

Cultivating success through Empowerment

In the seemingly deserted village of Lombwa, under the watchful eye of Traditional Authority Nkanda in Mchinji, a beacon of hope and success has emerged in the form of Lombwa Youth Club.

What began in 2012 as a modest initiative faced with challenges in group governance, financial management and resource mobilization, has now blossomed into a thriving cooperative, thanks to the transformative impact of HEIFER International's project funded by Financial Access for Rural Markets, Smallholders and Enterprises (FARMSE).

Gift Zinyongo, the dedicated secretary of Lombwa Youth Club, reflects on their remarkable journey: "We lacked the skills needed to make our dreams a reality. Heifer International and Farmse believed in us and gave us the tools to turn our aspirations into achievements."

Under the guidance of Chairman Jeremiah Jamison, the club embraced Heifer International's project aimed at enhancing the capacity of community-based organizations. The focus was on facilitating access to finance and markets, strengthening linkages to the formal financial sector, and establishing connections to markets in dairy, oil seeds, and banana value chains.

"In 2019, we saw a turning point," says Gift Zinyongo. "With K886,000 obtained through village bank shares, we invested in soya farming, and the results were beyond our expectations."

Empowered by HEIFER's support, Lombwa Youth Club leveraged their newfound access to formal financial institutions. In 2022, the club secured a loan of k1.2 million from Vision Fund, further boosting their farming endeavors.

Catharine Pangani, the Project Officer of HEIFER International, expresses her delight: "Witnessing Lombwa Youth Club's growth and success is a testament to the power of community empowerment. We are proud to have played a part in their journey."

Taking their commitment to community development a step further, Lombwa Youth Club has officially registered as a cooperative. In a bid to give back, they've introduced a School Support Program, forging a partnership with Population Service International Malawi (PSI) to pay school fees for four students.

Jeremiah Jamison emphasizes, "Education is the key to our future. We want to ensure that every child in Lombwa has access to quality education, breaking the cycle of poverty."

As the club expands its horizons, they now rear 10 pigs and cultivate 2 acres of soya and 1 acre for groundnuts. Looking ahead, the members have set their sights on acquiring a diesel maize meal, recognizing the potential for income generation in an area devoid of electricity.

Lombwa Youth Club stands as a shining example of what can be achieved through collaboration, determination, and the unwavering support of organizations like HEIFER International and FARMS. In the words of Gift Zinyongo, "Our success is not just ours; it belongs to the entire Lombwa community."