

# The Weekly

## Information Resource Bulletin

### FOCUS: Population growth

As we've discussed in previous bulletins, rapid population growth places greater demands for more land, food, water and other resources.

For instance, high population growth causes costs to rise on essential social services -- and this means the government will need more revenue for economic growth.

Also bear in mind that if a lot of people don't have access to basic needs such as adequate food, housing, education and employment, then many may be forced to consider crime as a way to survive.

This week we look at how population growth affects prison services in Malawi.

### The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the impact of population growth on prison services
- To help create a positive attitude towards planning births, having smaller families and using modern family planning methods
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about the impact of population growth on the prison services.

### The Problem: Population Growth and Over-populated Prisons

Malawi has an estimated population of over sixteen million people, and is among the least developed countries.

With such a big population, it is inevitable that there will be crime.

Malawi's prisons are over-crowded -- with the current prison population being at more than double the estimated capacity.

For example, according to the Prison Services Department, one of the major prisons in the country,

*Maula*, has the capacity of 800 people, but currently accommodates 2,300 prisoners.

Because of population growth and an increase in crime, it is hard for the government to build more prisons to adequately accommodate prisoners.

Additionally, most prisons in Malawi are old. They were built during the Kamuzu Banda era, when Malawi's population was smaller and able to adequately accommodate prisoners.

## Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand that rapid population growth affects prison services.

Make the following points:

Overcrowding in prisons, is a major contributor to almost all problems within the prisons, including health issues.

Because of population growth, which has led to overcrowding in prisons, most prisoners develop boils and this in turn leads to the spread of skin diseases.

Apart from skin diseases, overcrowding in prisons, often leads to the increase of tuberculosis, measles and other communicable diseases.

Ultimately, these diseases can affect not only the prison population, but the general population of Malawi, as well.

There is a need to get a handle on the country's population growth to avoid these kinds of unnecessary health issues.

Consider the use of modern family planning methods. We should all know that it is our right to have children, but it's also our responsibility to provide for them – ensuring they have proper health care and access to a quality education to reduce the risk of today's young

people turning to a life of crime.

Traditional leaders together with their communities should initiate community-based recreation programs for youth. These programs will keep young people busy and reduce the temptation to get involved in criminal activities.

Interview a former convict. Let him/her talk about how overcrowding in prison affected him/her.

Interview Victor Mhango from the Centre for Human Rights, and ask him about the situation in the country's prisons.

Interview a local tribal leader and ask what he/she is doing to keep young people in the community busy with interesting activities.

Discuss the overcrowding issue with the Acting Chief Commissioner of Prisons Kennedy Nkhoma. What problems does he see inside the prison system? Is disease a big concern? Do diseases often spread into the general population from prisons?

Also interview Sandra Mapemba from the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) and find out how population growth affects prison services in the country and discuss possible solutions.

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- <http://www.prb.org/publications/articles/2012/malawi-population-2012-asp>
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