

# The Weekly

## Information Resource Bulletin

### FOCUS: population growth

Even though, Malawi has made significant improvement in addressing its population issues, large family size remains the norm despite the high demand for family planning. (DHS-2010)

It is clear to see that this rapid pace of growth will not only affect families—but poses a significant burden on Malawi's government and economy to provide more services to the people.

If the current population growth trends continue, Malawi will need to triple the number of health care facilities, primary schools, nurses, and teachers over the next 30 years to provide adequate health services and opportunities to gain education and jobs.

This week, the bulletin will focus on how population growth affects crime rates in the country.

### The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To increase knowledge of listeners on how population growth affects crime rates
- To give the participating journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on population growth and the increase in crime rates
- To help journalists engage their communities in the search for solutions to population growth and the effects it has on crime rates

---

### The Problem: Population Growth and Increased Crime Rates

While current figures on crime are not available, in 2012, Malawi's Police Service suggested that overall the nation's crime rate was down 18 percent compared to the previous year; however, it conceded that violent crimes – such as murders and robberies had increased.

Economic and social development, environmental protection and population size are all related. As the human population grows, the more it costs to provide essential social services and the more income is necessary for economic growth.

If a lot of people do not have access to basic needs such as adequate housing, healthcare, education and employment, then many may be forced to consider crime as a way to survive.

Higher unemployment would certainly increase poverty and at the same time

Population in the country is growing much faster than the economy, social services such as hospitals and schools, the environment (land size, trees and water) can adequately support

Having fewer children will improve the ability of heads of households to meet the basic needs of family members.

It is not easy for someone who is poor to provide good education to their children, as they may not have enough money to send their children to school.

Not providing an education for children increases the probability of young people spending more time on the streets and potentially associating with gangs, which may lead to crime.

These problems could be minimized more easily if we do not add more people to our small country.

## Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand how population growth contributes to high crime rates in the country.

As mentioned on page 1, when a country has a lot of people, it is difficult for the government to provide enough services to educate all its children, and provide adequate health care and employment.

According to the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report for 2009, 74 per cent of the population in Malawi still lives below the income poverty line of US \$1.25 a day (about MK460).

According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development-IFAD, larger households in Malawi, are more likely to be poor, particularly those with many children. Access to education, which is a major driver of getting a well-paid job is also a problem for poor families.

Nearly 30 percent of poor children do not even start primary school, which is free in Malawi because of poverty. Secondary and higher education is also a challenge to poor families, mainly due to the required enrollment fees.

As you can see here, lack of education often leads to high levels of poverty, which will in turn lead to an increase in unemployment rates.

When a country becomes overpopulated, it gives rise to unemployment as there are fewer jobs to support a large number of people. Rise in unemployment gives rise to crime as people are forced to steal to feed their family and provide them with the basic necessities of life.

Some points to consider as Malawi's population continues to soar.

Consider the use of modern family planning methods – and remember: it is your right to have children, but it's also your responsibility to provide for them – ensuring they have proper health care and access to a quality education.

Traditional leaders together with their communities should initiate community-based recreation programs for youth. These programs will keep the youth busy and not tempt them to get involved in criminal activities.

The traditional leaders should also work together with the government in requesting banks to help those that are unemployed get small loans to start a business. This will help reduce the crime rate by allowing parents to provide for their families.

Interview people in your community and ask them about the crime rate where they live. Is crime a problem? What do they believe are the solutions?

Have a round table discussion with a man and a woman who are unemployed, a traditional leader, a police officer and a family planning nurse. The discussion could focus on how population growth contributes to high levels of crime. Ask the man and woman how unemployment affects their daily life and how they survive.

The police officer can talk about crime rates in his community. What types of crimes are happening? Why do the police think crime has increased? The traditional leader can talk about what he/she, as a leader, is doing to help reduce crime. Are the programs working? The family planning nurse can talk about the benefits of having fewer children and using modern family planning methods.

### Useful Contacts

- Sandra Mapemba; Population Reference Bureau (PRB); Phone: +265(0)999219789
- The police public relations officer in your area or the national police PRO +265 1754 644
- [http://www.healthpolicyinitiative.com/Publications/Documents/1065\\_1\\_Malawi\\_booklet\\_2\\_23\\_10\\_singlepg\\_acc.pdf](http://www.healthpolicyinitiative.com/Publications/Documents/1065_1_Malawi_booklet_2_23_10_singlepg_acc.pdf)
- <http://www.prb.org/publications/articles/2012/malawi-population-2012.aspx>



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



INFORMING  
DECISIONMAKERS  
TO ACT



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS