

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

Focus: Family Planning

More than 16 million people live in Malawi and about 40 percent of the population is made up of young people – under the age of 24. This is according to United Nations-UN.

Large families are the main reason for this population growth. On average, a woman in Malawi will have six children.

As it was discussed in one of our previous bulletins, a woman who begins giving birth at an early age is more likely to give birth to many children, and this will also contribute to population growth.

In this bulletin, we will discuss the role of men in family planning issues, especially to those who have just been married.

Family planning is often regarded as the woman's responsibility, but there is a need for men to take part in family planning issues, too.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the need for men who just got married to take a part in family planning issues
- 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 role of men who just got married in family planning issues

The Problem: Men Often Don't Take Part in Family Planning Issues

In Malawian culture, men often control important decisions about fertility and contraceptive-use in most families.

In fact, according to the United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA, it is men who usually decide on the number and variety of sexual relationships, timing and frequency of sexual activity and use of contraceptives -- sometimes through coercion or violence.

This is often the case in

most parts of the country – as men have greater decision-making power over household matters including health care.

In a random non-scientific survey conducted in Zomba district with men who have just married, six out of ten men said they cannot be involved in family planning issues, because they believe these issues are women's business.

Four men said if they were to take a role in family planning issues of their families, they would look like fools in the eyes of the society.

Activities for Journalists

Use your community radio station to help listeners understand the role men – particularly those who have recently married – need to play in family planning issues.

Make the following points:

Men who have just started a family, have a great role to play since in our society, men are seen as decision-makers in a family. Therefore, men should take the lead in initiating communication with their wives on family planning and reproductive health issues.

Traditional and religious leaders should encourage men to be involved to ensure that there is proper communication between husbands and wives in openly discussing family planning issues.

Conduct an interview with a few men who have just started a family. What role are they playing in family planning issues?

Identify a man who recently married and takes part in family planning issues. For example; does he escort his wife to the antenatal clinic? Does he remind his wife to take her contraceptive pills?

You might ask the following questions: how does he support his wife in as far as family planning issues are concerned? Why does he do that? What are the benefits he gets from supporting his wife?

Also interview the man's wife. Ask her how she feels about her husband supporting her in decisions about family planning. How has it improved communication within the family?

Talk to Fannie Kachali, the director of the Reproductive Health Unit, to find out why it is important for recently married men to take part in family planning issues.

Useful Contacts

- Fannie Kachali - Reproductive Health Unit; +265 1 735 814
- Sandra Mapemba- Population Reference Bureau- 0999 219 789
- International Planned Parenthood Federation -- <http://www.ippf.org/our-work/where-we-work/africa/malawi>
- www.healthywomen.org



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