

FAITHFUL VOICES

CHRISTIAN LEADERS' ADVOCACY GUIDE
ON POPULATION AND FAMILY PLANNING



JULY 2015

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Illustrations by: R. Chilemba

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FOREWORD

Malawi is one of the fastest-growing countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Our country's population has more than tripled over the past 40 years, and is expected to triple again by 2040.* As a result, our environment, our economy, and our communities are under increasing strain. It is difficult to meet the basic needs of so many people, much less improve their lives and achieve the development goals of the nation as a whole.

As religious leaders, we hold positions of trust. With this trust comes much responsibility—to lead by example, to do our utmost to follow God's teachings, and to nourish the spiritual and physical well-being of our congregants. In light of this, we believe religious leaders have a responsibility to raise awareness within our communities about the impacts of population growth, and discuss the potential benefits of planning families.

As Christians, faith is the foundation of our lives. The Bible reminds us that this faith is both manifested and perfected through works—through our actions in the world (James 2:14–26). “As the body without the spirit is dead,” the Bible teaches, “so faith without works is dead also.” This guide represents our own faith in action. Through it, we encourage religious leaders to address issues related to family planning, reproductive health, and population growth. These issues have profound impacts on the communities we serve—affecting the individual health and well-being of men, women, children, and families, as well as Malawi's overall development.



Rev Francis Mkandawire
General Secretary
Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM)



Bishop Gilford Matonga
Acting General Secretary
Malawi Council of Churches (MCC)



Pastor Innocent Chikomo
Executive Secretary
Malawi Union Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists

* Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. 2012. “Malawi RAPID: Population and Development.” PowerPoint presentation, available at <http://www.healthpolicyproject.com/index.cfm?ID=publications&get=pubID&pubID=71>.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abbreviations.....	iv
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Purpose of This Guide.....	2
1.2 Who Should Use This Guide?.....	2
1.3 How to Use This Guide.....	2
2 Population, Family Planning, and Development.....	3
2.1 Population Growth.....	3
2.2 Family Planning.....	5
2.3 What Does the Bible Say About Marriage and Planning Families?.....	8
3 Advocacy.....	11
3.1 Why Should We Engage?.....	11
3.2 The Advocacy Process.....	12
3.3 Implementing Key Activities.....	16
4 Conclusion.....	30
Worksheet: Advocacy Implementation Plan.....	32
Annex I: Institutional Structures.....	34
Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM).....	34
Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM).....	41
Malawi Council of Churches (MCC).....	46
Seventh Day Adventists (SDA).....	49

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The Health Policy Project is grateful for the dedication and efforts of all religious leaders who participated in the consultative drafting process. We have been inspired by their passion and commitment to addressing population and family planning issues in Malawi, and hope this guide will help them in their future endeavours. We also want to express our appreciation for the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development—formerly the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development—for its participation in the drafting process, and its ongoing efforts to engage religious leaders in efforts to respond to the population and development challenges facing Malawi.

Lastly, HPP would like to recognise the role played by representatives of the Christian mother bodies, especially those who participated in the development of this publication. These include: Rev. Charles Makata, Howard Kasiya, and Rev. Dr. Davidson Chifungo from EAM; Mtheto Lungu and Fr. Kaswanyundo from MCC; and Pastor Goodwin Sibande and Pastor Gazamwala from SDA.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
EAM	Evangelical Association of Malawi
ECM	Episcopal Conference of Malawi
FP	family planning
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HPP	Health Policy Project
IEC	information, education, and communication
IUD	intrauterine device
MAM	Muslim Association of Malawi
MCC	Malawi Council of Churches
MEPD	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
MoFEPD	Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
SDA	Seventh Day Adventists
SRH	sexual and reproductive health
QMAM	Qadria Muslim Association of Malawi
TA	traditional authority
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development



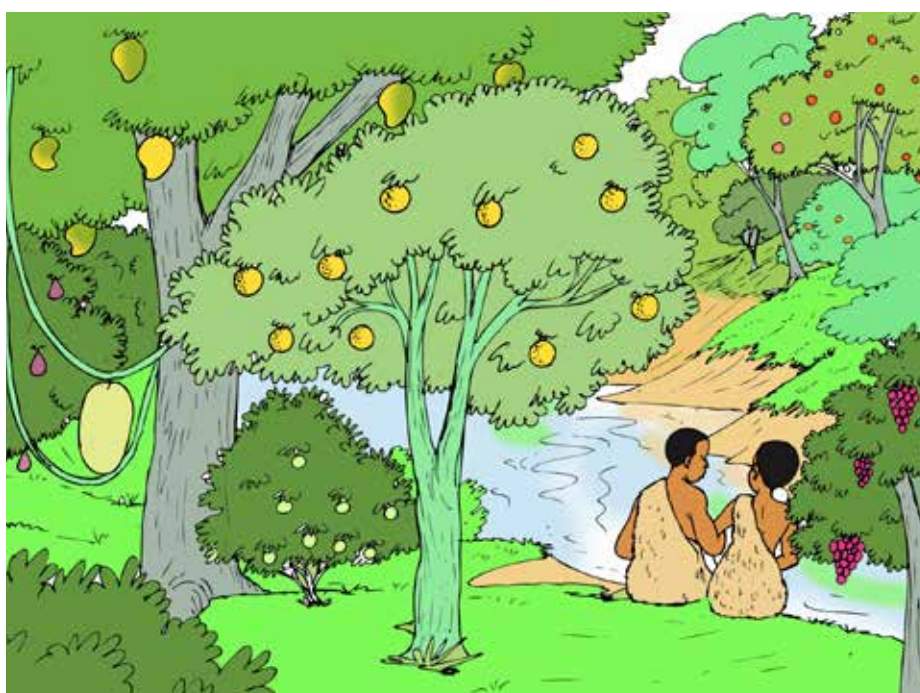
1 INTRODUCTION

High fertility, combined with a lack of services to support the healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies, is causing Malawi's population to grow rapidly. As the population grows, the availability of natural resources does not. We are farming the same land and fishing the same lakes as our ancestors, but there are many more of us today. This is resulting in environmental degradation, with significant impacts on health, education, and the economy. Moreover, the high fertility that is causing our population to grow so quickly is also harming the health and well-being of women, children, and families.

Recently, religious leaders from different faith communities have come together to address common concerns related to the planning of families, reproductive health, and population growth. In 2012, representatives from Malawi's religious "mother bodies"—the Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM), the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), the Malawi Council of Churches (MCC), the Muslim Association of Malawi (MAM), the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), and the Qadria Muslim Association of Malawi (QMAM)—assembled to discuss how they could become more involved in these issues. The result was an interfaith effort, through which religious leaders implemented "population weekends" in several districts (see Box 5). The population weekends were supported by the USAID-funded Health Policy Project, in collaboration with the Population Unit of the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD)—now the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (MoFEPD)—and succeeded in mobilising communities, raising their awareness of the impacts of population growth, and fostering discussions about the benefits of planning families. Our experiences with this work have led to this guide, which is intended to strengthen the role of religious leaders in addressing population and family planning issues.

Religious leaders in Malawi have a key role to play in addressing population and family planning issues. As trusted role models and guides, we have a responsibility to raise awareness in our communities about the impacts of population growth, and to discuss how planning families can increase the health and well-being of families, communities, and the nation as a whole.

God gave the earth into the keeping of human kind. He made man and woman "masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures that creep along the ground ... " (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:15). As stewards of God's creation, human beings must carefully consider how their choices and actions affect the earth. Decisions regarding reproduction—when to give birth, and how many children to bear—affect



the well-being of individual couples, as well as the earth's ability to thrive and support life. When the population grows too fast, the earth's natural bounty is depleted.

Committing our families to God, responsible parenthood includes planning and spacing pregnancies to maximise the health and well-being of mothers, children, and families (Proverbs 16:3). When couples are able to better plan their families, it can save the lives of mothers and children and improve families' overall health and economic situation. Better planning of families also helps slow population growth. A smaller population will help ease the pressure on natural resources, putting Malawi in a better position to address the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation. A smaller population will also enable Malawi to provide more social services (such as health and education) and jobs for its people.

Our past three years of ecumenical work on these issues is only the beginning. We must build on these successes to ensure sustained engagement by all religious leaders on population and family planning issues.

1.1 Purpose of This Guide

This guide is intended to make addressing population and family planning issues a part of religious institutions' routine "way of doing things." It gives religious leaders the guidance and information needed to integrate advocacy on population and family planning issues into the policies and activities of our religious institutions on an ongoing basis.

The activities and approaches presented in this guide should be understood as an ordinary part of religious life, rather than as "extra" activities.

1.2 Who Should Use This Guide?

This guide should be used by

- Religious leaders (for example, bishops and priests, reverends and preachers, chairpersons and general secretaries, vestry leaders, church group leaders, and para-church leadership)
- Anyone else who plays a leadership role within their faith community and would like to see that community do more to address population and family planning issues

1.3 How to Use This Guide

This guide should be used to support advocacy and activities at all levels, from national to local. It offers

- Information on the impacts of population growth, the benefits of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies, and the need for religious leaders to engage on these issues
- Suggestions for faith-based messages on population and family planning issues
- Guidance for planning and carrying out advocacy on population and family planning issues within religious communities and institutions
- Overviews of institutional structures of relevant religious institutions, and suggestions for how to advocate effectively within these structures

2 POPULATION, FAMILY PLANNING, AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Population Growth

If current fertility rates remain unchanged, Malawi's population—13.1 million in 2008—is expected to triple by 2040.¹ This rapid growth, along with water scarcity and declining food production, has led researchers to identify Malawi as one of 15 population and climate change “hotspots”—places in the world where the effects of climate change will fall especially hard.² The impacts of population growth can be seen in many different areas:

Environmental degradation

Population growth, when it happens too fast, can seriously harm the environment and reduce the availability of natural resources. The environmental impacts of population growth in Malawi can be seen in water scarcity, deforestation and soil erosion, and reduced agricultural productivity. As the population grows, more and more people need access to fresh water. This leads to water scarcity, as there is less water available per person. Population growth also causes deforestation, as more and more land is cleared for crops, fuel, and building materials. Deforestation leads to soil erosion, as topsoil is washed away without trees and other vegetation to hold it in place. Soil erosion, in turn, reduces agricultural productivity and increases the devastation caused by floods.



All of these challenges are compounded by climate change, which alters patterns of rainfall and leads to droughts, floods, and unpredictable growing seasons. Population growth makes it harder for Malawi to handle the effects of climate change—effects that will only intensify in the coming years.

Agriculture and land scarcity

Malawi's land resources are already under great strain. With an average of 126 people per square kilometre of land, Malawi has one of the highest population density rates in Africa—six times the density of neighbouring Zambia. If the population keeps growing at the same rate, by 2050 there will be six times as many people (803) for every square kilometre of land.

Close to 80 per cent of Malawi's population lives in rural areas, and the majority of Malawians rely on farming for their livelihoods. Over time, land has been divided into smaller plots that make it harder for families to make a living. As a result, they must farm their land more intensively, which gradually leads to soil depletion and declines in agricultural productivity. Land scarcity also contributes to conflicts within families and communities. Disputes over inheritance are increasingly common and have even resulted in violence in some districts.



Access to public services

With more people comes increasing pressure on Malawi's public services, such as health and education. Already, the country faces a shortage of healthcare workers and teachers, particularly in rural areas. In addition to reduced availability of public services, service quality (in health, infrastructure, education, etc.) is compromised in the face of overwhelming need. The MoFEPD's 2012 RAPID analysis projects population growth rates over a 30-year period (2008–2040). The RAPID analysis estimates that if the current rate of population growth continues, the Ministry of Health will require three times as many trained nurses and health centres in 2040 as in 2008. In the education sector, the number of primary school students is expected to more than double, from 3 million to nearly 8 million. With slower population growth, the government could save K116 billion (US\$751 million) in education and K226 billion (US\$1.5 billion) in health over the same period.³

Economic development.

Population growth has visible impacts on economic development. Slower population growth would help Malawi's economy grow more quickly, as resources could be shifted from meeting existing needs to investing in future growth. The declines in agricultural productivity resulting from rapid population growth, along with increased pressure on water resources and public services, will also hinder economic growth.

The economic consequences of rapid population growth will fall particularly hard on youth. More than half of Malawi's population (52%) is under age 18. As youth enter adulthood, they will need jobs and other opportunities. If the current rate of growth continues, 4.9 million youth will enter the job market by 2040. Yet, already there are not nearly enough jobs for all those who need them.

Impact on churches

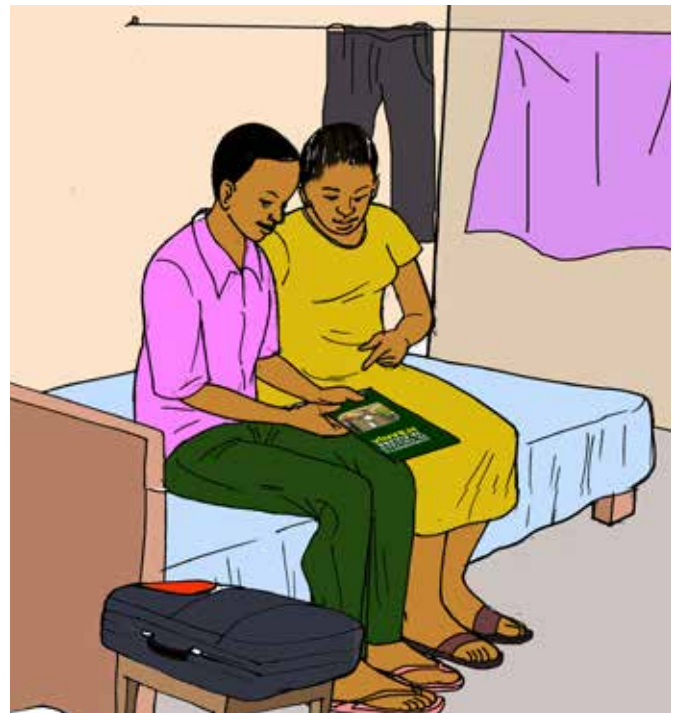
As the population grows, demands on churches also increase, as congregations require more assistance. At the same time, congregants have fewer resources available to support their churches. In one church, a new building was built to accommodate a larger congregation. The construction took five years to complete. By the time it was finished, the new building was already too small to hold the congregation. This shows how fast the population is growing, and how resources and infrastructure cannot keep pace.

This combination of factors can make life harder. However, as people of faith, we should not be discouraged. Instead, through God's grace, we can make Malawi's future better by coming together to address population and development issues.

2.2 Family Planning

What is family planning?

Family planning is when a couple makes informed choices about when to have a child, how many children to have, and how much time to wait between births. Couples should start discussing their plans for a family before they marry and continue talking about this throughout their marriage, as their options, decisions, and life circumstances may change over time. Couples should also teach their children about the importance of planning families—preparing them to become responsible parents when they reach adulthood.



Couples can choose natural or medical methods to plan their families. These methods are widely researched and safe for both women and men. They vary in effectiveness, characteristics, and in who should use them. The latter is based on family planning intentions and some rare medical conditions, so women and couples should consult healthcare providers to discuss their options.

Family planning methods currently available in Malawi include

Natural / calendar methods

Natural methods do not require any medical intervention, although some approaches need instructions and counselling from healthcare providers. Most natural methods are called “fertility awareness-based methods.” These methods help women and couples understand how to avoid pregnancy or how to become pregnant by recognising signs of a woman's fertile days, when she is most likely to conceive.

Natural methods include

- Calendar-based methods
 - Standard Days Method (cycle beads)
 - Calendar rhythm method
- Monitoring daily changes in the thickness of vaginal fluid
 - Billings Method, TwoDay Method
- Monitoring body temperature to detect ovulation
 - Basal body temperature method
- Breastfeeding/Lactation Amenorrhoea Method
- Withdrawal (coitus interruptus)
- Abstinence



Medical methods

- Condoms (male and female)
- Pills (oral contraceptives)
 - Combined oral contraceptives
 - Progesterone-only pills
- Injectables
 - Combined injectable contraceptive
 - Progesterone-only injectable contraceptive
- Implants (Jadelle)
- Intrauterine device (IUD)
- Vasectomy (male)
- Tubal ligation (female)

What are the benefits of planning families?

Today, the average couple in Malawi has between five and six children, but this fertility rate does not reflect couples' desires or plans. On average, both men and women report that their ideal family size is four children.⁴

- Almost half (45%) of pregnancies in Malawi are unintended or mistimed.⁵
- One in four couples would like to delay or avoid further childbearing, but do not use any methods to avoid unintended pregnancies. These couples have an **unmet need** for services that can help them better time and space their pregnancies.

Health benefits

The healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies is vital to the health of women and children. Malawi has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world (675 per 100,000 live births). Underlying causes of these maternal deaths include early childbearing (35% adolescent pregnancies), high fertility rate (5.7), and high HIV prevalence among women of childbearing age.⁶

Unintended pregnancies can increase the risk of death and disability for mothers and children, especially when pregnancies are

- Too early—when the mother is under age 18
- Too many—when the mother has had many previous pregnancies
- Too late—when the mother is older than age 35
- Too frequent—when pregnancies are spaced too close together



In Malawi, one in nine children does not live to see his or her fifth birthday; however, increasing the time between births can dramatically increase a child's chances of survival. Children born less than two years after a previous birth are more than twice as likely to die before age five as those born at least three years after a mother's last birth.

Family benefits

When couples have only as many children as they can readily support, there are many benefits for the family:

- Stress on marriages can be reduced, as can conflict within families over scarce resources.
- Parents have more time and attention to devote to each child, creating more opportunities to give spiritual guidance.
- Parents are able to provide their children with better nutrition, health, and education.
- Children are less likely to be left to fend for themselves at an early age.
- Economic and educational opportunities increase for both parents and children. Young couples who wait to have children can pursue higher education and obtain better jobs, and both boys and girls can go to school when parents have only the number of children they can afford.
- Women, in particular, will have better health, and may have more time for education, social engagement, and participation in community life.

Gender equality

High fertility contributes to gender inequality by limiting women and girls' access to education, employment, and other life opportunities. Over half of Malawian women (51.6%) are married by age 18, and one-quarter of adolescents ages 15–19 have already had at least one child.⁷ Young girls who begin childbearing at an early age are deprived of their chance for education, and their lives are placed at risk due to the dangers of early pregnancy.

Likewise, when parents have more children than they can support, it is usually girls who lose out—receiving a smaller share of family resources for things like education, healthcare, and food.

Church benefits

As families benefit, so do churches—the benefits of planning families can decrease strains on the church. Happier, healthier, more productive families are able to more fully participate in church life and support other congregation members and the church itself.

2.3 What Does the Bible Say About Marriage and Planning Families?

Some Bible versions include an introduction to each book, in which Bible scholars explain the book's main themes; who wrote it; and when, where, and why it was written. This provides the reader with a contextual understanding of Bible texts, which helps avoid fundamentalist interpretations. There are a number of issues related to marriage and family planning that should be clarified based on the guidance of Sacred Scriptures.

Principles of marriage

Family planning takes place within the context of marriage, and a good marriage is a foundation for responsible planning of families. Likewise, family planning can contribute to healthy marriages by reducing the stress that can be placed on marriages when couples struggle to meet their children's needs. A good Christian marriage should be guided by principles outlined in the Scriptures.

Marriage: a loving and caring covenant

“Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed over for us a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma.” (Ephesians 5:1-2)

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed it over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word...” (Ephesians 5:25-26)

“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” (Colossians 3:14)

“Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 John 4:8)

Marriage is a sacred, loving covenant entered into between a man and a woman. Love is essential to a Christian marriage, as matrimony is modelled on the loving relationship between Jesus Christ and the church. Christian love impels husband and wife to develop a positive Christian attitude towards one another. As human beings, husband and wife must accept one another's weaknesses and forgive each other.

Partnership and mutuality

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.” (Genesis 2:18)

Genesis (2:18) points to partnership as one of the most important reasons for entering into marriage. Christian marriage is an intimate partnership, in which a man and woman come together in marriage as

loving partners to care for, help, and support each other in the fulfilment of their physical, social, economic, and spiritual needs. Marriage is built on the basis of **mutuality**—the idea that husband and wife support one another, each according to his or her unique gifts. Mutuality is created through the manifestation of various qualities, including honesty, trust, openness, submission/obedience, respect, tolerance, understanding, faithfulness, and partnership/support (Genesis 2:24). In the spirit of mutuality, a husband and wife should share equally in both the labours and benefits of marriage, including economic activities. If a husband and wife live in this spirit of loving partnership and mutuality, peace and comfort will prevail in their marriage.

Intimacy

Marriage involves both physical and emotional intimacy. Within marriage, man and woman express their intimacy when, through their bodies, they engage in sexual relationship. Sexual satisfaction and emotional connection/support, together with openness, are key to establishing and nurturing intimacy (1 Corinthians 7:3–5; Ephesians 5:1–33).

Commitment

Marriage is a serious commitment that involves giving oneself to another. God’s unconditional and perpetual love for us is the model of Christian love in a family (John 3:16). In marriage, husband and wife offer themselves fully for the good of the other. Each gives up part of their independence and self-interest, transferring their energy and will towards the goal of mutual happiness. In the Scriptures, marital love is compared to the love and commitment between God and humankind, or to the relationship between Christ and His church. You may also refer to Genesis 2:24; Colossians 3:19; and Ephesians 5:25–33.

Reverence (prayerfulness)

The Scriptures also show that marriage should be entered into and sustained in a prayerful spirit. All things, including marriage, are created by God. Husband and wife must look to God for guidance in their marriage (Proverbs 16:3). Through prayer, we receive God’s grace. We cannot sustain our families or marriages without God’s help, and it is through His grace that we are able to flourish (1 Peter 3:7).

God’s relationship with humankind is symbolic of the marriage relationship. Therefore, marriage must be modelled on the relationship between Jesus and the Church (Ephesians 5:25). Prayerfulness in marriage also refers to the importance of marital communication. In prayer, we dialogue with God; likewise, in marriage, we should dialogue with our spouses (Jeremiah 33:3).

Procreation and responsibility

Genesis identifies procreation as one of the benefits that can result from marriage. Procreation is not the primary purpose of marriage, but children are a gift from God (Genesis 1:28) (see below for more on responsible procreation).

Family Planning—Responsible procreation

“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.” (Psalm 127:3)

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” (James 1:17)

We should understand that when God instructed Adam and Eve to “... be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28), the world population was much smaller than it is today—actually, only a few people! It is also important to understand that the word “subdue” in this verse refers not to domination, but to responsible management.

It is also clear from Genesis 1:28 that God expects humankind to add value to the earth. If you have so many children that you cannot meet their needs and help them flourish, you are failing to add value as God intended.

There are several other biblical passages that point to the importance of responsible parenthood. Parents have a responsibility to meet the material (e.g., medical care, education, food), emotional, and spiritual needs of their children and ensure that they have a dignified quality of life (1 Timothy 3:5). This is more possible when the number of children in a family is reasonable and manageable. When parents are unable to meet the needs of their children, these children may become disheartened (Colossians 3:21).

St. Paul instructed Timothy that leadership in the Church must be modelled on leadership in the family, saying, *“He must manage his own household well, keeping his own children under control, with perfect dignity.”* (1 Timothy 3:5).

Parents are responsible for giving protection to their children as Joseph and Mary did in Matthew 2:1–13. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus stood his ground as protector of children when he said, *“Let the little children come unto me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”*

Some have asked, “Why bother about family planning, if God takes care of children?” God provides and takes care of children **through their parents**. Failing to care for your children does not please God, and is sinful (1 Timothy 5:7–8). As Paul says in 1 Timothy (5:8), *“And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*

Today, without contradicting Sacred Scriptures, churches recognise signs of the times with regard to environmental degradation, scarcity of natural resources, and climate change. Church leaders find that it is important for couples to make thoughtful, informed choices about when to have children, how long to wait between pregnancies (birth spacing), and the total number of children they intend to bear.

There is a need for couples to plan their families together, and to discuss how many children they wish to have. These conversations require tolerance, faithfulness, and sacrifice. Ultimately, the outcome is in God’s hands. If a married couple cannot have a child, they must accept their situation and continue to love one another (Romans 8:28).

Endnotes

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3 ADVOCACY

With population growth and family planning becoming urgent concerns in Malawi, religious leaders at all levels (from national to community) must become involved in addressing these issues. We can use the teachings outlined above to help our communities understand the impacts of population growth and the importance of making informed choices—grounded in Christian principles—regarding procreation. However, our efforts should not be limited to discussing these issues with our congregations. Rather, our goal is to make addressing population and family planning part of the everyday work of religious institutions.

Through a series of interfaith discussions in early 2015, we identified seven key activities that we can undertake to achieve this goal:

1. Create awareness among our fellow religious leaders regarding the linkages between family planning, population growth, and development.
2. Incorporate population and family planning issues into our worship services and conversations with congregants, and encourage other Christian leaders to do the same.
3. Integrate population and family planning issues into our institutional policies and plans, and educational programmes and materials.
4. Get population and family planning on the agendas of discussion groups, events, and meetings.
5. Organise one-off events to mobilise, educate, and raise awareness in communities about the linkages between population growth, family planning, and development.
6. Engage with the media to increase coverage of population and family planning issues and ensure that supportive faith-based perspectives are included in the national conversation.
7. Spread the word!

This section will help you carry out these activities.

- In Section 3.1, we share teachings from the Scriptures that explain why we, as religious leaders, have a responsibility to take action.
- In Section 3.2, we provide an overview of the advocacy process, which is vital to carrying out the key activities listed above.
- In Section 3.3, we offer guidance on applying the advocacy process to plan and implement the key activities listed above, using tips and examples drawn from our own experiences.

3.1 Why Should We Engage?

“... give instructions to your brothers as a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching...” (1 Timothy 4:6)

Many biblical texts teach us about our responsibilities as Christian leaders. In the passage above, Paul exhorts Timothy to fulfil his office as a servant of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 4:6). Other passages show us our duty to deal with issues in the same way a shepherd tends and feeds his sheep (John 21:15–17). In

Box 1. What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is a carefully planned process designed to influence decisions regarding policies, programmes, or resources. Advocacy targets decisionmakers (those who have the power or position to make the change you are seeking) to achieve a clearly defined goal.

the eyes of Jesus, each and every person is so precious that the shepherd cannot but search for any one lost sheep.

Christian leaders must not be ashamed of testifying to the Lord (2 Timothy 1:8), and we should not be ashamed of giving testimony regarding population and family planning issues. However, we must also move beyond words to action. Do not be empty preachers, “*but be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*” (James 1:22–24). We should not avoid our responsibilities or wait for others to act (Matthew 14:16). A question is posed in James 2:14: “*What [doth it] profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?*”

All of these texts indicate that, as Christian leaders, we should play a role in protecting and guiding our congregations. In the case of family planning and population growth, Christian leaders can help families enjoy a better quality of life simply by giving them vital information that enables them to make informed choices. Yet to fully benefit our flocks, we must work—not only with community members, but also with our fellow religious leaders and our religious institutions—to ensure that addressing family planning and population issues becomes part of our day-to-day activities.

3.2 The Advocacy Process

Carrying out the seven activities described above involves advocacy. In this section, we provide an overview of the advocacy process and offer examples of applying it to make addressing family planning and population issues part of the day-to-day work of Christian institutions at all levels.

The advocacy process has five main steps.

Step 1: Identify the issue

- What problem are you trying to solve?
- Why is this problem important?

Clearly defining your issue and thinking about why it is important will help you choose goals and objectives, come up with persuasive advocacy messages, and stay focused.

Box 2. The Advocacy Process

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Step 1: | Identify the issue |
| Step 2: | Develop a goal and objectives |
| Step 3: | Develop an advocacy strategy |
| Step 4: | Implement your advocacy strategy |
| Step 5: | Monitor and evaluate your advocacy efforts |

Tip: The more specific you are about the problem, the easier it will be to develop clear goals and objectives.

Step 2: Develop a goal and objectives

Alongside identifying a problem, advocates must also propose a solution: What change are you trying to bring about? This is your advocacy goal.

Next, outline the specific objectives that will help you reach that goal. It may help to think of the goal as the “header” of your advocacy effort, and the objectives as “subheaders.”

Tip: The more specific your goals and objectives are, the easier it will be to plan your advocacy strategy.

Step 3: Develop an advocacy strategy

Next, develop your advocacy strategy (your plan for achieving your objectives). Coming up with a strategy requires careful thought about what you are trying to achieve, the circumstances (context) in which you are acting, who needs to be engaged, and how they should be engaged. This involves six key actions.

(1) Assess the situation

Developing an effective advocacy strategy requires assessing the situation, both internally (within your institution) and externally (in the broader community/nation). Key questions include

- Who has the power to make this decision or take this action?
- At what level are these decisionmakers? (e.g., national, regional, district, community)
- What is the process by which this decision will be made? (For example, decisions regarding Sunday school curricula may be determined by the national committee, which first designates a subcommittee to recommend curricula updates.)

(2) Identify your target audience

Your target audience should be the decisionmakers identified during your situation assessment. However, you should think strategically, narrowing down your target audience by focusing on the most influential decisionmakers, those who are most supportive of your goal, and/or those in the best position to help you achieve your objectives. Alternatively (see action item 6 below), you may need to identify resistance and focus on persuading those decisionmakers to support (or at least not to oppose) your objectives.

Once you have identified the decisionmakers whose support you need, consider the following:

- What is their existing level of knowledge and awareness about population and family planning?
- Are they supportive of your advocacy goal? Neutral? Opposed?
- What do they care about/What matters to them? How is this connected to your advocacy goal?
- What beliefs do they hold about population and family planning? (For example, some may have the mistaken impression that family planning is contrary to the teachings of the Bible.)

(3) Craft advocacy messages

Once you have identified and learned more about your target audience, you are ready to start crafting your advocacy messages. Effective advocacy messages help decisionmakers understand the following:

- What the problem is
- Why it matters (use evidence to support this)
- What you are asking them to do

Advocacy messages should be

- Tailored to the target audience(s)
- Clear and persuasive
- Evidence-based
- Appeal to the head, the heart, or both

Use the list of messages in Box 3 as a starting point for crafting your own advocacy messages.

Tips:

#1—Choose your language carefully, keeping in mind your target audience and avoiding sensitive language. For example

- Avoid sentiments like “population control,” and instead emphasise the importance of ensuring that decisions about reproduction are made by married couples themselves.
- Consider using “responsible parenthood” or “planning of families” instead of “family planning.”

#2—Use evidence to support your position. Ask yourself

- Do you have the information/evidence you need to persuade your target audience(s)?
- If not, how can you gather this evidence?
- Remember, evidence does not have to be numerical. For example, if a policy already exists but is not being carried out, the policy itself can be used as evidence as you advocate for improved implementation.

Box 3. Ideas for Key Messages

This list of possible messages (based on the information in Section 2) can be used as a starting point as you craft your own specific advocacy messages:

- Population growth has huge economic impacts and affects the education, health, and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.
- There is an urgent need for religious leaders to speak out on population issues.
- Support for healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies is beneficial for the health and well-being of women, children, and families, and helps to slow population growth.
- Family planning helps couples achieve healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies.
- Family planning is beneficial and recommended by the church.
- Religious leaders have a duty to advise couples regarding healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies.
- Family planning leads to healthier and wealthier communities by helping families improve their health, achieve higher levels of education and employment, and put aside savings for the future.
- As family planning involves both husband and wife, the church recommends planning together as a couple and seeking advice from a counsellor if in doubt.
- Couples are better able to provide for their children if they bear only as many children as they can responsibly care for.
- Having only as many children as they can readily provide for reduces couples’ financial stress and helps them better fulfil their responsibilities as husbands, wives, and parents—and also leaves them with more time and resources to devote to their spiritual lives.
- Religious leaders are encouraged to advise couples on the benefits of having only as many children as they can readily provide for.
- Family planning helps reduce the negative environmental, economic, and social consequences of rapid population growth.
- Family planning can help reduce conflict over land, including conflicts within families about inheritance.

(4) Identify avenues of influence/entry points

Once you have identified your target audience(s) and advocacy message(s), you must consider how you are going to reach your audience(s):

- Where and how do they make decisions? How can you gain access to this decision-making process?

For example, if a committee or regional body is involved, how often does this group meet? Do you have access to this meeting? If not, how can you gain access? What needs to be done to get your issue on the agenda?

- If you can't reach your audience directly, who could help you reach them?
- Where does your audience get their information? What media outlets/programmes do they watch/read/listen to?

Tip: Choosing the right spokesperson(s) can be crucial to success. Consider: Who does your audience see as credible and trustworthy? Who will they find most persuasive?

(5) Identify supporters and allies

Often, the success of advocacy efforts depends on choosing the right supporters and allies. Supporters and allies can play a variety of roles, such as providing additional information, advising you on effective messages and approaches, providing access to meetings and policy processes, and serving as credible spokespersons to help you reach your target audiences. Consider

- Which leaders or groups within your institution and/or community are already supportive of addressing issues related to population, family planning, and development?
- How can they help you achieve your objectives?
- How can you strengthen their support?
- What arguments/evidence might help them engage more effectively?

(6) Identify potential opposition and challenges

It is important to think about what opposition and challenges you might encounter during your advocacy efforts. You will be able to respond to opposition and overcome challenges more easily if you have prepared for them. Think about

- Are there individuals and/or groups within your church/institution who are particularly resistant to addressing population and family planning?
- How might you be able to persuade them to change their position?
- What is the basis for their opposition? What information and evidence can you provide to counter their arguments?
- What allies/supporters could help you influence the opposition?
- What other challenges might you face?
- How could you overcome these challenges?

Step 4: Implement your advocacy strategy

Now that you have identified your objectives and outlined your advocacy strategy, you must develop a detailed implementation plan. It is important to consider the following:

- What are your available resources? (human, financial, material—books/materials, etc.)
- What resources will you need?
- Which supporters will you adopt as partners?
- Timing: When will you implement your activities? Are there key meetings/events that you need to be present for? When do you need to begin preparing for these events? Are there holidays or other events you could take advantage of?

- Assigning clear roles and responsibilities will help you avoid delays and keep you on track (accountability).

Tip: Timing is key to effective advocacy. Advocates must choose the right moment to engage and must think ahead. This means you have to understand the decision-making process. For instance, if you want to engage decisionmakers to ensure that they incorporate issues related to population and planning families in policies that guide your religious community, you must know when and how those policies will be developed, and you must start advocating before the drafting process begins.

Step 5: Monitor and evaluate your advocacy efforts

It is important to monitor your progress in carrying out your advocacy strategy, and to take time to evaluate how well your strategy has worked. Having clear, established objectives will help you in this effort. What objectives have you reached? What strategies were most successful? What messages were most persuasive? Were there messages or strategies that didn't work? How could you change your approach to make it more effective?

It is also important to monitor commitments made by decisionmakers. For example, if your religious institution agreed to establish a sexual and reproductive health (SRH) policy, has the policy been drafted? Has it been finalised and, if so, was it adopted? If the drafting process has stalled, you can try to identify why and figure out how to get it moving again.

Advocates continue to play an important role after policies have been adopted. Sustained effort is needed to ensure that policies are implemented effectively at all levels.

3.3 Implementing Key Activities

The key activities outlined at the beginning of Section 3 may be implemented individually by a single religious leader, or collectively by a group of leaders committed to addressing population and family planning issues.



Key Activity 1—Create awareness among our fellow religious leaders regarding the linkages between family planning, population growth, and development.

Raising awareness and fostering support among fellow religious leaders is key to the sustainable integration of population and family planning issues into the work of religious institutions.

Step 1: Identify the Issue—What problem are you trying to solve? Why is this important?

Insufficient awareness among religious leaders at all levels about the linkages between population growth, family planning and development.

The process of setting goals and objectives involves assessing the general level of awareness among your fellow religious leaders. Effective engagement of other religious leaders requires an understanding of the current state of their awareness and attitudes. This can help you choose a particular group of leaders to target for engagement, or develop an effective engagement approach.

- Where is the weakest awareness of population and family planning issues? You may choose this level/group as your target audience.
- What is your position within the institutional structure? This may affect the focus of your efforts. Awareness may be needed at a variety of levels, but you may want to consider targeting (a) the level with the greatest influence on your community, and/or (b) the level where you yourself have the greatest potential influence/impact.

Example 1: While the national leadership of my institution (e.g., EAM, ECM, MCC, SDA, or a particular church) is aware of the linkages between population, family planning, and development, religious leaders at regional and district levels are largely unaware of these connections. This is making it hard to carry out the plans laid out at national level, or to reach communities with key messages.

Example 2: Within my religious institution, some key leaders at national level understand the linkages between population, family planning, and development. However, others still have little understanding of how these issues are connected or why the church should address them. This is making it more difficult to integrate population and family planning issues into the institution's policies, plans, and activities.

Step 2. Develop your goal (What change are you seeking?) and objectives (What intermediate achievements are needed to reach this goal?)

The broad goal is clear—to create awareness among fellow religious leaders. However, you will want to identify specific goals and objectives depending on priorities and circumstances.

Example 1:

Goal: Increase awareness and understanding among leaders at regional and district levels (e.g., dioceses, synods, regional conferences).

Box 4. Champions

One strategy we have used to raise awareness about family planning and population issues within our institutions is to identify and train “champions.” Champions can educate and motivate others—changing mindsets and/or inspiring them to act.

When picking champions, look for

- Influence
- Impeccable reputation
- Passion for population and family planning issues
- Limited (or no) interest in payment for their involvement

If you are trying to reach a specific group—such as youth—you may want to choose champions from within that group.

Objectives

- (1) Reach 10 regional leaders with key messages and information.
- (2) Reach 50 district-level leaders with key messages and information.

Example 2:

Goal: Increase awareness and understanding of population and family planning issues among the other leaders of my church.

Objectives

- (1) Hold a special meeting on addressing population and family planning attended by at least four other church leaders.
- (2) Persuade a well-respected regional religious leader to address my church's leadership on population and family planning issues.
- (2) Reach leaders of youth, women's, and Bible study groups with key messages and information.

Step 3. Develop an advocacy strategy

Use the key questions listed under Step 3 on page 12 to guide you in developing your approach.

In *Example 1*, advocates are trying to reach leaders at regional and district levels. If the advocates themselves are district-level religious leaders, they may use gatherings in their respective districts to reach their fellow religious leaders. To reach leaders in other districts, they would likely need to get support from higher levels. For example, religious leaders within EAM could use pastors fraternal and/or district executive committee meetings to reach other leaders in their districts, but would need to go through higher-level bodies such as the regional executive committee to reach leaders elsewhere.

In *Example 2*, the advocate is trying to reach fellow church leaders. To be most effective, the advocate should think carefully about the structure and decision-making processes of the church. Based on this understanding, he/she can decide which leaders are most important to engage. Thinking about the attitudes and beliefs of other church leaders can help the advocate decide how best to engage. For example Objective 2 indicates that the advocate believes having a prominent regional-level leader as a spokesperson can help persuade leaders who may be less willing to listen to someone from their own church.

Step 4. Implement your advocacy strategy

Now it's time to bring everything together in a single detailed action plan. The worksheet on page 32 can help you with this process.

Step 5. Monitor and evaluate

Think about how you will determine the success of your efforts. How will you know that you have successfully raised awareness among your fellow religious leaders? The more specific your goals and objectives, the easier it will be to monitor progress and figure out whether you are on track.

Key Activity 2—Incorporate population and family planning issues into our worship services and conversations with congregants, and encourage other Christian leaders to do the same.

One of the easiest and most straightforward ways to address population and family planning issues is to incorporate them into worship services and conversations with congregants—and to encourage fellow religious leaders to do the same. As this is not an “advocacy” activity, the process for implementation is relatively simple.



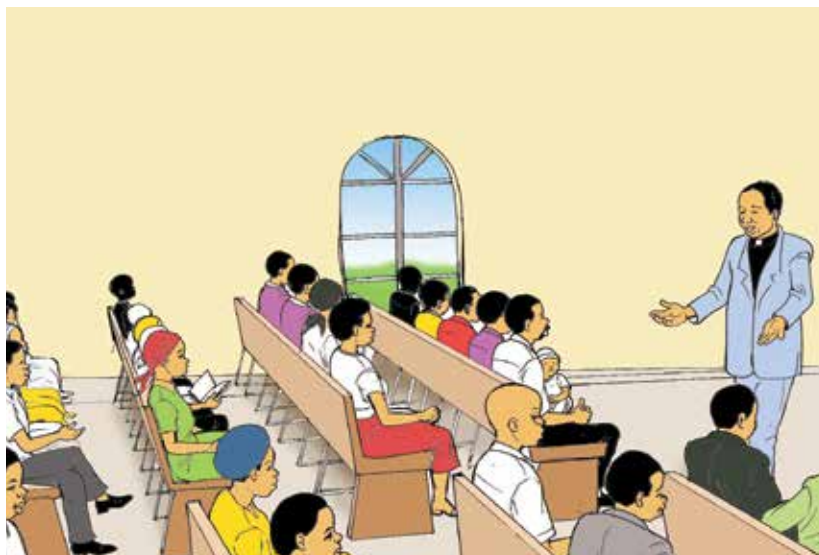
Step 1. Identify worship services and engagement opportunities with congregants that you can use to discuss population and family planning issues.

Set an overall goal, as well as specific objectives—e.g., to preach one sermon every month related to population and family planning issues.

Step 2. If necessary, secure appropriate higher-level permissions within your religious institution (this may require using the advocacy techniques described under activities 3 and 4).

Step 3. Plan your messages/sermons.

Sections 1 and 2 of this guide provide useful information that can be used for reference. However, the best way to ensure that your messages get through to your congregants is to connect them to real-life experiences. Think about whether any recent events in your church or community have shown the impact of population growth. Has the church struggled to meet the needs of its congregants? Perhaps there has been conflict in the community as a result of land



scarcity. Also, there may be married couples willing to share their positive experiences of family planning, or the difficulties they have faced due to large family size. Be careful to ensure that couples do not feel pressured to share their stories, as these can be sensitive issues. You must do all you can to protect couples and families from situations that might cause them to feel shamed, embarrassed, or uncomfortable.

To maintain momentum, consider tying your worship service to follow-up activities. For example, you could ask Bible study or women’s groups to include a conversation about the issues during their next meeting. Or, perhaps the church development committee could talk about how the church experiences strain as a result of population growth.

If you are unsure of how to talk about population and family planning issues with your congregants, reach out to your relevant mother body. They can connect you with a leader who has been trained in addressing these issues.

Step 4. Implement

The worksheet on page 32 can help you bring everything together in a detailed action plan.

Step 5. Monitor and evaluate

Monitoring and evaluating this activity is relatively simple. Did you meet the objectives you set for yourself? If not, what prevented you from doing so? Moving forward, how will you overcome these obstacles? How were your sermons received? Which messages and stories did congregants respond positively to? Following the worship services, did congregants talk to you about population and family planning issues?

Key Activity 3—Integrate population and family planning issues into our institutional policies and plans, and our educational programmes and materials.

Integrating population and family planning issues into institutional policies/plans and educational programmes/materials is key to ensuring that these issues are routinely addressed in Christian communities at all levels. Policies and plans that explicitly acknowledge the role of religious institutions in addressing population and family planning issues lay the foundation for undertaking effective faith-



based programmes and activities. Integration into policies and plans also provides support and justification for individual religious leaders who are engaging on these issues.

Step 1: Identify the issue—What problem are you trying to solve? Why is this important?

Begin by identifying the relevant policies/plans and educational programmes/materials for your institution, and finding out whether these policies and plans address population and family planning issues. Annex 1 provides information on the current policies/plans and educational programmes/materials of religious mother bodies. However, these lists are not exhaustive and are likely to change over time (hopefully as a result of your advocacy efforts!).

Policies and plans

Policies include both written policies and the unwritten rules that govern activities and behaviour in your religious community. Your efforts could focus on (a) crafting written policies to make guidance on population and family planning issues more clear; and/or (b) changing unwritten rules that hinder efforts to address these issues. Where supportive policies already exist, your efforts could focus on improving implementation of these policies.

- What policies and plans guide your religious community?

- What policies (if any) hinder efforts to address population/family planning (FP) issues within your religious community?
- In which policies/plans would it be appropriate to include population/FP issues?
- Do these policies/plans already address population/FP issues?
- If so, are they supportive?

To choose which policies to focus on, it can be helpful to consider

- Which policies/plans, if revised to include population/FP issues, would have the greatest impact?
- Are there any efforts ongoing to integrate population/FP issues into policies/plans?
- What other policies/plans are being developed or revised at the moment?
- How could you integrate population/FP issues into these policy processes?

Educational programmes and materials

Educational materials may include sermon guides (“daily” guides), Sunday school curricula, and pamphlets. Programmes may include things like couples retreats, youth activities, workshops, and counselling.

- What educational programmes and materials are used in your religious community?
- In which of these programmes/materials would it be appropriate to include population/FP issues?
- Do these already address population/FP issues?
- If so, are they supportive?



To choose which educational programmes/materials to focus on, it can help to consider

- Which educational programmes/materials, if revised to include population/FP issues, would have the greatest impact?
- Are there any efforts ongoing to integrate population/FP issues into educational programmes/materials?
- What educational programmes/materials are being developed or revised?
- How could you integrate population/FP issues into these revised programmes/materials?

Step 2. Develop your goal (What change are you seeking?) and objectives (What intermediate achievements are needed to reach this goal?)

Identify goals and objectives based on the information you gathered regarding policies/plans and educational programmes/materials in Step 1.

Example 1: You discover that the MCC has a national HIV/AIDS programme, but no corresponding programme for sexual and reproductive health (SRH). You decide to focus on creating such a national programme and ensuring that it includes an emphasis on family planning, population, and development. You believe that this would help the MCC and its member churches address population and family planning issues routinely and consistently at all levels.

Goal: Ensure that the MCC and its member churches address population and family planning issues routinely and consistently at all levels.

Objectives:

1. Create a national sexual and reproductive health (SRH) programme for the MCC, based on church doctrine and best practices in sexual and reproductive health.
2. Ensure that the SRH programme includes an emphasis on family planning, population, and development.
3. Secure approval of the programme by the General Synod and the Anglican Council of Malawi.
4. Achieve thorough implementation of the program at all levels.

Example 2: The content of worship services in your church is established through national-level guidance in the form of a “daily guide.” You realise that the best way to incorporate population and family planning issues into worship services is to ensure their inclusion in the daily guide, along with the guidance and information needed by those leading the worship services to provide accurate and supportive information to congregants.

Goal: Ensure that population and family planning issues are incorporated into worship services at all levels on a regular basis.

Objectives:

1. Draft content on population and family planning issues for inclusion in the daily guide.
2. Secure approval of the content and its inclusion in the daily guide for the coming year.
3. Develop a follow-up plan and ensure that the guidance provided in the daily guide is used. For example, regional or diocese-level committees could ask district- or zonal-level representatives to find out whether churches in their area have incorporated population/FP issues into worship services as directed by the daily guide.

Step 3. Develop an advocacy strategy

Based on your identified objectives, use the key questions listed under Step 3 on page 11 as guides.

It is particularly important to consider

- Who has the power to incorporate population/FP issues into these policies/plans or educational programmes/materials?
- How are these policies/plans and educational programmes/materials developed? (processes, timing, key players, roles and responsibilities).

Your target audience(s), as well as avenues of influence/entry points, will depend on the structure of your institution, the policy development process, and your own position within the institution.

Step 4. Implement your advocacy strategy

The worksheet on page 32 can help you bring everything together in a detailed action plan.



Step 5. Monitor and evaluate

What advocacy strategies/activities did you use? Which were most successful? Which need to be changed? Which policies/plans and educational programmes/materials were revised to integrate population/FP issues? What lessons did you learn? Moving forward, what is your new advocacy priority for integrating population/FP into policies/plans and educational programmes/materials? Remember, this can include strengthening implementation of existing policies.

Key Activity 4—Get population and family planning on the agendas of discussion groups, events, and meetings.

Step 1: Identify the issue—What problem are you trying to solve? Why is this important?

Start by identifying discussion groups, events, and meetings that exist within your institution/community. Consider focusing on those that (a) are most influential, (b) reach the largest audience, and/or (c) you have the best chance of influencing.

Key questions include

- What discussion groups/events/meetings are active/influential within your religious community? (see Annex I for ideas)
- Are population and FP issues on the agenda of these groups/events/meetings?
- Which of these groups/events/meetings, if they include population/FP issues, could have the greatest impact?
- Which of these groups/events/meetings do you participate in?
- Which of these groups/events/meetings do you have access to?

Step 2. Develop your goal (What change are you seeking?) and objectives (What intermediate achievements are needed to reach this goal?)

Develop advocacy objectives based on the discussion groups, meetings, and events identified in step 1.

Example 1: Population/FP issues are rarely included in the agendas of discussion groups, events and meetings within my religious institution.

Goal: Increase attention paid to population and family planning issues within my religious institution.

Objectives

- Ensure that population and family planning issues are included on the agenda of bi-annual meetings of the National Executive Committee.
- Ensure that population and family planning issues are included on quarterly meeting agendas for the regional committee in all three regions.

Example 2: Population/FP issues are never included in the discussions of our women's group.

Goal: Increase attention paid to population and family planning issues within my religious institution.

Objective: Include population and family planning issues in at least three women's group meetings in the coming year.

Step 3. Develop an advocacy strategy

Based on the objectives you identified, use the key questions listed under Step 3 on page 12 to guide you in developing your approach.

It is particularly important to consider

- When do these groups/events/meetings take place?
- Who participates in these groups/events/meetings? (key players)
- When and how are they planned? How is the agenda set? (timing, key players)
- Which of these key players are already supportive? Who else could be influential supporters/allies?
- Who has influence over the agenda/content of these groups/events/meetings?

When crafting your advocacy messages, be sure to clearly articulate the importance of integrating population/FP issues into these groups/events/meetings.

Your target audience(s), as well as avenues of influence/entry points, will depend on the structure of your institution, your position within the institution, and the process for planning events/meetings described under Step 1 above.

Step 4. Implement your advocacy strategy

The worksheet on page 32 can help you bring everything together in a detailed action plan.

Step 5. Monitor and evaluate

What groups, events, and meetings included population and family planning issues? What advocacy strategies did you use to achieve this? What messages and strategies were most effective? Which need to be revised? What lessons did you learn? Moving forward, what is your new advocacy priority for integrating population and family planning into groups, events, and meetings?



Box 5. Planning a Population Weekend

“Population weekends” are interfaith awareness-raising and community mobilisation events designed to increase understanding of family planning, population, and development issues among Malawi’s religious communities. Various religious mother bodies coordinate to ensure that, on the same weekend, religious leaders in churches and mosques throughout a specific geographical area will all preach about these issues during their worship services. Accomplishing this requires multi-level engagement from the national level all the way down to traditional authorities.

The idea of population weekends came about through government efforts to implement the National Population Policy. The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD), in collaboration with the USAID-funded Health Policy Project (HPP), reached out to mother bodies to discuss how religious leaders could become involved in addressing population growth, family planning, and development issues.

Step 1: National-level “buy-in”

Planning for a population weekend starts at the national level, as interfaith collaborations are always a matter for religious institutions’ national-level leadership. Once mother bodies agree to move forward with a population weekend, a joint task force is created to supervise implementation and choose the date and location.*

Step 2: Creating a district-level planning team

Following the institution’s structure (see Annex 1), each mother body identifies district-level leaders to participate in a district planning team to further develop and implement activities.

EAM: The National Executive Committee agrees to participate and passes information down to the Regional Executive Committee, and then to district executive committees in relevant districts.

ECM: The process of planning a population weekend begins at the national level, led by portions of the Catholic Secretariat—the Catholic Health Commission, the Pastoral Directorate, and the Research and Communications Commission. Together, these bodies agree on which dioceses to engage. Then, the Catholic Secretariat contacts the diocese through the bishop and the diocese’s pastoral secretary. This is done because the Pastoral Committee has the authority to instruct other committees at diocese level to collaborate.

MCC—A desk officer within the Secretariat is assigned to work on the issue. Once a date and location are selected, Secretariat programme staff discuss which member churches to engage at the district level and identify one district-level leader to serve as coordinator for the population weekend.

SDA—The president of the session agrees to participate in a joint population weekend and passes responsibility down to the regional president in the appropriate region, who passes it down to district pastors.

Step 3: Planning activities

The leaders identified come together for an interfaith district planning meeting. The district planning team determines which activities will be carried out in the district, and which churches and mosques will be involved. Planning meetings should also include representatives from traditional authorities and district government officials (such as the director of planning and development, the district health officer, and the FP coordinator). Involvement from government representatives is important. The district health officer and the FP coordinator are good sources of information. Moreover, involving government partners keeps them “in the loop” about activities that are being planned in their jurisdictions.

Population weekend activities vary by district, and even among churches within a single district, depending on the interests and resources of participating churches. In addition to addressing population and family planning in worship services, common elements include distribution of information, education, and communication (IEC) materials and media engagement.

*The geographical divisions of different mother bodies don’t always correspond, so a “catchment area” is identified that may span multiple districts.

Box 5. Planning a Population Weekend (continued)

Mobilising traditional authorities

The district planning team reaches out to the traditional authorities to sensitise and mobilise them, and to include them in planning and implementation. This is necessary to ensure that activities will be carried out all the way down to the community level.

The district planning team decides on a meeting date with religious leaders from traditional authorities (TAs). TAs play an important role because they know their areas well and can identify appropriate churches or other venues for carrying out activities. They can also identify a given number of traditional religious leaders. These leaders attend the traditional-level planning meeting, at which district-level activities are refined and the date confirmed. The TA-level group decides which member churches to visit.

Step 4: Implementation

Tips: Based on our experiences implementing population weekends, we are able to offer the following suggestions:

- Leave enough time to mobilise your fellow religious leaders (at least one month), particularly as they may be in remote areas.
- Enact good plans (and follow up to make sure they have been carried out) to distribute IEC materials to all participating churches, particularly those in remote areas, prior to the population weekend.
- Know and engage with local media outlets—this will increase coverage of your events and help ensure that coverage is accurate.
- Whenever possible, arrange media interviews ahead of time—this enables religious leaders to prepare for the media engagement.
- Make time to sensitise and build the knowledge of targeted leaders before moving ahead with planning—religious leaders identified to plan population weekends may not have extensive knowledge and understanding of population and family planning issues. Before moving forward with planning activities, ensure that the leaders involved understand the information you hope to share. Otherwise, congregants might receive inaccurate or conflicting information, which would undermine the goals we are trying to achieve.

Key Activity 5—Organise one-off events to mobilise, educate, and raise awareness in communities about the linkages between population growth, family planning, and development.

Organising specific awareness-raising and community mobilisation events is central to our engagement as religious leaders. The planning process for these events is a bit different than the advocacy process, because they are aimed at influencing community members rather than decisionmakers.

Step 1: Identify the issue—What problem are you trying to solve? Why is this important?

Overall: There is insufficient awareness and understanding of the linkages between population, development, and family planning at the community level.

Specific: In my community, there is a widespread belief that the church is opposed to family planning and that having as many children as possible is God's will.

Step 2. Develop your goal and objectives

Goal: Raise awareness and change the attitudes and behaviours of community members regarding population and family planning issues.

Objectives: Consider what types of mobilisation and awareness-raising events will help you reach this goal.

Examples

1. Hold “population weekends” in 10 districts between January and December (see Box 5).
2. Hold “open days” in the same 10 districts between January and December (see below).

Step 3. Plan your events

“Population weekends” are one example of a one-off event that we, as religious leaders, have found effective in raising community awareness about population and family planning issues. In Box 5, we outline the steps in planning a population weekend to provide a better idea of the steps involved in planning community mobilisation events.

Tip: Remember that population weekends are a special example. These events are organised starting at the national level and involve interfaith collaboration. Not all community mobilisation activities require such elaborate planning. You should brainstorm and think about other one-off activities you can conduct in your community.

Step 4. Implement

The worksheet on page 32 can help you bring everything together in a detailed action plan.

Step 5. Monitor and evaluate

Think about how you will know whether your efforts have been successful. How will you know that you have achieved your goal? The more specific your goals and objectives, the easier it will be to monitor progress to determine if you are on track.

Open Days

Following the implementation of population weekends in 2014, mother bodies came together to plan “open days.” Whereas population weekend activities are held in churches and mosques by the leadership and congregation, open days are interfaith events held at a select location in the district, in which all community members are welcome to participate. Open days also link community members with health services, making FP and HIV testing and counselling services available to participants.

Key Activity 6—Engage with the media to increase coverage of population and family planning issues and ensure that supportive faith-based perspectives are included in the national conversation about these issues.

Engaging the media is intended to support and make transparent faith leaders’ positions on population and family planning issues, to make their positions more visible to their congregants, and to contribute to the national dialogue on these issues.



There are two intended audiences for this section: (1) religious leaders as individuals, and (2) religious institutions. For both audiences, this section offers things to keep in mind when speaking to the media about population and family planning issues, and tips for coming up with successful media strategies.

Media engagement is a broad topic, and can't be handled in great detail here. This section provides a few key tips to help religious leaders and institutions as they engage the media on population, development, and family planning issues.

Religious leaders' media engagement has two main focuses:

1. Working with mainstream media to ensure that supportive faith-based voices are included in the national conversation surrounding population and family planning issues.
2. Partnering with faith-based media outlets to encourage them to include conversations about population and family planning issues in their programming.

Benefits of working with the media

Working with the media has multiple benefits for religious leaders. It can

- Counter misperceptions that religious leaders are inherently opposed to family planning.
- Ensure that the media reports accurate information.
- Demystify information about religious leaders and institutions' positions for future reference.
- Enable religious leaders to reach wider audiences.
- Be cost-effective (media engagement can help you reach more people; sometimes journalists and media outlets are willing to provide free coverage of important issues).
- Offer space for any views to be heard.

Moreover, keeping track of media coverage (number of stories, attitudes/language/focus) can help you assess changes in attitudes to see whether your advocacy efforts are having the desired impact.

Tips for working with the media

When engaging the media, it is important to

- Follow the media protocols of your religious institution.
- Avoid conflicting messages by identifying specific spokespersons at each level to handle media engagement.
- Choose the right spokesperson. Is this person at the right level? Do they have the authority to act as spokesperson? Do they have sufficient knowledge and expertise? Are they able to answer media questions in an interesting, engaging, and succinct way?
- Prepare for media engagements. Discuss and agree on talking points ahead of time. Practice making these points, and staying on point. Remember, you do not have to answer every question you are asked. If a journalist asks an off-topic question, you can decline to answer and/or use your response to bring them back to the topic at hand.
- Use media engagements as an opportunity to clarify misunderstandings about the position of Christianity on family planning and population growth.
- Build relationships with individual journalists, editorial boards, and heads of media houses, and maintain these relationships over time. This can help position you as a trusted source (making it easier to get your story out) and allow you to increase these journalists' awareness and understanding of population and family planning issues, leading to more accurate reporting.

- Hold press conferences. This allows you to pick the topic, control the message, and decide who should be in the room.

When selecting media outlets

- Think about your audience. Who are you trying to reach? Which media outlets reach this audience? (You may need to use several outlets to make sure you reach your entire audience.)
- Consider topical as well as geographic coverage. What issue does this particular journalist, publication, or programme cover? Make sure your story fits this topic. You may need to tailor the “angle” to emphasise a particular aspect of your story (such as maternal health or economic benefits).

Cautions about working with the media

- When speaking with the media, be clear on whose behalf (or what’s behalf) you are speaking and don’t exceed your authority. For example, you could say, “I am speaking as an individual, not on behalf of all Christians;” or, “I am speaking on behalf of the MCC.” Otherwise, journalists may misrepresent your role.
- Do not underrate the media’s power to build and destroy—handle them with respect and care.

Key Activity 7—Spread the word!

The best way to raise awareness about population and family planning and to spread faith-based messages on these issues is to talk about them. Think “outside the box” and find your own opportunities to raise these issues. For example, religious leaders are often asked to speak at weddings, funerals, and other community events. Other ideas include speaking in minibuses or talking about family planning, population, and development issues during one-on-one meetings with other religious leaders or congregants.

Every moment could be a “spread the word” moment. What will yours be?



4 CONCLUSION

As Christian leaders, we hold positions of trust and respect, and as shepherds entrusted with the care and safety of our communities, we have a responsibility to become engaged in addressing population and family planning issues. Our population is growing so quickly that it is harming the health and well-being of individuals, communities, and the country as a whole. Responsible parenthood and planning of families can save lives and improve families' health and economic situations. At the same time, it can help to slow population growth, which will have widespread health, economic, social, and environmental benefits.

We created this booklet to build on three years of interfaith efforts, and to help make addressing population and family planning issues part of our everyday work as Christian leaders. In this guide, we have offered information on the impacts of population growth, as well as the benefits of healthy timing and spacing of families. We have also suggested seven key activities that Christian leaders can use to address population and family planning issues in our communities and institutions.

The creation of this guide is an important step, but it is only the first step. Now it is up to us to take the information and advice offered here off of the page and into the world.



WORKSHEET: ADVOCACY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Step 1—Identify the issue			
What issue will you address?			
Why is it important?			
Step 2—Identify Goals & Objectives			
Goal			
Objectives	(1) (2) (3)		
Step 3—Develop an Advocacy Strategy			
(1) Assess the situation			
Key decision-makers:	Relevant decision-making process(es)		
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			
(2) Identify your target	Level of awareness none,low,high	Neutral, supportive, or opposed?	What is important to them?
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			
(3) Advocacy messages	Evidence needed?		
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			
(4) Avenues of influence/entry points			
#1			
#2			
#3			
(5) Supporters and allies	How can they help?	How will you engage them?	
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			

(6) Opposition and challenges	Arguments?	How will you engage/respond?
#1		
#2		
#3		
#4		

Step 4—Implementation

Key events / meetings	Dates	Notes
#1		
#2		
#3		
#4		
#5		
#6		
#4		

Activity planned	Resources needed	Responsible Person(s)	Timeframe
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			
#5			
#6			

Additional notes/information

ANNEX 1: INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES

To effectively incorporate population and family planning advocacy messages into the activities of religious institutions, it is important to first understand the internal structures, processes, and policies that guide their activities. To assist readers in planning advocacy efforts, these annexes contain basic information on the institutional structures, policies, and processes of Malawi's four Christian mother bodies.

Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM)

National level

The Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) is responsible for the planning, operation, and management of the Catholic Church's national-level pastoral and social development activities. The Bishops' Conference is composed of two Metropolitan See (archdioceses)—namely, Blantyre and Lilongwe—and six dioceses (Chikwawa, Dedza, Karonga, Mangochi, Mzuzu, and Zomba). This a total of eight Catholic ecclesiastical jurisdictions under the leadership of archbishops and bishops.

The chairperson of ECM is elected from among the archbishops and bishops on a rotating basis. The bishops meet two to three times per year in weeklong plenary sessions, and meet regularly at the Catholic Secretariat for study sessions, committee meetings, Board of Governors meetings, and ecumenical meetings.

The Catholic Secretariat is the administrative body through which the ECM coordinates and implements its resolutions and activities—animating the life of the Church at the national level. The Bishops' Conference appoints a secretary general to serve as the executive officer of ECM. According to the current structure, the Catholic Secretariat is composed of the secretary general together with the heads of the Finance and Administration and, Pastoral, and Development directorates, as well as the National Social Development and Research and Communications commissions.

Currently, there are six active commissions:

- Catholic Development Commission for Malawi (CADECOM), also referred to as Caritas Malawi
- Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP)
- Catholic Education Commission
- Catholic Health Commission
- Pastoral Commission
- Research and Communication Commission

The ECM's national commissions are constituted by the Bishops' Conference for a specific mission of the Church. Each commission is chaired by a bishop, who is responsible for guiding its policies and tasked with studying, recommending, and implementing its findings in accordance with its mandate.

Dioceses (Regional) level

The Catholic Church in Malawi is divided into eight Catholic dioceses, including two archdioceses (Lilongwe and Blantyre), each headed by a bishop or archbishop.

Figure 1. Catholic Secretariat

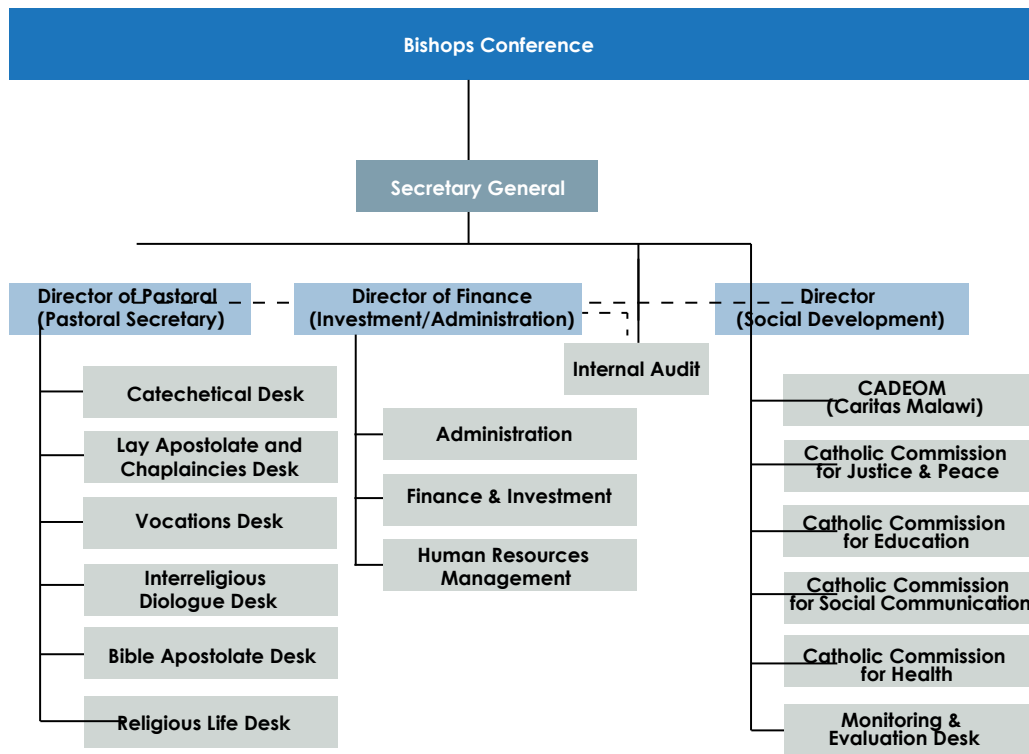


Figure 2. Linkages between National Level and Secretariat

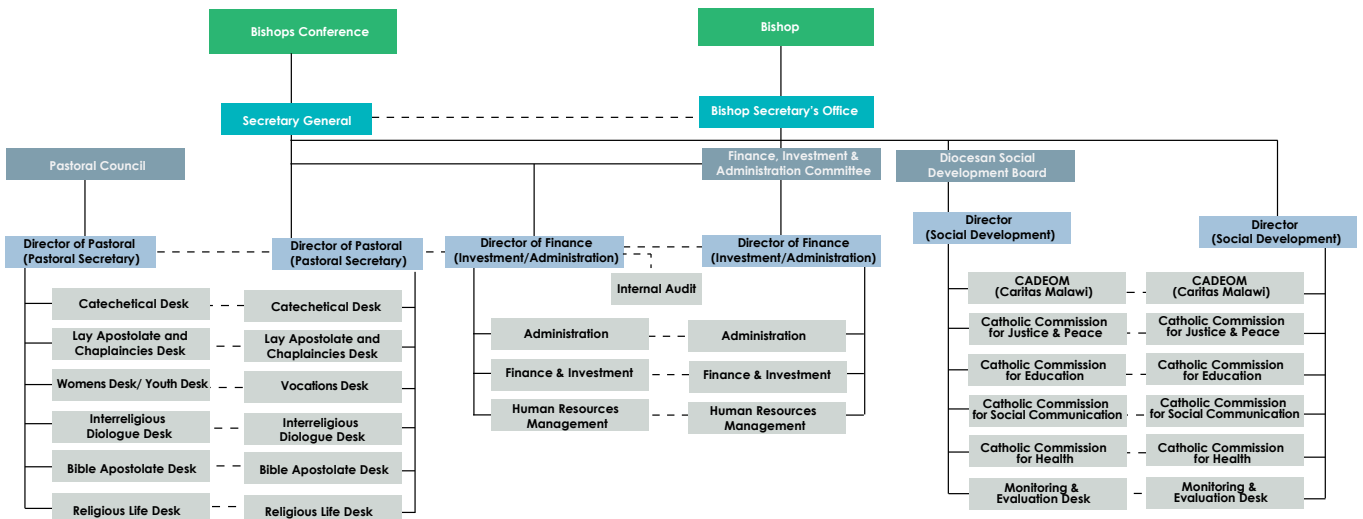
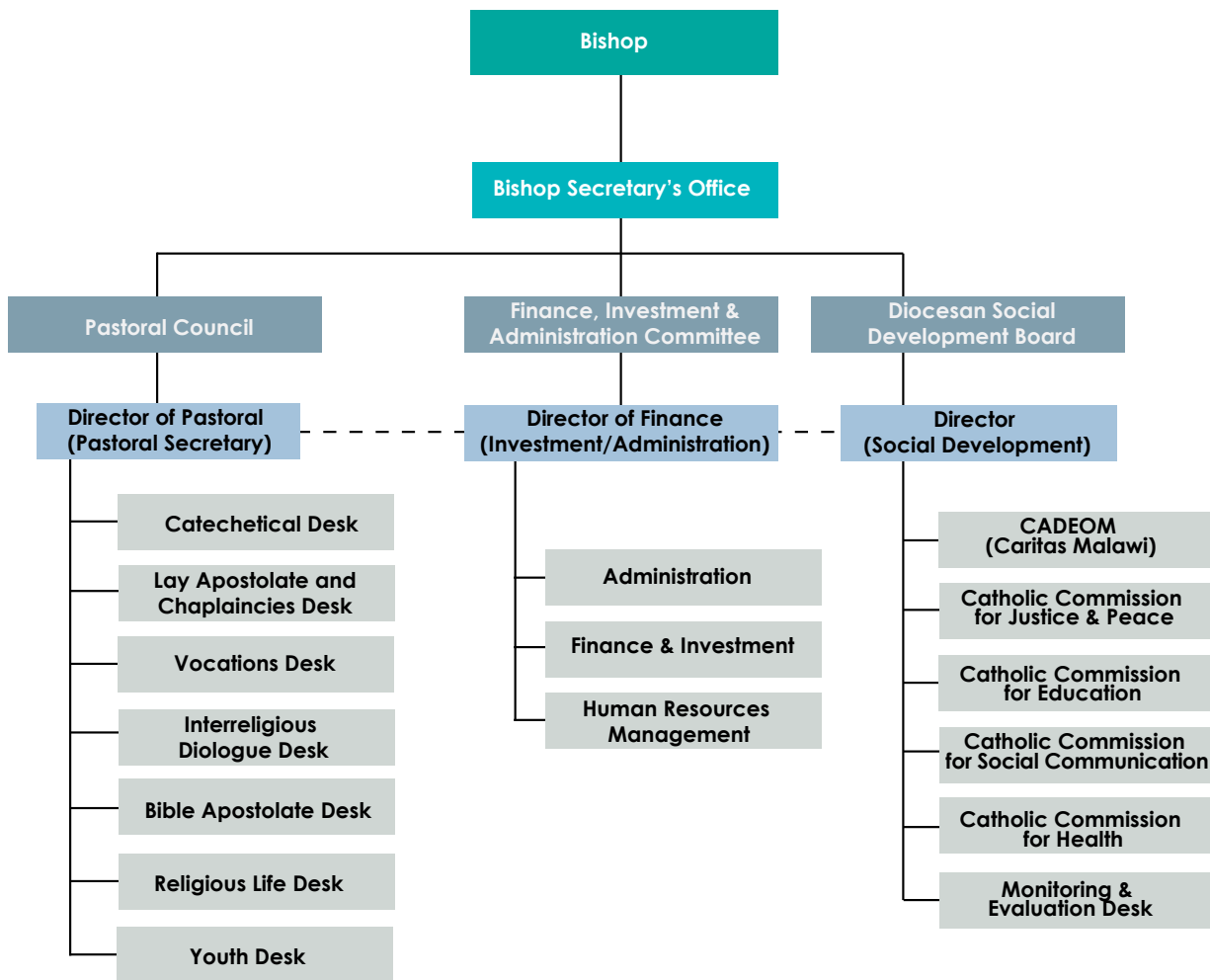


Figure 3. Diocesan Level



Parish level

At the parish level, the parish priest is head of the Church. Various committees operate under the parish priest's authority, including the Parish Pastoral Team (composed of the parish priest, sisters, and a catechist); the Parish Pastoral Council (including leaders of various committees); and the committees themselves (e.g., Christian Family Movement, Catholic Women Organisation, finance, liturgy, counsellors, youth, choir, and catechist).

Associations / Movements

Several associations and movements are central to Catholic life in Malawi, including the Christian Family Movement and the Catholic Women Organization. These associations play a vital role in advising the ECM on issues within their areas of focus, and in implementing activities at all levels. As such, they are harmonised within the commissions mentioned above.

List of Key ECM Structures and Individuals Whom You May Need to Engage

National Level	Roles and Responsibilities
ECM (Bishops' Conference)	Meets 2–3 times per year, weeklong plenary
Chairman of ECM (one of the bishops or archbishops, on a rotating basis)	Guides the proceedings of the conference
Vice-chairperson of ECM	Acts as the ECM chairperson's deputy
Catholic Secretariat	<p>National administrative body, through which ECM implements its resolutions and activities</p> <p>It is important that advocates are aware of the structure and functions of the Secretariat. The Secretariat may enable advocates to gain access to the national decision-making processes of the ECM. For example, the secretary general is able to contribute items to the agenda of the bishops' plenary meeting; the pastoral secretary and directors of national commissions can arrange meetings with bishops about specific issues outside of the regular plenary meetings.</p>
Secretary General	Heads the Secretariat
Director of Finance & Administration	
Pastoral Council Director of pastoral council/pastoral secretary	<p>It is important for advocates to understand the role of the Pastoral Directorate, as it has the power to instruct other parts of the Secretariat to coordinate (see Box 5 above).</p> <p>The Pastoral Directorate is involved in establishing and overseeing the educational and pastoral programmes of the Church.</p> <p>All of the associations mentioned below are organized and operate under the Pastoral Council.</p> <p>The pastoral secretary oversees several “desks” that are particularly relevant for advocates using this guide: the women's desk, interreligious dialogue desk, religious life desk, and youth desk.</p>
Director of social development	The director of social development oversees and coordinates the Church's activities regarding its social engagement with society.

National Level	Roles and Responsibilities
National commissions (part of Secretariat)	One bishop is assigned the responsibility of guiding a commission. Each is tasked with studying, recommending, and implementing its findings.
Catholic Development Commission for Malawi (CADECOM)	The CADECOM promotes the livelihoods of people within the communities served by the Church and specifically focuses on emergency relief, food security, and gender issues.
Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) Head of the Commission	The CCJP promotes the Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and Church engagement with socioeconomic and political aspects of Christian life.
Education Commission Head of the commission	The Education Commission is responsible for education policy formulation and review, as well as the management of the Church's educational programmes and institutions.
Health Commission Head of the commission	The Health Commission coordinates the healthcare services and programmes implemented by the Church.
Pastoral Commission Head of the commission	The Pastoral Commission is responsible for the organisation and coordination of pastoral activities, lay apostolic activities, and liturgical activities.
Research and Communications commission Head of the commission	The commission is responsible for disseminating information, instructing the Christian conscience on pertinent issues with respect to the media, guiding the local Church in media-related areas, and collaborating with lay media professionals and institutions.
Associations/movements	Under the Pastoral Department, associations and movements (youth, women, laity) play an important role in the life of the Church. They are very influential in decision making and implementation of Church activities at all levels.
Catholic Family Movement	The Catholic Family Movement and Catholic Marriage Encounter are associations whose members are married. They give support and instruction to other married couples on pertinent issues, and offer guidance to youth and those preparing for marriage.
Catholic Women's Organisation	The Catholic Women's Organisation coordinates the involvement of women in the life of the Church at all levels. They are key to the empowerment of women in relevant matters.

Diocese Level	Roles and Responsibilities
Bishop	Leader of the local Church
Vicar general	Acts as the bishop's deputy
Diocesan Council	The bishop's council of consultors
Diocesan commissions (Pastoral, CADECOM, CCJP, Education, Health, and Communication)	Role is the same as at the national-level commissions mentioned above, but at the diocesan level
Pastoral secretary	As at the national level, the pastoral secretary plays an important role, and is often the entry point (along with the bishop) into decision-making processes at the diocese level.
Diocese-level branches of associations/movements	See above
Parish Level	Roles and Responsibilities
Parish priest	Local leader at the parish level
Parish Pastoral Team	Advisory body to the parish priest, comprised of all pastoral agents (parish priest, sisters, and catechist)
Parish Council	Decision- and policy-making body composed of all pastoral agents and leaders of associations in a parish by representation

Table 2. List of Relevant ECM Discussion Groups, Meetings, and Events

National Level	Schedule / Responsibilities
Associations/movements	National-level meetings and gatherings of associations and movements
ECM meetings (Bishops' Conference)	2–3 times per year, weeklong plenary
Other bishops' meetings at Catholic Secretariat	Periodically throughout the year for study sessions, committee meetings, Board of Governors meetings, ecumenical meetings
Pastoral secretaries' meetings	The pastoral secretaries meet to organise pastoral and liturgical activities in collaboration with priests and lay associations and movements
Commission meetings	See above
Diocese Level	Schedule / Responsibilities
Associations/movements	Diocese-level meetings and gatherings of associations and movements
Parish Level	Schedule / Responsibilities
Associations/movements	Parish-level meetings, gatherings, and activities of associations and movements
Parish Pastoral Team meetings	Organise and coordinate pastoral activities at the parish level
Parish Pastoral Council meetings	Consultative body comprised of Church leaders that advises the parish pastoral team and assists with grassroots implementation of pastoral activities

Table 3. List of Relevant ECM Policies / Plans and Educational Programmes / Materials

<p>(a) Already include population and family planning issues, or</p> <p>(b) May be suitable for integrating population/FP issues</p>	Level	Includes pop/FP?		Notes
Policies / Plans				
Sexual and reproductive health	National	Yes	Yes	The ECM Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy brings about a necessary understanding of what the Catholic Church believes in and teaches regarding human sexuality, marriage, responsible procreation, birth regulation, and family planning
Child Protection	National	Yes	Yes	
Pastoral letters/Statements	National	Yes	Yes	
Humanae Vitae	National	Yes	Yes	
Compendium of Catholic Social Teachings (CST)	National	Yes	Yes	
Family Planning Booklet for Catholic Counselors (in process)	National	Yes	Yes	
Educational Programmes / Materials				
Catholic catechism	National	Yes	Yes	Compendium of all Catholic teaching regarding both faith and morals
Family Planning Booklet for Catholic Counselors (in process)	National	Yes	Yes	

Policy Development Process

Step 1: Bishops receive and discuss reports from commissions, associations/movements, and other pastoral departments in their council meetings.

Step 2: If an issue is worth pursuing, a task force is constituted to conduct research.

Step 3: A study session on the issue is convened by the bishops.

Step 4: Decisions are made.

Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM)

National level

The Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM) is an umbrella body for 108 churches and Christian organisations (58 evangelical churches and 50 Christian organisations). At the national level, the EAM is led by the Executive Board, under a chair and vice chair; the Secretariat operates under the Executive Board. Members of the Executive Board are nominated by a general assembly of EAM's 108 member churches. The EAM Secretariat is headed by a general secretary and is divided into several departments.

Regional level

At the regional level, the EAM is led by three regional executive committees: (i) Northern (Mzuzu regional office); (ii) Central (Lilongwe regional office); and (iii) Southern (Blantyre regional office)—each headed by a regional coordinator.

District/Zonal level

At the district level, the EAM is led by the District Executive Committee, composed of pastors fraternal from various churches. The committee supervises the activities of district-level forums/gatherings, including Pastors Fraternal, Wives of Pastors Fraternal, and the Youth Forum. The committee also supervises the implementation of social and development projects (specific to each district).

Church/community level

At the local church/community level, structures vary depending on the particular institutional arrangements of EAM partner churches and organisations.

Figure I. EAM Institutional Structure

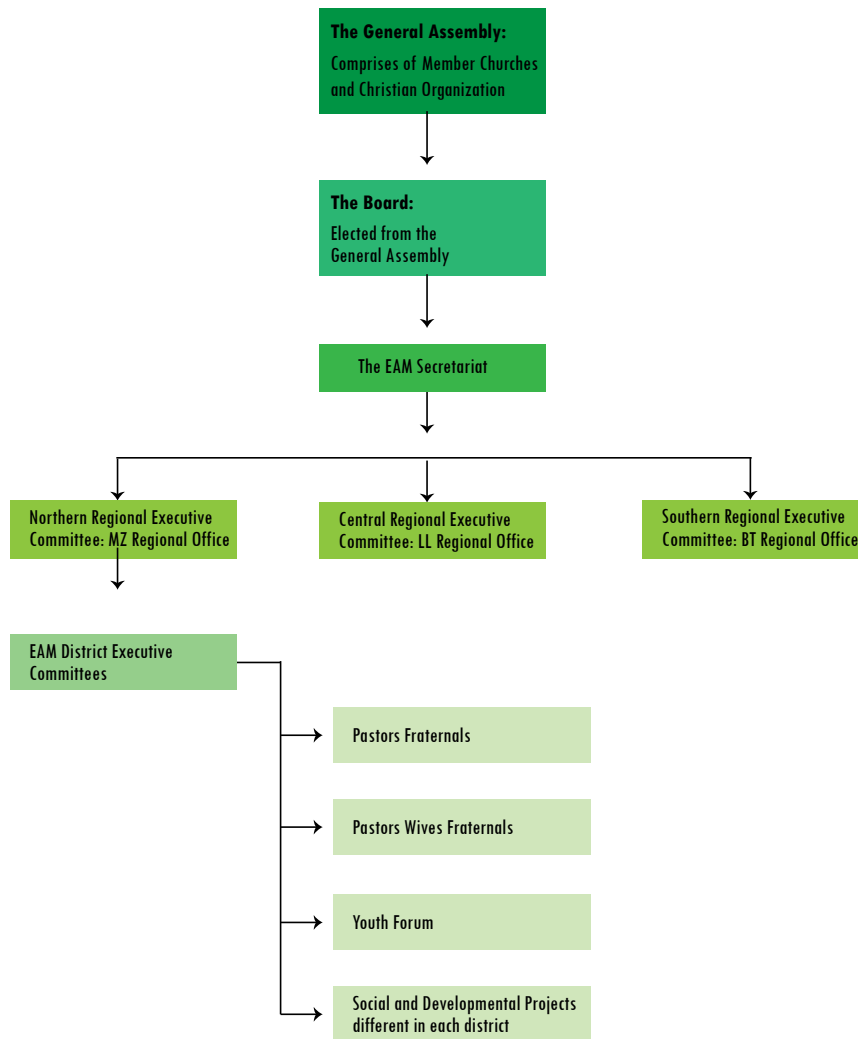


Table I. List of Key Players Whom You May Need to Engage

National Level	Roles and Responsibilities
Executive Board	National oversight (supervises regional executive committees) Policy and decision making Decisions regarding interfaith collaborations (such as population weekends)
Chair	Leads the committee
Vice chair	Leads the committee in the absence of the chair
Secretary and treasurer	Administration and finance
Board members (elected by national assembly)	Board supervision ensures that actions are in accordance with policies of member associations
Regional coordinators (3)	Serve as link between national and regional levels—bringing concerns from regional to national level and conveying national-level guidance to regions

National Level	Roles and Responsibilities
EAM Secretariat	Divided into several departments; issues are brought to the Secretariat by the commissions; the Secretariat then brings the issues before the board. Population issues fall under the supervision of the Ethics, Peace and Justice commission. The health commission handles FP issues.
Departments/commissions (Health; Education; Ethics, Peace, and Justice)	Pastors fraternal bring issues to the commissions, which brings them to the Secretariat
General secretary	Heads the Secretariat, sits on the Executive Board
National Assembly (of 108 member churches)	Nominates members of the Executive Board
Regional Level	Roles and Responsibilities
Regional executive committees (Mzuzu, Lilongwe, and Blantyre)	Regional oversight and policy supervision Conveying/implementing guidance from Executive Board Supervising district executive committees Gathering information from district and regional levels to convey to the national executive committee
Regional coordinators (3)	See above
Vice chairs (3)	Lead committees in absence of the chair
Secretary and treasurer	Administration and finance
District/Zonal Level	Roles and Responsibilities
District Executive Committee	Supervise activities of district-level forums/gatherings Supervise implementation of social and development projects for the district (based on guidance from Regional Executive Committee)
Chairman	
Pastors fraternal	Pastors fraternal are implementers who meet on a monthly basis to discuss emerging issues and encourage each other in spiritual life. They will be central to implementation of this guide.
Secretary and treasurer	Administration and finance
Parish Level	Roles and Responsibilities
Pastors wives fraternals	A fellowship group where issues of gender are discussed, including those related to family planning
Youth Forum	A commission for youth and children that conducts activities to foster Christian life of youth; FP issues could be integrated into this forum

Table 2. List of Relevant EAM Discussion Groups, Meetings and Events

National Level	Schedule / Responsibilities
Executive Board consultations	Briefing on population issues Seeking mandate
General Assembly meetings	
Regional Level	Schedule / Responsibilities
Regional Executive Committee meetings	
Regional training workshops and advocacy	Periodic events, including awareness raising and training of trainers
Parish Level	Schedule / Responsibilities
District Executive Committee meetings	
Workshops and trainings	Campaigns and trainings for pastors, youth leaders, spouses, and traditional leaders
Zonal trainings	
Pastors fraternal meetings	Monthly meetings
Pastors wives fraternals meetings	
Youth Forum meetings	

Table 3. List of Relevant EAM Policies/Plans

<p>(a) Already include population and family planning issues, or</p> <p>(b) May be suitable for integrating population/FP issues</p>	<p>Level</p>	<p>Includes pop/FP?</p>	<p>Supportive?</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<p>Health Policy Guide</p>	<p>National and regional</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Slow progress—there are many levels, so it can take time to work through the policy process. The policies will be completed, but other pressing challenges sometimes interrupt the process, as attention is pulled elsewhere (e.g., to the floods in early 2015).</p>
<p>Environment Policy (Disaster Management Policy) (in progress)</p>	<p>National and regional</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Y</p>	
<p>Ethics, Peace, and Justice Policy (in progress)</p>	<p>National</p>			

Within EAM, many policies and plans relevant to population and family planning issues are established at the member church level. Advocates working to integrate these issues into the policies/plans of a particular member church should start by consulting with other leaders about what policies and plans already exist within that church, and how these could be improved to better address population and family planning issues.

Advocates seeking to affect the policies of all member churches need to work through EAM structures at the national level, including the Secretariat and EAM leadership. These efforts would determine what policies could be adopted, and how (within its mandate and mission) the EAM could encourage member churches to do more to address population and family planning issues. For example, could EAM require or encourage member churches to adopt policies on population and family planning, or integrate these issues into existing policies?

Policy development process

Religious leaders bring issues to the attention of the pastors fraternal, who take them to the appropriate commission. The commissions are responsible for bringing issues to the Secretariat, which feeds them up to the Executive Board. Some decisions require ratification by a vote of the General Assembly.

When a policy is completed, the EAM implements it by consulting with local members who use the policy as they implement their own activities. Meetings are held with the pastors fraternal (at zonal level) and consortiums implementing activities that incorporate FP issues into their projects.

Malawi Council of Churches (MCC)

National level

The Malawi Council of Churches (MCC) is an umbrella organisation for 25 Christian churches and 20 para-church organisations in Malawi. At the national level, the MCC is led by a Secretariat, which is headed by the general secretary. Responsibilities of the MCC include the following:

- Promote the extension of the Kingdom of God by fostering closer cooperation and sponsoring united action between churches.
- Serve as a medium for united consideration of problems common to the churches, and act on their behalf.
- Act as a mouthpiece for members on matters of public importance.
- Promote and facilitate united action and cooperation with other churches and bodies outside of membership in matters of common concern.
- Serve as a communication link with other ecumenical organisations approved by the Council.
- Foster theological dialogue among members to promote transparency, accountability, mutual understanding, and (eventually) unity in obedience to God.

Regional level

The MCC has no formal subnational structures. Instead, MCC member churches have their own subnational structures and organisations. These include synods and secretariats for the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). The Anglican Church has dioceses, which also have levels of leadership extending down to congregations. Various other member churches have leadership structures for national, regional, district, and community and congregation levels.

It is important to understand that, although these structures are individual to member churches, the general setup for each body includes top-level leadership made up of the national executive, regional executives, district executives, etc.

Table 1. List of Key Players Whom You May Need to Engage

National Level	Roles and Responsibilities
General Synod	Policy formulation—the role at the national level is guidance/direction
Anglican Council of Malawi	Policy formulation (for Synods)
Regional/Conference Level	Roles and Responsibilities
Synod	Policy formulation and enforcement of policy
Diocese	
Presbytery	
Arch-deaconry	
Parish Level	Roles and Responsibilities
Congregation/parish	Implementation body
Prayer house/outstation	Enhancement of implementation
Fraternity	Interchurch district interfacing platform
Ward	Enhancement of implementation at community level
Groups (women’s, youth, choir, etc.)	Specialised services

Table 2. List of Relevant MCC Discussion Groups, Meetings, and Events

National Level	Schedule / Responsibilities
Indabas	Top-level leaders meet to discuss and resolve national-level issues. Indabas also occur at the SADC regional level.
General Assembly	Bi-annual meetings
Committees	Various committees are established by the General Assembly to handle issues as needed. It is important for advocates to be aware of this, as implementation of some activities described in this guide could require the formation of committees or subcommittees.
Seminars, workshops, etc.	Varies
Regional/Diocese Level	Schedule / Responsibilities
Presbytery (annual meetings)	Annual meetings—identify issues for top or bottom consideration
Dioceses	Bi-annual meetings
Congregation/Parish Level	Schedule / Responsibilities
Congregations/parishes (quarterly meetings)	Establish and run development and other sector meetings
Prayer house (weekly meetings every Wednesday and/or Thursday)	Day-to-day running of the church

Congregation/Parish Level	Schedule / Responsibilities
Home cells, teachings, preaching, weddings, funerals	Each prayer house has several “home cells”—groups of 5–10 people who meet weekly, led by a church elder
Fraternity meetings, workshops, seminars, etc.	
Wards	Family meetings, publication of Sunday Periodical
Festivals, meetings, competitions, performances	Planned from time to time (e.g., choir festivals, fundraising, and development meetings to support building churches)

Table 3. List of Relevant MCC Policies/Plans and Educational Programmes/Materials

(a) Already include population and family planning issues, or (b) May be suitable for integrating population/FP issues	Level	Includes pop/FP?	Supportive?	Notes
Policies/Plans				
Pastoral letters	National			Pastoral letters are an influential tool for policy making within MCC
<p>Within MCC, many policies and plans relevant to population and family planning issues are established at the member church level. Advocates working to integrate these issues into the policies/plans of a particular member church need to start by consulting with other leaders about what policies and plans already exist within that church. They should then determine how these policies/plans could be improved to better address population and family planning issues.</p> <p>Advocates seeking to affect the policies of all member churches should work through national-level MCC structures, including the General Synod and the Anglican Council of Malawi. These efforts would determine what policies could be adopted, and how (within its mandate and mission) the MCC could encourage member churches to do more to address population and family planning issues. For example, could the MCC encourage joint programmes and initiatives, urge member churches to adopt policies on population and family planning, or integrate these issues into existing policies?</p>				

Educational Programmes / Materials				
Buku la Chilangizo (counselling booklet)	Regional	Y—Indirectly: mentions women should space their pregnancies, but does not specifically discuss family planning or population	Y	In need of updating
Programmes on HIV/AIDS (national level)	National	N		Similar programmes for sexual and reproductive health could be established

Policy development process

Each member church has its own policy development process, dependent on issues core to its doctrines and larger policy.

Church synod conferences are an important part of policy making. Synods meet to discuss a particular issue (for example: What does the Bible tell us? What should we do?). Once a course of action is agreed upon, implementation is carried out at lower levels. After a period of one or two years, the synods meet again to report back. What is working? What needs to be changed?

The roles of the national level include compilation and direction, while regions/dioceses and parishes/congregations (and still lower levels) mainly focus on implementation.

Seventh Day Adventists (SDA)

National level

At the national level, the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church is led by the Malawi Union. The Union is headed by a president, selected by regional and external delegates during a session conducted every five years. The session is normally held at the world church headquarters in the United States of America. Overall, the top priority of the church is evangelism (introducing someone to Christ).

Regional/conference level

At the regional level, the SDA is led by three regional conferences (central, southern, and northern), each headed by a president. These regional conferences are responsible for all activities within the region.

Church/“district” level

Within the SDA, this “church/community” level is referred to as a “district.” Here, each SDA church is headed by a pastor, who is responsible for implementing all church activities outlined by the regional and national leaders, with support from the church elders.

Table 1. List of Key Players Whom You May Need to Engage

National Level	Roles and Responsibilities
National president	Responsible for all activities and policies of the SDA in Malawi, under the supervision of the SDA's Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division; supervises departmental directors; the president chairs all meetings at both the national and regional level, but may delegate someone else for this purpose
Departmental directors (national)	Responsible for planning activities at the national level, under the supervision of the national president
Executive Committee	Composed of all regional presidents and their officers, as well as delegates (church members selected at the regional level)
Executive secretary	
Chief financial officer and administrators	
Regional/Conference Level	Roles and Responsibilities
Regional president	Responsible for all church activities at the regional level; reports to national president
Departmental directors (regional)	Responsible for planning activities at the regional level, under the supervision of the regional president
Church/"District" Level	Roles and Responsibilities
Pastor	Responsible for all church activities within his territory; church programmes and policies are generally planned at higher levels, and the pastors' role is implementation
Church elders	Elected on a yearly basis; report to pastors; responsible for assisting pastors with implementation of programmes/policies

Relevant SDA Discussion Groups, Meetings and Events

National level

- Executive Committee meetings (quarterly)

Regional level

- Regional presidents' meetings (quarterly)

Church/"district" level

- Church retreats
- Youth camping
- Camp meetings
- Men's meetings
- Women's meetings
- Pastors' meetings

Table 3. List of Relevant SDA Educational Programmes / Materials

Educational programmes/ materials that ... (a) Address population/FP issues, or (b) May be suitable for integrating population/FP issues	Level	Includes pop/FP?	Supportive?	Notes
Youth counselling programme	All levels	Y	Y	
Women’s programme	All levels	Y	Y	
Health programmes	All levels	Y	Y	
Church retreats	All levels	Y	Y	
Family planning programme	All levels	Y	Y	
Family Life Programme (updates planned)	All levels	N	-	The church already has a department that deals with family life. SDA plans to mainstream its activities to include population growth and development, which were not original emphases of the programme.

Futures Group (Health Policy Project)
Amina House, Unit 8
Off Paul Kagame Road — Opposite Cash Build
Lilongwe, Malawi