

See Our World

An essential part of Plan's work is to help create spaces for children and young people to discuss together the issues which affect their lives, then ensure adults respect their views so that children may be involved in community decision-making. This communication has been prepared with and by children directly and is intended to give a general sense of the kinds of issues children discuss and how they work together.

Introducing the “Timveni Radio Listeners Clubs”

Meet us

Dear Sponsor,
Greetings from Malawi!

We are group of girls, boys and young people from Lilongwe and Kasungu area. We would like to share with you our experiences about “Timveni radio listeners clubs”. We are groups of young people and children that meet regularly to discuss issues aired on Timveni radio program as well as give feedback and share our own issues to be discussed during the radio programme.

How we started

Children participation in the community’s development in our area and in Malawi in general is challenged by culture, norms and beliefs. There is a silent cultural norm in most Malawian families, which accepts that children are supposed to be seen and not heard. That’s why children find very difficult to participate and contribute with their ideas in adult dominated forums as in many cases their contributions are not taken seriously. Children complained that their membership in community interests groups in most cases is a mere act of tokenism for the community groups.

Some years back with the support of Plan we started a radio project where children across Malawi can participate in through presenting programmes, contributing in discussions, and writing letters. We really love this project as we feel the radio program is by the children and for the children.

However some of us noted that there is still a gap in terms of participation in the radio programme by all children particularly those coming from very remote areas.

We discussed with Plan how to increase the participation of all children in the discussions taking place on the radio programme and we agreed that if we discuss issues on groups, many children will have the opportunity to participate other than getting involved as individuals.

That’s why we started forming “listeners clubs”, which are giving us the possibility to be involved as well as taking a leading role in disseminating information about child rights among ourselves and the villages we live in.



Our clubs activities

Most of our “listeners clubs” have members ranging from 15 to 25 children. We meet every day to listen the Timveni radio program. Usually the topics are to do with rights of children and how children themselves can contribute in addressing issues affecting them. When there are questions during the programme, we discuss and answer them together. In our groups at home we discuss the issues being presented and together come up with suggestions how to address them. We then write a letter to the presenters, communicating our suggestions we would like the radio programme to air and then later get feedback from our friends from other parts of the country.

We are obviously curious and interested to hear what the presenters as well as our friends across Malawi think about our suggestions. We would like to know how young people in other parts of the country have dealt with child rights issues we experience in our villages, as well as what they do to keep them from happening again. Having them aired on the radio could help us learn from our friends across the country how they got to address the issues. The presenters, reporters and producers are young and this helps us to relate to them especially when they come down to our areas to record the programmes. Plan assists these young people to come up with the final programme.

“.....My name is Agnes. We do not have a radio at home so I always look forward to our club meetings because I have a chance to listen to one. Plan gave us a radio which we use for our meetings.....”

Sometimes, the presenters and producers of the programme visit our areas to record our discussions. These are the days we look forward to most, because we know our voices will be heard on radio and everyone in our villages will get to know about it.

The activity which we like most during our meetings is the debate sessions. During this activity a topic is suggested which some in our group chose to be for it and others chose to be against. We debate the topic until one side agrees that the facts put forward by the other side are substantial and worth agreeing to. We also do these debates in front of audiences. The audience which is usually full of young people and our friends get influenced by the positive conclusions of the debates. Some of the debate topics include issues of education, child rights and development.

“...Hello, my name is Luka. My contribution during a recorded radio discussion which was aired on radio got attention from my friends and some adults. They applauded me for speaking openly and sensibly. This has really motivated me and my friends because we know people are listening to us out there....”

Our achievements and the way forward

One highlight of our club in past year was taking part in a tree planting campaign in our area. Our club planted a significant number of trees which our area is going to benefit from in the future.

Our clubs have also made a significant contribution in the reduction of child abuse cases in our villages and also with reporting of child abuse incidences. We work hand in hand with child rights clubs of which some of us are members to sensitize people about the importance of protecting children from abuse as well as reporting abuse cases to authorities. Since Timveni radio program discusses real stories that happened, the embarrassment perpetrators of violence and abuser go through when their acts become common knowledge, helps to deter potential child abusers.



Our Club taking part in a tree planting campaign in our area

We are optimistic that our radio listeners clubs can play a contribution role ensuring more and more children participate actively in community life. We would like to see more clubs forming in the areas we are coming from. More radio listeners clubs will translate into more young people and children participating in discussions about child rights and develop into responsible citizens that can contribute to the growth and development of our country. We appreciate Plan's efforts in dealing with child abuse through a number of programs being carried out across the country. Projects and programmes like learn without fear, child help line as well training of communities in child rights has helped to reduce the cases of abuse and violence against children in the communities we live and beyond.

Some of the children who contributed and took a leading role in the production of this document are: Jennifer, Aneter, Tawina, Zione, Delia, Silvia, Lenia, John, Blessings, Stanly, Sandifor, Kambani, Wonderful and Limbani.

The document was reviewed and edited by Plan staff