

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

Family Planning Focus

Family planning is more important than ever as Malawi's population keeps growing.

Throughout history, the burden of family planning has more often than not fallen to women. This burden has continued even with the undisputable evidence that life cannot be created without contributions from both a man and a woman.

The role of men in fertility and family planning in sub-Saharan Africa is becoming increasingly important in the context of raising contraceptive prevalence and reducing the level of fertility.

In some cases, women do not have control over their own reproductive behavior. According to research findings by C-Change, male partners and other family and community members exert significant influence over a woman's fertility and family planning decisions

Failure to give women the ability to decide the timing and number of children is deeply damaging -- not just for the women themselves, but for societies, too.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To determine the role of men in family planning decision-making
- To convince men that family planning is not only a woman's issue but that men also need to get involved
- To convince men that it is best to have smaller sized families
- To encourage men to openly discuss family size and family planning issues with their partners
- To discuss some of the reasons men do not get involved in Family planning matters

The Problem: The Desire to have Many Children

Often women are the ones concerned with family planning and there seems to be an opinion that family planning is a woman's business. Should family planning be of concern to the men, too?

Men have a greater role in family planning and without them women find it very difficult to successfully follow the instructions given to them at the clinic.

For example, a birth-control method like Depo - Provera requires that a man must abstain from sex or use a condom for a period of seven days after the injection. It is during this time that some men choose not to understand their role in family planning.

Some refuse or are unable to get involved in family planning, either in decision-making or enabling their partners to use family planning methods.

The men will always say they want to have more children, so as to be seen as the so-called 'real men' in the communities.

Without the husband being actively involved in the use of modern family planning methods, any type of contraceptive a woman decides to use for family planning will prove a waste of time in the long run.

Therefore it is very important for men to take part in family planning issues.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand that family planning is not an issue for women only but men too, have a very big role to play.

Mention some of these roles in the program:

Men can help remind their wives on the dates to go and get refills or receive an injection if she is taking injectable birth control. Men can also remind their partner to take her pills every morning.

Men have a greater role of talking to other men about family planning so that their friends can also understand the importance of family planning in their families. This can be an effective way of convincing men because most of the time men think that the best advice comes from men, not women.

Those men who do understand the importance of family planning tell their friends in their meeting places – such as when they are playing *bawo* (a game played with marbles) or watching football.

Also encourage chiefs to play a big role in encouraging men to take part in family planning in their families. During village meetings where several developmental issues are discussed, the chiefs could include messages on family planning in their talk. The chief could encourage their community to take part in family planning so that they can have a smaller number of children to care for.

Encourage men not to stop their wives from using family planning methods. Make them understand that family planning gives the woman time to rest after giving birth and this gives women time to properly raise the child and also participate in other activities that are happening at the community level.

The woman can also engage in small scale business which can bring money to the family instead of just relying on the husband to feed and clothe the family.

Encourage spouses to discuss health issues and engage in “joint decision-making” in choosing the method that will best work for them.

Radio debate

Have a panel of five people - two men who take part in family planning issues – one who encourages his wife to go for family planning methods or someone who takes time to talk to friends about family planning. In addition, have a man who does not support family planning, a woman and a health expert.

In this debate, pose a question: do men have a role in family planning matters? Let the guests justify their answers to this question.

Also ask the woman what kind of support women look for from men when it comes to family planning issues

Do an interview with a chief on what he/she is doing to make sure that men from his/her area are taking part in family planning issues.

While men have “high awareness” of the need for and importance of family planning, they often have “poor knowledge” of the various modern methods of family planning and how they work. Let your listeners know that in your next program you will talk about some of the modern family planning methods available in various clinics.

Community Engagement

Urge listeners to send SMS, call or stop by the radio station to talk about the importance of male involvement in family planning issues.

Useful Contacts

- PRB- Contact person; Sandra Mapemba: +265-99-921-9789
- Timothy Bonyonga Safe mother hood initiative-+265992962914
- <https://www.c-changeprogram.org/sites/default/files/Barriers-to-Family-Planning-Use-Malawi.pdf>
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