

## Female Condom Programming in Malawi

### SITUATION AT A GLANCE

Total Population	13.2 million
<b><u>HIV/AIDS</u></b>	
HIV prevalence (ages 15-49)	12.0%
HIV prevalence (ages 15-49)	13.3% for women; 10.2% for men
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 <sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

### 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Mapemba, Sandra. "Breaking Down the Barriers to Achieve Gender Equity – The Female Condom Programme in Malawi." Power Point presentation presented at the United States Agency for International Development, Washington, D.C., November 19, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> PlusNews. "Malawi: Education to boost popularity of female condom." Malawi Politics. <http://www.malawipolitics.com/news.php?item.185.8> (accessed December 4, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Population Services International/Malawi. "PSI/Malawi Launches CARE Female Condoms 'For Women Who Choose to Care.'" Press Release. PSI/Malawi, April 25, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Mapemba. 2009.

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*Prevention Now! is an initiative of the Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)*