

# Exploring Opportunities for mCPR Growth in Malawi

When assessing potential opportunities for family planning, it is important to consider a wide range of areas related to demand for contraception, availability and access to services, quality and equity, and the enabling environment. This opportunity brief brings together a range of data sources to allow for exploration of these key areas. This brief is meant to provide an overview of key data and population segmentations to spark conversations about prioritization and potential impact. Further analysis, including additional segmentation by residence or region may reveal additional nuances.

## Putting Growth in Context: the S-Curve

Historical data shows us that contraceptive use grows in an S-shaped pattern. This is characterized by slow growth and little annual change when mCPR is low (Stage 1), an opportunity for rapid growth in the middle during the transition from low to high mCPR (Stage 2), and slowing growth as mCPR reaches its maximum (Stage 3). While all countries will go through this general pattern, the duration and speed of growth seen in each stage will vary. Understanding this concept provides countries with a template that can assist in:

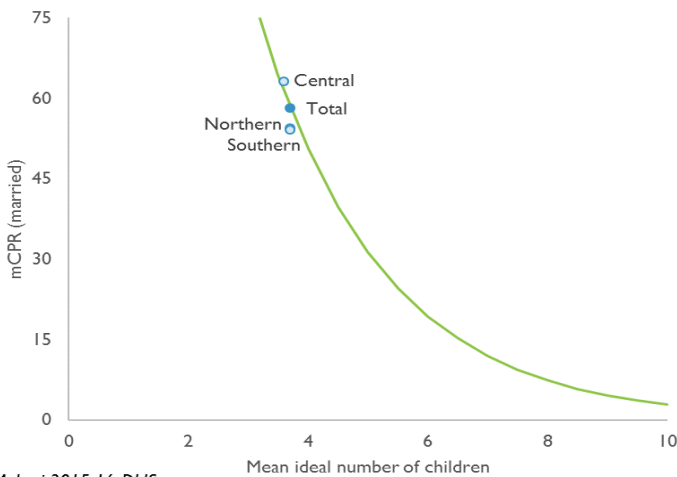
- Identifying program priorities
- Setting realistic targets for growth and contraceptive prevalence goals
- Maximizing the potential of obtaining the demographic dividend

Nationally, Malawi is in Stage 3. During this stage efforts should prioritize equity in mCPR among different sub-groups to ensure that no women are being left behind. Programs at this stage need to focus on long-term sustainability, continued improvements in service quality, and expanding the range of methods available. At this stage, rather than focusing on further growth, goals and objectives should be focused on equity indicators and government financial commitments.

Stages may vary sub-nationally, this should be examined when thinking about sub-national goal setting and planning.

**Stage 3: High Prevalence**  
Growth slows and eventually stops as mCPR reaches its maximum

## Assessing Demand



Malawi 2015-16 DHS

The 'demand curve' (green line) represents the likely maximum mCPR that could be reached given the mean ideal number of children, which represents a wider set of social constructs that may be influencing the motivation to use, or not use, contraception. The gap between where a country or region sits and the curve is the 'potential use gap' - an estimate of the maximum mCPR growth that could be expected within current levels of demand.

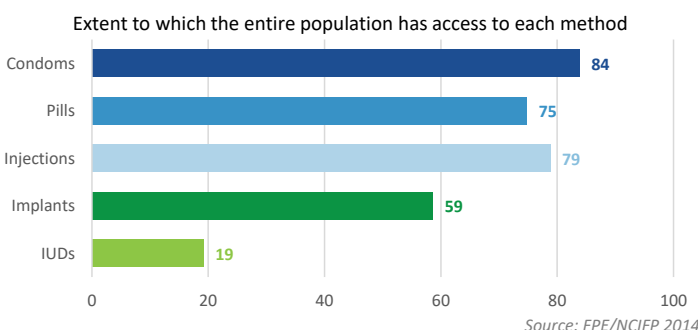
At the time of the 2015-16 DHS the mean ideal number of children in Malawi was 3.7. Based on this, at the national level, there was no or a small potential use gap, meaning there may be limited growth in mCPR without changes in demand. Countries should consider sub-national variation; geographic variation is shown on the graph. Other segmentation could also be considered (e.g. wealth, education).

Each blue dot in the graph represents a data point from the DHS; the solid dot shows the National value. The green 'demand curve' is based on global data. Within any country, there is some range on the true maximum based on contextual factors, and therefore, some areas may sit above the curve. In these areas additional mCPR growth may be limited without further changes in demand.

## Availability of Contraceptive Methods

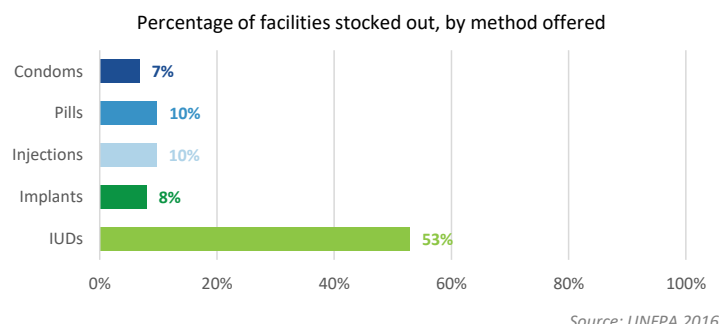
### Is there a need for expanded access?

The graph below shows data from the Family Planning Effort Index/National Composite Index on Family Planning from a set of questions about the extent to which the entire population has ready access to each contraceptive method. For methods that score low, efforts may be needed to expand access in order to ensure women have access to a full range of methods. This could be achieved through policy changes such as task-sharing, investing in additional training of health care workers, engaging the private sector, or other interventions.



### Are stock-outs a barrier?

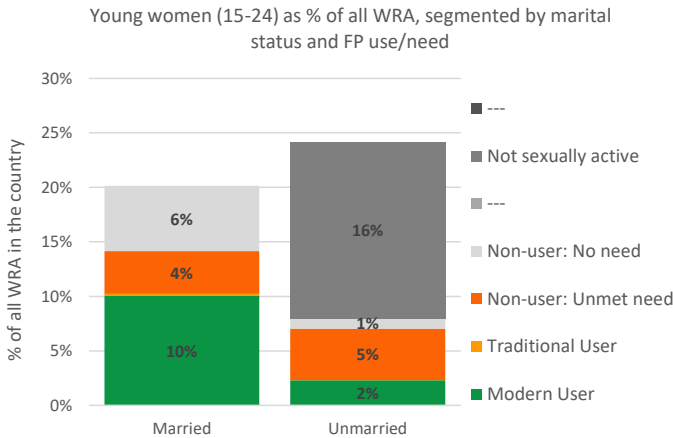
The graph below shows data on stock-outs by method. Stock-outs can have an impact on contraceptive prevalence and method choice, by limiting availability of FP. Countries with high levels of stock-outs should prioritize strengthening the supply chain to ensure women have access to a range of methods. In countries where stock-out levels are low, systems must be maintained to ensure adequate stock continues to reach facilities.



## Expanding Access to Key Populations

### Reaching Youth

The graph below shows the proportion of all women of reproductive age (WRA) who are young (15-24) segmented by marital status and FP use/need. These segments are important to take into consideration when thinking about youth interventions. When a large proportion of women of reproductive age are young women with an unmet need for modern contraception (orange segments in graph), there is the largest opportunities for investments in youth to lead to growth in mCPR. Attention should be paid if this unmet need is largely among married or unmarried youth, as programming approaches should differ.

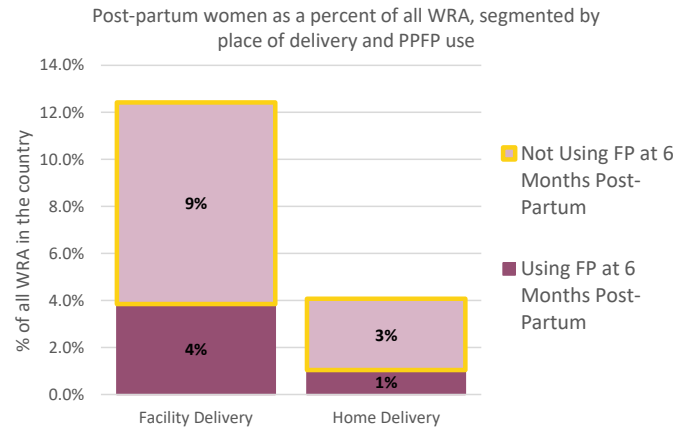


In Malawi around 9% of all women are youth with an unmet need for modern methods (sum of orange segments). Of these young women with an unmet need for modern contraception, 54% are unmarried, and 51% are aged 15-19.

Source: WPP 2015 and secondary analysis from 2015-16 DHS

### Reaching Post-Partum Women

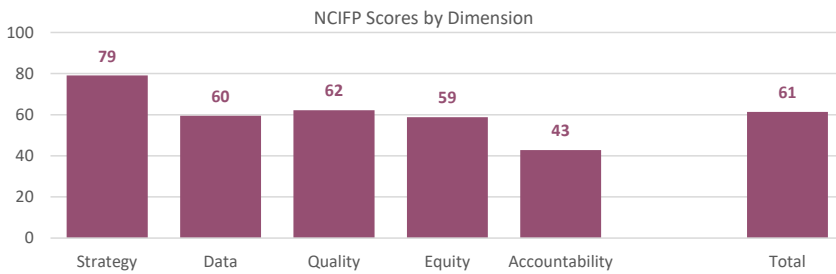
The graph below shows the proportion of all women of reproductive age (WRA) who are post-partum, segmented by post-partum FP use (PPFP). Places where a large proportion of women of reproductive age are post-partum and not using modern contraception present the largest opportunities for investments in PPFP to lead to growth in mCPR. Attention should be paid to what types of PPFP interventions might be most impactful, considering differential levels of post-partum use by place of delivery and levels of facility vs home delivery. Note: we never expect PPFP uptake to reach 100%, countries with very successful programs show uptake levels around 60-70% nationally.



Overall, modern PPFP uptake at 6 months in Malawi is 30%. Combining this with demographic data, it is estimated that 16% of women of reproductive age in Malawi are post-partum in a given year and 12% are post-partum and not using a modern method of contraception. This last group represents the potential contribution of PPFP to mCPR growth.

Source: WPP2015 and secondary analysis from 2015-16 DHS of PPFP uptake at 6 months

## Enabling Environment

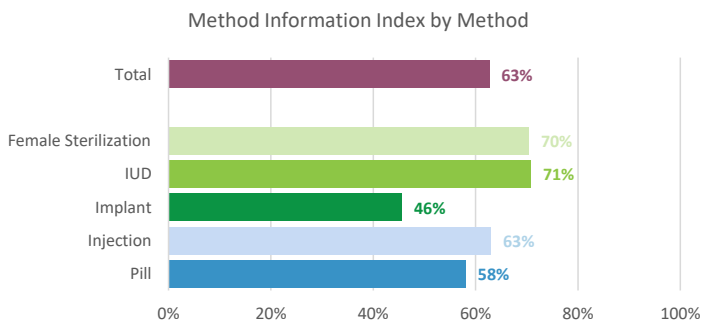


The strength of the enabling environment can impact the potential for growth in mCPR. The National Composite Index on Family Planning (NCIFP) is a new tool developed to support FP2020's efforts to better understand the enabling and policy environment for family planning. The NCIFP measures both the existence of policies and program implementation, using 35 individual scores organized under five dimensions: strategy, data, quality, equity, and accountability. Summary results are shown in the graph to the left; dimensions with low scores may signal the need for efforts to improve elements of the policy environment.

## Beyond mCPR Growth: Addressing Quality and Equity

### Quality

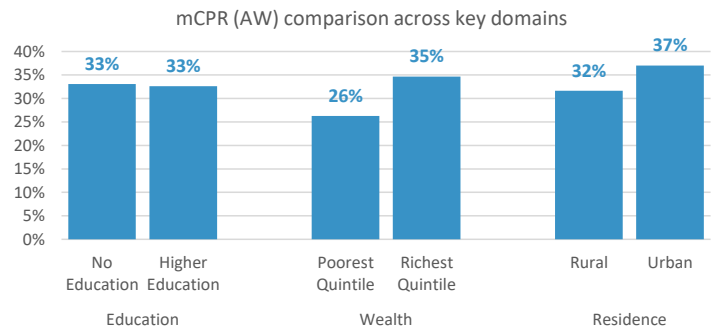
The graph below shows the Method Information Index (MII), an FP2020 Core Indicator. The MII shows the % of current modern method users who said yes to all three questions: told about other methods, told about side effects, told what to do if experience side effects. Low MII scores could indicate a need for improved quality of counseling.



Source: 2015-16 DHS

### Equity

The graph below compares mCPR (AW) across several domains. Inequalities in mCPR may be seen during all stages of the S-Curve, but how they should be addressed varies by stage. Stage 1: focus should be on generally expanding demand and access to facilitate shift to Stage 2. Stage 2: efforts should be made to ensure programs are increasing access to all populations, addressing disparities when possible. Stage 3: efforts should focus on eliminating these disparities.



Source: 2015-16 DHS