

# The Weekly

## Information Resource Bulletin

### FOCUS: Quality of Life and Population Growth

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 a modern contraception, at all.

Women in rural Malawi, on average, give birth to six children. This contributes to rapid population growth.

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

Everyone in this country has a role to play in as far as population growth is concerned.

This week we will discuss the role of religious leaders in population growth and family planning issues

### The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the need for religious leaders to take a part in family planning and population growth 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 religious leaders in family planning issues

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### The Problem: Religious Leaders Have a Role in Addressing Population Growth

With more than 90 percent of Malawians belonging to a religious group, religious leaders have an important role to play in addressing population growth and family planning issues.

Religious leaders are mostly known to be influencers of ethics and morality and they define what is approved or prohibited. Therefore, there is a great need for religious leaders to take part in this issue.

Religious followers, sometimes get confusing messages about what the scripture says on having many children.

For example, Genesis 1 verse 28 says "God blessed them and said to them: be fruitful and increase

number, fill the earth and subdue it...."

Many people will usually confuse this verse by thinking that God told us to have many children to fill the earth, but according to one religious leader who opted for anonymity, this particular scripture does not mean that each family should have many children, but should make sure they can care for the children they have – responsibly.

Therefore, religious leaders have a role in dispelling such confusion and preventing the problems that would arise due to rapid population growth, both to their followers and the whole nation.

## Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community and religious leaders understand that they have a big role to play in population growth and family planning issues.

Let them know, particularly the religious leaders that since they have readily available audiences, they can use that opportunity to educate their congregation about the benefits of family planning to individuals, families and the whole community. This can lead to improvement in population growth issues and better quality of life for everyone.

Since religious leaders have a great influence on their congregation, their messages to the people have real meaning and are often acted upon.

Therefore, family planning information and methods that are supported by religious leaders are more likely to be accepted by a lot of people.

The religious leaders should encourage adolescent girls in their congregation to avoid early marriages and pregnancies. As discussed in a previous bulletin, early marriages and early pregnancies contribute to rapid population growth.

Religious leaders can also educate their congregation on modern family planning methods and their benefits.

Have an interview with several religious leaders from your area and ask them what they think is their role in population growth and family planning issues. Also ask them if they think that enough is being done by religious leaders in managing the population.

Have a round table discussion with religious leaders from various faiths. Ask them how they are contributing to managing population

### Useful Contacts

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