

# The Weekly

## Information Resource Bulletin

### FOCUS: Family Planning

Malawi's population could reach 23 million by 2025 and 37 million by 2050 if most families continue to have, on average, six children, based on UN projections.

Population growth, according to WHO and UNICEF, has resulted in poor sanitation conditions and the contamination of rivers and other water resources in sub Saharan Africa as well as in other developing countries.

The UNICEF/WHO report states that every year, unsafe water, combined with a lack of basic sanitation, kills at least 1.6 million children under the age of five years old.

In this week's bulletin, we will look at how population growth affects sanitation.

### The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

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

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### The Problem: Population Growth and Sanitation

Based on a study by the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) in Malawi, poor sanitation costs the country nearly nine billion Kwacha a year.

The study also suggests that more than five million Malawians use unsanitary or shared latrines and another one million people have no latrine at all and must defecate in the open.

This is how population growth is contributing to poor sanitation in the country. When there are a lot of people in a community, it is not easy to get enough land to construct a latrine for each house, this is why most people are forced to share latrines or defecate in the open.

These unhygienic practices may

lead to diseases such as cholera or diarrhea.

According to WHO, nearly 8,800 Malawians, including 4,500 children under the age of 5, die each year from diarrhea. Almost 90% of these deaths are directly attributed to unclean water, poor sanitation and hygiene.

Due to population growth, communal water points and sanitation facilities may be a problem to a community.

A well/borehole that is used by a lot of people can be difficult to maintain and keep clean – and this can result in people drawing unclean water from these water sources.

## Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand how population growth contributes to poor sanitation.

As mentioned, some people are forced to share a toilet or worse must defecate in the open when a community has many people and there is not enough space for individual toilets.

The World Resources Institute (WRI) reports that public defecation is a major obstacle to good sanitation for a growing population, especially in developing parts of the world.

According to WRI, Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, including Malawi, where there are high population growth rates, account for the vast majority of places where people don't have access to latrines.

While Malawi has made progress in reducing the number of people without latrines from 35% in 1990 to 11% in 2008, Malawi is still at risk of continued diarrheal diseases caused by open defecation. (Water Supply and Sanitation in Malawi report -2010).

Remind your listeners that the most common illness associated with poor sanitation is diarrhea.

Rapid population growth often leads to many people not having access to clean water – and having to walk long distances to find it since the few water sources are used by a lot of people.

### **Suggest the following solutions to the listeners:**

One long term solution: choose a modern family planning

method, which will help them have few children and this will eventually lead to good sanitation since there will be fewer people in the community and resources allocated to them will be enough.

Let every household in your community take it upon themselves to stop open defecation and build a toilet/latrine to avoid diarrheal diseases

Traditional leaders could develop by-laws that will place heavy fines on those defecating openly. Such fines will encourage community members to build latrines.

Another way is to treat the water with chlorine or water-guard. Water-guard is available in most grocery shops in the country at a relatively low price.

Have a vox pop with a few people from your community and find out how they think population growth leads to poor sanitation.

Have a round table discussion with several people from your area and a family planning nurse. Let them discuss how population leads to poor sanitation and how your community can work together in finding solutions to this problem.

### **Community engagement**

Urge listeners to send an SMS, call or stop by the radio station to talk about the effects of population growth on sanitation.

### Useful Contacts

- Sandra Mapemba; Population Reference Bureau (PRB); Phone: +265(0)999219789
- Minister of health and population; Dr Jean Kalirani ; phone +2651788849
- [www.unicef.org/malawi/MLW\\_annualreport\\_2010.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/malawi/MLW_annualreport_2010.pdf)
- [www.unicef.org/malawi/wes\\_3975.html](http://www.unicef.org/malawi/wes_3975.html)
- PLAN Malawi; phone: +265999970400(open defecation)



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