

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Condom use

More than a million Malawians are living with HIV, according to the National AIDS Commission (NAC). And it says out of the one million people with HIV, nearly a third are young people under the age of 24.

Research commissioned by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Ministry of Health in 2010, found that low condom use is one of the causes of high HIV infections.

A 2011 UNAIDS report reported similar findings. In addition, the Malawi Demographic Health Survey- (DHS) noted that among young men, HIV prevalence is slightly higher for those who reported not using a condom during their last sex compared to young men who reported using a condom.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the importance of condom use
- 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 use of condom use among the youth

The Problem: Lack of Condom Use Among Youth

Malawi has a youthful population. According to the National Statistical Office (NSO) nearly three-quarters of the population is under the age of 30.

Increased condom use could help these youth because they offer dual protection: preventing sexually transmitted infections such as syphilis, gonorrhoea and HIV as well as unplanned pregnancies.

In a random, unscientific survey, eight out of 25 young people interviewed in Lilongwe, said they avoid using condoms for fear of being labelled promiscuous and 12 of the young people said myths associated with condom use such as less enjoyment during sex deters them from using condoms.

The remaining five who were surveyed said they do not feel the need to use condoms because they always feel like their partners will disapprove.

So there is need for all Malawians - religious leaders, traditional leaders, parents and the youth themselves to take part in creating demand for condoms - and ensuring that condoms are being used consistently and correctly.

The youth should be encouraged to use condoms and always be reminded that they help to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDS) and to prevent transmission of the human papillomavirus or HPV, which can cause cervical cancer.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help young people from your community understand the importance of condom use.

Condoms are highly effective against the most dangerous of sexually transmitted infections - HIV.

They are also effective against unintended pregnancy as well as against gonorrhea, syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Remind young people that abstinence is the only way to guarantee staying 100 percent safe. Yet, condoms are by far the best protection for anyone who is sexually active.

Condoms are inexpensive (less than 50 Kwacha) and readily available at supermarkets, filling stations, pharmacies and grocery stores. They are also frequently distributed for free in some health clinics.

Condoms are relatively easy to use. However, it may help to practice. Health practitioners may be of great help in assisting youth in knowing and understanding how to use a condom.

Health-care providers can encourage condom use during visits to the youth-friendly health clinics by

talking young people and helping them figure out how to talk with sex partners about using condoms. Such interventions can also take place in community settings, such as workshops in which the youth could role-play discussions about using condoms.

Have a vox pop with a few young people from your area and find out why they think some young people do not use condoms.

Have an interview with a boy and a girl who use condoms in their relationship. Ask them why they decided to be using condoms and the benefits they have experienced since they started using them.

Talk to a nurse from your local hospital, to talk about the benefits of condoms use.

Get health officials to discuss the myths surrounding condoms – including concerns about being labeled promiscuous.

Work with your local health clinics and help distribute free condoms during your radio programs that focus on this issue.

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