

YONECO AGYW PROJECT SUMMARY

Youth Net and Counseling (YONECO) with funding from Global Fund through Action Aid and Christian Aid is implemented a **Comprehensive Action for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW)** in an effort to provide girls and young women aged 15 to 24 with opportunities to improve their livelihood, while preventing and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS. The AGYW project was implemented in 6 Traditional Authorities of Juma, Njema, Mkanda, Chikumbu, Mthiramanja and Mabuka as well as 188 schools in 13 educational zones of Mulanje District.

Overall Objective

- To reduce prevalence of HIV among girls aged 15-24 through addressing negative gender and social norms, strengthened community systems, and integrated interventions contributing to the attainment of the 90-90-90 goal.

Outcomes

- Increased awareness of adolescent girls and young women in HIV and AIDS
- Reduced School dropout rate
- Reduced incidences of Gender Based Violence

Beneficiaries

- Adolescent girls aged 15 – 24

Duration

- January 2017 – December 2020

The AGYW project interventions focused on three thematic areas:

- **In school** - Focusing on reducing school dropout rate, increasing HIV and SRHR awareness among adolescent girls and young women and addressing issues of gender based violence.
- **Out of school** - Used a peer-led approach that leveraged existing structures to address HIV vulnerabilities among young women and this bridged HIV information gaps and support service access
- **Community** - Strengthening community systems for HIV/AIDS, SRH care and gender-based violence survivors

Key successes

- The project reached out to 26,891 girls with HIV prevention programs – defined package of services which include family planning demand creation messages, life skills education, GBV screening and referrals.
- 26, 024 girls have been reached with HIV information through one on one and peer group discussions conducted in out of school girls clubs by peer educators.
- 26024 adolescent girls and young women accessed HIV information, 7436 received HTC services, and 2345 accessed family planning services. 1496 girls screened for STIs and 476 of these received treatment.
- 1, 519 young women from 67 village and saving loan clubs have been reached with livelihood trainings particularly Village Saving and Loans (VSLs) and financial literacy in order to empower them economically and reduce their vulnerability to gender based violence and HIV infection. All girls are participating and benefiting from small scale businesses.
- 230 out of school girls trained in vocational skills including welding, Hair dressing, soap making, baking, and juice making, tailoring and designing. The trained girls are running their businesses and some were employed in some companies.
- 629 girls have been trained in sewing of reusable sanitary pads and they are able to use proceeds realized from selling of the pads to pay for school fees, boost capital of their business and support other needy in school girls who cannot afford to buy a pad.
- Through the involvement of gate keepers, Police, mother groups and Social Welfare Office, 2041 girls have been withdrawn from marriage and supported to start rebuilding their lives either through schools and IGAs.
- The project received and supported the interventions on 759 cases of GBV of which 178 were defilement and have been properly prosecuted.
- Engaging male champions in the project has been key in educating and re-culturing men to recognize and put to an end behavior patterns that encourage, propagate and support a culture of rape and sexual abuse. The project has also strengthened systems for HIV/AIDS, SRH care and gender-based violence survivors.

SUCCESS STORY

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE OFFERS HOPE TO OUT OF SCHOOL GIRLS IN MULANJE



Violet Saikonde showcasing how her group's bakery works

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 Christian Aid, 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 training in baking. The group started the business with the 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 several livelihood training opportunities that 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 business ventures as well.