

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Flooding and Population Growth

Malawi recently experienced devastating floods in its southern region.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the floods have killed dozens of people and displaced thousands of others from their homes.

Deforestation, climate change and rapid population growth are some of the factors that lead to flooding.

In this week's bulletin, we will look at how rapid population growth leads to floods.

In addition, acceleration of human population growth and changes in land use patterns have increased human vulnerability to floods.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To learn from other listeners on what Malawians can do to avoid or manage floods.
- 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 relationship between population growth and floods

The Problem: Population Growth and Flooding

There are many reasons why flooding takes place, and population growth is just one of those reasons.

In most cases, flooding occurs due to a powerful weather system, but certain human activities can also worsen the chances of flooding.

Rural and urban development can disrupt the natural system of waterways, causing further flooding issues.

Population growth and urbanization has led to demand for more land.

This has forced many people to construct houses in places such as *Soche* and *Mpingwe* hills in Blantyre.

By constructing houses there, it means clearing the land of trees and other important vegetation.

Trees and plants act as a natural barrier to slow water as it runs off the land. Roots bind the soil and prevent it from being washed away.

The absence of vegetation causes the topsoil to erode more quickly, and increases flood risk during heavy rains.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand that rapid population growth has the potential of causing devastating floods.

In one of our previous bulletins we looked at how population growth leads to high rates of unemployment. We discussed that high levels of unemployment will lead to many people being jobless and eventually moving to cities to try to find work.

Because of overpopulation in the cities, some people end up living in unplanned towns, which are often in flood-prone areas, such as *upper Chilobwe, Naotcha* and *Soche* hills in Blantyre, where recent floods destroyed a lot of property and lives.

The three townships, have a very high population which has increasingly intensified human activities in the townships.

For instance, deforestation in *Soche hill* has also played a role in the the recent floods. Trees and other vegetation hold back water

run-off from rains and release it gradually back into the soil, to reduce flooding.

Therefore, there is a need for something to be done to reduce the severe flooding. One of the long-term solutions is to reduce population by using family planning methods. Smaller families mean a small population with less deforestation and urbanization.

Have a vox pop with a few people from your area and ask them why they think the flooding was so severe. Did hillsides wash away due to deforestation?

Interview Paul Chiunguzeni, the principal secretary for the Department Of Disaster Preparedness and ask why the flooding was so bad. Ask him about government plans to avoid and limit future flooding. Are flood management plans being put in place?

Interview Sandra Mapemba of Population Reference Bureau and ask her how population growth plays a role in flooding. Ask her about possible solutions.

Useful Contacts

- Department of disaster preparedness; Principal Secretary; Mr Paul Chiunguzeni +2651772428
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- www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/275944/icode/



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