Parents Urged to Safeguard Children from Cyberviolence p 5

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Editor’s Note

Dear Reader,

welcome to this edition of YONECO Voice Newsletter for the month of April, 2020.

In this edition, do not miss the write up by the Executive Director for YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, which is on page 4 under the title, The Executive Director’s Corner. There are more insights and positive thoughts on various issues affecting us today.

On behalf of the whole production unit, I would like to wish you a wonderful read. We are hopeful that you will enjoy reading this edition just as you have enjoyed the previous ones.

Protect yourself and others from Covid 19; wash your hands regularly with soap and water.

Enjoy your read.

Lemani Makina
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Malawi has confirmed the country’s first cases of covid19. The announce of the new cases, by President Arthur Peter Mutharika, comes on the heels of a state of emergency he declared on 20th March 2020. The declaration led to the closure of schools and development partners are all moving in to contain the situation. We need to respond comprehensively and engage each other meaningfully.

YONECO has also geared up its efforts and this includes working with partners like WFP, UNFPA, Tithese Nkhanza, TROCAIRE and UNICEF to provide support in terms of information and psychosocial interventions. The Tithandizane National Helpline services has become key; and you can therefore call 116 or 5600 or 6600 or 5800 or 6900. The counsellors have been trained to provide information, counselling support services and refer you to relevant intermediaries.

Well, as the virus spreads through contact, let’s practice the hygiene as guided. Wash hands intensively and thoroughly, self-quarantine into homes, avoid crowded places and seek medical attention when we feel symptoms. Particular attention to young people is that the schools have closed and they need to be home. It’s noted that the young people from schools are defying the orders and are busy getting together in small parties and gatherings. In other places restaurants and public places have been closed. We have to intensively avoid these gatherings and maintain the social distance. This is no joke but rather a serious matter. Remember, once you get the virus, you are putting the whole family and friends at risk. Let’s all be responsible.

One thing that all of us should take note of, is that, as was the case with AIDS, this will bring a lot of burden to the women and children in the world and Malawi is no exceptional. The orphans being left with the epidemic, mental health issues and also the caregiving aspect left solely to women especially in Malawi.

As a country, we need now to put in place the post Corona Virus plans while dealing with the epidemic now.

MacBain Mkandawire

Executive Director
YO N E C O has reiterated on the need for children and the general public to report any form of child abuse including cyber violence.

This was said during the national commemoration event for the Safer Internet Day (SID) that was held on 6th February at Mount Soche Hotel in Blantyre.

The function was graced by the presence of various stakeholders including parents, teachers, mobile phone network providers, the press as well as representatives from a number of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Addressing the audience, the Technical Advisor on Digital Migration for Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA), Benson Tembo, said protecting children from online child abuse is a shared responsibility.

“Everyone has a role to play in protecting children from online child abuse. There is need for parents to effectively monitor what their children spend their time on when they are online,” explained Tembo.

“Parents also should not hesitate to report any case of violence perpetrated against their children and advise their children not to entertain strangers on the internet.” added Tembo.

In his remarks, YONECO’s Deputy ICT Manager, Moses Chongoloka Msukwa, said YONECO remains committed to protecting children from all forms of abuses.

“As YONECO, we have the welfare of children at heart all the time and we will always ensure that we are doing our best to protect children from all sorts of abuses and promote their rights at the same time,” he said.

Msukwa added that there is need to report child abuse cases or any suspected case of child abuse as such actions will ensure efficiency and effectiveness of all mechanisms that have been put in place to end the vice.

SID falls on 6th February annually and this year, the Day was commemorated under the theme; “Together for a better internet”.

YONECO FM (YFM)
The Real Voice of the Youth, Women and Children
Male Champions Championing a “Child Marriage Free Community”

Stakeholders in Mulanje district have applauded YONECO for introducing Community Male Champions of Change in the fight against child marriages.

This was highlighted during the monitoring and documentation of best practices under Comprehensive Action for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) Project.

Among other cases, one of the child marriage survivors, a 16-year-old girl from the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Mabuka, testified that she was saved from the horns of child marriage and re-admitted back to school with support from the Community Male Champions.

Another adolescent girl from the same area got pregnant and this forced her to dropout of school in order to take care of her child.

However, after a fruitful discussion with the Community Male Champions, all parties involved agreed that the girl should go back to school and leave the responsibility of taking care of the child with her monther.

Further to this, a 14 year-old girl from the area of T/A Mnthiramanja, also commended the Male Champions for facilitating the annulment of her marriage and supported her to go back to school.

The girl said her marriage life was nothing but a series of problems.

“Marriage life was hard because we always quarrelled, my husband had a number of extra-marital affairs and he used to batter me like a dead animal,” she said.

Speaking during the sessions, Mulanje Police Publicist, Gresham Ngwira, said the success of the AGYW Project is mainly due to the cordial relationship that exists among the key stakeholders.

“Since the inception of the project, Mulanje Police has seen an increase in the number child marriage cases that are cases reported.

YONECO is implementing the AGYW Project in partnership with MAGGA with funding from Global Fund through Action Aid and Christian Aid.
As the global community is grappling with the deadly Covid 19, children in Malawi are also feeling the effects that have come about because of the novel Corona virus.

This follows President Peter Mutharika’s declaration of a State of Disaster on 20 March, 2020.

Furthermore, schools have been closed as a way of preventing the virus and ensuring that children are safe and protected within the comfort of their homes. The President also banned gatherings or events of more than 100 people.

Proud Massa, a nine year-old learner at Zomba Baptist Primary School said despite the fact that the closure has affected the school calendar, he felt very unsafe to sit in a crowded classroom or play on the school ground with the rest of his schoolmates.

“It is really bad that I will not sit for my exams sooner than I expected. However, I never felt safe at school because of the Corona Virus,” he said.

Various stakeholders have commended the Malawi government for putting up such preventative measures which, if properly followed, would keep Malawi safe from Covid 19.

Currently, a number of countries across the globe have registered some cases and thousands of people have lost their lives.

Until 3 March, 2019 Malawi had no confirmed case of Covid 19. However, all Malawi’s neighbouring countries (Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia) had already registered some cases.

Meanwhile, YONECO and other institutions in the country have joined the Malawi government in ensuring that people are aware of the preventative measures. Key to this is also the process of demystifying various misconceptions which people have and are capable of giving them a false sense of protection and end up being careless.
Defilement Lands  58 Year-Old-Man in Jail

Chiradzulu First Grade Magistrate’s Court sentenced a 58 year-old-man to 10 years Imprisonment with Hard Labour (IHL) for defiling a 12 year-old girl in the district.

On 3rd February, 2020 YONECO Office in Chiradzulu received a report from someone who complained that his daughter was defiled by an old man. He complained that he had reported the matter to a number of authorities but he was not seeing any commitment from the authorities to bring the man to justice.

Upon receipt of the complaint, YONECO followed up the matter. It was discovered that the case was initially reported to a certain Police Unit in the area but it was not properly filed.

However, a medical report from Chiradzulu District Hospital indicated that the girl was indeed defiled.

Further investigations that were made by YONECO and the District Social Welfare Office revealed that the girl survived multiple defilement incidences. The assailant threatened the girl that he will kill her once she tells another soul about the incidences.

The father also complained to YONECO that some stakeholders were requesting him to sort the case out of court. The man refused and decided to report the matter to YONECO.

“Even the First Grade Magistrate also tried to convince me to sort the matter out of court”, explained the man whose daughter was defiled by someone who is 46 years older than his little child.

The assailant hails from Chimbali Village, Traditional Authority (T/A) Chikowii in Zomba district and he was a security guard at Chiradzulu First Grade Magistrate’s Court.

YONECO has commended Chiradzulu District Social Welfare Office for diligence and professionalism in handling rape, defilement and Gender Based Violence (GBV) cases.
Every Child Deserves...

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YONECO conducted a Talent Show in Balaka district at St. Louis Community Day Secondary School that was aimed at inspiring students to explore the talents they have while pursuing their education.

The activity was patronized by over 40 students who were imparted with information pertaining to life skills and mental health sessions.

Most importantly, the students were mentored on balancing academic life with other tasks.

Many young people are unemployed today hence the need to be engaged in extra curricular activities that could possibly help them to generate income.

A number of Malawian successful athletes, musicians and dramatists were listed down as examples of people who are now doing well after nurturing their talents.

Some of the activities which the students performed during the talent show include; singing, acting and dancing. The students showcased very brilliant performances to the satisfaction of all the people who attended the event.

YONECO is committed to empowering the youth through various interventions like school and community-based activities.

In response to a call by Mchinji District Social Welfare Office (DSWO), YONECO conducted an awareness raising session about the dangers of drug and substance abuse at Kamuzu Primary School in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Zulu in the district.

According to Mchinji DSWO, the district is currently experiencing an increase in the number of drug and substance abuse cases among young people in the area.

Thus, the office called on various stakeholders to intensify awareness campaigns in order to deal with the challenge.
YONECO hosted students from the University of Malawi’s Polytechnic, PACT and Soche Technical College who separately visited the institution’s office in Chikwawa to learn various disaster management and response mechanisms which the organization uses.

During the visit, the students interacted with Helpline Service Management Team on referral and case management systems. Furthermore, the visitors also appreciated the role of various district and community stakeholders in disaster management and response interventions.

After touring YONECO office at Chikwawa Boma, the students travelled to one of the impact areas in Mwalija Village, Traditional Authority (T/A) Kasisi. This is an area where YONECO has been providing various support services to community members who were affected by floods and famine since 2015.

The students also supported the affected community members with assorted items including soap, clothes, beddings and school books for primary school leaners and secondary school students.

In his remarks, the District Manager for YONECO in Chikwawa, Patrick Makonde, stated that his office is always willing and ready to host students during such learning visits. Makonde stated that the students will be employees of various institutions and the familiarization they will have today will be an asset and they will eventually serve the communities better.

The students also appreciated the support they were given as the gesture opened them up to a practical arena which is away from their usual theoretical understanding of things.

YONECO also hosts interns from various institutions of higher learning. Currently, YONECO has interns both at its head office in Zomba and in all the 15 district offices which the organization has across Malawi.
20 Adolescent Girls Trained in Making Reusable Sanitary Pads

YOYNECO has trained a total of 20 adolescent girls from St Denis Primary School in Rumphi district in making re-usable sanitary pads.

The trainings were aimed at promoting girl child education as most girls do not have access to sanitary materials which increases absenteeism when the girls are menstruating. As such, this affects their performance in class so much that others simply dropout of school altogether.

In her remarks, the Field Officer for YONECO in Rumphi, Janet Manjawira, stated that the sanitary pads which the girls will be making will also economically empower them as some will be made for sale.

Previously, YONECO trained another set of 20 girls who are now championing the use of re-usable sanitary pads. The pads have a wide market in the area as they are cheaper as compared to the ones that are made by various companies.

School authorities at St Dennis Primary School commended YONECO for the initiative. The authorities stated that they are also hopeful that the knowledge and skills in making the pads will trickle down to other adolescent girls who did not attend the training.
Rumphi Taxi Bicycle Operators Oriented in Road Safety Techniques

YO N E C O  in conjunction with the Malawi Police in Rumphi district conducted an awareness session with Taxi Bicycle Operators that was aimed at reducing road accidents that occur in the district due to lack of knowledge of road safety tips and Highway Code among the operators.

Bicycle Taxis are a popular mode of transport since they offer easily accessible and cheap services around the communities in the district hence the importance of having the session which will help to reduce accidents that occur due to lack of knowledge of road safety rules and regulations.

From the session, Chairperson for Bicycle Taxi Operators Association in the district, Alick Chirambo, expressed his gratitude for the kind gesture that YONECO and Rumphi Police had shown in order to ensure the safety of both passengers and the operators.

“It is a great opportunity for us to have this critical information about traffic rules and the Highway Code. I am sure that cases of road accidents involving bicycle taxis will be reduced” said Chirambo.

In her remarks, one of the facilitators from the Traffic Police Department told the Bicycle Taxi Operators to always remember to put on their reflectors and maintain the passenger capacity.

She further advised that they should always use hand signals whenever they are on the road. She also tipped the operators to avoid careless stunts on the road like overtaking someone on a bridge.
As one way of implementing its Youth Development Programme, YONECO has recruited another cohort of 9 interns from various tertiary institutions attached to YONECO FM.

The newly recruited team is comprised of young people from the Malawi Institute of Journalism (MIJ), Lilongwe Technical College, HBI Institute of Communication and Management as well as the Polytechnic.

In his welcoming remarks, YONECO Manager for Media Advocacy, Networking and Communication (MMANC), Benson Nkhoma Somba, said the institution provides internship space for young people from various colleges and universities as one way of complementing government’s efforts of reducing the unemployment rate among the youth by providing an opportunity for a hands on experience which he said is crucial for job hunting.

Nkhoma Somba added that the interns are expected to gain various skills including radio presentation, programme production, designing and news production.

On her part, one of the interns from MIJ, Deborah Banda, said this will give her an opportunity to explore the media industry and gain experience in various media related aspects.

YONECO also deploys interns in all its 15 district offices who are attached to various departments. Since its inception, YFM has trained over 100 young people under its internship programme.

Top to bottom
Clifford Mkumba
Deborah Banda
Hajira Maxwel
Precious Hemah
Steven Mkombezi
Tadala Chikhasu
Marriage, No Child’s Play

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YONECO Voice-Monthly Newsletter  
April 2020  

Promoting good health, Sanitation & Wellbeing

Raising Awareness about Importance of Male Involvement in Health

An awareness session on importance of male involvement in health issues

YONECO has intensified awareness campaigns on the importance of male involvement in health issues in Rumphi district.

The campaigns are aimed at promoting the use of Family Planning methods among married couples as well as protecting women from Cervical Cancer and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

The initiative is targeting chiefs, religious and community leaders as change agents. So far, a number of community and religious leaders have been engaged on how they should use their influence to change the status quo.

During one of the meetings, Group Village Head (GVH) Chirambo appreciated the support and investment which YONECO is making towards involving men in health programmes in the district.

In his remarks, he stressed the need for men to have adequate information on their health and the welfare of their families. Chirambo explained that men need to encourage their wives to undergo Cervical Cancer Screening in accordance to the recommendations by the Ministry of Health and Population.

“Despite being at an infant stage, the initiative has already started bearing fruits. We have seen men seeking more information and HIV Testing Services (HTS) and Family Planning.”

Wongani Mfune, Field Officer for YONECO, also added that some women have reported that their spouses are now encouraging them to go for Cervical Cancer Screening.

Apart from Community awareness meetings with various community structures, YONECO also conducts door to door sessions.
Demystifying Misconceptions on Modern Contraceptives

YONECO conducted a Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) outreach session with community members around Rumphi Market in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) chikulamayembe.

The activity was organised following the realisation that there was a lot of misinformation surrounding the use of modern contraceptive methods. The myths and misconceptions compelled men and women to shun using the methods.

During the sessions, men and women were made aware of the health and socio-economic advantages of family planning. In addition to this, the community members were also told where the services could be accessed.

The targeted groups of people were also encouraged to openly discuss matters concerning family planning with their spouses as such issues greatly hinge on one’s rights and bodily autonomy.

One of the participants, Thumbiko Mwale, thanked YONECO for reaching out to them with family planning information and he urged the organization to reach out to more people in the area.
YONECO GIRLS EDUCATION FUND (YOGEF)

YOGEF's Scholarship Program focuses on increasing enrollment of girls into secondary schools and upper primary schools in Malawi.

YOGEF
Be a driver of change by joining the initiative. Send your donations to the following bank details:
National bank of Malawi
Account Name: YONECO 017
Account No: 109 02 59

FOR MORE INFO:
Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO)
Youth Leadership Development Centre
Along Zomba Lilongwe road,
Next to Calvary Church,
P.O. Box 471, Zomba, Malawi
Email: girlseducation@yoneco.org
Theatre for Development (TfD) has a way of enhancing change as it directly involves the concerned parties in issues affect them at community level.

The approach helps communities to discuss community problems and amicably find solutions to the challenges.

John Fernando from Nlapa Village, Traditional Authority (T/A) Juma in Mulanje district bears testimony.

Fernando said they conduct awareness campaigns in various communities within the area of T/A Juma where they first conduct a research to find issues which adolescent girls and young women face and then they design their play in accordance to what they find.

“Basically, we conduct a research first because we want to get the real issues that are happening in the community” said Fernando.

“This forms the messages that should be included in the play”, he added.

Fernando further explained that the play easily stimulates discussions among the audience. Fernando said this is the case because the people are able to relate to the issues, challenges and appreciate the need for change.

Ida Waison from the area of Group Village Head (GVH) Chimbalanga, T/A Juma is also one of the community members who were trained in TfD by YONECO.

Ida added that edutainment is a strong tool for reaching out to people with different messages as well as advocating for change.

Waison further narrated a testimony where they assisted a girl who wanted to drop out of school in order to sign matrimonial vows.

“The play we did on that day made her realize that marriage can wait,” said Ida.

The community TfD groups were trained by YONECO under Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) Project which is being funded by Global Fund through Action Aid and Christian Aid.
YONECO Courts T/A Nkanda with TfD Legal Awareness

YONECO in conjunction with the Malawi Police in Mulanje conducted a legal awareness campaign at Chiuta in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Mkanda under Comprehensive Action Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) Project.

Group Village Head (GVH) Wilesi Swaili described awareness campaigns as one of the most important activities in the fight against GBV.

Speaking during the awareness session, GVH Swaili said forced child marriages and other forms of abuse which girls face translate into various socio-economic challenges which affect their welfare as adults.

“However, since YONECO rolled out the project, by-laws have been instituted to ensure that girls do not dropout of school or get into marriage before reaching the age of 18”, said Swaili.

“So far we have annulled 15 child marriages and we have also helped 30 girls to go back to school” added GHV Swaili.

Further to this, Swaili called on all parents to understand that child marriage is not a solution to their poverty.
let's Ch1ll
smart choices on SRHR for young people

letschill.yoneco.org

Think sharp, be smart, play it safe let's chill
YONECO has managed to facilitate the reimbursement of money that was siphoned from the beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance in Phalula and Mitochi Villages in Balaka district.

The incident happened between the months of January and February 2020 in the respective villages where the group village heads in both areas demanded half of the money that was given to the beneficiaries.

In Phalula, Group Village Head (GVH) Chiwengana snatched MK20,000 from one of the beneficiaries after he received his MK46,000 arrears, after which the victim reported the matter to police.

Similarly, in Mitochi village, GVH Mitochi forcefully took part of the money from the beneficiaries.

“Just after we received the money, we were ordered and forced to give half of the money to the chief. We were threatened that next time we will not benefit from other initiatives. Thus, due to fear we gave in,” explained one of the victims.

During an investigation on the matter, GVH Mitochi, accepted that he forcefully took part of the money from the beneficiaries.

However, the community leader said he did this because many areas did not benefit from the initiative hence he wanted to use the money to support the other people who were not on the programme.

YONECO is managing the CFM for WFP Programmes in Malawi including a Lean Season Response in Balaka.
Listen to YFM

The Real voice of the youth, women and Children

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Zomba : 97.9 Mhz
Blantyre : 101.4 Mhz
Lilongwe: 90.0 Mhz
Dowa : 98.3 Mhz
Mzuzu : 104.0 Mhz
Chigonjetso Mother Group from Nthiramanja area in Mulanje district successfully managed to reintegrate a young girl who had dropped out of school because of pregnancy.

One of the members of the group, Jane Katsabola, said they have registered major successes in the promotion of girl child education.

“Previously, girls who got pregnant were not returning to school. However, our group has changed that as we encourage such girls to return to school after delivery and this is working” explained Katsabola.

Katsabola stated that one of the girls who was supported by the group to return to school passed her Malawi School Certificate of Examination (MSCE). Katsabola added that the girl is now pursuing a career in teaching.

Jane Katsabola says there are many more stories to tell. Community members have commended the good work which the group of these 10 dedicated women is doing in their area.
Bicycle Operators Sensitized On the Dangers of GBV

For a long time, Bicycle Taxi Operators have not been recognized as critical community players that are capable of meaningfully contribute towards addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV). Instead, they are often ignored, and they are not considered in community development.

However, the story is no longer the same in Mulanje district, especially in areas around Namphungo, Mkando, Musisi, Ndanga, Kamwendo and Chitakale. Thanks to the Global Fund through Action Aid and Christian Aid for the financial support which YONECO gets to reach to such groups of people through Comprehensive Action for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) Project.

The Bicycle Taxi Operators have now become champions of change in the fight against violence against adolescent girls and young women as well as reducing the spread of HIV/ AIDS.

YONECO held sessions to assess the knowledge levels of the aforementioned groups of men on violence against AGYWs and to strengthen their capacity in GBV prevention at community level.

During the sessions, some men confessed that they have been violating girls’ and women’s rights by having sex with them when they complain that they do not have enough money to pay for the bicycle taxi fare (and often without any form of protection).

One of the participants also narrated that “some of them are also agents who are paid to link individual men with adolescent girls who are being exposed to sexual violence”.

Another Bicycle Taxi Operator from Nsoma village in the Area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Ndanga testified that he was once used to entice a certain girl to sleep with a business person who was in transit to Mozambique. The man acknowledged that this exposes young girls to GBV as well as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including HIV.

“It is true that as Bicycle Taxi Operators, we have contributed to some forms of abuses which girls have suffered in the hands of some men. Usually we are not involved in any interventions of a similar call by community members or organizations. This leaves us in isolation and not knowledgeable about GBV issues. But now after going through this orientation, we will be able to do our part in ending such abuses in our community”, he explained.

He further appealed to organizations not to sideline them on such issues but rather engage them directly.

278 Men were oriented on dangers of GBV, prevention and reporting mechanisms. The participants vowed to champion the fight against GBV in the area.
Francis Banda who hails from Matewere village in Traditional Authority (TA) Juma in Mulanje district recounts the period when he used to cover long distances during Gender Based Violence (GBV) case follow ups.

"Group Village Headman Manyumba has 22 villages which are vast and far apart. I used to spend most of my time walking than doing the actual tasks. It was not easy," he recounts.

Banda recalls the time when he received a report that a 13 year-old girl had been defiled and the suspect was at large.

Like a foot soldier, Banda did not waste time to embark on the journey to Sumani village to gather details and grab the case by the throat.

"It was after going there that I discovered that the girl who was learning at Thawale Primary School was allegedly defiled by a man from the same village who later fled to Ntchisi," said Banda.

Banda says the journey was followed by endless movements between Matewere and Sumani villages in order to make sure that the suspect is brought to book.

But, the story is now different in January, 2020. Banda together with nine other Community Male Champions of Change from T/A Juma received a bicycle each through ‘Comprehensive Action for Adolescents Girls and Young Women’ (AGYW) Project which YONECO is implementing in the district in partnership with MAGGA with funding from the Global Fund through Christian Aid and Action Aid.

Banda says after receiving the bicycle, he has managed to make follow up of cases which stalled because of mobility challenges.

"The bicycle has helped a lot in facilitating my movements between Matewere, Sumani and the police station where some cases are handled," Banda says.

"Currently I have heard that the suspect is back so we are going to follow up so that he should be arrested."

Another male champion, John Basali who hails from the area of Group Village Head (GVH) Wendewende says since receiving the bicycle, he has conducted 10 awareness meetings on the dangers of GBV in various parts of the area.

"T/A Juma has 102 GVHs and 194 villages while Wendewende area has 14 huge villages as well. However, with the push bikes, mobility is no longer an issue.

Grant Chitseko of Manyumba village says after receiving the bicycle, he has been able to act with speed on reports of incidences of GBV.

"At first, it took us two weeks to follow up a case after being given first-hand information," he says.

The story is also the same in the area of Traditional Authority Mabuka.

Shadreck Malola, a male champion in GVH Misanjo says the bicycle has helped to ease mobility problems.

He says due to the vastness of his catchment area which has 22 GVHs, it was difficult to follow up various issues such as child marriage cases but now with a bicycle readily available, he is able to swiftly respond to cases.

"Through this bicycle, I have been able to travel around and facilitate the annulment of so many child marriages" explained Malola.
Targeting Tobacco Estate Employees with Mental Health Sessions

Targeting employees with mental health promotional sessions in their working environment is key to productivity and development of a healthy nation.

YONECO through its mental health project which is being funded by Comic Relief organized a mental health session for employees at Nsamala Tobacco Estate in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Mlumbe in Zomba District. The mental health session reached out 60 males and 56 females.

The session was facilitated by members of staff from the Ministry of Health and Population in collaboration with Community Mental Health workers from YONECO.

The main objective of the session was to equip employees with positive ways of promoting mental health and possible strategies of reducing Gender Based Violence (GBV) at their work place and in their communities.

A mental health psychiatric nurse discovered that smoking marijuana, alcohol abuse and GBV are the main concerns among employees in the tobacco estates that are in the area.

Therefore, participants were targeted to get adequate knowledge and skills on how to promote their mental wellbeing and some possible ways of managing and reporting GBV cases.
Leading by example; the Executive Director for YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, washes his hands with clean water and soap at YONECO Head Office in Zomba.

Following the declaration of a State of Disaster by the President of the Republic of Malawi on 20 March this year, we have allocated hand sanitizers as well as hand washing utensils at our head office in Zomba and in all our district offices across the country.

This approach will help our staff as well as clients who report various cases pertaining to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and child abuse among other issues.

Further to this, all staff meetings for more than 50 people have been banned as well.

Together, we will defeat Corona Virus!
Learners Drilled in Tree Nursery Management

Learners from Livimbo Primary School in Lilongwe have been trained in tree planting and tree nursery management.

The Programme Support Manager (PSM) for YONECO, Hughes Munthali, stated that the orientation will go a long way in ensuring that young people are able to mobilize themselves in tree planting activities.

This is part of YONECO’s planned activities under the 2019/2020 National Forestry Season. The season commenced on 15th December, 2019 and will come to an end on 15th April, 2020.

The main objective of the season is to build a responsible citizenry that cares for trees and forests for the sustenance of present and future generations.

Nyaluwanga Girls Club in Aforestation Drive

A group of 25 girls from the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Nyaluwanga in Rumphi district have teamed up with YONECO staff in a bid to replace trees that were wantonly cut down a couple of decades ago.

Andilade Tasosa, Field Officer for YONECO, stated that planting more trees is not enough on its own. Tasosa explained that there is need to consider the application of good practices that will help to ensure a good survival rate of the trees that are being planted.

Thus, Tasosa stated that the girls and other communities have been engaged and trained in management of the trees that will be planted this year and in the years to come.