

YONECO VOICE

YONECO Voice Monthly Newsletter

February 2022

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Issue 02



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About Us...

Youth Net and Counselling

Sustaining institutional growth and independence for social and economic development of the youth, women and children

VISION

A self-reliant, healthy, empowered, resilient, responsible, and inclusive society that respects democratic values and principles.

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 the** impact of climate change; and **conducting** research for evidence-based programming and advocacy.

CORE VALUES

Integrity

Teamwork

Confidentiality

Respect for human dignity

Transparency and Accountability

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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*

Greetings for the month of February

The month of February 2022 comes sadly after a devastating period of tropical cyclone Ana which landed in Malawi on 24th January 2022. This has been a challenging period for all of us and we would like to start by committing into God's hands all those that have lost their lives due to the disaster. We are also with all those that lost their loved ones and we ask to put everything in God's hands. We have no control over nature. We also want to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for quickly coming in to declare a State of Disaster in the affected districts. Our request is that those of us who are involved in providing humanitarian support to the affected should diligently do the needful and focus on the work. This is the time to support and protect the survivors and to not abuse them.

February is a month of love. So we are made to understand as we have the Valentine's Day which falls on 14th February. This is a day that is dedicated to everything that is connected to love. On this particular day, people get engaged in various activities to express their affection to their special ones. We would like to take this opportunity to implore everyone to ensure that in whatever we do to mark this year's Valentine's Day, we should be cautious and responsible. This is in both our actions as well as finances. For finances, please ensure that you should spend within your means. It would not make any sense to overspend and start regretting the decision later on. On the other hand, we should also guard our actions on this day. Do not do anything or engage in any type of behavior that will leave you regretting the decisions you made just for fun or for the sake of love.

The United Nations Commission for Social Development will hold its 60th session in New York City from 7th to 14th of this month. This year, the session will be held under the theme; 'Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda'. We are all aware that COVID-19 has had an impact on the livelihoods of many people including the youth, women and indirectly children. Among other challenges, people have lost their jobs, businesses and companies have closed down. The question is on how we are going achieve the theme in the current situation we are in.

Usually, when such things are happening, there is too much focus on the government. We all think in terms of 'government this and government that'. While the government has the overall responsibility of providing the much needed social services, there is also need for us as citizens to start thinking about the contributions we will make. Another question is on the quality of citizens which Malawi has. Recent debates have grossly pointed fingers on the elected for poor quality life in Malawi. However, it also looks like our mindset is wrong. A colleague once asked "whose mindset should we change?"

Change is quite desirable but who needs to change? As we promote the mindset change paradigm, are we changing our own mindset?

Member states will be engaged in discussion of policies and measures implemented to mitigate hunger and poverty during and beyond the pandemic. Malawi has a commitment on the SDGs 1 and 2 which relate to hunger and poverty. Malawi as a nation needs to be refocusing on how we will be managing the processes in the context of hunger and poverty. We need to focus on how the poverty of youth, women and children will be reduced. Furthermore, disasters and pandemics are affecting sustainable livelihoods in the county and we need clear policies relating to epidemics and sustainable development. We need to start addressing food insecurity and also start transforming agri-food systems to suit the times. We also need to start closing the finance gaps by among others fostering economic security, investing in human capacities and social protection of the citizens.

Let me conclude by saying that we all have a part to play if we are to make a change for the better and it starts with making smart decisions. So let us start the month with a mind to change the wrongs that we see.

Thank you.

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YONECO Rolls Out SADC Youth Helpline Project in Malawi



Picture insert: Stakeholders posing for a photo after the inception meeting.

YONECO organized an inception meeting for a two-and-a-half-year SADC Youth Helpline Project which the organization will be implementing in Malawi. The project is very key in contributing towards addressing such problems," said Mkwinda Mkwinda, Executive Director of YONECO. "The project is very key in contributing towards addressing such problems," said Mkwinda Mkwinda, Executive Director of YONECO.

Development and Social Welfare, Alice Mkwinda, advised YONECO and its implementing partners to properly manage data as it will be crucial in informing further programming.

The project will enable young people to access specialist counselling services, HIV and AIDS as well as Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and referrals to high impact services.

"As government, we will ensure that we are closely monitoring the implementation of the project and provide the necessary feedback" said Mkwinda Mkwinda.

The Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkwinda, described the SADC Youth Helpline Project as an innovative way of delivering integrated health services to young people. Mkwinda explained that the project has come at a right time when Malawi, just like the rest of the world, is grappling with the impact of Covid-19 pandemic which has also affected young people's access to various health services.



Speaking during the meeting, NAC's Prevention Officer, Alice Mvalo, commended YONECO for introducing the project in Malawi. Mvalo said the initiative will make a significant contribution to various efforts that are aimed at reducing new HIV infections.

In his remarks, the National Coordinator for Reproductive Health in the Ministry of Health and Population, Hans Katengeza, called for collaboration among all stakeholders in the implementation of the project. Katengeza also requested the implementing partners to consider scaling up to various parts of the country.

"With the latest report by the National AIDS Commission (NAC) which indicates an increase in

Concurring with Mvalo, the Director of Gender in the Ministry of Gender, Community

The Youth Helpline Project is being implemented in three countries namely; Malawi, Zimbabwe and Botswana. The initiative is being funded by SADC HIV Fund through Youth Advocates which is based in Zimbabwe.

Outreach Activities Key in Promoting Adolescent SRHR



Picture insert: Service delivery during the outreach activities in Mangochi.

Young people in Malawi face a number of challenges that prevent them from accessing Sexual Reproductive Health Services (SRH) services like modern contraceptives as well as HIV Testing and counselling (HTC) Services. Long distances to nearest health service delivery points is among the most prominent challenges which young people, especially those who live in rural parts of the country, grapple with.

Heartrendingly, lack of access to SRH services has led into unacceptable high rates of unintended pregnancies among young people which typically result into school dropouts, child marriages and complications which result from induced unsafe abortions.

It is against this background that YONECO supported a series of SRH outreach activities in the areas of Traditional Authority (T/A) Namkumba, Jalasi, Chimwala and Mponda in

Mangochi district. The outreach sessions were aimed at bringing SRH services closer to young people who are prevented from accessing them because of the long distances they need to cover to reach a public health facility.

During the outreach activities, young people accessed SRH information, STI treatment and screening services, oral and injectable contraceptives as well as HTC services. The sessions reached out to a number of young people through 26 community youth clubs in the targeted five T/As.

Various community gatekeepers have commended the SRH outreach sessions citing that prevention of various SRH challenges which young people face is far much cheaper and easier than to remedy the consequences of any inaction on the same.

YONECO Nurturing a Climate Conscious Generation in Ntcheu



Currently, a number of efforts are being put in place in order to reverse the situation. However, if the war against environmental degradation is won today, the current situation we are in will repeat itself unless children are groomed to respect and take care of nature.

It is against this background that YONECO has introduced special sessions on climate change and sustainable use of natural resources. Currently, the sessions have commenced at YONECO Youth-Drop-In-Centre (DIC) in Ntcheu and they are expected to be replicated in other centres. So far, 16 children from around Ntcheu Youth DIC, (4 boys and 12 girls) are attending the weekly sessions on climate change and sustainable use of natural resources.

Majority of Malawians depend on renewable natural resources for their livelihoods. However, failure to sustainably use such life serving resources has led to environmental degradation which has consequently, decreased the country's productivity.

YONECO FM Graduates Five Interns



Picture insert: Four of the interns that have graduated posing for a photo.

Five interns have graduated from YONECO FM (YFM) after completing their three months internship period.

The five who are graduates from various colleges and universities in the country, joined YONECO in October 2021 and were attached to the radio department.

During their three months stay in YONECO FM, the interns were drilled in news idea generation, news writing and editing, audio editing, radio program documentation and radio program production and presentation. In addition they were also assigned to support various institutional activities.

In her remarks one of the interns, Ceceilia Chinseu, who is a graduate of the Malawi University of Business and Applied Science (MUBAS) said her stay at YONECO FM

has equipped her with hands on experience which she will easily apply in the industry and during job hunting.

She also said the institution has also helped her explore other opportunities and instilled a passion in child protection which she never had.

On his part YONECO FM's Station Manager, Benson Nkhoma Somba, said he is delighted to have contributed positively to youth's development and the process of job creation for the youth.

Since its inception, YONECO FM has trained a total of 102 interns many of whom have managed to get permanent jobs at the institution; others have secured jobs in other institutions whilst others are upgrading their studies.

YONECO Trains Youth Helpline Ambassadors

YONECO has trained its newly recruited Community Ambassadors at Mponela in Dowa district.

The training was conducted under Project 393 Youth Helpline which aims at engaging the youth on HIV and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) issues.

The project which is being implemented in three Countries namely; Malawi, Zimbabwe and Botswana is set to reach out to young people who are within the age range of 10 and 24 with relevant and consistent information about SRHR including HIV and adherence to Antiretroviral Treatment (ART).

In his remarks, the Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, said with the coming in of various emerging issues due to COVID-19, young people are at an even higher risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. The training was facilitated by Youth Advocates,

an organization which is based in Zimbabwe.

In his remarks, the Executive Director of Youth Advocates, Tatenda Songole, said that the problem of HIV among adolescent boys and girls is still a challenge in Southern Africa hence the need to bring more innovative interventions to deal with the problem.





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YONECO FM Recruit and Orients New Child Presenters



Picture insert: Child presenters during the orientation session in Zomba district.

As part of enhancing child development and protection YONECO has recruited and oriented 16 new child presenters.

The child presenters will be attached to the radio section where they will be responsible for presenting child programs on the radio as one way of amplifying children's voices.

The 20 children who will be trained in interviewing skills and radio program presentation.

Speaking during an orientation session which was held at Bluegum Avenue in Zomba, one of the new recruits Favor Wataya, said this will help her to easily interact with fellow children and understand issues that children are facing in the society.

"Mostly children are under represented and are rarely given the opportunity to speak their minds, so I feel that these programs will help me to amplify the voices of my fellow friends",

said Talumba.

On his part YFM Chief Producer, Rodrick Mwale, said they are optimistic that through the initiative, they will help to develop and groom patriotic children who will be able to hold duty bearers accountable on issues relating to children.



Picture insert: One of the child presenters

He said helping children to speak in one voice can go a long way in creating a better Malawi fit for everyone including children.

Mwale further urged the children to be hardworkers in school as it is a foundation for their success and also to take this opportunity to sharpen their listening and

public speaking skills.

Since its establishment in 2015 YFM has always involved child presenters in its programming to enhance child participation. To date YFM has had 28 child presenters.



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Traditional Leaders Applaud YONECO Interventions



Picture insert: Some of the members who attended the session

Chiefs from Sub Traditional Authority (STA) Tsikulamowa has praised YONECO interventions under the Investing for the Impact of HIV and AIDS among young people project saying it has uplifted lives of many youths.

YONECO has been implementing phase two of the project in STA Tsikulamowa with funding from Egmont Trust. Speaking during a dialogue session which was held at Senzani TDC in STA Tsikulamowa, chiefs rated the interventions highly.

"YONECO deserves 92 percent in its interventions, as chiefs we have registered tangible results and our youth have and continued to benefits from the project and we appreciate and ask for continued interventions", said Group Village Head Senzani

who represented STA Tsikulamowa.

During the session, YONECO presented progress report of the project and the immediate impacts on the beneficiaries. This also provided a platform to the participants to discuss issues that affect them. It was highlighted that costs attached to services in Christian Health facility in particular access to STI screening and Treatment, was affecting youths access to the services.

Later on the participants called for the need to strengthen group businesses in all project impact area as well as continuity of ongoing activities such as peer education sessions and provision of YFHS. The session was patronized by 25 people, where 13 were females and 12 were males.

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Hands-on Participatory Cooking Demonstrations Key to Improving Nutrition



Picture insert: : Care givers captured during participatory cooking demonstrations at Likangala Health Centre

In a bid to enhance the capacity of families and communities to support orphans and vulnerable children, YONECO through the ANA Patsogolo project supported hands on participatory cooking demonstration for care givers of HIV exposed infants and children living with HIV. Participatory cooking demonstrations are a practical way of showing mothers and caregivers how to prepare improved dishes for young children, using readily available local ingredients. The sessions which are facilitated by Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) and Community Linkage Facilitators (CLFs) are conducted in 19 health facilities where the ANA Patsogolo project is being implemented.

Through the sessions 719 caregivers of children ages 0-2, 3-5 and 6-9 years have been reached with nutrition education to promote parental practices and provide adequate support and care to their children. During the sessions HSAs, delivered messages on ART adherence, health, hygiene, and nutrition for caregivers. The sessions helped caregivers to understand the relationship between HIV treatment and viral load, as well as collaborative brainstorming on practical solutions (i.e. how to mix different foods) to overcome challenges caregivers face when trying to get small children to take ART.

The Facilitators also reminded the care givers that when they are preparing and cooking food for young children, they should observe proper hygiene,

including: thoroughly washing their hands; cleaning work surfaces and washing utensils. The sessions have created awareness of underutilized nutritious food ingredients readily available in their home or in the area. ANA Patsogolo Project is a five-year activity to prevent new HIV infections and reduce vulnerability among orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), OVC caregivers and adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in Malawi. The project is funded by USAID and led by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education Inc. (WEI/B). The APA consortium is comprised of five Malawian APA partners who work across eight high burden districts in Southern Malawi.



Picture insert: : Cooked nutritious food by care givers Health Centre

Families Matter Program Sessions Bearing Fruits



Picture insert: Mary demonstrating what she discusses with Tadala at home during Session 5

“Yes they have changed and we are now treated as human beings’ This is the response from adolescents when asked about noticeable changes their mothers have gone through during session 5 of Families Matter! Program (FMP) in all areas the program is conducted.

This is a story of Mary Chipanda and her daughter Tadala Feston from Malonje village, group village headman Chopi, T/A Malemia, Zomba district. She is one of the women we started with in second wave of FMP at Malonje CBCC where sessions were conducted.

“I have learnt so much and I can now help my children with renewed knowledge and strength” Mary echoes. She claims she is no longer the same woman who would just get angry anyhow or shout at her children without hearing them first. She says she used to mistreat her children for meager issues, abuse them verbally later on fail to guide them properly and promptly as a good mother. According to her she was a bad example in many ways.”

However, Alesi said after attending the training program she realized where she was getting it all

wrong and has since learnt how to better relate and communicate with her children.” Alesi said that the other area she has seen improvement is one of flexibly where she can discuss sex and sexual related topics with her children. According to her, at first it used to be hard to discuss such topics with her children especially male adolescents. She now has learnt the importance of a parent taking a leading role of educating one’s children on sexual related topics. Some of topics she freely and flexibly discusses with her children of both sexes are: changes associated with puberty, sexual transmitted infections, voluntary male medical circumcision and family planning. Other topics she frequently discusses with them are goal setting and self-esteem/assertiveness.

FMP sessions run for seven weeks and are delivered to parents of adolescents between ages of 10 to 14 and also 15 to 19. This activity is being carried out in all 19 APA targeted health facilities. Parents’ last words are always “Thank You for enlightening us, please continue”.

Overcoming Common Parent–Child Communication Barriers Through Families Matters Program



Picture insert: Alesi Alfred

Alesi is among the 120 beneficiaries of the FMP for wave 2 at Chilipa. She was eligible because of her daughter Charity who is in standard 5 at Guta primary school. She took the sessions seriously as she noticed that they were so helpful for her family and being a single mother she strives hard to raise her children properly. The answer to her dream of having her children raised well came in as she was introduced to Families Matter Program.

“For me to miss a single session it was like missing a whole lot because what is learned is always interesting as well as productive, first I thought I am wasting my time and that learning how to handle my children will be boring but the sessions are made in such a way that they are thrilling, I love going to attend the sessions and I love the interaction that is there between me, my colleagues and the facilitators.”.

“Previously I was so afraid to talk to my children about growing up and other issues concerning their lives, after attending session 1 noticed that I was lagging behind and I needed to be a mother my children will feel proud of. At this moment I had already asked my form 2 child to quit school, I thought since she can read

and write it doesn't make sense for her to continue with school. I also thought since she will get married one day then her husband will be the one to provide for her needs. On top of that a lot of girls in our community are doing nothing yet they went to school so I asked her to leave school.

But after attending the FMP sessions I noticed that school was so important and had to ask my daughter to go back to school, I escorted her to explain to the teachers that it was my fault that she quit school, I am happy with the coming in of Families Matter! made me realize that school is important and I also had time to listen to my children's issues they face when they are growing, I was shocked to hear that I am one of the people that put my children at risk, I used to ask them to drop out of school, I was not providing for their needs but now am a changed mother”, Alesi Explained.

Alesi admitted that before she was enrolled in the program she could not have time to chat with her children, she said they only met at the eating time and also had no time to ask where they are going or problems they face when they go to school, a lot of things started changing when she started attending the Families Matter! sessions.

“The sessions are so thrilling, apart from learning it was also a ground of experience sharing, interaction and it was a free space, we could share stressful moments.”

Alesi Alfred



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