Female Condom Programming in Malawi

SITUATION AT A GLANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>13.2 million</th>
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**HIV/AIDS**

- HIV prevalence (ages 15-49) | 12.0% |
- HIV prevalence (ages 15-49) for women | 13.3% |
- HIV prevalence (ages 15-49) for men | 10.2% |
- 15-19 year olds | 3.7% for women; 0.4% for men |
- 20-24 year olds | 13.2% for women; 3.9% for men |
- 25-30 year olds | 15.5% for women; 9.8% for men |
- 30+ year olds | 17.0% for women; 17.5% for men |
- Couples, both partners positive | 14.6% in urban areas; 6.0% in rural areas |
- Man positive, woman negative | 13.8% in urban areas; 4.7% in rural areas |
- Woman positive, man negative | 4.5% in urban areas; 3.9% in rural areas |

With funding and support from UNFPA and USAID, the Reproductive Health Unit of the Malawi Ministry of Health has worked with both the public sector and NGOs to provide condom programming and education to women, men, and youth in conjunction with expanding access to female condoms throughout the country. With support from the government, NGOs and community-based organizations provide male and female condoms to clients at no cost. As a result of these efforts, demand for the female condom among both women and men has increased significantly, with nearly one million female condoms distributed in the public sector in 2008, compared with 124,000 distributed in 2004-2005.

**THE CARE FEMALE CONDOM SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN**

In 2008, Population Services International (PSI)/Malawi, with the support of the Ministry of Health and UNFPA, launched a social marketing campaign for the female condom featuring a repackaged product called the CARE female condom. Based on successful approaches in Zimbabwe and Zambia, this campaign combines peer education, media strategy, and creative distribution plans, such as partnering with hair salons. Salons are ideal places for educating consumers about female condoms, because they serve women and are often run by women. With the support of UNFPA, PSI works with salon owners to conduct trainings with their staff about educating and promoting female condoms with their clients through providing accurate information and condom demonstrations. The women who visit the salon are educated about the product, instructed on how to use it, and afterwards are able to purchase female condoms at the salon.

**CHALLENGES TO FEMALE CONDOM PROGRAMMING**

Despite the successes of female condom programming in Malawi, there are still many challenges to expanding access and education. At the local level, more financial resources, advocacy, and continued capacity building for comprehensive male and female condom programming are necessary for ensuring that all barriers to access and use are removed. For example, even where female condoms are provided for free by the government, health institutions must pay a handling fee, which their inadequate budgets cannot support. In addition, increased investigation into the needs and desires of the consumers is necessary to ensure more effective, targeted promotion. This would include addressing barriers related to accessibility, culture, and economics, and would assess the spectrum of need among different groups (i.e. married couples, men who have sex with men, discordant couples, etc.). Overall, stronger program management, including needs assessment and strategic planning, would increase access to female condoms. Program implementers should ensure robust monitoring and evaluation of female condom programming.
NOTES

4 Mapemba. 2009.