



Malawi: Investing in Our Future Now

“Malawi: Investing in Our Future Now” highlights the advances Malawi has made and the challenges it still faces as it strives to become a middle-income country. Exploring the impact of rapid population growth at the national and the family level, the presentation illustrates the links between rapid population growth, family planning and development. The presentation underscores the importance of addressing rapid population growth and meeting unmet need for family planning in order to reduce poverty and achieve national development goals.

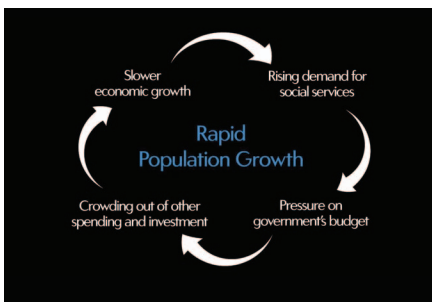


Malawi is on the verge of a bright future, with improved child survival, an increasing gross domestic product and higher school enrollment.



However, not everyone benefits yet from these changes.

The absolute number of people living below the poverty line is just over 5 million, the same number as in 1998.¹



The population is growing faster than the economy can keep up. Malawi adds over 400,000 people a year. At this rate, the country will grow to four times its current size by 2050.²

More people will need social services. Greater pressure will be placed on the government's budget as it seeks to meet those needs, crowding out other investments. Ultimately, this could slow the country's economic growth.



Migration and population growth mean cities are getting more crowded, making it harder to provide adequate housing and services like water and electricity.

As the rural population grows, landholdings are getting smaller and soil productivity is decreasing. Desperate farmers are moving onto marginal lands.³

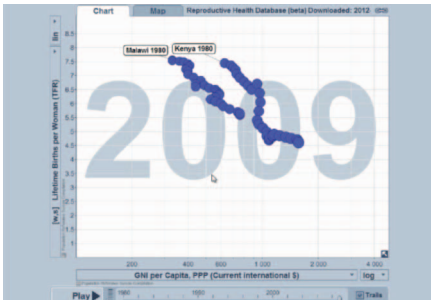
While the size of the population is growing larger every year, the amount of available land is not.



Many countries have made significant economic progress over the past few decades, in part by managing population growth.

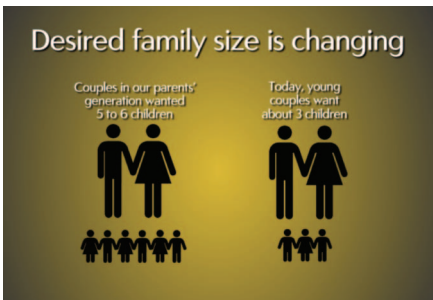
With fertility declines, these countries were able to invest in national development, and today have much higher gross national incomes per person than Malawi.⁴

To achieve its development goals and become a middle-income country, Malawi needs to make addressing population growth a priority.



Kenya shares many of the same experiences as Malawi, but has made greater strides towards development. One thing that made the difference for Kenya was an early and sustained commitment to population and family planning.⁵

Meeting the unmet need for family planning and reducing the fertility rate are key steps for Malawi to boost its economic growth.



Malawian couples today want fewer children (about three) than their parents did (five to six children).⁶

More women are choosing to use family planning. Today, 42 percent of married Malawian women are using modern contraception.

And when men are positively involved, couples are even more likely to use family planning.⁷



However, couples are still having more children than they intend and the fertility rate remains high, at nearly six children per woman. One reason is unmet need for family planning.

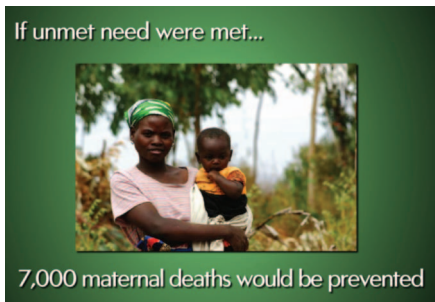
One in four women says that she does not want another child now or at all but is not using family planning. These women have an unmet need for family planning.



This unmet need results in high rates of unplanned pregnancy: nearly half of pregnancies in Malawi are unplanned.⁸

Unplanned pregnancy increases the risk of disability or death for both mothers and babies. In Malawi, one woman dies every two hours from causes related to pregnancy or childbirth.⁹

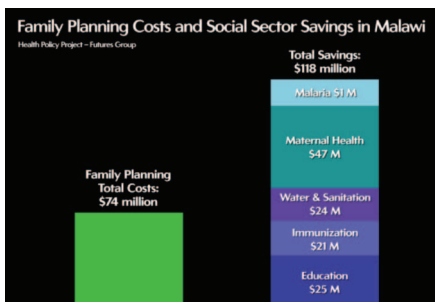
Unplanned pregnancy is also more likely to result in unsafe abortion.



These deaths can be avoided! If unmet need for family planning were met by the year 2020, we could prevent:

- 7,000 maternal deaths.
- 354,000 child deaths.¹⁰

What would it cost to prevent these deaths?



From now until 2020, it would cost about US\$74 million to meet the unmet need for family planning.

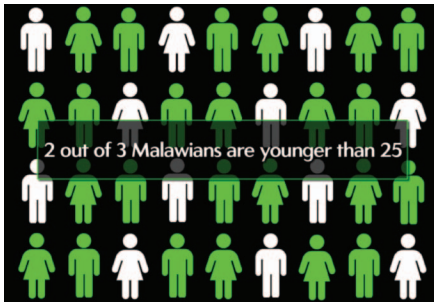
As families become smaller, the cost to meet the needs of the population also go down, including costs for education, immunization, water and sanitation, maternal health and malaria.

The government would save US\$118 million—more than it spent!

Family Planning is a Best Buy

Family planning is a best buy in today’s difficult economic environment, for the nation and for families.¹¹

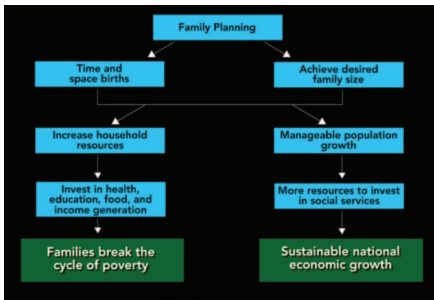
Investing in family planning now is investing in the future of our country, especially in our youth.



There are 10 million young people in Malawi—two-thirds of our population.¹²

With the right social and economic policies and conditions, these young people represent 10 million opportunities to improve Malawi’s future.

Meeting the reproductive health needs of our youth is one important strategy to help them reach their full potentials, with benefits reaching far into the future.¹³



When every individual and couple is able to choose the timing and spacing of each pregnancy, they can have the number of children they want and can care for.¹⁴

Family planning is a key strategy for development—for greater prosperity at the family level and sustainable economic growth at the national level.



What can be done now? A broad-based coalition of policymakers should join together to:

- Approve and implement a strong national population policy and incorporate population growth and family planning across all relevant national policies.
- Allocate sufficient funding and resources for reproductive health, including contraceptive supplies.
- Encourage public support and understanding of the broad-based benefits of family planning through frequent statements and discussion.
- Expand opportunities and services for youth, and involve youth in decisionmaking processes.

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- Health Education Unit, Ministry of Health, Malawi
- UNFPA Malawi
- Kate Gilles

Acknowledgments

“Malawi: Investing in Our Future Now” is a multimedia advocacy tool developed in 2012 by the Malawi ENGAGE task force chaired by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and the Ministry of Health with support from the Population Reference Bureau’s (PRB) Informing Decisionmakers to Act project (IDEA) . The tool and this pamphlet were made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of the IDEA Project (No. AID-0AA-A-10-00009). The contents are the responsibility of the Malawi ENGAGE task force and the Population Reference Bureau and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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