

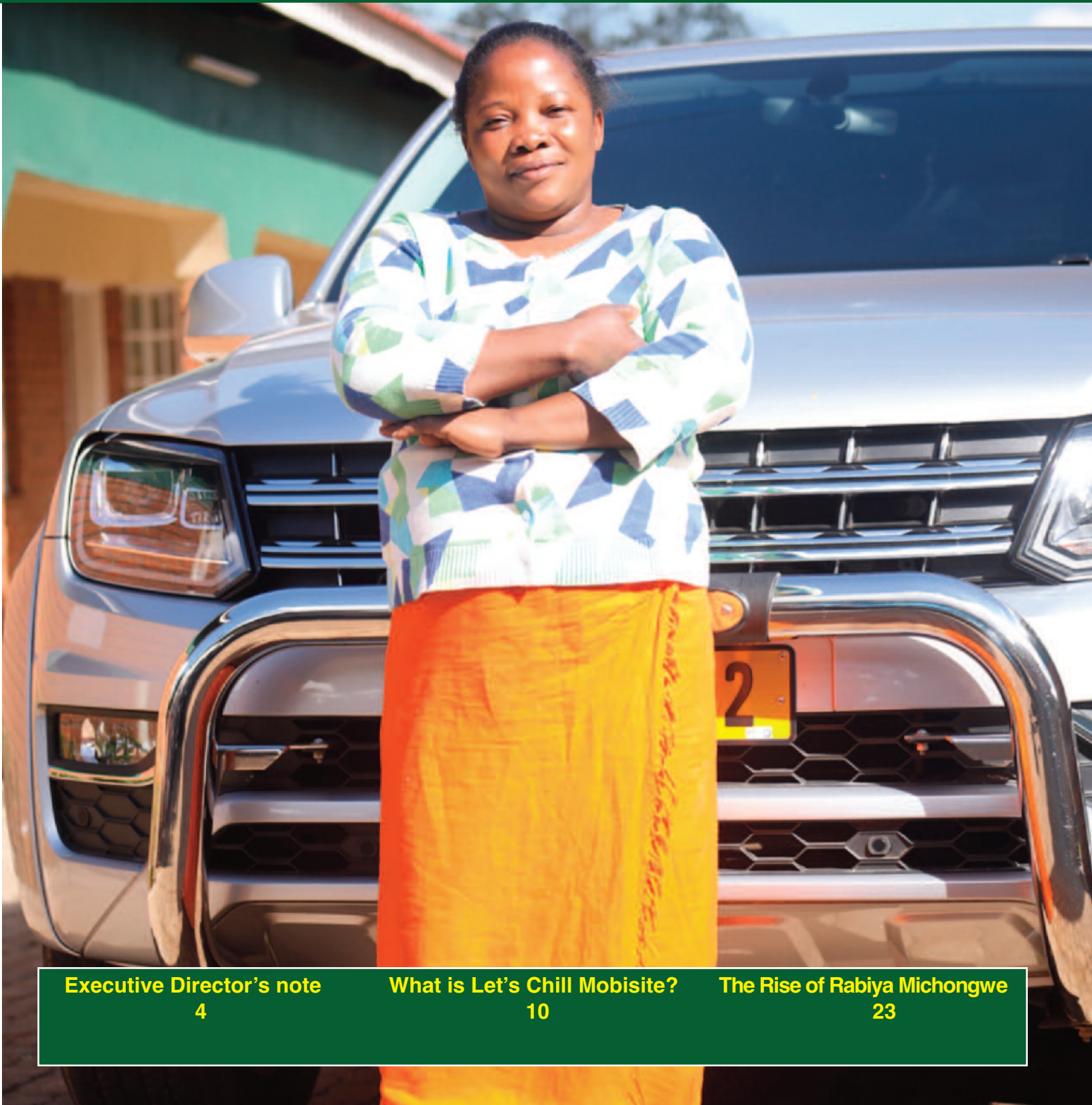
YONECO | VOICE

YONECO Monthly Newsletter

June 2021

Vol 10

Issue 6



Executive Director's note
4

What is Let's Chill Mobisite?
10

The Rise of Rabiya Michongwe
23

About Us...

Youth Net and Counselling

Managing organizational rapid growth and success for youth, women and children development.

VISION

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

MISSION

We are a non-governmental organization that is committed to 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.

CORE VALUES

Integrity

Teamwork

Confidentiality

Respect for human dignity

Transparency and Accountability

Contents

Executive Director's Note	4
Education Authorities Endorse SRGVB Awareness Sessions	6
Chiradzulu Based Youth Club Visit Mapale DIC	7
Mangochi Youth Meet on SRHR Issues	8
YFM Engages Ward Counsellor in the Fight against Drug Abuse.....	9
What is Let's Chill Mobisite?	10
Stakeholders Join the Fight against Online Child Sexual Exploitation	11
YONECO for Evidence-Based Interventions to Prevent OCSEA	11
YONECO, TROCAIRE, HDF Conducts Monitoring Visit in Ntcheu.....	12
School Champions Trained to Combat OCSEA.	13
School Authorities Endorse SRGVB Awareness Sessions	14
YONECO Attends Stakeholders' Meeting in Nkhata Bay	14
YONECO Commemorates International Child Helpline Day.	15
Ntcheu DIAC Hails YONECO's Child Protection Interventions	16
YONECO Recovers Money through CFRM.	17
Chief Diverts Funds for Lean Season Response	18
Participatory Community Theatre, a Tool for Effective Social Behavioural Change	19
YONECO ED Meets Parliamentary Committee on HIV/AIDS and Nutrition.	20
Music Maestro, Charles Sinetre, Hails YFM Programming	21
Women Urged to Join the Fight Against GBV.	22
Community Gears Up to End GBV.	22
The Rise of Rabiya Michongwe	23
UN Women Conducts Project Monitoring Visit in Machinga	24
Reusable Sanitary Pads; A Panacea to Menstrual Health and Hygiene	25
WASH Sessions for Young People Introduced in Balaka	26

Production Team

Editor: Lemani Makina

Production Team: Wilson Mkandawire, Deogratious Mwalamoyo, Alinafe Nyasulu
Mabuchi Chunga, and Grace Mkwapata

Layout and Design: Lemani Makina

Photography: Bright Chayachaya and Lemani Makina

Contributors: Sewenthe Mahwayo, Lisa Lamya, Richard Nkhonjera, Shadreck Sindiza
Funny Chilemba, Wongani Mfuno, Jacob Phiri and Blessings Sabao

Media & Communications Manager: Benson Nkhoma Somba

Executive Director: MacBain Mkandawire

Our Programmes

Youth Development

Enhancing Child Protection and Development

Women Empowerment and Gender Equality

Governance and Human Rights

Media, Collaboration, Networking and Coordinating

Climate Change and Disaster Management

Promoting Good Health, Sanitation and Wellbeing

Research Monitoring, Evaluation, Documentation and Learning



The Executive Director's Note ... *with MacBain Mkandawire*

The final lap in every race is most crucial. We are half way through 2021 and it is safe to say whatever happens henceforth will determine whether this year was another waste of time or a productive one at that, the decision entirely depends on you. Welcome to the month of June 2021 which in essence concludes the first half of the year 2021. We therefore want to start by asking each one of you to take stock personally what have you achieved on the big plans you had for 2021. Does your achievement show that 50% of your plans have been achieved as well?

Let us take time out to review the progress so far that has been rendered in empowering the youth, women and children particularly on the allocation of resources towards the ministry of Gender and social welfare. It is very important to acknowledge that investing in the protection of rights and the well-being of people contributes immensely to the development of the country, hence the need for government to consider a rational share of funds in the 2021/2022 financial budget. However, over the last few months we have noted some serious violations and abuse.

We want to recognize the steps taken by the judiciary in metting out heavy sentences to the defilers of the children. We say Bravo to the Judiciary and this trajectory should continue. However, we also want to bring to the attention of the judiciary that there are lots of injustices on the system for cases involving children. We have cases of the children that have stalled for close to five years. We need your action on these cases and also ask the investigators to be timely in order to conclude the cases.

While on the same, we have seen an increase in the defilement cases over the last six months. We note from the helpline that, between January to March 2021 alone, we have recorded high levels of violence and abuse against children with 568 defilement cases (348 cases same period in 2020), 610 child marriages (621 the same period in 2020), 65 trafficking cases (24 in same period in 2020), and 143 child neglect cases (15 in same period 2020). These figures are alarmingly too high and creates a lot of challenges for the children IN Malawi. What is more disappointing is that there has also been an influx of the sharing of the photos for the child survivors of abuse and violence. We implore the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare to manage the situation.

Malawi joins the rest of the world world in commemorating the International Child labor day falls on the 12th June 2021 amid unprecedented economic crisis brought by COVID-19. The pandemic has threatened a reverse of progress in eliminating child labor. Children were forced

o fend for their families exposing them to a lot of abuse and violent circumstances. Ending child labor is not a one man's fight; different stakeholders need to come together chat a way forward on how best we can end the vice. This year, the day will focus on action taken towards the eradication of the act hence the theme Act now: End Child Labor. We want to encourage all the stakeholders to join hands to end child labour in Malawi.

The African Union adopted the African Charter on the rights and Welfare of Children 1990 and it entered into force in 1999. AU also adopted the Agenda 2040 for children with a few aspirations. Accelerating this agenda 2040 requires commitment from governments to focus on the agenda and reflect. In 2021, Africa celebrated the Day of the African Child 2021 with the theme: "30 years after the adoption of the Charter: accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2040 for an Africa fit for children". The expectation from different stakeholders is to actively participate in the commemorations with different activities in order to spread messages of children's rights and welfare in every corner. The question remains: if at all Malawi and its stakeholders are still focusing on this Agenda 2040 and its aspiration?

The month continues to be an eventful one as the International day against drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking falls on the 26th June 2021. The day highlights the dangers of drug use and their illegal trade, and again let us reach out all over to help spread messages about extreme cultural and economic harm the trade in drugs is still doing across the globe. But wait a minute, the day comes when the country has just started issuing licenses for industrial hemp. We do hope that there will be serious enforcement on the industrial hemp management to ensure that we do not slide into use of Cannabis by young people.

YONECO has a full swing mental health component and please feel free to reach out to our helpline systems to get support. These include 6600 drugs and substance toll free line, 5600 – GBV Crisis Line and Child Helpline 116. These are open for the general public to get counselling on various social issues including drug and substance use. Alternatively, one can walk in our physical offices to get help.

Finally, you can get anything you want in life if you set your mind to it, challenges are inevitable, and you shall continue to face them. Never allow defeat. I wish you all the best, Good luck.

Yours

MacBian Mkandawire
Executive Director



**REPORT
CHILD
ABUSE
CALL
116
FOR
FREE**

Every child deserves
support, protection and
freedom.

School Authorities Endorse SRGBV Awareness Sessions



An SRGBV session at Lisale Community Day Secondary School

School authorities from Nkhata Bay district have commended YONECO for conducting awareness sessions on School-Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV) in various primary and secondary schools in the district.

The Head Teacher of Lisale Community Day Secondary School described the sessions as eye opening and a major step towards ending SRGBV in schools.

The sessions have been very interactive and the students actively participated by highlighting some real-life experiences as well as asking critical questions.

The activities are being conducted in collaboration with officers from the Victim Support Unit (VSU) of the Malawi Police Service and officials from the Department of Social Welfare.

The sessions are being conducted with financial and technical support from UNFPA through Spotlight Initiative.



Chiradzulu Based Youth Club Visit Mapale DIC



Members of Zinalikuti Youth Club at YONECO Head Office in Zomba

Zinalikuti Youth Club from Chiradzulu District visited Mapale Drop-in Center (DIC) to interact with youth clubs around Zomba City.

Speaking at YONECO Zomba Offices (Mapale DIC) YONECO District Manager for Chiradzulu Mabel Makondetsa said Zinalikuti Youth Club has been hearing a lot and is excited to learn what different youth clubs around Zomba City are doing in their respective communities through radio programs at YFM.

“The purpose of the visit was to learn from other youth clubs and learn how they can move forward as a club and as a district office we are committed to working hand in hand with this club,” Makondetsa said.

In his remarks, District Manager for Zomba, Blessings Sabao, welcomed Zinalikuti Youth Club and encouraged them to implement what they have learned from other youth clubs in the city.

“You can achieve a lot and being an example for a lot of youth clubs in Chiradzulu if you remain in

solidarity and by doing that, you can also achieve a lot. You have also to put much focus on your goals,” Sabao narrated.

The club was welcomed by seven youth clubs around Zomba City and the club had a chance to visit YONECO head office as well as participated in the production of some radio programs on YFM.



Members of Zinalikuti Youth Club and YONECO staff

Mangochi Youth Meet on SRHR Issues

On 22 May, 2021, young people from Mangochi district congregated at our Youth Drop-In-Centre (DIC) to share their experiences and the activities they conduct in their respective clubs.

The participants also explained how they have benefitted from Let's Chill Mobisite which YONECO has been operating in order to enhance young people's access to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights information through affordable online platforms.

"Let's Chill has made it easier for me to access sexual reproductive health information. I fail to open up and ask others because I am naturally shy but the perceived distance and level of interaction with counselors through Let's Chill saves me the trouble" Heston Mkumba – Youth Club member.

YONECO ICT Officer, Aulphan Kumenda, stated that Let's Chill Mobisite is a direct response to young people's need and choice of information sources.

The youth of today prefer web-based information sources of which some are not reliable and provide inaccurate information.

Currently, YONECO has Youth Drop-in-Centres in Nkhata Bay, Rumphi, Mchinji, Lilongwe, Ntcheu, Balaka, Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba and Blantyre districts. The DICs operate as information hubs for young people on SRHR, alcohol and substance abuse.



Mangochi Youth and YONECO District Manager (R)



Mangochi Youth engaged in dialogue on SRHR



Young people from Mangochi outside YONECO DIC

YFM Engages Ward Counsellor in the Fight against Drug Abuse



Likangala Ward Councilor, Munira Bakali Chitseko with *Total Turn Around* Programme Producer, Deogratius Mwalamoyo during the programme

“My mission is to transform the lives of the youth and this includes protecting them from delinquent behaviours like drug and substance abuse that can blemish their dreams.”

These were the initial words of Munira Bakali Chitseko - Councilor for Likangala Ward in Zomba during *Total Turn Around* Programme on YFM Radio.

In the programme, Chitseko explained that she has managed to empower and transform more than 200 young people from her area.

Chitseko stated that she managed to achieve this through the introduction of skills training sessions in phone repairing, graphic designing, carpentry, tailoring and driving. The Counsellor explained that all the young people who underwent the sessions are now reliable and

productive citizens in her ward. Further to this, Chitseko said she has also managed to revamp 15 Youth Clubs which are operating as hubs for various youth-oriented interventions.

Among other key issues, Chitseko stated that the clubs are focusing much on provision information on dangers of drug and substance abuse as well as Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

Total Turn Around is a radio programme on YFM which is aimed at encouraging various stakeholders like traditional, political and religious leaders to fight against drug and substance abuse among the youth.

The programme is aired every Saturday from 7:30 pm to 8:00 pm.



What is let's chill MOBILE SITE ?

Let's Chill is a Youth Net and Counseling-YONECO initiative which was established in June 2019 to contribute to the organization's strategic objective number 4 which aims at improving the health and well being of the youth. Let's Chill provides a youth friendly mobile platform for young people to access critical SRHR information and education in Malawi. Through this platform young people will be able to evade various SRHR challenges as they will have information to enable them make informed decisions. The intervention targets young people within the age range of 10 to 25 years of age who live in urban and rural areas.

Tithandizane Child Helpline 116

Marriage, No Child's Play



REPORT CHILD MARRIAGE CASES

Call: Toll Free 116

Stakeholders Join the Fight against Online Child Sexual Exploitation



An OCSEA session in progress at YONECO district Office in Balaka

the dangers of online child sexual exploitation and the available reporting mechanisms.

So far, we have conducted awareness sessions with learners at Mdeka, Roman Catholic and New Era Primary School in Ntcheu. Similar activities have also been conducted in primary schools in Balaka and Machinga.

The activities are part of a project that is aimed at preventing Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) which is being funded by Human Dignity Foundation through Trocaire.

YONECO is currently working with education authorities in Balaka, Ntcheu and Machinga in order to raise awareness about

YONECO for Evidence-Based Interventions to Prevent OCSEA

YONECO has successfully completed a data collection exercise on online child sexual abuse in the areas of Traditional Authority (T/A) Nsamala and Phalula in Balaka district. The data will inform interventions on preventing cyberbullying.

The exercise was conducted in collaboration with various key stakeholders including the District Gender Officer, District Social Welfare Officer as well as members of various Area Development Committees (ADCs).

The activity was conducted under Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) Project which YONECO is implementing with support from Human Dignity Foundation through Trocaire.

Child online sexual abuse cases are increasing at an alarming rate in Malawi hence the need to put in place necessary measures in order to deal with the problem.

Apart from managing toll-free child helpline services, YONECO is also managing Internet Watch Foundation's Online reporting portal for Malawi



YONECO, TROCAIRE, HDF Conducts Monitoring Visit in Ntcheu



Trocaire Country Director (R) and YONECO ED (in brown)

YONECO conducted a monitoring visit in Ntcheu district to appreciate the implementation progress of the Responding to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse project.

The project which is being implemented in three districts of Ntcheu, Balaka and Machinga seeks to address cases of online child sexual exploitation and abuse which is escalating in the country and prevent its occurrence.

The meeting which was virtually attended by Officials from Human Dignity Foundation, Trocaire and MACRA was graced by the physical presence of YONECO's Executive Director MacBain Mkandawire, Trocaire Country Director Jeannette Wijnants, district stakeholders, community and religious leaders and the youth.

Among others during the meeting, beneficiaries of the project who are the youth had to showcase how the project has benefited them through a panel discussion where they highlighted that they are now equipped with knowledge on OCSEA and are now part of the solution to the problem.

In his words, YONECO's Executive Director MacBain Mkandawire said he is impressed with the response the project is getting from the public.

"Am so delighted with the feedback from the communities regarding this project and it has shown that OCSEA is really a problem in the country and this should now be a wakeup call to everyone.

what is needed now is ownership of the responsibility to curb the vice. We might have laws that criminalize the act and protect children from the OCSEA but if we do not own this responsibility then all the efforts will be in vain," Mkandawire explained.

On her part, Trocaire Country Director Jeannette Wijnants said there is need for collaborative efforts and coordination from all the key stakeholders in ending online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

One of the youths, who is also a beneficiary of the project, Mary Theu, said the project has made her realize OCSEA is a form of abuse and should not be condoned.

"I am one of the survivors of the abuse. Initially, I did not know that it is an abuse that needed to be reported. Through this project, I have learnt a lot," explained Theu.

YONECO is implementing the project with funding from Human Dignity Foundation through Trocaire.



Project Coordinator, Alinafe Nyasulu, making a presentation



YONECO ED greeting a learner at YONECO ECD Centre in Ntcheu district

School Champions Trained to Combat OCSEA



School Champions after their initial training at YONECO Youth Drop-In-Centre in Ntcheu

YONECO, Ntcheu Office, has trained School Champions under a newly introduced project which is being funded by Trocaire and it is aimed at ending Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA).

The trained School Champions acknowledged that there is too much online child sexual exploitation. The participants explained that students are also exposed to a lot of pornography as many of them have smart phones which makes it easy to download and share the materials.

"As students, we watch pornographic videos in small groups during break time, at home and sometimes we even do this in class," explained one of the School Champions.

It was also noted that some older men pay young girls to send them nude pictures. The

older men share such images with their friends. Eventually, the pictures become everyone's property there by exposing the girl to various forms of abuse.

The participants were encouraged to raise awareness about the dangers of online child sexual exploitation. The Champions were further urged to promote the available reporting mechanisms including YONECO's toll-free child helpline (116) and free helpline postal services.

The session was facilitated with various stakeholders from the Malawi Police Service, Ntcheu District Education Office, as well as officials from the District Social Welfare Office.

OCSEA Project is being implemented in Ntcheu and Balaka districts.

School Authorities Endorse SRGBV Awareness Sessions

Education authorities from Nkhata Bay district have commended YONECO for conducting awareness sessions on School-Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV) in various primary and secondary schools in the district.

The Head Teacher of Lisale Community Day Secondary School described the sessions as eye opening and a major step towards ending SRGBV in schools.

The sessions have been very interactive and the students actively participated by highlighting some real-life experiences as well as asking critical questions.

The activities are being conducted in collaboration with officers from the Victim Support Unit (VSU) of the Malawi Police Service and officials from the Department of Social Welfare.

The sessions are being conducted with financial and technical support from UNFPA through Spotlight Initiative.



Students during an SRHR awareness session



An SRGBV awareness session with secondary school students

YONECO Attends Stakeholders' Meeting in Nkhata Bay



Stakeholders' meeting in Nkhata Bay

YONECO attended a stakeholders' meeting in Nkhata Bay district for UNFPA-funded Spotlight Initiative Safeguard Young People (SYP) Malawi.

The meeting was aimed at monitoring progress and highlights on the activities and interventions that are being implemented by various partners in the district.

The Implementing partners include YONECO, GENET and FPAM.

The guest of honour at the meeting was UNFPA's Deputy Resident Representative - Masaki Watabe.

YONECO Commemorates International Child Helpline Day



YONECO, on 17th May 2021 joined the global community in commemorating the International Child Helpline Day with a call to all children in the country to always speak up and report when they encounter any form of abuse.

The day was founded and set aside by a global network of child helplines in 2003 with an aim of raising awareness and providing a platform for children to speak out whenever they face an abuse.

As part of the commemoration YONECO through its YFM held a live panel discussion to appreciate the impact of the National Tithandizane Child helpline which is hosted by YONECO in the country.

The panel comprised of YONECO's Helpline Deputy Team leader, Zomba district social welfare officer and the Zomba Victim Support Unit coordinator.

During the panel discussion it was highlighted that

many children are now able to come forward and report all forms of violence and abuses they face. Mercy Makondetsa is the Helpline Deputy Leader and says the institution has seen an increase in the number of reports from children through the Child helpline 116 toll free lines.

“Over the years we have seen many children coming forward to report all the abuses perpetrated against them, which is very commendable and it shows that the helpline services are easily accessible and that Malawian children are empowered and can now speak out when they have been infringed,” she said.

Makondetsa went to say that with the covid-19 pandemic the department has registered many calls on child abuse which she said that it is an evidence that many children in the country are still being abused every day.

Nevertheless, whilst appealing to the public to desist from abusing children but rather take full responsibility and protect them, Makondetsa has urged and encouraged all children to always speak out when they are being abused or witness an abuse.

On his part, the district social welfare officer, Christopher Ndaona, commended the collaboration and coordination among referral stakeholders on cases reported through the child helpline, saying it is helping to ensure that survivors of child abuse get justice.

YONECO started hosting the Tithandizane Child Helpline in 2006 with an aim of helping and responding to abuses and violence perpetrated against children, youth and women.

**Report violence against children through our
toll-free child helpline on 116**

Ntcheu DIAC Hails YONECO's Child Protection Interventions



Members of Ntcheu District Interfaith AIDS Committee (DIAC)

Religious leaders under the banner District Interfaith AIDS Committee (DIAC) in Ntcheu district have hailed YONECO's interventions in child protection.

This was said during an interface meeting with religious leaders to appreciate their role towards ending online child sexual exploitation and abuse in the country which YONECO organized under the Responding to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) project.

During the meeting the faith leaders acknowledged the existence of the problem and were quick to say many people are not aware that it is an abuse hence they do not come forth to report.

Bishop Moffat Litchapa is a member of the committee and said the meeting was an eye opener and will help them to easily preach against the vice in their respective communities and religious gatherings.

"Mostly people tend to sideline the religions in various interventions because they believe we are not mandated to do anything except preaching the gospel, but YONECO has just proved that wrong," he said.

He added that children are being subjected to various forms of abuses including those happening online and it is our role as faith leaders not to condone such act but rather be part of the solution to bring the change that we want.

"YONECO has proved to us that it is possible to work with faith communities in protecting children from abuses and as faith leaders. We do not take that for granted. We are determined to work collaboratively on this and uproot such evil in our societies," Litchapa explained.

On her part OCSEA Project Coordinator, Alinafe Nyasulu, said the organization is working with faith leaders because it appreciates their role and the influence they have on their followers in their communities, as such they are very key in such issues.

YONECO is implementing the OCSEA project which aims at raising awareness on the existence of child online abuse and sexual exploitation and explores means of protecting the children from the vice with support from Human Dignity Foundation through Trocaire.

YONECO FM



The Real Voice of the Youth, Women and Children



103.8 MHZ - ZOMBA
101.6 MHZ - BLANTYRE
97.5 MHZ - LILONGWE
103.9 MHZ - MZUZU
104.6 - THYOLO



YONECO Recovers Money through CFRM



Community members during the CFRM meeting.

In ensuring that WFP programmes are credible and abuse-free, YONECO toll free lines are being used as a key reporting mechanism in humanitarian response amidst the Covid-19.

YONECO has been an instrumental and effective collaborator with district stakeholders in following up all cases reported through the Community Feedback and Response Mechanism (CFRM) and ensured that money has been recovered and returned to the rightful beneficiaries in a dignified manner.

One of the affected beneficiary was Jadiel Andrea, who hails from Nyama Village in GVH Chimwalamwanya in Traditional Authority Kaphuka in Dedza district.

Andrea is a person living with disability together with his brother. After receiving the money amounting to MK46 200, the Group Village snatched MK34 000 from him and the other beneficiary. The GVH used the

money to pay for a fine she was slapped with by grave diggers, popularly known as *Adzukulu*, after he was held liable for cutting down trees in one of the grave yard in the village.

During case follow up which YONECO conducted in collaboration with district stakeholders, the money was recovered and given back to the affected beneficiaries.

The GVH was then asked to desist from taking beneficiaries' money and that she should be at the forefront encouraging beneficiaries to use what they have been given for its intended purposes.



Kuzembetsa ufa wa phala pa sukulu ndi mlandu. Ndi udindo wa aliyense kuonetsetsa kufi ufawu ukugwira ntchito yake yoyenera.

Nenezani aliyense ozembetsa ufa wa phala wa pa sukulu poimba foni mwaulere pa **116, 5600** komanso **5800**

Chief Diverts Funds for Lean Season Response



A community meeting on CFRM in progress in Dedza

Despite various interventions and sensitization meetings on the objectives of the Lean Season Response (LSR) Programme, Chiefs continue to be the biggest culprits in compromising the set standards by beating the system on the grounds of promoting citizen participation towards development activities.

This was established during case follow up which YONECO conducted in collaboration with stakeholders during a recovery and returning mission to affected beneficiaries.

It was noted that perpetrators ended up forcing beneficiaries to share their money with non-eligible beneficiaries on grounds of promoting citizen participation. However, chiefs ended up collecting more money than what has been shared to the people.

In a related development, some chiefs took

advantage of the cash and managed to collect from few individual and used the money to purchase community items to be used during both bad and good times.

One such chief is from Dedza district and he was involved in a scam whereby 41 beneficiaries were forced to contribute towards a village development fund soon after they received their money under LSR Programme.

According to one of the village heads from the area, the chief took advantage of the received cash and facilitated the purchasing of the items.

“I did not use the money for my own benefit, but for the interest of the community,” he said.

He confessed to collecting cash from few individuals instead of all people from his village. The team managed to recover the cash and returned it to the affected beneficiaries.

The village headman and the affected beneficiaries were then taken through principles of good governance where they were taught on issues of citizen participation by YONECO.

This increased community awareness on the importance of citizen taking part in development activities rather than a few individuals.



YONECO FM

The Real voice of the youth women and children



Participatory Community Theatre, a Tool for Effective Social Behavioural Change



It is a known fact that COVID-19 has disrupted our ways of life. The citizenry has been overwhelmed by the epidemic, while schools were shut. Various social gatherings were, through a government sponsored gazetted order banned or totally reduced or confined to specific hours.

However, YONECO Cultural Troupe, adapted and adopted new approaches to contribute towards the fight against COVID-19. Ever heard of Participative Visual Street Theatre, PVST? YONECO used PVST to reach out, an approach that allows social distancing but maintains the much-needed interactive approach in community theatre. The performances provided not only a platform for the communities, but also enriched debate and dialogue on COVID-19 as well as child protection.

YONECO ED Meets Parliamentary Committee on HIV/AIDS and Nutrition



YONECO ED, MacBain Mkandawire (5th from left) and members of Parliamentary Committee on HIV/AIDS and Nutrition

On 6 May, 2021, the Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire had an engagement meeting with members of the Parliamentary Committee on HIV/AIDS and Nutrition at Parliament Building in Lilongwe.

YONECO was summoned by the committee to discuss key issues pertaining to socio-economic development of Malawi in relation to HIV/AIDS. Further to this, the meeting also provided an opportunity to the committee to learn more about YONECO and its interventions on HIV/AIDS, Gender Based Violence (GBV) and child protection among other things.

MacBain Mkandawire presented a number of key recommendations that would help Malawi in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS perseverance and increased cases of rape and defilement.

In his presentation, the Executive Director of YONECO recommended the establishment of a sexual crimes unit within the Malawi Police Service to fast track the prosecution of defilement cases and other sexual related crimes.

Further to this, Mkandawire also requested the lawmakers to critically look into harmonization of gender-related laws. Mkandawore cited the disparity on the definition of a child in Child Care, Protection and Justice Act (CCPJA) and the Marriage, Divorce and

Family Relations Act.

The Executive Director argued to the committee that the conflict in the two legal blueprints is negatively affecting prosecution of cases that are related to child abuse.

In his remarks, the Chairperson of HIV/AIDS and Nutrition Committee of Parliament, Honourable Darlington Harawa, said his committee will engage other relevant groups and stakeholders on how to take on board the recommendations which the Executive Director of YONECO made during the meeting.

Lastly, the committee requested YONECO to open up more district offices across the country. Currently, YONECO has 15 district offices across Malawi with additional adjunct offices in eight districts.



YONECO ED making a presentation at Parliamentary

Music Maestro, Charles Sinetre, Hails YFM Programming



Charles Sinetre (L) and Deogratiu Mwalamoyo in YFM on-air studio

The history of Malawi music is incomplete without mentioning Balaka-based musicians like Coss Chiwalo, Charles Sinetre, Paul and Lucius Banda, and many others.

The star behind greatest hits like Amadikira and Kulota Satumana, Charles Sinetre visited YFM Radio as one way of honouring the radio station on its programming content and encouraging YFM presenters to promoting local based talent.

Speaking on live on YFM, Sinetre said YFM Radio is doing a lot in protecting and promoting the rights of the youth, women and children and also promoting local talent through music, poetry and radio plays.

"I really like listening to YFM Radio for its educative, informative and entertaining programs that focused on promoting and protecting youth, women and children," said Sinetre.

In addition, I want to encourage you YFM presenters to promote local based talent because by doing so you are also promoting your country's

talent." Sinetre said.

Furthermore, Sinetre said current he is preparing to come up with an album within this year and Malawians should expect good things from the album.

In his remarks, YFM Radio presenter Deogratiu Mwalamoyo (Omwala) commended Sinetre for the visit and he added that Sinetre's visit will motivate YFM presenters to put much interest on promoting local music.





**DRUG & SUBSTANCE
ABUSE HOTLINE**

6600

**SAY NO TO DRUG AND SUBSTANCE
ABUSE**

**Get Help for free,
Call 6600**

Our Services

Telephone Counselling
Social rehabilitation
Psychosocial support
Referral support
Youth Drop-in Center
Facilities

Women Urged to Join the Fight Against GBV



Women's meeting on GBV in T/A Zulu's area in Mchinji

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is one of the vices that will negatively impact on efforts that are being made towards the attainment of SDG 5 and other equally important sustainable development goals if it is left unchecked.

YONECO engaged over 24 women aged between 23 and 44 years old from Nkhombe Village, the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Zulu in Mchinji district on GBV. The sessions focused on causes and effects of GBV as well as prevention and mitigation measures.

During the sessions, it was noted that GBV is mainly fueled by lack of knowledge, alcohol and poverty.

“Some parents influence their girl child to engage in transactional sex with men so that the parents should benefit from such an arrangement. This is very common in this village”, explained Jenifer Kanama who is a Community Child Protection Worker.

Participants also revealed GBV incidences that are perpetrated by women against men. However, it was stated that such cases go unreported as the male survivors fear reprimands and mockery for being weak.

During the session women were urged to report all forms of GBV to various institutions including police, social welfare office, and to the court. Tithandizane Helpline toll-free numbers, 116 and 5600, were also publicized as efficient mechanisms for reporting such cases.

Community Gears Up to End GBV

Residents of Senior Chief Muhthwalo's area in Mzimba district have avowed to implement Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention measures in order to protect women and young girls from various forms of abuse.

Community members made the commitment during a community awareness campaign on dangers Gender Based Violence (GBV) which YONECO organized in the area.

We also discussed with community members a number of reporting mechanisms and strategies that are key in preventing GBV.

About 30 community members attended the session which was spiced up by drama as well as traditional songs and dances.



A community meeting on GBV in progress

The Rise of Rabiya Michongwe



Rabiya Michongwe at YONECO Head Office in Zomba

Rabiya comes from a small village called Chikumbeni in Zomba district where various socio-economic factors compelled her to drop out of school at a very tender age.

Rabiya Michongwe started as a community volunteer for YONECO, who has managed to rise through the ranks to her current position.

Rabiya joined YONECO in 2007 as a volunteer under YONECO Cultural Troupe - which is a wing within the organization's communications department which supports community engagement interventions. At this point in time, Rabiya only had a Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC).

As volunteers, YONECO supported all the members of the theatre group to attain higher academic qualifications. In 2009, Rabiya got a Junior Certificate of Education which helped her to become an employee of YONECO within the Cultural Troupe.

Her journey did not stop there, with encouragement and support from YONECO management, Rabiya returned to school and acquired a Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE). This catapulted her to the position of an Office Assistant. In 2017, Rabiya decided to take driving lessons and got her Driver's Licence in 2018.

Upon acquiring her Driver's License and her MSCE, Rabiya qualified for the position of a Driver in YONECO. Finally, lady luck smiled on her in 2020 when Rabiya joined a team of drivers in which she is the only woman.

Rabiya expresses her gratefulness to YONECO Management for the continuous support and opportunities she has been given and she describes her life as 'a great learning journey'.

"Whatever situation you are in, exercise restraint, be honest and work hard and the rewards will always follow you," said Rabiya with car keys in her right hand.



Rabiya Michongwe captured behind the steering wheel



Rabiya Michongwe driving out of YONECO Head Office

UN Women Conducts Project Monitoring Visit in Machinga



UN Women and YONECO staff in an engagement meeting at Nkula in machinga district

UN Women conducted a monitoring visit in Paramount Chief Kawingain Machinga district to appreciate progress of interventions done under the Spotlight initiative Project.

During the visit, UN Women had an opportunity to appreciate how various community players including chiefs and religious leaders who were trained by YONECO and SWAM are working together in addressing issues that perpetuate VAWG and Harmful practices in their community.

UN Women was happy to see how community members are able to demonstrate how to address such issues using different approaches such as SASA and score card among others through focus groups discussion which were done.

UN Women also applauded the two organizations for working hand in hand with already existing structures and using approaches that have demonstrating impact in the communities.

YONECO is implementing the Spotlight Initiative Project in Machinga in Paramount Chief Kawinga and TA Nkula in consortium with SWAM with funding from EU through UN Women and Trocaire.

The project aims at contributing towards reducing prevalence of VAWG, promoting SRHR and

ending Harmful practices.

The implementation of the project will run from March to June 2021.



A dialogue session at community level in Machinga district



Community leaders engaged in a dialogue session



**REPORT ANY FORM OF
GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

**WRITE TO
PRIVATE BAG
5600**



**FREE POSTAL
MAILING SERVICE**

Email: gbv@yoneco.org

Reusable Sanitary Pads; A Panacea to Menstrual Health and Hygiene



Participants carrying their hand-sewn sanitary pads

Sanitary pads are expensive and often inaccessible. Some girls resort to managing their periods with pieces of rags or paper which are often unhygienic and uncomfortable. Others ask for permission to leave school premises and many stay at home during their periods.

To address the challenges YONECO with support from Bantwana trained mother groups on the production of re - reusable sanitary wear using locally available materials.

The mother groups are now cascading this learning to AGYWs. Namikango Mother Group has trained 20 AGYWs.

The training was conducted a few days before the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Day which is commemorated annually on 28 May. The theme for this year's commemoration was "step up action and investment in menstrual health and hygiene".

Prior to the commemoration day, YONECO conducted a social media campaign that was aimed at promoting menstrual health and addressing issues pertaining to menstrual

stigma, and period poverty.



STEP UP ACTION AND INVESTMENT IN MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE.

"When it comes to menstrual hygiene. I support my sisters and friends"

Kennedy Luciano - YFM Producer

WASH Sessions for Young People Introduced in Balaka



A WASH session in progress

YONECO has introduced Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sessions for young people in Balaka district.

The District Manager for YONECO in Balaka, Jacob Phiri stated that WASH is one of the areas which YONECO focuses on. As such, the office has started with young boys and girls so that they should grow up with the necessary knowledge about WASH.

Phiri stated that his office intends to reach over 3,500 young people by the end of this year. Phiri indicated that the sessions will be delivered both at community level as well as at YONECO's Youth Drop In Centre (DIC).

Knowledge of WASH is very essential and these sessions will go a long way in ensuring the health and wellbeing of the targeted young people", explained Phiri.





GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE CRISIS LINE

5600

Report any form of gender-based violence by
calling our toll-free line number