

YONECO VOICE

YONECO Voice Monthly Newsletter

March 2022

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Executive Director's Note

Page 3

**YONECO Steps Up Efforts to
Address Mental Health Issues**

Page 7

**Chikwawa Flood Survivors in Dire
Need of Aid**

Page 17

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

Contents

The Executive Director’s Corner3

Young People Cautioned against Drugs and Alcohol Abuse in Mangochi.....6

YONECO Steps Up Efforts to Address Mental Health Issues.....7

Traditional Healers Association Joins YONECO in Mobilizing Young People.....7

The Power of Mentorship Among Students.....8

YONECO Internship Program: Profiles from Machinga District Office.....9

Sporting Activities Key in Mobilization for Role Modelling.....10

Psychological First Aid Key in Disaster Response.....12

Children in Displacement Camps in Urgent Need of Learning Materials.....12

YONECO, MACRA for Online Child Safety.....13

YONECO Laments About Increased Cases of Child Marriages.....14

Empowering Children Through Rights Sessions in DICs.....15

Chikwawa Flood Survivors in Dire Need of Aid.....17

Using SASA Model to Address GBV in Evacuation Camps.....18

YONECO Urges Community Members in TA Liwonde to Plant Trees.....19

YONECO Engage Girls at Matifi Primary School with Various Messages.....20

YONECO Ntcheu Joins District Council in Tree Planting Season Launch.....22

Production Team

Editor:

Wilson Mkandawire

Production Team:

Alinafe Nyasulu
Mabuchi Chunga.

Layout and Design:

Wilson Mkandawire

Contributors:

Lisa Lamya

Titus Linzi

Funny Chilembo

Wongani Mfune

Shadreck Sindiza

Alinafe Nyasulu

Mabuchi Chunga

Jacob Phiri

Geoffrey Nyangulu

Grant Dulla

Danrek Pande

Media 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*

Greetings to you all our esteemed readers

We start the month of March coming from a difficult period in which our spirits were dampened by the unfortunate aftermath of the devastating Cyclone ANA. However, we begin the month of March on a clean slate with more energy while hoping for the best.

We kick start the month by observing 8th March which is the International Women's Day (IWD). Briefly, this is an annual global commemoration that was adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1977 to celebrate the achievements of women as well as bringing attention to issues that have a bearing on the rights and welfare of women across the globe. This year, the Day will be commemorated under the theme 'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow.'

We would like us to take a different slant in our train of thought as the Day approaches. To begin with, if we are looking at gender equality in any aspect, we believe we should ask ourselves one critical question; 'how can we engage men in the promotion of equality?' This question should address the importance of having men to understand their rightful role in the process of achieving an egalitarian society where both women and men are given what is due to them regardless of their gender. By enlightening more men on the importance of equality positive change can happen.

On the other hand, women should also reflect and identify their part and do the needful to contribute towards the realization of the common goal which is equality? This should be asked at various levels and capacities especially at professional and social spheres and in urban as well rural settings. We also need to take stock of what women do to each other in this continuum. Do women themselves help and support each other or there is too much of what is called PHD (Pull Her Down) Syndrome whereby women go to any level to deal with their fellow who is doing well in life? This can further be delved into by looking at whether women and girls stand up for each other in order to achieve the equality we need.

In the same vein, some of our prevailing sociocultural practices seem incapable of promoting equality among men and women but very capable of promoting the opposite. For instance, there are certain gender dynamics that come into play when a man goes to stay at his wife's home village. This practice is called Chikamwini. On the other hand, Chitengwa is the direct opposite whereby a woman goes to stay at her husband's home village and this arrangement has its own implications on issues of gender as well.

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

While we are still on the issue of women empowerment and gender equality, one thing that is heartrending is that the people entrusted to protect our women and girls are, ironically, the ones perpetrating the acts of abuse. Violence against women and girls is a usual feature in our society with the clergy, law enforcement officers, parents and guardians being among the perpetrators. This year, the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women will take place from 14th to 25 March that will be held under the theme 'Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes'. In light of this, there is need to develop strategies and policies that put women and girls at the centre of sustainable development as we strive for effective and efficient energy sources that are environmental friendly,

I wish you all the best and a fruitful month of March.

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Young People Cautioned against Drugs and Alcohol Abuse in Mangochi



Insert: Young people during Youth Corner weekly session at Mangochi District Hospital

By Grant Dulla

Promoting Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) through Youth Corner gatherings is key in ensuring that young people are able to achieve their goals in life. Thus YONECO utilizes the opportunity to conducted awareness sessions on the dangers of drug and substance abuse at Mangochi District Hospital Youth corner in Traditional Authority (T/A) Mponda in Mangochi district.

people to refrain from using drugs because they may result in making poor choices which has already resulted into high number of young people contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) as a result of unprotected sex due to the influence of drugs or alcohol.

The awareness session aimed at addressing the negative effects of drug abuse on one's health which hinders young people from realizing their goals in life. During the session, service providers from MDH advised young

Young people have been encouraged to access counselling and critical information about drug and substance abuse on Tithandizane National Helpline by dialing the Drug and Substance hotline -6600.

Report Gender Based Violence

CALL 5600

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YONECO Steps Up Efforts to Address Mental Health Issues

By Wongani Mfuno



Insert: Teachers during the engagement meeting at Mangochi Technical College.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse cases among young people is increasing steadily due to lack of knowledge and understand on the effects, hence the need to strengthen structures that would enhance provision of quality youth friendly health services to address the issues young people are facing.

The only way the country can improve socially and economically is by putting the drug and alcohol abuse under check and also ensuring that young people are having access to quality youth friendly health services. It is against this background that, YONECO Mangochi district

office facilitated engagement meeting with teachers at Mangochi Technical college to discuss some of the issues that are fueling to the increases of the Drug abuse cases among students at the institution amid calls to intensify the mental health and drug abuse program in the district.

The Principal for Mangochi Technical College, expressed commitment to ensuring that college management responds to the needs of young people in the provision of quality youth friendly health services at the college.

Traditional Healers Association Joins YONECO in Mobilizing Young People



Mangochi district is one of the district in Malawi that has a higher rate of school dropout children. In Saitikadzuwa YONECO, with support from the Traditional Healers Association mobilized young people who are just staying and not going to school for life skills session.

This was aimed at equipping them with knowledge that will help them make right decisions and cope up with the challenges they are facing every day. During the session it was found that the whole group of youth who were present were school drop outs and that worried YONECO hence its purpose is to empower youth to become independent through the enhancement of socio-economic status and that can only be achieved if the youth are well educated.

According to the session which YONECO conducted, youth for Saitikadzuwa were encouraged to go back to school as they are still young whereby their visions can be achieved and live a successful life. All the young people promised to go back to school and they urged for more life skills session with YONECO that will help them to have confidence in doing things.

By Grant Dulla

The Power of Mentorship Among Students



Insert: Mentorship session underway at Nyika Private Secondary School

By Geoffrey Nyangulu

Mentoring is acknowledged as an approved process and as an undividable part of professionalization in many fields such as medical sciences, social science, education, law, and architecture. Mentoring helps as a function in assisting mentors in the field of guidance and counseling by embracing values, attitudes, practices, approaches, experiences, and standards. In this era of materialism, inflation, and electronic media, teenaged students are negatively affected.

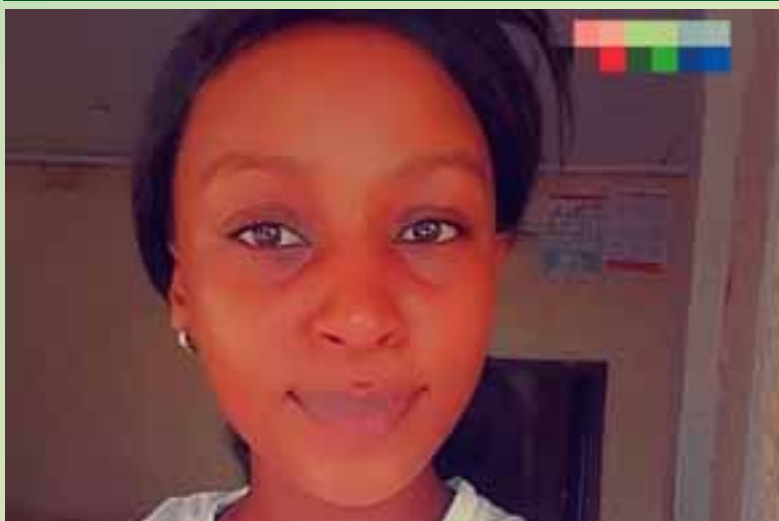
Mentoring is essential to in addressing such impacts by decrease seclusion, fear, psychological ambiguities, and uncertainties among students. Beside mentoring role modelling also works as an important tool in guiding student's career life.

In recognizing the power of mentoring and role modelling the YONECO team conducted a session at Nyika private secondary school targeting form 3 students. The session reached 47(28M, 19) students who are in the age group of 15-21years old.

The session offered a platform for interaction and relationship between secondary school students and YONECO team. The discussion was primarily focused on sexual productive health, gender based violence and role modelling. Students were oriented on different health consequences which occur due to unprotected sexual acts, which includes HIV/AIDS, early pregnancy and Sexual transmitted infections (STIs). The session encouraged students to embrace abstinence as the only mechanism to prevent sexual related health effects which occur from unprotected sex.

On gender based violence the session equipped students on guiding them to develop a rightly suited behavior of reporting any gender based related violence encounter at the institution or within communities. After the session students were optimist of the effort by YONECO team on the addressed topics.

YONECO Internship Program: Profiles From Machinga District Office



Insert: Caroline Gondwe

Caroline Gondwe is a 21 year old young student from Malawi Assemblies of God University (MAGU) studying Early Childhood Development (ECD) program. She joined YONECO in Machinga district for her academic practicum during the month of September 2021.

Caroline has acquired various skills and knowledge in relation to her field of study. The practicum has created a conducive platform for Caroline to have in-depth understanding of ECD concept. During the time Caroline was joining YONECO, there was no ECD centre at YONECO Office, therefore, she challenged herself to establish one for her study as well as to promote YONECO's work in Child Development. Caroline received tremendous support from her workmates and supervisor to achieve her plan. She jointly with her team managed to mobilize the community around Ntaja area including traditional and religious leaders who welcomed the idea and managed to enrol over 60 children to attend ECD classes.

Experience is indeed a good teacher; Caroline believes that her time in YONECO has given her great opportunity to not only learn but also practice ECD concepts. Caroline has passed both year 2 theory and practicum examinations with flying colors and will now be happily pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in ECD.



Insert: Douglas Minimbi

Douglas Minimbi is a fourth year Malawi Assemblies of God University (MAGU) student studying Community Development. Douglas is passionate about the welfare of women and girls. During his fourth year academic placement, he chose to join YONECO in Machinga district to learn more about women empowerment.

Working with YONECO has enhanced his desire to become a Social Worker and support the vulnerable communities. Douglas has interacted and assisted numerous victimized women and girls who come to access legal clinic services at YONECO. He encountered cases of economic abuse, physical abuse and cultural and traditional beliefs which enabled him to have broad understanding of the challenges women and girls are facing in the communities. Apart from case management, Douglas has also acquired community mobilization, facilitation, activity planning and report writing skills at YONECO.

Douglas believes that his placement experience will enable him to have relevant expertise in his field of study, and will prepare him to become a responsible social worker after University.

Sporting Activities Key In Mobilization For Role Modelling

By Sewenthe Mahwayo



Insert: Children who attended the Role Modelling session in Ntcheu

Children look up to variety of role models to shape them on how they can behave in schools or when making difficult decisions. In the course of implementing generic activities, YONECO observed that many children in the villages surrounding Ntcheu District they do not have role models in their lives which leads to high rate of school dropout, the use of drug and substance abuse, prostitution, teenage pregnancies, child marriages among others.

In trying to address the problem, YONECO used football to mobilize children connected to the street and their fellow children to a role modelling session which took place at Gomani ground in TA Kwataine. During the session children were taken through who a role model is. It was also emphasized on positive role models that influence children actions and motivates them to strive and to uncover true potentials and overcome their weakness. The sessions showed young people how to live with integrity, optimism, hope, determination and compassion.

“When I complete my education, I would like to work as a police officer” this was an

ambitious statement from one of the children connected to the street who patronize YONECO DIC complementary basic education.

The children were also advised to take their parents, relatives or siblings as their role models as some of them are from families in which their parents and relatives are teachers. A total of 29 boys and 1 girl participated in the session. YONECO plans to conduct more role modelling sessions in schools targeting in school children.





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Psychological First Aid Key in Disaster Response

By Lisa Lamya



Insert: Mkandawire posing with some of the children at one of the camps in Chikwawa

Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) executive director MacBain Mkandawire has implored on humanitarian actors to consider providing psychological support to flood survivors in all affected areas. Mkandawire made the call when he visited some camps in Chikwawa on Sunday 13 February.

“We are probably far from starting the response and that is a major issue that humanitarian actors need to critically think on how we are going to accelerate that,” he said.

According to Mkandawire, apart from provision of physical needs such as food and shelter, it is also important to tackle psychological needs of the people. Mkandawire also spoke tough on the need to strengthen child protection in camps and prevent other abuses.

Mkandawire took time to play some games with children at the camp and encouraged them to return to school when the situation normalizes.

Children in Displacement Camps in Urgent Need of Learning Materials

Children in the school going age are absconding classes in some areas that were affected by floods in Chikwawa due to lack of textbooks, pencils and other school necessities. This was revealed when YFM Online visited some of the camps in Chikwawa where parents expressed fears that children may drop out of school.

In an interaction with one of the parents at M'dala Camp, Patricia Kachiya, she said her children are not attending classes because uniforms and school materials were washed away by floods and she has no money to buy school items.

“It was more important to preserve my children's lives rather than school materials,” Kachiya said.

“My children want to attend classes but how will they attend classes without uniform let alone textbooks.”

Kachiya it was more important to preserve lives of her children than school materials.

Children at Chikokoto camp nonetheless are attending classes but they do not have extra clothes to look presentable.

Chikokoto camp chairperson told this website that parents are doing piece work to buy textbooks for their children so that they should not miss out on school. He however stressed that this is not enough and more materials are needed for children who are not attending classes.

By Lisa Lamya

YONECO, MACRA for Online Child Safety

By Alinafe Nyasulu

**Insert: Learners discussing children cyber security during a panel discussion**

The Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) says educating users of internet to be responsible digital citizens can curb cases of cyber bullying.

The remarks come as the Authority in collaboration with other stakeholders conducted a series panel discussions with students from tertiary, secondary and primary school institutions in Mzuzu as one way of commemorating the 19th edition of Safer Internet Day.

Addressing the audience, MACRA's Deputy Director responsible for consumer affairs, Kelius Mlenga, said cyber bullying is a criminal offence under the electronic transaction and cyber security Act.

He therefore expressed the need for sensitization among digital consumers such as students. Mlenga said: "We need to educate digital users to be responsible digital citizens so that they should avoiding bullying other people and the consequences of cyber bullying which can attract a heavy fine and jail sentence of up to seven years."

He further said they are extending consumer

education to the students so that they become ambassadors of the message in their institutions.

Commenting on the same, one of the stakeholders at the event, Article 3 Executive Director, Boniface Mandele, described the discussions as an opportunity for young people to give feedback on laws available in the country aimed at protecting them from cyber bullying.

"These days students are using internet on daily bases so this meeting is giving an opportunity for them to give us feedback, as programmers, whether we are doing the right thing in accordance to the laws of the country," said Mandele.

On his Part YONECO's IT and Helpline services manager, Moses Msukwa said it children are very vulnerable to abuses and violence as such it is very important to protect them from all angles including on the cyber space.

A student from Mzuzu University, Chancy Moses, described the discussion as an eye opener especially in reporting cybercrimes.

YONECO Laments About Increased Cases of Child Marriages, Appeals to Young People To Desist From Sexual Activities

By Jacob Phiri



Insert: YONECO Project Officer (Standing) engaging the youth in Machinga

Machinga district is one of the Southern Region districts in Malawi where cases of child marriages are rampant at alarming rate. During the year 2019, Machinga district registered 237 cases of child marriages while during the same period in 2020, the district registered 969 cases of child marriages representing 75.5 percent increase exceeding similar cases registered during the same period combined Blantyre and Chiradzulu (Child marriage and teenage pregnancy report by JK Consultants through Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare). The trend portrays a serious challenge in terms of enjoyment of girls' rights in the district.

During the month of February, 2022, YONECO embarked on awareness campaigns with young people to denounce the vice. The interactive sessions brought together young people of different backgrounds and beliefs and created a platform for deliberations. According to most participants, child marriage in the district is predominantly influenced by teenage pregnancies and harmful practices. Young people stressed that girls are traditionally advised or forced to get married when they are pregnant. Asked on why most young girls are victims of

teenage pregnancies, young people responded that there are various factors including poverty, peer pressure and harmful practices such as cleansing.

In response to young people's opinions, YONECO's Project Officer, Mary Chimanya, told young people that child marriage has adverse effects on their future such as school dropout, health complications and depression due to responsibilities attached to it. She urged young people to be responsible and productive citizens by focusing on their career instead of rushing into marriage. "Marriage can wait, look at the global public figure, Rihanna, she is one of the richest women but she will deliver her first baby now at the age of 34." Explained Chimanya while appealing to young people to desist from indulging in sexual activities.

Chimanya also preached about availability of SRHR services in the district. she urged young people to access SRHR information and services in order to prevent teenage pregnancies and child marriages.

Empowering Children Through Rights Sessions in DICs



Picture insert: Some of the children attending a session

Children, just like any other person, are entitled to the enjoyment of freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, thought, religion, and conscience. However, many children are not aware of their rights and privileges. Worse still, many children do not know where to report when they are being abused.

YONECO recognizes a child's unique and privileged place in society and that children need protection and special care. Child rights sessions which are promoted by YONECO aims at protecting the life of a child and safeguard children against all forms of economic exploitation and against work that is hazardous, interferes with the child's education, or compromises his or her health or physical, social, mental, spiritual, and moral development.

YONECO team in Rumphi district take significant efforts in educating children through interactive teaching sessions within the district. The team conducts interactive child right teaching sessions with children who usually visit the Drop-In Centre (DIC) for Psychosocial support and other services offered by YONECO. The sessions reach out to children who were oriented on

child rights.

The sessions also empower them with the knowledge to know of any limits or restrictions imposed on their rights and freedoms that are consistent with Malawi's obligations under international human rights law. The sessions further encourage children to report to YONECO's 116 Tithandizane Child Helpline Services or relevant authorities of any abuse imposed on them.



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Chikwawa Flood Survivors in Dire Need of Aid

By Lisa Lamya



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

At least 500 families affected by Cyclone Ana desperately need food, water and sanitation facilities at M'dala camp in Chikwawa district.

This was revealed to YFM Online after Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) provided psychological first aid to survivors and empowered them to report any forms of abuse and other vices at the camp. One of the survivors, Patricia Kachiya, a mother of eight kids, who hails from Mabungu Village, Group Village Head Kanseche said they are sleeping on an empty stomach for days since they lost everything to Tropical Storm Ana.

"Life here is hard and I do not know where my next meal will come from. My plea to government is that it should organize food items as soon as possible because we are suffering," she said.

Kachiya also spoke of how women who are menstruating are facing problems at the camp saying there is no clean water

for them to use and changing rooms are also a hustle.

"When we are menstruating we need clean facilities, water, changing rooms and privacy as well but here we don't have all that," Kachiya said.

Group Village Head Kanseche also implored on government and well-wishers to assist them with food among other essential items.

"There are 505 families camping here and we need food, we also need water because we can easily contract waterborne diseases under the current situation".

Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) is providing support to the survivors with funding from Trocaire.

Using SASA Model To Address GBV In Evacuation Camps

By Blessings Sabao



Picture insert: : Participants captured during a GBV awareness session through SASA Model

There is growing evidence that humanitarian settings like flood evacuation camps are a risk factor for violence against women (VAW) and that intimate partner violence (IPV) remains the most common form of violence against women in these settings. Zomba is one of the districts which was hit by Cyclone Ana from 24 to 26th January 2022 when heavy rains destroyed homes and vegetative cover including the farming land of many households.

In response to the disaster, YONECO with support from the Ana Patsogolo project conducted gender-based violence (GBV) awareness sessions in evacuation camps using the SASA model. The sessions reached out to 206 displaced persons (38 males and 168 women) with messages on GBV. Using power posters and job aids, Change Agents (CAs) and YONECO Officers engaged participants to tackle issues at the camp that may trigger GBV and help them to find

solutions. Topics during the session included the meaning of GBV, forms of GBV, and available reporting mechanisms including the toll-free lines. The affected households were also encouraged with the word of God from the Bible by the SASA Faith Facilitators trained in the ANA Patsogolo project.



Picture insert: : A Change Agent using Power Poster to engage participants

YONECO Urges Community Members in TA Liwonde To Plant Trees

By Jacob Phiri



Insert: Budget looks visionary and quite interesting - Mkandawire.

The Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources of Malawi declared 15th December 2021 to 15th April 2022 as tree planting season. The ministry anticipates 40 million trees will be planted during the season by the various actors including community members. The responsible Minister shared that the objective of the season is to build responsible citizenry that cares for trees. The Ministry stressed that it expects that trees will be planted around government plantations, homesteads, riverbanks, private and community forests, village forests areas, forest reserves and fruit tree orchards.

During the month of January 2022, YONECO in accordance to its interventions which were designed to complement government efforts took the good messages of climate change and environmental management to communities around TA Liwonde. YONECO interfaced with community members to urge them to take part in the tree planting season by planting and taking care of trees. In her message, YONECO Officer Ms. Mary Chimenya, stressed that everybody needs trees for various important reasons thus there is need for everyone to plant and take care of

trees in order to meet the demand. Further, she explained that apart from supplying people with their needs, trees also conserve the environment from natural disasters such as flooding and diseases which also impact badly on the society.

Apart from preaching the message to the community, the officers also demonstrated nursery gardens which can be locally made and utilized. Responding to the initiative, the community applauded YONECO for the initiative and vowed to champion the initiative in order to plant more trees.

Malawi is among Southern African countries which have been hit hard by wind and floods during the month of January 2022. YONECO has joined the Government of Malawi to address issues of Climate Change by intensifying awareness campaigns on environmental management. YONECO in Machinga is mobilizing tree seedlings to engage in tree planting exercise with the youth.

YONECO Ntcheu Joins District Council in Tree Planting Season Launch

By Sewenthe Mahwayo



Insert: One of the council members during the season launch.

YONECO under the climate change Programmes works with youth, women and children in the communities. Plant and Care for a Tree in Communities is an initiative that promotes communities participation in climate change interventions, reforestation and forestry interventions. This encourages that each community member should plant a tree at home annually as a drive to support the community participation in the reforestation program in Malawi.

Currently YONECO in Ntcheu continued taking part in tree planting exercises following district Constituency tree planting launch which took place in Ntcheu Central Constituency on 31st January, 2022. During tree planting exercise, awareness were also raised on tree survival rate which community need to focus more and promoted ownership of forest reserves and woodlots in the schools and communities to enhance biodiversity.

District Executive Committee members, Community members, chiefs and in going school children led by the Ntcheu Council Chairperson, managed to plant 600 trees seedlings of which 300 were Mtangantanga

and 300 were Caciuz. YONECO has further engaged and involved in tree planting exercise with Youth club members having tree nurseries.

“This is our responsibilities to cover barer round with trees, we cannot leave the work of tree planting for school going children as youth we need to actively participate in forest recover”.

This was encouraging words from TA Ganya youth Network Chairperson. YONECO continue engaging communities and provide capacity in mitigating the impact of climate change.



Insert: Youth Network Chairperson planting a tree



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YONECO Engage Girls at Matiti Primary School With Various Messages**Insert: Matiti Primary School girls during the session**

Girls in Malawi face many barriers to education including child marriage, menstruation, and gender-based violence. Some girls enter into marriage due to poverty while others are forced to do so by parents/guardians for various reasons. Some believe marrying off the daughters is a solution to solving financial hardships but child brides who miss out on education are also more likely to experience domestic violence and pregnancy complications.

Another challenge girls face is during menstruation which is stigmatized in most areas and the cultural shame attached to the natural process makes girls feel embarrassed to fully participate in class. Some girls end up skipping class because they can not afford to buy a sanitary pad. To raise awareness on coping mechanisms for girls on such issues, YONECO engaged 120 girls in standard 7 and 8 at Matiti Primary School and motivated them to work hard in a class by overcoming the barriers.

On this day, YONECO tackled the importance of girls' education in Malawi and elsewhere including how education reduces

their vulnerability to various forms of abuse. During the session, girls were encouraged to report any form of abuse they face at school or home through the available reporting mechanisms including the Tithandizane Child Helpline numbers.

Additionally, YONECO took a proactive measure to advance environmental health by integrating positive messaging around personal and household hygiene, sanitation, and proper disposal of wastes and other potentially harmful materials. The girls were encouraged to practice personal hygiene and ensure that the learning environment is clean at all times to prevent other diseases like diarrhea.

COVID -19 messages were also provided to the girls focusing on the signs and symptoms and preventative measures of social distancing, hand hygiene, and masking up. A total of 120 girls were reached.



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