

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Family Planning & Condoms

Family planning is a key development issue in Malawi that impacts the quality of lives of families, communities, and broader society.

According to the Population Reference Bureau (PRB), if current trends in fertility continue, the population of Malawi will reach 37 million by 2050. Families, on average, have six children.

A large number of children per family are contributing to the rapid population growth in the country.

Women, on average, give birth to six children. This contributes to food shortages, environmental degradation and poverty.

Unintended pregnancy is a major problem among sexually active women in Sub-Saharan Africa and occurs for a number of reasons such as inconsistent use of short-term contraceptive methods or not using modern contraception, at all. These are the reason most families have a lot of children.

In this week's bulletin, we will look at the use of condoms as a method used to avoid unexpected pregnancies and as a backup family planning method.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To increase knowledge of listeners on condoms as a backup family planning method and a method which can be used to avoid unplanned pregnancies
- To correct misconceptions and rumors about condoms
- To encourage listeners to seek more information about condoms as one way of family planning

The Problem: Low Use Of Male Condoms For Family Planning

In Malawi there are several modern family planning methods that are available: permanent reversible and barrier types. One of the barrier methods is a male condom.

Condom use is popular among the youth, but not commonly used as a birth control method in married couples.

In a small informal and unscientific survey in Blantyre, several people were randomly interviewed.

All respondents said condom use creates trust issues in the family because once a married couple starts using condoms, they feel that their partner cheats on them.

Despite having knowledge that condoms can be used as family planning method, all the respondents said that condoms are not meant for married couples.

This random survey appears to suggest that more work needs to be done to change attitudes about condom use.

A male condom is more effective than many forms of birth control.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US) website, condoms are 98 percent effective in preventing pregnancy.

It means that only two in every 100 women could get pregnant after using a male condom with their sexual partner.

Apart from providing protection against unplanned pregnancy, male condoms also offer protection against sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) including HIV/AIDS.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand how effective male condoms are in preventing unplanned pregnancy.

Explain to your listeners how a male condom works.

Male condoms work by keeping semen from entering the vagina; they form a barrier – preventing semen from going inside the vagina, unless the condom is broken.

They are an effective form of barrier contraception if used properly, and reduce your risk of getting unplanned pregnancy and contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

Here are some facts about male condoms:

- A reduced risk of pregnancy (Generally, they are 98 percent effective against pregnancy)
- Fewer concerns about acquiring STD's including HIV/AIDS

Condoms are recommended every time a couple feels they are at risk of an unplanned pregnancy.

It will also be important to let the listeners know that each condom is for one use only.

A condom can be used as a backup method. For instance, if a woman has decided to undergo sterilization, a backup method of contraception should be used to avoid pregnancy, until a doctor

confirms that the tubes are fully blocked.

Have a vox pop with a few people from your area and find out why some couples do not use condoms as a birth control method.

Interview two couples who use condoms as a family planning method. Ask them why they use condoms and the benefits they experience. Also ask them which partner came up with the suggestion to use condoms as a means of family planning. How did they reach this decision?

Interview a local nurse on the benefits of using condoms as a family planning method to avoid pregnancy or as a back-up method.

Launch a discussion about trust issues and condoms among married couples. Can anything be done to resolve these trust issues? Interview a marriage counselor and health issue about this issue.

At the end of the program, let the listeners know that they can get free condoms at government hospitals and they can buy them from supermarkets and bars across the country.

Community engagement

Urge listeners to send an SMS, call or stop by the radio station to talk about the benefits of using modern family planning methods especially condoms.

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