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**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

Villagers laugh as they watch a group of actors perform a play about the benefits of family planning near Blantyre, Malawi. The festivities are part of a larger effort of the Adventist Health Service in Malawi to promote community-based family planning.



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Making Injectables Available in Malawi

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Injectables More Widely Available in Communities

- In 2008, MOH approved Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) to provide injectable contraceptives
 - Phased-in approach starting in 8 districts
 - Training
 - Strong referral systems
- Initial evaluation:
 - **49%** of clients were new family planning (FP) users
 - **70%** of those who were previous injectable users switched to HSAs for convenience



Role of Policy in Making It Happen

- Cornerstone of a strong, sustainable community-based distribution (CBD) program
 - Sets the stage for scale-up
 - Regulation
 - Financing
- Process that gathered years of experience and efforts into a successful advocacy push
 - Evidence-based process
 - Policy dialogue and advocacy champions

Context for Family Planning in Malawi

- FP success story in sub-Saharan Africa
- Strong FP policy environment
 - Reproductive Health Policy and Strategy
 - Road Map for Accelerating Reduction of Maternal Mortality
- MOH goal to increase CPR to 40%
- CPR has increased ... but fertility still high

Need for CBD of Injectables in Malawi

- High unmet need for FP services, especially for injectables
- Poor geographic access to health centers in a largely rural country
- Human resource shortage in rural areas



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Challenges



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- Regulatory bodies strongly opposed CBD of injectables
- Are HSAs already overloaded?
- Can paraprofessionals safely administer injectable contraceptives outside the health center setting?

Seizing the “Policy Window”

- ✓ Cadre of paraprofessionals (HSAs)
- ✓ Ad hoc provision of injectables by HSAs in several districts
- ✓ Strong support by the RH Unit of the MOH
- ✓ Senior MOH staff changes
- ✓ Strong civil society participation
- ✓ Demonstrated feasibility and acceptability
- ✓ Policy dialogue to overcome objections



Photo credit: Molly Stevenson / Find Your Feet

USAID-supported Multi-partner Efforts

- Research, evidence-based advocacy: [Health Policy Initiative](#)
- Training of HSAs, implementation of pilot, program guideline development: [Community-Based FP and HIV/AIDS Services Project](#)
- Logistics, training, reporting: [DELIVER](#)
- Evaluation of pilot: [FHI](#)



Future Directions for Scale-up



Photo credit: Swathi Sridharan

- **Challenges remain:**
 - Regulation of HSAs
 - Refresher training, quality monitoring
 - Sustainable financing for contraceptives, and particularly injectables
- **The future:**
 - Scale-up to all Malawi's 28 districts
 - CBD agent/volunteer provision of injectables at the community level?