

# The Weekly

## Information Resource Bulletin

### FOCUS: The Importance of Child Spacing

Malawi has a population of over 16 million and 40 percent of this population are young people.

According to the Population Reference Bureau (PRB), the average age of the first sexual intercourse in Malawi is 17 years for boys and girls.

Young people in Malawi are having sex at an early age and the result is a high number of adolescent pregnancies, which in turn leads to rapid population growth.

Some of the girls who get pregnant will be forced to get married. This in turn, will result in the girls having many children – and having to give up getting an education.

### The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the importance spacing births among young people who have just entered into marriage
- 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 Child Spacing When They Get Married

With women having, on average, five or six children, Malawi has a very high fertility rate among African nations, and this is harmful to the development of the country.

PRB findings in a publication titled: “A Vision for the Health and Well-Being of Malawi’s Young People”, states that among the 15-to-24 age group, 14 percent of young women are sexually active by age 15. This often leads to early marriages. Therefore, there is need for young people who have been

to be knowledgeable about having smaller families with well-spaced births.

Pregnancy in adolescence puts the mother and child at risk of complications and even death.

A woman who starts having children at an early age, is more likely to give birth to many children.

This can also affect the children in the family, since many children often means the parents are not able to give each child the care and attention they need and deserve.

## Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help young people in your community who got married at an early age understand the advantages of having smaller families with well-spaced births and the benefits of smaller families to their entire community.

Make the following points;

Family planning can prevent poorly-timed pregnancies and births among the youth, which contributes to early marriage and ultimately rapid population growth.

Spacing births by using family planning methods, helps preserve health and improves quality of life. Spacing births and having smaller families will contribute to improving children's health and ensuring they have access to adequate food, clothing and educational opportunities.

When communities start growing slowly, they are better able to cope with the increased need for schools, health care services, water and other essential needs. When families are large, communities cannot keep up with the

demand for services.

Repeated child births among young people is very dangerous to the mother, too. According to the Reproductive Health Unit, women are more likely to have problems during childbirth when they have had more than four children. The more children a young woman has, the more likely she is to die during childbirth.

If a family decides to have a large family, it is advisable to space births at least 3 years apart. Children who are born less than three years apart are more likely to have poor nutrition, suffer from frequent illnesses and do poorly at school.

Do a vox pop with young people about the importance of using family planning when having sex.

Have a round-table discussion with several young people from your area – males and females -- and the District Youth Officer of your district. Discuss birth-spacing, abstinence, family planning and why early marriage should be avoided.

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