likely she is going to die during childbirth.

Even if one decides to have a large family, it is best to space births at least three years apart.

Having smaller, healthier families benefits your community as well as your family.

According to a book by the then, Ministry of Development Planning and Cooperation, (***RAPID: Population and Development in Malawi-2010***) lower fertility contributes to reduced infant mortality rates because it is associated with longer intervals between births. Infants spaced less than two years apart are twice as likely to die before their first birthday as those spaced two or more years apart. Birth spacing of three years or longer is especially beneficial to infant survival.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To convince the audience of the personal advantages of having smaller families with well-spaced births.
- To convince the audience of the benefits of smaller families to their entire community
- To explore how harmful it is to have many children
- To encourage listeners to seek more information about family planning
- To stress on the importance of using modern family planning methods

The Problem: The Desire to have Many Children

According to the Malawi DHS 2010, Fertility Rate for Malawi is still high, although declining. In 2010, the Total Fertility Rate was estimated at just under six births per woman, down from 6.0 in 2004. Births were even higher in 2000 and 1992. (MDHS, 2010).

The high fertility rate puts women at significant risk and it is harmful to the development of families and communities, as well as the country.

Children who are born less than two to three years apart are more likely to have poor nutrition, to suffer from frequent illnesses, and to do poorly in school.

Without family planning, there is always an increase of unintended and unwanted pregnancies and thereby putting women at high risk of unsafe abortions.

There are so many disadvantages to the community and a family which does not space the birth of their children.

The more people there are, the less we can protect our natural resources. Communities are also unable to keep up with the demand for services.

Many communities in Malawi are now suffering shortages of jobs, water, fire wood, and even land. This was not always the case. But, as the number of people has increased, there has been a greater demand on our natural resources.

There is a strong need to work together to build healthy and productive families and communities. One of the best ways to do this is *the use of family planning methods* to have smaller families.

Activities for Journalists

Use your community radio station to help your community understand the benefits of having smaller families to an individual family, the community and the whole country.

Emphasize the point that family planning can help families avoid high-risk pregnancies and prevent unwanted childbearing.

Also inform your listeners that family planning is good for children's health. Child deaths are prevented through adequate birth spacing, prevention of births among very young women, and prevention of births among women with four or more children.

Your listeners should be made to understand that families with fewer children are better able to provide them with enough food, clothing, housing and schooling. Families with fewer children also have more time for development activities and therefore improved economic status.

Development benefits of family planning to the community include: when communities start growing more slowly, they are better able to cope with the increased need for schools, health care services, water, and other essential needs. But, when families are large, communities start growing too rapidly to keep up with the demand for services.

With smaller families we are better able to protect our natural resources like land, water, and firewood. Larger families use more of these resources, and there is a chance that they will run out.

In addition, sanitation services like garbage and human waste disposal cannot keep up with increasing numbers of people. We are likely to pollute our water, land and air, making it unusable.

Talk to a woman from your community who has had frequent child births and has a lot of children. The woman should be someone who had complications during pregnancy or delivery because of frequent child births.

Find out from the woman what her experience has been like giving birth frequently. Also ask her how having many children and giving birth frequently has affected her health.

Ask her if she is using any type of modern family planning methods. If yes, how has the method helped her? If no, how does she think the methods could help in improving her life?

Also interview a chief from the community to comment on the benefits of having a small number of children (using family planning) to the community

Talk to a local health expert on the dangers of having many children to a woman and the whole family. The expert should also talk about the benefits of family planning to families, the community and the country as a whole.

Community Engagement

Urge listeners to send SMS, call or stop by the radio station to talk about the benefits they are getting from having a small number of children in their families.

Useful Contacts

- Ministry of Health-Reproductive Health unit; contact person: Jean Mwalabu- 0993210392
- PRB- Contact person; Sandra Mapemba: +265-99-921-9789
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- http://www.healthpolicyinitiative.com/Publications/Documents/1065_1_Malawi_booklet_2_23_10_singlepg_acc.pdf
- <http://www.nsomalawi.mw/index.php/publications/malawi-demographic-and-health-survey/2010-malawi-demographic-and-health->

