# NEW IPCC REPORT RECOGNIZES FAMILY PLANNING AMONG SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

# What's New in the IPCC Report?

For the first time ever, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recognized the social dimensions of climate change adaptation. Working Group II's contribution to the fifth assessment (AR5) Report, "Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability," highlights population dynamics and the important role that family planning can play in reducing climate change vulnerability and as a potential adaptation strategy.

# Why Does it Matter?

• The IPCC is the scientific body which reviews existing climate science and informs the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Including these social dimensions in its latest report will mean that the UNFCCC decisions and policies on adaptation planning are more likely to recommend the inclusion of the social dimensions outlined in the report, and to take strong action on these issues moving forward.

# **Key Excerpts**

#### On the Role of Gender

- Females are more strongly affected than males by high temperature and ozone air pollution. Chapter 11, pp.10, lines 1-4
- The effect of food insecurity on growth and development in childhood may be more damaging for girls than boys. Chapter 11, pp.10, lines 1-4
- Pregnancy makes women vulnerable to a wide range of environmental hazards, including extreme heat and infectious diseases such as malaria, foodborne infections and influenza. Chapter 11, pp. 10, lines 1-8

# On the Role of Family Planning

- Providing access to family planning saves women's lives by reducing the total number of births and reducing births in high-risk groups. Chapter 11, pp. 36, lines 40-44
- When women have access to family planning, it is the highest risk age groups (youngest and oldest women) who reduce their fertility most. Chapter 11, pp. 36, lines 40-44
- Meeting the need for family planning services in areas with both high fertility and high vulnerability to climate change (such as the Sahel region of Africa) can reduce human suffering and help people adapt to climate change. This is also important in rich countries like the U.S., where there is unmet need for services as well as high CO2 emissions per capita. Chapter 11, pp. 35-36, lines 50-54

#### **Talk to Our Experts**

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 Increasing access to family planning improves maternal and child health through increased birth spacing and reducing births by very young and old mothers. Chapter 11, pp. 35-36, lines 50-54

# On Linking Population, Family Planning, and Adaptation Planning

 Many countries recognize "population pressure" as an issue for adapting to climate change, but few incorporate family planning into national adaptation planning or poverty reduction strategies.
 Chapter 2, pp. 34, lines 29-33

## Why the Issue Matters for a Country Like Malawi

- Malawi is one of 15 population and climate change hotspots in sub-Saharan Africa characterized by a high population growth rate, a high projected decline in agricultural production, and low resilience to climate change.
- Malawi's population is projected to reach 50 million by 2050 and more than 120 million by 2100. At the same time there is a high unmet need for family planning. Twenty-six percent of married women who want to postpone their next birth or stop childbearing are not using contraception.
- Malawi's economy depends on rain-fed agricultural production, which is dominated by smallholder farming. Agriculture contributes 30 percent of Malawi's gross national product, and supports livelihoods for over 80 percent of the population.
- Between 1990 and 2010, Malawi lost about 17 percent of its forest cover.
- A 1-in-10-year drought event would reduce Malawi's annual GDP by an estimated 4 percent.



### **Policy Opportunities**

- Malawi is one of the countries already incorporating the social dimensions in climate change adaptation policy planning. Its National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) recognizes rapid population growth and gender as factors influencing vulnerability to climate change.
- Both climate change and population dynamics have been identified in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II (MGDS II) 2011-2016, the national development blueprint. But the proposed activities tackle these challenges separately, thereby limiting the potential benefits.
- These policies need to be translated into programs and projects which also address the social dimensions of climate change adaptation. Such programs should incorporate family planning and reproductive health in order to improve the health and lives of women in Malawi.

# Main Climate Change and Environmental Challenges in Malawi

- Increased water scarcity
- Unpredictable weather patterns
- Recurring flooding
- Recurring droughts
- Unpredictable start of rainfall
- Short rainy seasons and prolonged dry spells during rainy season
- Drying up of rivers and lakes
- Low fish supplies
- Excessive temperatures (heat waves)
- Landslides
- Frequent bush fires
- Increased prevalence of water borne diseases
- Low and unstable hydro-electric production
- Declining flora and fauna, and declining natural species

Source: AFIDEP and PAI. 2012. "Population, Climate Change, and Sustainable Development in Malawi", Nairobi and Washington, DC: African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) and Population Action International (PAI).