Youth and Sports Minister Tours YONECO Head Office

18 Role Models Trained to Support Mchinji Girls

YONECO: 18 Districts Taller in Malawi
About Us...

Our Vision
A self-reliant, healthy, and resilient society that respects human rights and democratic values

Our Mission
Empowering the youth, women and children, promoting good health, human rights, and democracy, adapting and mitigating effects of climate change; and conducting research for evidence based programming and advocacy

Our Values
Integrity
Transparency
Accountability
Team work
Respect for human dignity
Confidentiality

Our Programmes
1. Enhancing Child Development & protection
2. Governance and Human rights
3. Youth Development
4. Promoting Women and Gender Equality
5. Promoting Good Health, sanitation & wellbeing
6. Climate Change & Disaster Management
7. Media, Networking, Collaboration & Coordinating
8. Research, Monitoring, Evaluation, Documentation and Learning

Editor’s Note
Dear Reader,

Welcome to our September, 2020 edition of YONECO Voice Monthly Newsletter. I am hopeful that you will enjoy this edition as you have enjoyed our previous publications.

I have good news for you dear reader! Every year, we will be producing four quarterly newsletters. The four publications are as follows; Youth and Parents Newsletter, Children and the Environment Newsletter, Young People and Agriculture as well as the Youth and SRHR Newsletter.

We will be distributing these publications in hard as well as soft copies through our website and E-mail groups.

We are hopeful that you will support these publications the way you have done with our monthly newsletter.

Remember, COVID-19 is real, always stay safe!

Lemani Makina

Contact Us
The Executive Director
Youth Net and Counselling - YONECO
C/O Youth Leadership Development Complex
Along Zomba-Lilongwe Road
Next to Calvary Family Church
P. O Box 471
Zomba
Malawi
Tel: +265 1 526 199
+265 88 208 88643
Fax: +265 1 525 674
Email 1: executive@yoneco.org.mw
Email 2: director@yoneco.org.mw
Website: www.yoneco.org
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Production Team

Editor: Lemani Makina
Production Team: Grace Mkwapata, Mabuchi Chunga
                  Alinafe Nyasulu, Deogratious Mwalamoyo

Layout & Design: Lemani Makina
Photography: Augustine Chikatentha and Cover Picture by Ellen Mvula


Media & Communications Manager: Benson Nkhoma Somba

Executive Director: MacBain Mkandawire
COVID-19 has had a huge bearing on many operations in different sectors of the economy and lives. A lot of effort will be required to normalize or adopt to the new norm. My heart still bleeds over the numerous girls that have been taken advantage of and are now either pregnant or living with the scars of horrible experiences of defilement.

The children are failing to access justice because of a failing child justice and protection systems that focus on producing reports and guidelines, having meetings and collecting data that has not become useful now. “Data, so what if we may ask?” When I posted the statistics of Thyolo district with over 3,700 cases on violence against children (defilement, teen pregnancies and child marriages), one health worker shared with me the statistics on COVID-19 in Thyolo. The figures were 58 cases of COVID-19 as of 16 August 2020, 1 death and 51 recoveries. So I asked myself which emergency are we going to be dealing with? Teenage pregnancy and defilement crisis or the COVID-19 Crisis?

As usual, these discussions end when they are released and form part of history of Malawi that in 2020 Malawi experienced a pregnancy and defilement crisis as a result of COVID-19. Government is in the process of developing procedures to open schools with some institutions of higher learning already setting the dates for the schools.

What we are not hearing though is how these young girls will be supported. As schools will be open, are they going to be part of the school system? If so how? Are they going to feel neglected and lonely at home? What about those that have been married off? Well, whatever the situation, the system needs to devise a mechanism on how we will work with the groups. On the other hand, while the children will be going back to school, also rethink strategies of how we will support these young people by giving them moral support to remain in schools.

The holiday was just too long and definitely there have been cases of abuse and some will grow up scarred for life. YONECO continuously offers psychosocial support to survivors of abuse and violence of any kind. So visit the closest YONECO office around you or alternatively call the Tithandizane National Helpline Service Call center on our free toll lines – Child Helpline 116, GBV Crisis Line 5600 and Drug and Substance Hotline 6600.

As children return to school, we are blessed to have the World Literacy Day on 8 September 2020 that focuses on teaching and learning in the COVID-19 era crisis and beyond
especially on the role of educators and changing pedagogies.

Quite convenient with the pandemic situation. The theme is mainly dwelling on lifelong learning perspectives of the youth and adults. Acquiring knowledge is for every day, people are never too old to learn. Hence the need to ensure education is accessible to all men and women regardless of age.

The fundamental question for parents, care giver and teachers is how do we rekindle the literacy and learning issues in the communities where children have over stayed at home. We should also note that a higher number of girls and women are lured into being trafficked and other forms of abuse because of high illiteracy levels which come about as a result of lack of knowledge emanating from lack of awareness.

Knowledge is power, let us empower our young girls and women by equipping them with the right information which goes back to making sure that our women and girls get an education. A lot of crimes go unreported because of lack of cognizance. It is our responsibility through capitalizing on awareness to send out messages on the dangers of these malicious acts happening to our women and girls and this is a plea to different stakeholders, let us join hands.

World Tourism Day this year falls on 30th September 2020 with a focus on building peace and fostering knowledge. We need to recognize that tourism is one of those economic activity that needs to be natured. We need to focus on how to build our tourism sites and infrastructure. We do appreciate that current government has tried to put tourism and culture together. We have to work hard to build the cultural sites and make them attractive. We are focusing on building these positive cultures. We, however, note that the tourist sites have poor roads and these need to be properly managed. We hope that these sites are critical. While the tourism industry is a great business and earn a lot of foreign exchange, we want to highlight that the travel and tourism sector is a dangerous area when it comes to protection of children and girls.

Girls are exposed to sexual exploitation in travel and tourism areas like hotels, lodges, rest houses, construction sites etc. Have you ever wondered what happened when we have a huge construction activity? I was excited the other day when I saw Mota Engil, a construction company advertising for a protection officer and said this is progress. I only hope that this is working and bravo Mota Engil, we do need a lot of protection.

For free reporting lines please call 116, 5600 and 6600. Currently, YONECO YFM has “Lekeleni Mwanayo” radio programme that aims at raising awareness on the dangers of sexual exploitation happening in communities which are tourist attraction areas. We also, need to be on the lookout. It does not need a special package or a huge amount of resources to end any kind of abuse in the community. All it needs is humanity and being responsible for one another. Let us be our brother’s keeper. I yearn for a day when we can all see each other as human beings and equals and not objects of satisfaction.
A 22-year-old man from the area of Group Village Head (GVH) Kamphomombo, Traditional Authority (T/A) Timbiri in Nkhatatabay District has been arrested for consistently defiling a 17-year-old girl over the last 6 months. The man used to entice the girl with money so that she should not disclose the ordeals to anyone.

However, the girl’s parents noticed some changes on their daughter and all signs pointed at a possible pregnancy. Their assumption was later vindicated when the daughter revealed that she was pregnant.

The girl’s parents took this hard and forced her out of their house to marry the man who was responsible for the pregnancy. As per their wish, the girl tied the knot with the 22 year-old man.

The matter was kept a secret until one day when a cousin of the expectant girl was fed up with the severe abuses which the husband perpetrated against her relative. The cousin reported the matter to YONECO.

After verifying the facts, YONECO referred the matter to Victim Support Unit of the Malawi Police Service. The marriage was later annulled.

Currently, the girl is staying with her parents while the 22 year-old young man who married her was arrested pending trial for defilement. Further to this, the girl is being supported with psychosocial counselling at YONECO Youth Drop-In Centre.

YONECO in collaboration with Rumpi District Social Welfare Office (DSWO) has repatriated a total of 11 street connected children to their respective homes.

The District Manager for YONECO in Rumpi, George Mlowoka explained that, apart from other hazards, the children were at risk of contracting COVID-19 due to various unfavorable conditions that are associated with the streets. Mlowoka stated that the children had no protective wear in the streets which are always crowded.

There so many issues that force children in the streets, major ones being domestic, economic and social disruption. For survival, these children are mostly seen selling commodities, begging and eating food from bins.

“In these streets, children are introduced to violent crimes and they are sodomised by older men thereby exposing them to various Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), explained Mlowoka”.

YONECO conducts street scouting exercise that are aimed at identifying children connected to the streets and repatriate them to their homes. With support from DSWOs, foster parents are identified to raise some children whose relatives and original homes could not be traced.
YONECO has reaffirmed its commitment towards sensitizing community members on the need for lactating mothers to exclusively breastfeed their babies in order to enhance child growth and development.

The Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, said this during this year’s commemoration of the Global Breastfeeding Week which falls from 1 to 7 August, every year.

Among other things, YONECO through its radio station (YFM), aired special programmes throughout the week where various key players in health, child rights and gender were featured.

Mkandawire said the organization realizes the importance of breast milk to infants hence the institution’s decision to go to any length to ensure that babies are thoroughly and exclusively breastfed.

“You know breast milk is key in the development of a child, among other things; it enables children to grow health and boosts their immune system. This is why we would like to reach to all Malawians with the message and ensure that they are properly breastfeeding their babies,’ he said.

Breastfeeding week aims at raising awareness on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding to both the baby, the family and the nation at large.
YONECO Courts Families of Street-Connected Children in Nkhotakota

The process involved tracing and meeting parents and relatives of children who live on the streets of Nkhotakota Town.

The exercise revealed that most children who are connected to the streets of Nkhotakota have parents who deliberately send them to wonder around in order to earn a living.

One of the parents, 38-year-old Linda Kamfoloma, admitted that she forces her children to go and beg in the streets in order to sustain their livelihood.

Kamfoloma is a divorcee who has five children and she believes that repatriating her children back to the village will lead to their starvation as she has no any way of earning income to support them.

“I know that it is wrong to send my children to beg and work on the streets, but I feel that it is the only way of ensuring their survival,” she said.

YONECO’s District’s Manager for Nkhotakota, Tipere Kamunga, highlighted the consequences of forcing children to work and beg in the streets.

After the assessment, Kamfoloma and other women who had children in the streets were later linked to women’s savings and loans groups for them to easily access soft loans to venture into small scale businesses.

Three weeks down the line, Kamfoloma and other five women managed to obtain loans which they have used to set up individual businesses which range from owning grocery stores, selling agricultural produce as well as managing restaurants.

The parents have now welcomed their children and efforts are being made by YONECO Child Protection Workers to ensure that the children should not return to the streets.
YONECO has intensified efforts to protect girls from early pregnancies as schools in the country are still closed as one of the measures of preventing the further spread of COVID-19.

Recently, the media has been awash with information pertaining to the alarming increase in the number of teenage girls who are falling pregnant.

For instance, over 5,000 girls are reportedly to have fallen pregnant between the months of May and June in Phalombe district. Further to this, a total of 79 teenage pregnancies were recorded in Mchinji district within the month of May while a total of 7,274 have been reported in Mangochi from January to June this year. The figures are are shockingly high in other districts across the country.

With the alarming figures as well as other factors surrounding such cases, YONECO through its radio station has been airing special programmes like Padiwa, which is broadcasted under the auspices of More Than Bides (MTBA) Alliance.

The radio programmes have focused on raising awareness about the impact of COVID-19 on young girls and how other misguided individual have taken advantage of the pandemic to violate the rights of young girls.

Further to this, young girls are given the platform to interact through YFM and share knowledge and necessary life skills for evading abuses.

Speaking on YFM, Deborah Kamwendo, a Form 1 Student at Likangala Secondary School and Fatima Limani who is in standard 8 at Chikamveka Primary School in Zomba District advised their fellow girls to find ways of keeping themselves busy as they are awaiting for schools to be re-opened.

Fatima cited reading, playing in-door games with siblings as some of the ways of keeping a girl occupied.
Marriage, No Child’s Play

REPORT CHILD MARRIAGE CASES
Call: Toll Free 116
Youth and Sports Minister Tours YONECO Head Office

Minister of Youth and Sports, Honourable Ulemu Msungama, visited YONECO Head Office on a familiarization tour in Zomba City.

The visit was further aimed at appreciating programmes which YONECO has in support of government’s efforts of promoting youth development in Malawi.

During the visits, Hon Msungama toured YONECO ICT Department, Tithandizane Helpline Services call centre, YONECO Radio Station (YFM) studios as well as the Special Programmes Section.

In his remarks, Hon. Msungama called on collaborative efforts among various sectors to work together in enhancing the welfare of the youth.

“The success of my Ministry does not depend on one man, but in concerted efforts of various sectors,” explained Msungama.

In the same vein, the Executive Director of YONECO, Macbain Mkandawire, has given the Ministry of Youth and Sports free space for radio programmes for the ministry to use in addressing issues that are affecting young people in Malawi.
Minister Meets YONECO ED in a Bid to End Drug and Substance Abuse

YONECO has committed to supporting the Government of Malawi in ending drug and substance abuse amongst young people.

During a meeting with the Minister of Homeland Security Hon. Richard Chimwendo Banda, the Executive Director of YONECO MacBain Mkandawire called on a review of the Dangerous Drug Act in light of the changes that have been recently effected. The main objective of the Act is to control the importation, exportation, production, possession, sale, distribution, and use of dangerous drugs.

Mkandawire also called on the Malawi government to fully operationalize the National Alcohol Policy by engaging all actors that operate under the Ministry of Homeland Security.

Currently, YONECO is working with the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare in developing a parenting strategy for prevention and mitigation of drug abuse in Malawi. In the discussion, it was further noted that many parents in Malawi are struggling with children who abuse drugs and alcohol.

In his remarks Hon. Chimwendo Banda called upon collaborative efforts and commitment towards safeguarding young people from things that might rob them off their bright future.

“It is not about leaving a legacy in fighting drug abuse in Malawi but serving the needs of the people of Malawi,” said Chimwendo Banda.

Currently, YONECO has toll free line (6600) which is dedicated to the provision of information and support to young people on drug and substance abuse.
Youth Economic Empowerment Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

In Rumphi district, YONECO has engaged an extra gear in dealing with high rate of youth unemployment which is one of the issues the country is currently grappling with.

YONECO is reaching out to young people through various youth clubs that were established at community level. One of the clubs which YONECO has engaged in a drive to promote economic activities is Buwira Youth Club which is from the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Chikulamayembe in the district.

The District Manager for YONECO in Rumphi, George Mlowoka, highlighted that young people can open up irrigation schemes where they can grow various crops for commercial purposes, establishing bee keeping and establishing Village Savings Loan (VSLA) within their clubs.

Mlowoka stated that through such means, young people would easily generate income rather than just look for employment in companies or big estates.

“Young people need to fully understand that self-employment is worth it especially when one dedicated and eager to achieve,” said Mlowoka.

The Chairperson for Buwira Youth Club commended YONECO for the session. The Chairperson stated that young people from the club will start to view things with a different perspective due to the session.

The session also mainstreamed issues of COVID-19, with a special focus of prevention, as well as demystifying myths and misconceptions sorrowing the pandemic.
Youth Engagement Sessions on SRHR in Balaka

Following the closure of schools in April this year as a precautionary measure against the spread of COVID-19, Balaka district has registered overwhelming cases of teenage pregnancies.

In the four months that have elapsed since schools were closed, the district has registered around 307 teen pregnancies and recorded 297 child marriages. Heartrendingly, most of these girls are primary school learners.

YONECO through its office in Balaka, initiated a number of interventions in order tackle the issues. Among other activities, YONECO has intensified awareness campaigns and life skills sessions.

One of the sessions was conducted at Cecelia Youth Club which is from a small village where over 5 adolescent girls fell pregnant within the aforementioned period.

The session begun with discussions on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). This further led to a dialogue on COVID – 19 prevention. The youth were encouraged to follow all preventive measures as advised by the ministry of health to prevent further spread of the virus.

Furthermore, YONECO officers also took time to impart knowledge on issues pertaining to child rights to the group. Young people were oriented on rights and their associated responsibilities.

The session also focused on increased teen pregnancies. Young people were given a platform to open up on the causes and suggested possible solutions to end unintended teen pregnancies and child marriages.

The sessions was also an opportunity for young people to learn various programmes of YONECO especially those that target the youth.
YOUONECO has challenged the youth in the country to be vigilant and invest in their potential in order for them to positively and effectively contribute to the country’s socio-economic development.

The Executive Director for YOUONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, said this during the commemoration of the International Youth Day (IYD) which falls on 12th August annually.

This year, the Day was marked by a number of sessions that were held on various virtual platforms due to COVID-19. The Day brought together various stakeholders, key players and the youth themselves.

Among other things, YOUONECO conducted a social media campaign and aired a number of radio programmes which featured the youth and other social workers.

In his words, Mkandawire said it is high time the youth realized their full potential and capitalize on them to ensure that they are fully participating in various developmental activities in the country.

“The youth need to identify their strengths and focus on them, they should not wait for someone to tell them about their capabilities,” he said.

Mkandawire added that, “the youth should prove to the world that they are capable of making a difference in this country. Gone are the times when young people used to rely on the older people for everything. Young people should start building themselves now and win the support and confidence of those in high positions.”

On her part, one of the panelists, Catherine Phiri, concurred with Mkandawire saying that many youths are fond of looking down on themselves which prevents them from doing their best.

“The problem that we have as young people is that we undermine our strengths and potentials. However, I feel like it’s time to let go of that mentality and move out of the comfort zone and face the real world and be part of the game changers in the country,” she said.

This year, the IYD was commemorated under the theme; Youth Engagement for Global Action.
The Executive Director for YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, lack of vocational skills is one of the contributing factors to the shockingly high rate of unemployment among young people in Malawi.

Consequently, this negatively translates into various socio-economic challenges including forced child marriages, unintended teen pregnancies, Gender Based Violence (GBV) among other things.

YONECO, in partnership with Malawi Girl Guides Association (MAGGA) is implementing a project in Mulanje district called Comprehensive Action for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW). Under this project, YONECO is providing free vocational skills training to adolescent girls and young women. Among other areas, the girls are being trained in tailoring, baking and welding.

Members of a girls’ youth club that was established in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Mkanda, Group Village head (GVH) Kaduya in the district opened up a bakery.

The initiative was steered by two of the club members who attended a training in baking. The group started the business with a capital of MK 75,000 which the group members got after making some financial contributions.

Currently, the venture has proved to be lucrative so much the club has made a profit of MK 60,000 within the first two months of its existence. The profits that are being made are injected into the group’s Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) so that the members would easily access soft loans for other individual business ventures.

Violet Siakonde is a member of the club and she expressed satisfaction with a number of livelihood training opportunities which YONECO has been providing to members of her group over the last 4 years.

Violet added that all members of her group are now able to venture into various Income Generating Activities (IGAs). Violet further stated that her peers are doing well in terms of sustaining their individual business ventures as well.
YONECO has trained a total of 51 Peer Educators in Traditional Authority (T/A) Zulu’s area in Mchinji district in order to address information gaps on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) among young people.

The training was aimed at imparting SRHR information to the Peer Educators amidst COVID-19 in order to enhance health seeking behaviours among young people especially adolescent girls.

The training was facilitated by health workers from Mchinji District Health Office with support from some members of the More Than Brides Alliance (MTBA) Malawi namely YONECO and Save the Children.

During the training, peer educators were given a platform to share SRHR topics they feel are difficult to deliver. The aim of this particular session was to further build the young people’s delivery of information and facilitation skills.

In his remarks, YONECO’s District Manager for Mchinji, Anderson Chikalipo, urged the young people to always exercise their right to access SRHR information and services at all times.

“Young people have the right to access Sexual Reproductive Health services including information and no one should violate it. The commodities like contraceptives and condoms are very key in preventing unintended pregnancies as well as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). As such, encouraging young people to access them will definitely help reduce the rising cases of teen pregnancies in the country,” he said.

The trained peer educators are expected to conduct SRHR sessions as well as train their fellow young people in their respective youth clubs while following COVID-19 preventive measures.
Senior Chief Chikumbu of Mulanje has urged all stakeholders to join hands in the fight against unintended teenage pregnancies and forced child marriages and other child rights violations that are prevalent in the district.

The Senior Chief made this call during a review and community systems strengthening for Gender Based Violence (GBV) meeting that was organized by YONECO under Comprehensive Action for Adolescents Girls and Young Women (AGYW) Project in Mulanje district.

During the meeting, the people present also acknowledged the negative impact which COVID-19 global pandemic has made on rights and welfare of young people especially the girl child.

It was further noted that COVID-19 has weakened some child protection systems hence the country has experienced increased cases of child marriage and unintended teenage pregnancies.

Speaking during the meeting, Senior Chief Chikumbu expressed her worry over inadequate number of magistrates in the district. The Senior Chief explained that the shortage leads to delays in delivery of justice on defilement and other child rights violation cases.

“Mostly, cases of GBV and Violence against Children (VAC) take ages to be concluded due to shortage of magistrates and cases are not prioritized as expected,” explained Senior Chief Chikumbu.

Senior Chief Chikumbu also advised her subordinate chiefs to remind their subjects about the roles they have in preventing and reporting incidences of child rights violation.

Speaking after the meeting, YONECO’s AGYW Project Coordinator, Blessings Sabao, said the meeting brought to light a number of insights which will be used to inform the process of formulating other interventions.

YONECO in partnership with Malawi Girls Guides Association (MAGGA) is implementing the AGYW Project in Mulanje with funding from the Global Fund through Action Aid and Christian Aid.

YONECO in Ntcheu district facilitated a cleaning exercise at the district’s main market which saw different stakeholders joining in.

The cleaning exercise started with an awareness campaign on the effects of improper disposal of garbage fuel and air pollution. Most market users perceive poor disposal of garbage as a normal way of disposing without necessarily looking into the harm it can bear on the environment.

Officers at YONECO called out to the market users to practice separating plastic papers from other garbage before disposing everything off. Market users and communities graded the waste they had and burnt garbage that cannot decompose outside the market.

The Youth then agreed to champion the exercise in other markets around the community at least twice each month and have called upon different stakeholders to provide support for intensification of community awareness campaigns on the fight against climate change through cleaning exercise.
18 Role Models Trained to Support Mchinji Girls

Having a role model compels an individual to do and achieve more in life. However, many girls across Malawi, especially those who live in rural and remote parts of the country, lack people they can admire and look up to as role models. This prevents them from setting and pursuing goals in their lives.

It is against this background that YONECO oriented 18 ladies in Mchinji district who have achieved and attained their goals on how best they can inspire and motivate young girls in the district.

One of the facilitators, Nthandose Nkhandwe of Mchinji District Health Office, urged the role models to be open on SRHR issues which are key in girl child education.

“Role models are very paramount when it comes to SRHR issues because most parents tend to avoid such topics. This leaves the girls in an awkward position and they end up making uninformed decisions,” said Nkhandwe.

The 18 were further taken through case management process which includes case detection, referral and follow up among other things.

The role models were also tasked with the role of raising awareness about the rights of children and to be exemplary if they are to inspire young girls in their designated communities.

During the session, role models also shared some milestones they achieved in empowering girls.

“The rate of child marriages has gone down compared to the previous years and with the knowledge we have gained from this training, I am positively sure that we will reach out to more girls out there,” said Clara Mdzenje one of the role models.

The role models were drawn from various fields including teaching, accounting, and nursing among others. Currently, the group is expected to execute their roles based on a three-months action plan which they developed after the training.
Youth Development

Young Lady Surviving Through Technical Work in Ntcheu

People who listened to the story of 22-year-old builder, Annie Chombo, who was featured on YONECO FM’s Chitukuko ndi Achinyamata Programme will never forget how strong and focused the young lady is.

Annie is the only lady among 13 male colleagues who are currently constructing a maternity wing at Nsipe Health Centre in Ntcheu district.

In the programme, Annie explained the genesis of how she joined what most people perceive as a traditional job for men only. Annie challenged other young ladies and girls to take interest in technical works like carpentry, designing, tailoring, brick laying and alike.

Just like the renowned Nigerian musical duo - P Square stated, Annie also strongly believes that ‘what a man can do, a woman can do’ as well. Anne added that through such technical jobs, ladies could easily earn a living and ably support their families.

Annie stated that when she was in secondary school, she wanted to become a police officer but things took another twist after she sat for her Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) Examination.

"What happened was that I became pregnant. Unfortunately, the man who impregnated me denied the responsibility,”she said.

Annie said she started struggling in many ways because as her parents, who are merely subsistence farmers, were unable to provide all her needs as an expectant person. Annie ventured into the business of selling sandstone just to manage a balanced meal as she was eating for two.

Annie noticed that all women and girls in her area preferred selling fritters, cakes or whatever they can cook or bake. As such, she noticed that there were a lot of such commodities on the market hence a bit hard for one to earn enough money.

"This is when I firstly noted that I should infiltrate the male-dominated businesses and selling sandstone got my attention. I was the only fame doing the business out-of 8 people”, explained Annie.

Sandstone is mainly used in construction. As such, she started learning a few things about construction and her interest grew big.

Moving on, after delivering a bouncing baby girl, Annie applied for an opportunity to study Brick Laying at Chiradzulu Vocational Training Centre where, in January 2019, she became the only girl in a class of 26 students.

Currently, as schools are closed due to COVID-19 pandemic, Anne is working as a temporary brick layer with a renowned condition companies in Ntcheu district.

“With the salary which I get here, I have managed to buy some tuition books and I am able to support my child and my parents.

Chitukuko ndi Achinyamata is a Radio program that gives a platform to the youth to among other things; expose their talents and inspire fellow young people to take a positive path in life. The programme is aired every Tuesday from 01:30 PM.
Mloza Border which lies in the south of Mulanje is one of the busiest trading centres in the district. This is a place where people are busy with various endeavors of making money such that nothing seems wrong in that area.

It is an area where business men, tourist and truck drivers who take advantage of the high levels of poverty and weak child protection systems to sexually abuse young school girls and give them money in return. In the language of these unscrupulous men, the girls are named ‘amchapa magazi’ (blood purifiers).

Further analysis of the problem reveals that school-going adolescent girls who operate on self-boarding arrangements are mostly tricked by Taxi Bicycle Operators who make arrangements of linking the girls with the lustful men.

Thus, through the Comprehensive Action for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) Project which YONECO, in partnership with Malawi Guides Association (MAGGA), is implementing conducted an interface meeting with the District Child Protection Committee (DCPC) in order to find workable means of addressing the problem.

Among other things, it was agreed that there is need to conduct a thorough and comprehensive research of the problem, engage available community structures to report such cases of girls and coming up with new interventions that should target those involved in the malpractice.

In Mulanje district, the AGYW Project is being funded by the Global Fund through Action Aid and Christian Aid.

Testimony of a Volunteer Child Protection Worker

Elias Donasio is a Child Protection Worker who hails from the area of Traditional Authority (TA) Juma in Mulanje district.

Elias acknowledges how the interventions that were implemented under Comprehensive Action for Adolescents Girls and Young Women (AGYW) Project have helped in safeguarding young girls from harmful cultural practices.

Elias explained that harmful cultural practices were among the key factors that were fueling high prevalence of HIV incidences among young girls, teen pregnancies as well as child marriages.

“Initially, it was hard for girls to go further with their studies due to unintended pregnancies and forced child marriages. Thus, AGYW Project focused on strengthening child protection systems and dealing with other root causes of the problems hence things are now changing for the better,” said Elias.

Donasio and a team of other volunteers were trained in child rights and protection by YONECO under the AGYW Project. Donasio stated that after the training to date, the team of volunteer community child protection workers has managed to rescue 41 girls from child marriage.

Donasio further thanked various stakeholders for their support and untiring efforts in promoting the rights and welfare of adolescent girls and young women. The AGYW Project is being funded by the Global Fund through Action Aid and Christian Aid.
Tithandizane Child Helpline

Send Girls To School
Not To Marriage

Education is a Right Not a Privilege

REPORT CHILD MARRIAGE CASES
Call: Toll Free 116

POSTAL ADDRESS
The Executive Director
Youth Net & Counselling
P.O BOX 471
Zomba, Malawi

TEL
+265 1526 199
+265 1525 674

CELL
+265 888 958 726

EMAIL
executive@yoneco.org.mw
Brenda James of Senzani Village in the area of Sub-Traditional Authority Tsikulamowa in Ntcheu District is enjoying fruits of Village Savings Loan (VSL) after YONECO introduced the practice through a project called Investing for the impact of HIV among Young people project which aimed at mitigating the impact of HIV and preventing further transmission among people.

In June this year she managed to buy a milk cow using MK 600,000 which she managed to save together with interests at her VSL group which had a total savings of MK 1 200 000.

“the concept of financial literacy and VSL has proved to be a gender transformative concept. I never dreamt of being a livestock farmer especially in milk production. Today I represent women in dairy farming because of VSL” Brenda proudly explained.

She encouraged her fellow parents and guardians living with young people who are HIV to invest in joining VSL’s which can lead to investing in various businesses.

Through investing for the Impact of HIV project, other parents have managed to buy chickens (27), goats (89) and pigs (7) as their income generating activity.

YONECO Making Free Masks for Needy Youths, Women and Children in NU

YONECO has embarked on sewing reusable facemasks in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initiative follows government’s directive that wearing of facemasks is mandatory in the country as one of the preventive measures to curb the spread of the virus.

The facemasks are among other things distributed to walk in clients who seek various services at the district’s office.

In her words, District Manager for Ntcheu, Sewenthe Chipofya said they are aware of the economic challenges most people are facing in the district such that others are finding it difficult to buy the face masks.

“We know that not everyone can afford to buy the face masks especially our target group who are the youth women and children due to financial constraints, that’s why we came up with this initiative so that we can support them and contribute in the fight against covid-19,” she said.

The initiative on the other hand was initiated to sustain the office’s Drop in Centre activities as people initially stopped patronizing the centers for fear of contracting the disease.

So far YONECO has sewed over 100 facemasks which have all been distributed to the clients.
YONECO Introduces Economic Empowerment Initiatives in GBV Fight

As a way of enhancing the capacity of women in the fight against Gender Based Violence, YONECO is training women in fish farming which has proved to be a lucrative economic venture in Chikwawa district.

Over the years, it has been noted that lack of economic opportunities for women is one of the factors that fuel incidences of Gender Based Violence (GBV) that is perpetrated against women in Malawi. This is due to women’s over-reliance on men for financial support. Thus, men take advantage of this position to violate the rights of women.

In its approach, YONECO is reaching out to the targeted beneficiaries through various community structures and other women groups.

Recently, YONECO trained members of Tikondane Women Savings Group from the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Mulilima in the district. The training was conducted in partnership with the District Fisheries Department.

During the training, the group members were drilled in construction and management of a fish pond, how to feed fish, get rid of parasites, proper harvesting procedures and other things.

So far, the group is raising thousands of fish. According to the District Manager for YONECO in Chikwawa, Patrick Makonde, the group is expected to further inject the money they will realize from selling the fish into their savings group.

Makonde stated that this will increase the group’s capital so much that members will be able to borrow enough money to venture into other businesses.
YONECO has engaged fishermen from the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Makanjira in Mangochi district in order to find lasting solutions for reducing the scourge of sexual Transmitted infections (STIs) in the area.

Speaking during the session, Field Officer for YONECO in the area, Stephano Konyani said male involvement in health issues is key to the wellbeing of all people in the society. Konyani further encouraged the fishermen to access Sexually Reproductive Health (SRH) services with the aim of protecting themselves and their partners.

Among other harmful practices that are common on the shores of this part of the lake include transitional sex. Fishermen sleep around with women and girls in exchange for fish.

In his remarks, George Saidi, one of the fishermen described the session as an eye opener. Saidi defined it as a right moment for community members to join hands in renouncing harmful practices and beliefs that have a negative bearing on people’s SRH.

“I urge all my fellow fishermen to support their wives by going to the hospital and access various SRH services of their choice,” Saidi said.

YONECO has trained a total of 12 women in establishment and management of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) in Rumphi district.

YONECO’s District Manager for Rumphi, George Mlowoka, stated that each of the participants is expected to facilitate establishment of various groups within her vicinity.

The approach is being intensified in order to empower women economically. Further to this, the groups will also be operating as safe spaces for women to discuss other issues that affect them.

Thus, participants were further oriented on Gender Based Violence (GBV), child protection as well as parenting skills.

Currently, YONECO is also bonding similar interventions in other 14 districts across the country namely; Zomba, Chiradzulu, Chikwawa, Mulanje, Chiladzulu, Machinga, Mangochi, Ntcheu, Lilongwe, Nkhotakota, Mchinji, Ntchisi, Nkhata Bay, and Rumphi.
YONEECO GIRLS EDUCATION FUND (YOGEF)

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

Be a driver of change by joining the Initiative. Send Your Donations to the following bank details:
National bank of Malawi
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Youth Leadership Development Centre
Along Zomba Lilongwe road,
Next to Calvary Church,
P.O. Box 471, Zomba, Malawi
Email: girlseducation@yoneco.org
The Executive Director for YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, hosted the Member of Parliament (MP) for Zomba-Malosa Constituency, Honourable Grace Kwelepeta in a meeting where the two discussed issues pertaining to youth development and child protection during the COVID-19 era.

Community development also came out as one of the major components affecting youth and women in different aspects.

Mkandawire condoned the tendency of some citizens who expect to be given handouts and remuneration for being involved in what are supposed to be community service activities. Mkandawire further added that the country will have difficulties in making progress unless communities change their attitude towards the development of their areas.

“Many people need to refocus and strategize on what they need to achieve. People need to be patriotic and be able to contribute to the development of their communities without expecting something in return,” said MacBain Mkandawire YONECO ED.

Mkandawire also made a special request to the MP and other members of parliament who will soon be convening to seriously understand Parliamentary Bills before they are passed into Acts. On this issue, Mkandawire explained that he strongly believes that the NGO Act seriously need to be looked into.

**Upcoming Events**

- September 2020: World Literacy Day
- September 2020: World Tourism Day
Every Child Deserves...

Support Protection & Freedom

Report Violence Against Children & Neglect

Call: Toll Free 116

Tithandizizane Child Helpline

YONECO Youth Net and Counselling
Country Director for Community Energy Malawi, Edgar Kapiza Bayani toured YONECO Head office to familiarize himself with some of YONECO’s interventions in Green and Inclusive Energy (GIE).

YONECO and Community Energy Malawi have been implementing a five-year project on GIE with funding from HIVOS. Among other things, the project was aimed at addressing issues of climate change and empowering communities to use renewable and sustainable energy. However, the project is phasing out this year.

Thus, the Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire and Bayani discussed the possibility of combining efforts to ensure sustainability of the project.

“It is very important for partners to come together in making sure that communities are able to tap and use renewable sources of energy,” said Mkandawire.

Bayani was also featured on YFM in Mphamvuza Chirengedwe Radio Programme in which he tackled the importance of gender balance in the implementation of activities on renewable and sustainable energy.
YONECO Management held a technical meeting with the Board of Trustees to discuss some of the programmes and projects within the institution and finding other innovative ways of serving its community of interest.

In the meeting, the members present agreed to go back to the drawing board in order to redesign the institution’s Strategic Plan so as to accommodate new impact districts of Salima, Blantyre, Dowa and Nkhotakota.

The meeting was also aimed at reviewing and engaging in strategic deliberations by approving plans of actions, providing ongoing support to the organization through its various stages of growth.

Apart from the Board Members, the meeting was also attended by the Executive Director of YONECO; Research, Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Documentation Manager; Media Advocacy and Communications Manager; as well as the Acting ICT Manager.
On 30th July 2020, YONECO joined the global community in commemorating the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons with a call to government and stakeholders to join hands in ending the vice in the country.

YONECO’s Executive Director, MacBain Mkandawire said that although the country has registered impressive progress in curbing the malpractice, corruption among community members and border post officers remain huge challenges.

“We need to appreciate that we have made some progress as a nation. Reports indicate that we have moved from tire three to tire two among the countries with high trafficking in person’s cases,” he said.

Mkandawire added that there is need to seriously restructure our approach by among other things working collaboratively with the communities living in border areas and the border posts officers because they are the ones at a great risk.

“We need to empower the communities and border post officers and end the corrupt practices as they are mostly connived by the traffickers to support the human trafficking process,” he added.

Among other things, YONECO conducted a social media campaign and a special radio panel discussion program where stakeholders including the Malawi Police service, the social welfare office and human rights campaigners were featured.

The day which falls on 30th July annually was commemorated under the theme “Committed to the cause- Working on the frontline to end human trafficking”.

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**REPORT CHILD MARRIAGE CASES**

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**POSTAL ADDRESS:**
The Executive Director
C/O Youth Leadership Development Centre
Along-Zomba Lilongwe Road
Next to Calvary Family Church
P.O Box 471
Zomba, Malawi

**TEL:**
+265 1 526 199
+265 1 525 674

**CELL:**
+265 888958726

**EMAIL:**
executive@yoneco.org.mw
GBV CRISIS LINE

You can report GBV through a Toll-free line

CALL

5600

WHO WE ARE: The GBV Crisis Line -5600 is a Toll-free Line that was established in 2014 to respond to issues pertaining to Gender Based Violence. The GBV Crisis Line is one of YONECO's innovative approaches that are used to enhance the rights and welfare of the youth, women and children. The GBV Crisis Line came into operation as a direct response to the needs of communities and reducing traffic from child helpline.

Our Services
Through our GBV Crisis Line, we provide the following services:

► Free telephone counselling on GBV issues
► Making GBV Case referrals
► GBV Case Management and follow ups
► Provision of places of safety to survivors of GBV
► Face-to-face counselling on GBV Issues
► Providing GBV response mechanisms in emergency situations
► Raising awareness on prevention of GBV

Our Partners and Key Stakeholders

Min. of Gender, Children, Disability & Social Welfare
Malawian Police Service - Victim Support Unit
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Trocaire
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Tithete Nkhanza
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