



YES I DO. Champions of Change

Towards gender equality in Traditional Authority Liwonde, Machinga: a baseline study

Executive Summary

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1. About the Champions of Change baseline study

It is estimated that the prevalence of child marriage among females aged 18-24 in Traditional Authority (TA) Liwonde in Machinga District is 18% while teenage pregnancy prevalence among females aged 20-24 years is at 63%. The prevailing gender inequality in this area constitutes one of the root causes of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Plan International will implement the “Champions of Change” (CoC) intervention in order to address gender inequality, as part of the YES I DO (YID) programme. Thirty-two facilitators of Champions of Change (FCoC) will be trained and these will lead girls’ and boys’ groups. Boys and girls aged 14-18 years, called Champions of Change (CoCs), will be members of these groups and they will be discussing issues around gender equality. Creating awareness among community stakeholders such as community leaders and parents will also be part of the intervention. The intervention will be implemented over a 2-year period and follows a curriculum developed by Plan International. This report presents results of the baseline of the operational study on the CoC intervention conducted in 2017. A midline and an end-line study are planned in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

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2. Objectives

The main objective of the overall study is to assess the outcomes of the CoC intervention in TA Liwonde. The specific objective are as follows:

- To assess the challenges and opportunities that young people face during the establishment of a youth movement to develop and influence social norms on gender equality and girls' rights.
- To explore the local context regarding the promotion of and engagement around gender equality and girls' rights; including community leaders, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and government institutions.
- To assess whether the CoC intervention contributes to a youth-led movement for and changes attitudes regarding gender equality and women's rights.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted in TA Liwonde in Machinga District. The training of Research Assistants (RAs) lasted for four days, including the pilot. Six RAs were recruited: three females and three males. Fieldwork lasted for 14 days. A mixed-methods approach was used: 358 respondents (34 FCoCs and 324 CoCs) participated in a survey and two In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with parents, three IDIs with female and three with male CoCs, three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with FCoCs and four Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with community leaders and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), including Plan Malawi, were conducted. All interviews and FGDs were tape-recorded after obtaining consent. They were transcribed and content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. NVivo software was used to support qualitative data analysis. SPSS was used to analyse quantitative data.

4. Results

Demographic characteristics: Forty-nine percent (49%) of the respondents were females and 51% were males. Most respondents (97%) were aged less than 25 years; 72% were in primary school, 15% in secondary school and 13% were out of school. Most CoCs (94%) were single and 44% of the FCoCs were married. Eleven percent (11%) of the respondents had children with 15% females and 8% males reporting this. In terms of income, 64% had ever received money in the six months preceding the survey: more males (67%) than females (60%) and more FCoCs (88%) than CoCs (61%) reported receiving money. Most income was either from *ganyu* (piecework) /daily labour or from parents.

Boys' attitudes towards girls: Most males (90%) agreed with the statement "*I think I treat girls fairly*" (90%) with all FCoCs agreeing with this statement compared to 89% among CoCs. Most respondents (95%) also agreed with the statement "*I think girls are as important as boys*"; all FCoCs agreed with this statement compared to 94% of the CoCs. Slightly more CoCs (94%) than FCoCs (91%) agreed with the statement "*I believe that men and women should take equal responsibility in household chores*". Lastly, 97% of the males agreed with the statement "*I feel that boys should support other boys who challenge unfair attitudes towards girls*".

Perceptions about decision making: Most respondents (77%) agreed with the statement "*I feel that a girl should be able to decide for herself how to use her free time*" with more females (83%) than males (73%) reporting this. Married respondents (86%) were more likely to agree with this statement than single respondents (76%) were. Ninety-one percent (91%) of the respondents agreed with the statement "*I know how to make decisions about my own life*" with all married respondents reporting this compared to 95% of the single respondents. In terms of making decisions about marriage, most respondents (79%) disagreed with the statement that "*it is not for a girl to decide whom she marries*" with more FCoCs (94%) than CoCs (78%), more females (81%) than males (77%) and slightly more Christians (83%) than Muslims (75%) disagreeing with this. While a majority of the survey respondents thought a girl is supposed to make decisions about whom she marries, during the FGDs with FCoCs, participants said that sometimes girls are forced or pressured to get married by parents or peers unlike boys.

Perceptions about age at marriage in the community: Most respondents (65%) agreed with the statement "*I think girls marry too young in the community*", with more FCoCs (79%) than CoCs (64%) reporting this. The proportion of respondents who reported this increased the higher their educational level. This perception was more common among the Yao (71%) and the Lomwe (70%) than among the Chewa (55%).

Gender differences in saving money: Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the respondents agreed with the statement *I save money* with more males (46%) than females (33%) and slightly more Christians (39%) than Muslims (34%) agreeing with this. The proportion of respondents who saved money increased with age and education. The Chewa (45%) were more likely to report saving money than the Lomwe (39%) and the Yao (34%). More married respondents (68%) agreed with the statement than single respondents (36%).

Availability of opportunities in the community: Fifty-six percent (56%) of the respondents agreed with the statement "*I think boys have more opportunities in the community*" with more males (65%) than females (48%) agreeing with this statement.

Attitudes towards SRH issues: Most respondents (82%) agreed with the statement *“I take care of my sexual health”* with more males (87%) than females (78%), more respondents in secondary (94%) than in primary school (77%); and more married respondents (100%) than single respondents (81%) agreeing with this statement. The proportion of respondents who reported taking care of their sexual health increased with age. Most respondents (89%) agreed with the statement *“I have the confidence to encourage girls to take care of their sexual and reproductive health”*. There were no major differences by gender, religion and tribe. With regard to the statement *“I like my body”*, 98% of the respondents agreed with this statement.

Only 45% of the respondents reported they *“express their opinions about sexual health with a sexual partner”* with more males (52%) than females (40%) saying this. All married respondents expressed their opinions about sexual health with a sexual partner; only 40% of the single respondents reported this and the proportion of respondents expressing their opinions on these issues increased with age. Overall, 48% of the respondents agreed with the statement *“I negotiate condom use during sex to prevent pregnancy or disease”* with more FCoCs (88%) than CoCs (45%), more males (55%) than females (43%) and more secondary (76%) than primary school respondents (36%) reporting this. The proportion of respondents who reported they negotiated condom use also increased with age. Married respondents (96%) were more likely to negotiate condom use compared to single respondents (44%).

Most respondents (90%) agreed with the statement *“It is the girl’s responsibility to prevent pregnancy”* with more CoCs (90%) than FCoCs (82%) and more Christians (92%) than Muslims (88%) agreeing. Ninety percent (90%) of the single respondents agreed with this statement compared with 82% of the married respondents. With regard to the statement *“Girls like it when boys comment on their bodies”*, most respondents (79%) agreed with the statement with more males (88%) than females (70%), more CoCs (80%) than FCoCs (71%) and more Muslims (85%) than Christians (73%) agreeing with this statement and the percentage agreeing increased with age. There were more married respondents (86%) than single respondents (78%) who agreed with the statement.

Most respondents (79%) did not agree with the statement *“I think that homosexual people have equal rights and should be treated with respect”*. More FCoCs (88%) than CoCs (78%) and more Christians (83%) than Muslims (74%) disagreed with this statement. There were more married respondents (96%) who objected to this statement than single respondents (77%).

Sexual violence: Most respondents (85%) agreed with the statement *“Girls wearing less clothing provoke boys”* with more females (86%) than males (83%), more CoCs (87%) than FCoCs (65%) and more respondents in primary (90%) than in secondary school (72%) agreeing with this statement. Single respondents (87%) were more likely to agree with this statement than married respondents (68%). With regard to the statement *“If a girl is unfaithful, it is alright for her husband to beat her”*, 57% of the respondents disagreed with the statement with more males (65%) than females (49%), more respondents in primary (49%) than in secondary school (6%), more CoCs (44%) than FCoCs (6%), more Muslims (43%) than Christians (39%) agreeing with this statement. The proportion of respondents who agreed with this statement decreased with age. Only 9% of the married respondents agreed with this statement compared to 43% of the single respondents. Just more than a third of the respondents (36%) agreed with the statement that *“it is a girl’s fault if she is sexually harassed”* with more females (41%) than males (32%), more CoCs (38%) than FCoCs (15%) and more respondents in primary (41%) than those in secondary school

(23%) agreeing with the statement. Lastly, 55% of the respondents agreed with the statement *“A good woman tolerates violence from her husband or partner in order to keep her family together”* with more males (57%) than females (53%), more CoCs (60%) than FCoCs (9%), more Muslims (57%) than Christians (54%) and more respondents in primary (64%) than those in secondary school (30%) agreeing with this statement. The proportion of respondents who agreed with this statement decreased with age.

Responding to sexual violence: If respondents saw cases of sexual violence, the main ways they would respond to this included talking to the harasser about how bad sexual violence is (50%), telling their parents (36%), reporting to the police (35%), reporting to the chief (30%) and talking to the harassed about why sexual harassment is bad (29%).

Perceptions about safety and violence in the community: Most respondents (84%) *“can identify safety problems for girls in the community”* with more females (86%) than males (81%), more FCoCs (94%) than CoCs (82%) and more respondents in secondary (94%) than in primary school (81%) saying this. Most respondents (91%) knew *“ways to keep themselves safe from violence”*.

Another statement which was read to respondents was *“I think girls are safe in this community”*: 62% of the respondents thought girls were safe in their community with more CoCs (74%) than FCoCs (53%) and more females (77%) than males (66%), respondents in primary (78%) than in secondary school (53%) and more Muslims (75%) than Christians (69%) saying this. Single respondents (74%) were more likely to agree with the statement than married respondents (50%). Most CoCs (92%) agreed with the statement *“I think boys should not use violence in their relationship with others”*. All FCoCs compared to 91% of the CoCs, more Christians (95%) than Muslims (88%) agreed with the statement. The proportion of respondents who agreed with this statement increased with age.

Only 22% of the respondents said that *“a girl should not be hit if she has sexual relationship before marriage, fights with a brother or sister, fights with others in class, doesn’t obey parents, doesn’t complete her homework, doesn’t help with household chores and stays out late”*; with more males (27%) saying this than females (18%). As such, more females said a girl should be hit for any of these compared to boys. A higher proportion of males (29%) than females (22%) said that a boy should not be hit for any of these conditions. More females mentioned that a boy should be hit for all these conditions with an exception of staying out late. Most respondents (70%) disagreed with the statement *“if someone insults a boy, he would be right to defend his honour by hitting that person”* with more males (76%) than females (65%), more FCoCs (88%) than CoCs (69%), more married respondents (91%) than single respondents (69%), more Christians (74%) than Muslims (67%) and more respondents in secondary (94%) than those in primary school (65%) disagreeing with this statement. The proportion of respondents who disagreed with this statement increased with age.

Gender stereotypes: Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement *“Girls do not need to go to the university”* with more FCoCs (97%) than CoCs (88%), more females (91%) than males (88%) and more respondents in secondary (94%) than in primary school (88%) and more married respondents (96%) than single (88%) respondents disagreeing. However, from the qualitative component it was found that the general expectation in the community is that girls cannot go far with education, because they will get married and their husbands will look after them. With regard to science and sports, 53% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that *“boys are better at science and math than girls”*

with more FCoCs (68%) than CoCs (40%), more females (47%) than males (38%), more Christians (51%) than Muslims (33%) and more respondents in secondary (62%) than those in primary school (37%) disagreeing with this. The proportion of respondents who disagreed with this statement increased with age. Married respondents (59%) were more likely to disagree with the statement than single respondents (41%).

Most respondents (69%) also agreed with the statement *"Boys are better at sports than girls"* with more CoCs (73%) than FCoCs (27%), more males (72%) than females (66%), more single respondents (72%) than married respondents (36%), more Muslims (71%) than Christians (68%) and more respondents in primary (77%) than those in secondary school (42%) agreeing with the statement. The proportion of respondents who agreed with this statement decreased with age.

With regard to leadership, most respondents (77%) disagreed with the statement *"Girls and women are not good leaders"*. There were more FCoCs (97%) than CoCs (75%), more Christians (82%) than Muslims (73%), more males (100%) than females (81%), more respondents in secondary (93%) than in primary school (73%) who disagreed with this statement. Married respondents (86%) were more likely to disagree with this statement than single respondents (77%). Most respondents (76%) agreed with the statement *"Wives should obey their husbands"*. There were more CoCs (81%) than FCoCs (32%), more males (86%) than females (66%), slightly more Muslims (79%) than Christians (75%) and more respondents in primary (85%) than in secondary school (47%) who agreed with this statement. The proportion of respondents who agreed with this statement decreased with age. About half of the respondents (51%) disagreed with the statement *"It is wrong when boys behave like girls"*. There were more FCoCs (53%) than CoCs (40%) and more respondents in secondary (59%) than those in primary school (39%) who disagreed with this statement. There were no major differences between males (42%) and females (41%).

Most respondents (79%) agreed with the statement *"Boys need to be tough even if they are young"*. More CoCs (81%) than FCoCs (62%), more males (86%) than females (73%), slightly more Muslims (81%) than Christians (78%) and more respondents in primary (82%) than in secondary school (74%) agreed with this statement. The proportion of respondents who agreed with statement decreased with age. Lastly, most respondents (68%) agreed with the statement that *"boys lose respect if they cry"*. There were more CoCs (72%) than FCoCs (32%), more males (70%) than females (67%), more Muslims (73%) than Christians (65%), more married respondents (69%) than single respondents (55%) and more respondents in primary school (75%) than in secondary school (47%) who agreed with this statement. The proportion of respondents who agreed with this decreased with age.

Perceptions about sex and sexual relationships: Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement *"If a girl says no to sex she usually means yes"* with more FCoCs (79%) than CoCs (59%), more females (65%) than males (49%) and more married respondents (73%) than those who were single (56%) disagreeing with this statement. Most respondents (81%) also agreed with the statement *"Most boys do not remain faithful to their girlfriends for long"*. There were slightly more females (83%) than males (80%), more CoCs (82%) than FCoCs (71%) and more respondents in primary school (82%) than in secondary school (77%) agreeing with this statement. Most respondents (68%) also agreed with the statement *"If a boy is unfaithful, it is because his girlfriend did not care of him"*: more males (74%) than females (62%), more CoCs (71%) than FCoCs (59%), more Muslims (78%) than Christians (59%) and more respondents in primary (76%)

than those in secondary school (43%) agreed with this statement. The proportion of respondents who agreed with this statement decreased with age. Lastly, most respondents (87%) agreed with the statement *"Girls always want boys to be romantic"*. There were more males (93%) than females (81%) and slightly more FCoCs (91%) than CoCs (87%) who agreed with this statement. There were no differences between respondents in primary and those in secondary school (for both, 87% agreed that girls always want boys to be romantic).

Discussions about gender equality and girl's rights: A third of the respondents (34%) *"always talked about gender equality and girls' rights with girls of their age"* with more females (40%) than males (27%), more FCoCs (68%) than CoCs (30%) and more respondents in secondary (49%) than in primary school (29%) reporting doing this. The proportion of respondents who always did this increased with age. Thirty-six percent (36%) of the respondents reported they *"always talked about gender equality and girls' rights with boys of their age"* with more males (48%) than females (24%), more FCoCs (59%) than CoCs (34%) and more respondents in secondary (59%) than in primary school (31%) reporting doing this. The proportion of respondents who always did this increased with age. Married respondents (59%) were more likely to do this than single ones (34%).

Sixty-six percent (66%) of the respondents reported they *"never took part in discussions about gender equality and girls rights with adult men"* and there were more females (71%) than males (61%), more CoCs (70%) than FCoCs (32%) and more respondents in primary (75%) than in secondary school (40%) who reported never doing this. The proportion of respondents who never take part in these discussions decreased with age. Fifty-one percent (51%) of the respondents *"never take part in discussions about gender equality and girls' rights with adult women"* and there were more males (59%) than females (42%) and more CoCs (55%) than FCoCs (9%) who never took part in such discussions. The proportion of respondents who never take part in these discussions with adult women also decreased with age.

Champions of Change: Thirty-two (32) male and female FCoCs have been trained in TA Liwonde. Each FCoC has between eight and 42 members in their group and they meet every weekend. These FCoCs were chosen from existing youth groups: factors such as having the ability to learn and teach others, having interest, having good behaviour, previous attendance of trainings, and one's educational qualifications were considered when FCoCs were being chosen. FCoCs appreciated the two trainings they already underwent. This training covered a number of issues including gender and gender inequality, rights and communication. Some FCoCs reported that they did not understand some topics such as body confidence; hence, refresher courses were suggested and it was also suggested that the training should cover vocational training courses such as carpentry for income generation. Others suggested that the CoC programme should be extended to other areas.

FCoCs and CoCs explained that in principle all youth attend group meetings, regardless of age (10-19), gender, religion, tribe, disability, socio-economic status, marital status, whether in school or not and whether they have children or not. However, some youth do not attend CoC meetings due to disability, religion (as some religious groups do not condone condom use), being denied by their parents, lack of entertainment (e.g. balls) and some youth were mentioned not to attend because of not financially benefiting from the activity.

The major role of FCoCs, as narrated by the FCoCs themselves, is to meet with their CoCs and discuss with them what they learnt during the training e.g. issues around gender and gender equality, use of contraceptives, the importance of education and they also help youth seek redress when they experience violence. FCoCs are also role models for CoCs. Study participants reported that community leaders can call meetings where they can tell their subjects about the CoC programme. Community members can accept the programme and even establish bylaws on children's rights.

FCoCs suggested that they can help to make changes regarding gender equality and rights by calling for sensitization meetings, including with help from chiefs, where they can inform youth about the programme. They can also bring about change by leading an exemplary life style and having one to one discussions with young people. There were also suggestions that parents and other community members can encourage their children to participate in CoC activities. Community structures such as mother groups were also mentioned as having potential to making changes at community level on gender equality e.g. they discourage dropping out of school and child marriage. NGOs can also play a role on gender equality by encouraging girls to go to school, sponsoring children to go to school and they can also provide further training to FCoCs. Lastly, FCoCs mentioned they experienced the following problems: the lack of sporting activities, parents denying their children to attend CoC activities, FCoCs being looked down upon by fellow youth, long distances being covered by FCoCs, lack of identification/uniform, lack of teaching and learning materials and absenteeism of youth during the CoC meetings.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This study was aimed at generating baseline data for the CoC programme being implemented in TA Liwonde by Plan Malawi. The study has demonstrated that the CoC programme has great potential in addressing gender and gender inequality issues prevailing in this community. These results generally demonstrate that unlike CoCs, the FCoCs, both male and female, had more accepting attitudes towards gender and gender equality compared to CoCs. This could be because they already underwent two trainings. The CoC programme can become a youth movement which can bring about change in gender equality and rights. However, the implementation of the CoC programme is experiencing a range of problems e.g. the lack of sporting equipment (e.g. balls), non-participation of many youth in CoC activities, the lack of identity cards and other materials and lack of teaching and learning materials. The following recommendations are, therefore, made in order to make the CoC programme more effective and consequently bring about gender equality in this community.

- In this community, there is gross infringement of the rights of children, especially girls. The creation of awareness about gender and gender equality issues should continue to include girls' rights e.g. the right to education and to participate in decision making on issues which concern them.
- There is a need to further build young females' awareness on their rights and self-worth, because it was found that for some of the statements on gender equality, it were especially girls who thought girls are less worth than boys.
- The YID programme should purchase and distribute (foot)balls to all the FCoCs and other entertainment materials as this is expected to improve attendance.
- Plan Malawi should continue to work with FCoCs and traditional leaders to create awareness among community members in TA Liwonde about the CoC programme.

- When selecting FCoCs, attention should be paid to their educational qualifications, age, marital status and their interest in youth activities.
- Plan Malawi, FCoCs, CoCs and influential people at community level should continue to encourage girls and boys to go to school as this has positive influence on gender and gender equality.
- Plan Malawi and the FCoCs themselves should monitor the size of their groups and ensure that when these split, the incoming FCoC should be properly oriented.
- Plan Malawi should consider having younger FCoCs as some of the current FCoCs are much older than their group members.
- There is a need to conduct refresher training for all FCoCs (which is planned for) and new groups might require initial trainings.
- Plan Malawi should continue engaging traditional leaders, parents, teachers and other existing structures at community level on the need for gender equality to prevail/ to be internalised and the need for this youth movement (CoC) which will bring about changes in people's attitudes towards gender equality.
- The programme should consider giving an orientation of the FCoCs on how persons with disability can best be reached. The programme can obtain assistance either from the Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA) or the Department of Disability and Elderly Affairs in the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare.

As mentioned earlier, there is evidence that the implementation of the CoC programme has started having an impact on the champions themselves on gender and gender equality issues. The prevailing gender inequality issues contribute significantly towards teenage pregnancy and subsequently child marriage which have long lasting negative impacts on the future of girls. In order to ensure that the CoC is an effective youth led movement to change peoples' attitudes towards gender equality, there is an urgent need to address the challenges being experienced by the programme.