

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Population Growth, Economic Growth and Poverty

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world.

According to a World Bank website, Malawi is a low-income country which is ranked 170 out of 186 countries surveyed in the 2013 Human Development Index or (HDI)

The HDI is a tool developed by the United Nations to measure and rank countries' levels of social and economic development. It's based life expectancy, number of years of schooling, expected years of schooling and gross national income per capita.

Malawi has a GDP per capita of lower than \$765 dollars, based on World Bank data. GDP is the value of all goods and services produced by a country in a given year. It's one of the primary indicators of a country's economic performance.

A rise in per capita GDP signals growth in the economy and tends to translate into jobs.

In this bulletin, we will look at economic development, rapid population growth and poverty.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about population growth and poverty
- 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 on how population growth leads to poverty

The Problem: Population Growth and Poverty

Malawi has an estimated population of over sixteen million people and being one of the poor countries in the world, it's facing numerous economic challenges.

Rapid population growth is an obstacle to economic progress in most poor countries.

According to the World Bank, over half of Malawi's population still live below the poverty line - earning less than one US dollar per day.

As was discussed in our previous bulletins, rapid population growth increases

the number of people in need of basics – such as health care and education. A large population, particularly in a small country, makes it difficult for the government to improve the quality of life – and this ultimately effects economic development.

Having many children causes many families to live in poverty – and makes it nearly impossible for them to escape being poor.

It means the children may not get a proper education, lack health care and not get proper nutrition.

Use your radio station to help your community understand how population growth can lead to poverty.

Make the following points:

Women who are unable to delay or stop childbearing are unlikely to get a proper education, send their daughters to school and earn a living wage. This will lead to economic challenges for a family.

Earlier we noted that over half of Malawi's population still lives below the poverty line. In simple terms this means they don't earn enough money to support themselves or their families.

These families often have many children whom they are unable to provide even the basic necessities such as food, clothing and school fees.

Malawi relies on agriculture for its economic development since most Malawians are farmers. However, because of the large population, most of the agricultural produce is consumed within the family – leaving these

families with little or nothing to sell – thus restricting their means of supporting themselves.

What's the solution? For one thing, it's smaller families. Parents need to consider family planning methods – and remember that while it is their right to have as many children as they want, it is also their responsibility to ensure they receive proper education, health care, nutritious food and clean water.

Talk with someone from Population Reference Bureau about the connection between larger families and poverty.

Interview a nurse or doctor about modern birth control methods. Ask them to describe the various methods and the importance that men support modern family planning methods.

Interview a family that has many children. What are their hardships? Why do they believe life is so difficult? Would life be better with a smaller family? Are their sons and daughters going to be able to finish school? What do they believe are the solutions to a better life?

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