



# **RAPID POPULATION GROWTH & CLIMATE CHANGE; FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE**

**Dingaan Mithi, Programme manager,  
Journalists Association Against AIDS**

## INTRODUCTION

- ✓ At present, the world has a population of 7 billion people.
- ✓ Malawi is a climate change hotspot facing water stress and rapid population growth which leads to agricultural decline.
- ✓ A change in climatic patterns heavily affects rainfall and results in extreme weather events and include; drought, flash floods, insect infestations and soil erosion.
- ✓ The country is now facing rapid population growth (on average Malawian women have six children) This is translated to a 5.7% in the fertility rate



## **POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

- ✓ Malawi is a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- ✓ The country has developed the Malawi Growth & Development Strategy 2011-2016 which recognizes agriculture and climate change.
- ✓ A National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA) was developed in 2006 to respond to climate change.
- ✓ The NAPA recognizes rapid population growth and links to agriculture, however it does not put family planning central to it.
- ✓ Malawi has newly adopted the National Population Policy in 2012.
- ✓ National Climate Change Policy
- ✓ National Climate Change Investment Plan (2013-2018)



## THE IMPACT OF RAPID POPULATION GROWTH ON AGRICULTURE

- ✓ Rapid population growth threatens agriculture as it degrades biodiversity e.g land degradation.
- ✓ Malawi's economy is dependent on rain-fed agricultural production, agriculture contributes 30% of the gross national product, and supports livelihoods for over 80% of the population (World Bank).
- ✓ Half of Malawi's land area will have excessively high levels of population density. It will be very difficult for Malawi's population to fend for itself sustainably if the country continues to depend so much on land-intensive and rain-fed agriculture and its population growth is not slowed.
- ✓ The erratic rainfall and recurring drought spells have inevitably resulted in poor crop yields or total crop failure, serious food shortages and malnutrition in some districts .



## THE IMPACT OF RAPID POPULATION GROWTH ON AGRICULTURE....CONTINUED

- ✓ *“Increased population results in increased cutting of trees, which reduces soil cover. People also settle or cultivate on marginal lands, leading to soil erosion. So, family planning can be used as an adaptive measure, and there is need to educate the general public about the effects of population on climate change issues.”*  
(UN Agency Official)
- ✓ According to the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee’s July 2012 report, 1.63 million people (11% of the total population) in Malawi’s 15 districts in the southern and central regions faced serious food shortages.
- ✓ Shortages due to crop failure and poor harvests caused by sporadic onset of the rainy season, erratic rainfall, and prolonged dry-spells.



## LINKS BETWEEN RAPID POPULATION GROWTH, CLIMATE CHANGE, WATER RESOURCES & AGRICULTURE

- ✓ Malawi is considered one of the countries with severe water scarcity in Africa.
- ✓ In January 2012, torrential rains caused serious flooding that displaced many people in Nsanje district, washing away roads, bridges, crops and livestock as rivers burst their banks.
- ✓ Rapid population is directly linked to climate change. ( Increased numbers of people leads to deforestation and increases loss of soil fertility and causes massive crop failure)
- ✓ Floods caused by deforestation also increases food insecurity as crops get washed away.
- ✓ Climate change makes the globe to become warmer, this leads to an increase in pests such as army worms (*Ntchembere zandonda*) as they breed more in warm conditions and they attack crops leading to a decline in harvests.



## IMPACT OF CLIMATE RELATED NATURAL DISASTERS ON FOOD SECURITY AND GENDER

- ✓ From 1979 to 2008, natural disasters affected nearly 1.7 million people and killed about 2,596 people in Malawi.
- ✓ Malawi's vulnerability is linked to specific geo-climatic factors: (i) the influence of the El Niño and La Niña phenomena on the country's climate, and the positions of tropical cyclones developing in the Mozambique Channel, resulting in highly erratic rainfall patterns.
- ✓ Farming is disrupted when natural disasters strike and often causes poverty and food insecurity.
- ✓ Women are more affected by natural disasters than men.
- ✓ Women bear most of the burden in activities that are most impacted by adverse climate hazards, including collection of water, firewood and ensuring daily access to food.
- ✓ Women comprise 70% of the agricultural labour force, farming is hugely disrupted when climate disasters strike.



## ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN REPORTING POPULATION GROWTH, CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY AND AGRICULTURE

- ✓ The huge part of the population (over 90%) use the radio to access information.
- ✓ ZBS radio has a 76% listenership out of the 15 million people.
- ✓ Inform people on rapid population and food insecurity.
- ✓ Early warning systems (to warn people when extreme weather events are about to hit communities) This could save lives.
- ✓ Investigate forest crimes committed deliberately which cause deforestation.
- ✓ Expose corrupt practices in agricultural services such as the input subsidy program.
- ✓ Educate farmers on climate smart agriculture and advanced agricultural practices and cross cutting issues of family planning.





## IMPACT OF RAPID POPULATION ON LAND RESOURCES

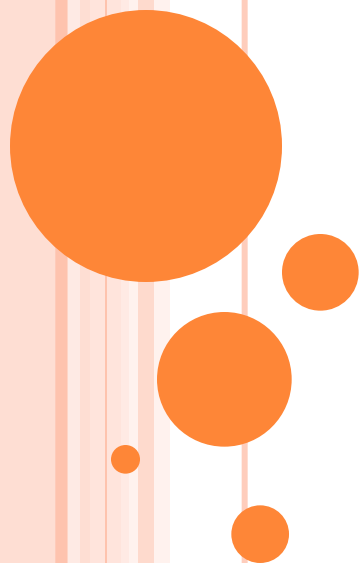
- ✓ Malawi's rapid population growth has exerted enormous pressure on land and other natural resources, leading to the fragmentation of smallholder land holdings and over-exploitation of land and other natural resources.
- ✓ The current population density of 126 people per square kilometer is among the highest in Africa, and it is projected to grow six-fold to 803 by 2050.
- ✓ Close to half of Malawi's land area will have excessively high levels of population density.
- ✓ It will be very difficult for Malawi's population to fend for itself sustainably if the country continues to depend so much on land-intensive and rain-fed agriculture and its population growth is not slowed.

## IMPACT OF RAPID POPULATION GROWTH ON FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE LINKAGES

- ✓ Malawi is experiencing rapid deforestation as a direct consequence of rapid population growth.
- ✓ The proportion of land covered by forests decreased from 41% in 1990 to 35% in 2008. The country has been losing its forestry cover at the rate of 2.8% per year.
- ✓ The rate of deforestation varies across the country's three regions, ranging from 2.4% in the Central Region, to 2.7% in the Southern Region, and 3.4% in the Northern Region.
- ✓ 95% of the households in the 2008 Census reported use of wood fuel for cooking, deforestation is likely to worsen in future as the population grows.

## **IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON WATER RESOURCES**

- ✓ There is limited access to water in many of the densely populated districts in the central region (such as Kasungu and Dowa).
- ✓ The high level of deforestation that the country is experiencing has compounded the problem by causing severe reduction in water catchment capability.
- ✓ As Malawi depends on hydroelectric power, the recurrence of drought has adversely affected hydroelectric power generation, which has further affected overall economic productivity.



## LACK OF ACCESS TO CLIMATE FINANCING

- ✓ Malawi as a least developing country (LDC) struggles just like other LDCs to access funding.
- ✓ The Green Climate Fund set up recently with secretariat in South Korea has a commitment made by rich countries for USD 100 billion to be committed from now to 2020 to help poor countries to adapt.
- ✓ Malawi has responded by launching a National Climate Change Investment Plan (NCCIP) of 2013-2018 to mobilize funding for climate change.
- ✓ Lack of climate financing derails many climate adaptation and mitigation programs, for instance the 2006 NAPA has lacked implementation due to funding woes.

## **OUR ROLES IN THE SOCIETY IN DEALING WITH CLIMATE CHANGE**

- ✓ Encourage communities in tree planting to address deforestation.
- ✓ Participate in carbon trading (REDD+) interventions as part of the clean development mechanism (CDM) to offset carbon emissions.
- ✓ Strengthen by-laws that protect forests from degradation.
- ✓ Establish community woodlots.
- ✓ Promote family planning for smaller families (use of long acting methods) this has a long term benefit of reducing rapid population growth for CA.

## RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

- ✓ The media should consider increasing features and special radio programs.
- ✓ Consider introducing phone-in radio programs integrating family planning and agriculture (smaller family sizes reduces poverty and climate vulnerability)
- ✓ Local NGOs should support the local community radio stations for field trips and media tours linking population growth, food security and climate change.
- ✓ There is a need to train local media houses especially community radio stations to have skills to report on the impact of rapid population growth on food security.
- ✓ Ministry of Agriculture should consider developing a national action plan on rapid population growth and food security and involve the media to widely disseminate it as at the moment, policy fragmentation is causing is a huge challenge in terms of policy harmonization
- ✓ Government of Malawi should increase the family planning budget as the MK26 million is very small. (Family planning is key to boosting food security and economic development of the country).



## **RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED....**

- ✓ Government should urgently implement the NCCIP by establishing the National Climate Change Fund (NCCF) as proposed in the investment plan.

**THANK YOU!**

