

# The Weekly

## Information Resource Bulletin

### Family Planning Focus

According to a study by the African Institute for Development Policy and Population Action International, **in Malawi women have an average of 5.8 children**; this is only a slight decline from 40 years ago, when the average was 7.2 children per woman.

**The high fertility rate also puts women at significant risk**; Malawi has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. According to UNFPA, in Malawi 16 women die every day in pregnancy or childbirth. **Family planning reduces the number of unintended and unwanted pregnancies** and thereby saving women from high risk pregnancies and unsafe abortions

However, despite persistent advocacy encouraging the use of modern contraceptive methods for family planning, the fertility rates in most sub-Saharan African countries, including Malawi, remains unacceptably high, because of cultural, economic and political barriers.

### The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- Identify factors that facilitate or constrain the use of modern FP methods in Malawi
- Find out from the community on how couples can work together in deciding on which modern family planning method to use
- To stress on the benefits of using modern family planning methods
- To dispel some of the myths surrounding Modern family planning methods especially those to do with side effects
- Encourage openness between husbands and wives on issues to do with family planning
- Give the participating journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on these issues

### The Problem:

#### Not Using Modern Family Planning Methods

Family planning is a proven, cost-effective intervention that empowers women and men to exercise their right to make voluntary and informed decisions about the number, spacing, and timing of pregnancy and childbearing.

According to the 2010 Malawi DHS, knowledge of any contraceptive method is universal in Malawi, with 98 percent of all women and 99 percent of all men knowing at least one method of contraception.

Despite the fact that knowledge of modern family planning methods is high in Malawi and that some of these methods are readily available, some women and men are still not using any of these methods.

This implies that knowledge and availability of the modern family planning methods alone does not

determine use of these services and that other factors influence decisions on whether or not to adopt modern family planning methods.

**Some of the reasons some women are not using modern Family Planning methods to prevent or postpone pregnancy are: partner refusal, negative attitudes, myths and beliefs that surround the use of family planning methods.**

Sometimes, using these methods depend mostly on husband's approval. **Most women would not use family planning methods because their husbands would like to have more children and therefore disapprove of the use of family planning methods.** Some women do not use the modern family planning because they believe that family planning methods have side effects.

## Activities for Journalists

Use your community radio station to help your community understand that modern family planning method is a safe way of controlling the number of children one can have.

You should offer some solutions to couples on how they can decide together to start using the modern family planning methods.

**Explore some of the motivating factors for using modern family planning methods such as:**

*Having the desired number of children, lack of finances to support children, experiencing pregnancy or delivery complications in previous pregnancies, the desire to maintain good maternal health and participate in development work, and family problems.*

Encourage couples to choose modern family planning methods together. One reason some women do not use modern family planning is because of their husband's disapproval.

This may be because of the authority that men have over household decisions and the high regard that wives have of their husbands, which is the case in most cultures.

On the fear of side effects - not all the side effects that people associate with modern family planning methods are related to these methods.

People's use of modern family planning methods are affected by perceived benefits, concerns about side effects and how methods may affect

relationships with partners. In order for family planning intervention programs to be more effective there is need to help people distinguish fact from fiction.

Male participation in modern family planning is needed to increase support to women.

Talk to a couple who does not use any modern family planning method and has many children. Ask them how this has affected their lives economically, emotionally and physically.

- Ask them about how they manage to take care of their children
- How this has affected their day to day life
- If they have heard of modern family planning methods
- Why they don't use modern family planning methods
- How they think family planning methods could help them improve their lives

Have another couple who are using one of the modern family planning methods and ask them how they have benefitted from it.

Finally talk to a local health expert especially those from BLM on the importance of using modern family planning methods and making decisions together as a couple in deciding which method to use. The expert should dispel some of the myths surrounding modern family planning methods especially those relating to side effects.

### Useful Contacts

- Timothy Bonyonga-Safe motherhood initiative-+265992962914
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