

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Population growth

Rapid population growth places greater demands for more land, food, water and other resources.

More than 80 percent of the population in Malawi earns its income from agricultural activities.

According to a publication by Population Reference Bureau (PRB), the yearly production of maize will barely feed the population and if population growth continues at today's rate, Malawi will have very little maize for export by 2040. This will happen if families continue to have, on average, six children.

This week we will look at how population growth leads to food shortages.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the impact of population growth on food availability in the country
- 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 impact of population growth on food availability.

The Problem: Population Growth and Food Shortages

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), one in eight people go hungry in the world and in Africa this situation is almost twice as bad, with closer to one in four people going hungry.

Population growth means more food is needed to adequately feed more people in Malawi.

Another way to look at it: the more people there are, the more arable land and water will be needed for agricultural purposes.

Currently, Malawi has a population of about 17 million people.

By January 2014, according to the World Food Program (WFP) nearly two million people were facing food shortages in the country. This number is up by a whopping 27 percent from the figure released in July 2013.

The largest numbers of people experiencing food shortages are located in the districts of Mzimba and Mangochi. These also happen to be the districts where population growth is highest.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand that rapid population growth leads to food shortages.

Make the following points:

A 2005 report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that the goal of achieving food security will be made more difficult if population growth rates cannot be reduced.

While poverty and natural disasters are the most common causes of food shortages, rapid population growth overburdens the already strained financial and natural resources of a country.

This, in turn, greatly hampers efforts to raise incomes and reduce food shortages, particularly in rural areas where food shortages are often worse.

As a result of population growth, Malawi has had its fair share of food shortages. There was a serious food shortage in the country early last year. The government tried to ease the impact

by rationing maize (limiting maize sales to 10 kilograms per person) and this led to price hikes for maize.

Family planning methods can help families to plan and space their children – and, in the process, reduce rapid population growth.

There is also a need for people to start practicing modern farming practices such as conservation agriculture which usually leads to improvement of soil productivity.

Do a vox pop with a few people from your area and ask them if they are concerned about food shortages. Ask farmers if they have experienced poor crop yields as a result of weather. What do they think some of the solutions are to limiting food shortages?

Have a panel discussion with two farmers and an agricultural specialist from your area. Discuss how population growth leads to food shortages.

Interview someone with Population Reference Bureau about the connection between population growth and food shortages.

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- <http://www.fao.org/giews/countrybrief/country.jsp?code=MWI>
- <http://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/nearly-one-and-half-million-need-food-assistance-onset-lean-season>



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