



Youth Net and Counselling

YONECO VOICE



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Our Programmes

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- Child Protection and Development.
- Women Empowerment and Gender Equality.
- Governance and Human Rights.
- Media, Collaboration, Networking and Coordinating.
- Climate Change and Disaster Management.
- Institutional Management.
- Research and Documentation

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P.O Box 471, Zomba,
Malawi.

About Us

Our Vision

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



Our Mission

We are committed to empowering the youth, women and children, promoting good health, human rights and democratic culture, adapting and mitigating the impact of climate change and conducting research for evidence-based programming and advocacy



Our values

Integrity
Teamwork
Confidentiality
Respect for human dignity
Transparency and Accountability



Executive Director's Note...



...with MacBain Mkandawire

Dear esteemed reader,

1st May is International Labour Day and Malawi is no exception. We would like to join all workers in celebrating the Day. This year, International Labour Day comes at a time when Malawi is facing serious economic challenges that have led to retrenchments that have affected many workers. Living conditions in Malawi are getting tough and with the impact of Tropical Cyclone Freddy and the persistent Cholera situation, we are placed in a very difficult situation as a country. While these are realities of life, we still have to celebrate Labour Day. On one hand, we implore all employers to respect the rights of their workers and earnestly engage them. On the other hand, as workers, let us also be diligent to ensure that we are positively contributing to the growth of the businesses or institutions we work for in order to sustain our employment.

In the same month, on 14 May, we also celebrate the legacy of Malawi's founding father, the Late Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, and the annual commemoration is dubbed Kamuzu Day. For young people who were born after 1990 may not understand how important this day is but one thing to emulate from the life of Kamuzu is the "Quest for Quality". We are actually seeing the importance when we juxtapose public infrastructure that was constructed before 1990 and those that were built after 1990. We should possibly reflect on the kind of investment that has been made recently. As a people, we need to get back and reflect on quality issues. As the Minister of Transport and Public Works recently pointed out that "Tropical Cyclone Freddy" exposed us in the construction industry. We need to do some serious soul-searching.

Distressingly, children are continuously being subjected to abuse, violence, and exploitation. Year in and year out, children drop out of school because of various factors. As YONECO, we always ensure that the Tithandizane National Helpline Services continue to be a source of inspiration in protecting children from violence and abuse. The Helpline services provide an array of protection and support services through the following toll-free lines: 116 (child helpline), 5600 (GBV Crisis Line), 6600 (Drug and Substance Helpline), and 393 (Youth Helpline) which continue to be major sources of engagement. We, therefore, join the world on 17 May 2023 to celebrate the International Child Helpline Day. We believe that no child should be left unheard. In this regard, we would like to extend our gratitude to the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) for designating 116 as a Child Helpline and free for the callers.

While we are celebrating the importance of the child helpline, we have noted with concern the number of young people committing suicide. As a nation, this is a national tragedy and we need to reflect on this. We, therefore, would like to encourage you to seek help, and YONECO, as the operator of Tithandizane Helpline Service, would like to remind you that your help is always available and a call away on 116, 5600, 6600, or 393. All these spaces are for you to have a chat with our counsellors. You can also reach out to mental health professionals in all our health formations, teachers, and lecturers including your religious leaders.

Finally, as a child protection agency, we are worried about increased cases of violence against children. Our database, media reports and community engagement sessions indicate that cases of violence against children are escalating despite several efforts by various partners. Just recently, we have been shocked by the murder of a girl child who was brutally killed after being defiled and we see this as a new phenomenon. As a nation, we probably need to reflect on what is happening. Children are no longer safe and we need to work together to create a safe haven for children.

I wish you all a productive and prosperous month of May!

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YONECO Encourages the Youth to Take a Leading Role in Disease Prevention

By Enalla Msukwa



Insert: YONECO staff and some of the youths from Active Youth Association (AYA) who were part of the clean up exercise.

YONECO mobilized young people to co-lead a cleanup exercise at South Lunzu Health Centre in Blantyre, Malawi in response to the two-front war of Cholera and the effects of Tropical Cyclone Freddy which the country is currently facing.

YONECO staff and volunteers collaborated with the youth from the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Machinjiri in disposing of waste and cleaning open drains and tidying various rooms around the health facility.

The Chairperson of Active Youth Association (AYA), Mphatso Limbanga, whose group was involved in the exercise highlighted the importance

of youth engagement in managing health issues and encouraged other youth groups to be proactive in promoting health in their localities.

Mphatso believes that greater youth participation can help to ensure that prevention measures are more comprehensively understood and adopted.

“Youth involvement can also help to create a more positive attitude towards cholera prevention, which can help to reduce stigma and encourage people to take preventive measures,” he added.

The activity was conducted under Cholera Prevention and Response (Tithetse Cholera) Project which YONECO is implementing in Blantyre and Mangochi with funding from Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR).



YONECO Holds Socio-Economic Session for Youth Vendors at Ntcheu Market

By Richard Nkhonjera



Insert: YONECO Field Officer interacting with one of the youth vendors at Ntcheu market during the session.

Malawi has a significant rural population, and among them, young people make up a considerable percentage. Unfortunately, most of these young people are either unemployed or underemployed. To address this issue, YONECO district staff in Ntcheu conducted a socio-economic session with youth vendors who are striving to enhance their lives and living standards by investing in various businesses instead of idling at home or wandering aimlessly.

During the session, the youth vendors shared their experiences on how they started their businesses, the progress they have made, the challenges they face, and their future aspirations. For instance, they narrated how they sometimes experience theft and losses during low demand periods. Nevertheless, the youth vendors were optimistic about their business growth prospects. They received training on financial literacy and profit utilization to help them avoid living in poverty, and also to reduce the high failure rates of small-scale businesses.

One of the youth vendors, a 25-year-old young man, shared his vision of starting multiple businesses once he earns enough from his current one. YONECO staff encouraged the seven youth vendors who attended the session to remain steadfast in their efforts and not to give up on their dreams, no matter the challenges they face. They also urged them to reinvest some of their earnings into their current businesses while keeping some money aside.

This socio-economic session is part of YONECO's efforts to promote youth development in the area. By encouraging entrepreneurship and providing training on financial literacy, YONECO hopes to uplift the economic status of young people in rural Malawi.

YONECO Conducts Sessions with Youth Club Members in Ntcheu

By Richard Nkhonjera



Insert: Some youths from Kalumbu Youth Club TA Njolomole who attended the session in Ntcheu

Drug and substance abuse has become a severe problem, affecting millions of people worldwide, including the youth, who are meant to be the future leaders. It often begins with smoking cigarettes and can gradually lead individuals into the trap of drug addiction. Stress, anxiety, peer pressure, and poverty are some of the main causes of drug and substance abuse.

This problem has deteriorated the lives of millions of drug addicts globally, making it difficult for them to distinguish between life and death. The illegal production and distribution of drugs have increased crime and violence worldwide. The world community has undertaken many initiatives to sensitize people, especially youth, about the dangers of drugs.

YONECO, in its effort to create a self-reliant, healthy, resilient, responsible, and inclusive society that respects democratic values, has embarked on conducting sessions with youth club members as one way of mitigating the impact of drug and substance abuse among the youthful generation.

Following reports that young people in GVH Kalumbu in TA Njolomole are addicted to drug and substance abuse, YONECO conducted a session where youth were taken through events and cultural factors contributing to drug abuse trends among young people. The discussion aimed to help youth perceive drug abuse as harmful, thereby reducing their drug intake. It is essential to help youth and the general public understand the risks of drug abuse, and for teachers, parents, and healthcare professionals to keep sending the message that drug addiction can be prevented if a person never abuses drugs.

YONECO managed to reach out to 23 members of Kalumbu Youth Club in Ntcheu, of which 16 were males and seven females. It is expected that these youths will disseminate the message to their peers in the community, as drug addiction is an escape from reality, and it is not the drug that makes a drug addict. Therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to contribute effectively to eradicating this problem, and parents should talk to their children to shape their minds positively.

Celebrating Success: The Impact of Economic Empowerment on Business Women

By Enalla Msukwa



Insert: Limbe women vendors who are benefitting from economic empowerment activities that YONECO is offering in Blantyre district.

Economic empowerment of women is critical to the realization of sustainable socioeconomic growth. Empowered women are more likely able to avoid Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and prevent contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI).

Thus, YONECO has been conducting a number of empowerment activities targeting women in various parts of Malawi. The interventions include training sessions to impart the women with financial literacy and business management skills.

In January of 2022, YONECO trained 84 women in financial literacy and business management. The women were identified among others who were operating small-scale businesses around Limbe market in Blantyre city.

After the training, YONECO facilitated the establishment of a savings and loans group in order to promote a culture of saving as

well as ensuring that the women have access to soft loans to further invest in their designated businesses.

14 months down the line, each individual woman has a significant change story to tell. that the financial training she attended helped her to understand what profit is so much that she has never spent anything from her business capital. The lady stated that this has helped her to think of ways of boosting her baking business which is now making a profit of MK 10,000 to MK 12,000 a day.

"YONECO should continue reaching out to more women with financial literacy training sessions and I strongly believe that this is the only way women can become economically empowered" explained Brenda.

Sekanawo Kuwali (41) hails from Manje township in Blantyre and she is among the women who are also benefitting from the economic empowerment activities. Previously, Sekanawo used to sell fruits and her stock was not big enough to earn her a decent living. Today, Sekanawo owns a grocery store in her area and she has a shopkeeper. Sekanawo also explained that within the period, she managed to boost her initial business venture.

"It's good that we have a savings and loans group which helps me to access loans and increase my business capital," stated Sekanawo.

So far, the 84 women who were trained in financial literacy have formed 6 savings and loans groups.



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YONECO Drills Caregivers on Child Play Therapy

By Richard Nkhonjera

YONECO provides support to preschool children through the organization's Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme which focuses on the holistic development of young learners in various parts across Malawi.

It is against this backdrop that YONECO drilled caregivers on how to facilitate child play therapy sessions in order to promote the rights and well-being of children. The drills were conducted in some ECD centres around Ntcheu and these include Yankho, God is Able, Love of God, and Ntcheu ECD centres.

Play therapy leverages the power of play to help children express their thoughts and feelings in a safe and comfortable atmosphere. By using play as a medium of expression, children of all ages can more readily communicate their emotions without having to rely on words.

One of the caregivers who was engaged during the sessions elaborated that the approach is an effective way of allowing children to express themselves and bring out issues that are affecting them.

The sessions are expected to benefit 132 (33M and 88F) from the targeted ECD centres.



Above & Below: Counsellors from YONECO interacting with some of the children during the session.



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YONECO Participates in District Clean-up Exercise

By Richard Nkhonjera



Insert: District partners who participated in the clean-up exercise posing for a group photo.

YONECO in Ntcheu district participated in a district-wide clean-up exercise organized by the District Community Development Office that was conducted on 14 April, 2023.

This campaign was aimed at raising awareness about the importance of practicing good hygiene in public places in order to protect oneself and those around them from illnesses like cholera.

During the exercise, some streets were cleared of debris, waste was properly disposed of, and public toilets were sanitized. Additionally, users of public places were encouraged to adopt the best hygiene practices and to keep their surroundings clean at all times.

The exercise was a success, as it helped improve the overall cleanliness of the district and raised awareness about the importance of proper waste management.



Above & Below: District partners sweeping the streets of Ntcheu during the exercise.



TBOs Sensitized on the Rights of the Child

By Grant Dulla



Insert: A YONECO officer (In green vest) engaging bicycle taxi operators during the session in Mangochi.

There is a growing concern that Bicycle Taxi Operators (TBOs) in Mangochi are preferring to simply sleep around with young female customers than get cash for their service. This is not only a breach of the rights of the girl child but also puts them in danger of contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) including HIV.

It is against this backdrop that YONECO organized a series of sensitization sessions with BTOs around the municipality of Mangochi. The sessions mainly focused on various legal frameworks that protect and criminalize sexual violence.

The BTOs who were reached with the sessions were also urged to report such cases when they occur. YONECO further publicized various community, district, and national reporting mechanisms.

In total, YONECO engaged 350 BTOs around Mangochi town.

YONECO Conducts SRH Session at Soche Camp

By Enalla Msukwa

After Cyclone Freddy hit, many people were left homeless and had to seek refuge in established camps. These camps are now home to both men and women, as well as adolescent boys and girls. However, there are concerns that some of these individuals are engaging in sexual activity without protecting themselves. This has prompted camp leaders to request that condoms be provided.

Responding to this request, officers from YONECO visited the Soche camp in Blantyre on April 18, 2023, to conduct a sexual reproductive health session for the survivors of Cyclone Freddy who are staying at the camp. During the session, the officers focused on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and explained the importance of preventing them. They advised attendees to get tested regularly and to use protection when engaging in sexual activity.

To support this effort, 250 condoms were distributed to the camp. A total of 23 people attended the session, with 10 being male and 13 being female.



Insert: A YONECO officer during the SRH session at the camp.

Children at High Risk of Contracting Malaria in Evacuation Camps

By Grant Dulla



Insert: One of the camps that has been set up at Mangochi Community Ground where YONECO conducted the assessment.

As schools are opening in areas that were affected by Cyclone Freddy in the southern region of Malawi, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have been living in evacuation camps that were established in schools are being relocated to other places.

In Mangochi districts, IDPs who were being accommodated in various primary schools around the municipality have been transferred to Mangochi Community Ground.

Thus, on 21st April 2023, YONECO conducted a monitoring exercise at the newly established camp which is accommodating 95 households. In total, the camp has 44 under-five children who are at risk of contracting malaria due to mosquito infestation and lack of mosquito nets.

"We are calling on well-wishers to support us with treated mosquito nets so that we should protect our children from malaria," explained one of the parents from the camp.

A number of assessments that YONECO has been conducting in various camps have also shown that the shortage of mosquito nets is a big challenge in all disaster-affected areas.

Malaria is particularly dangerous to children as they do not have the same defenses which adults have against this illness. Unlike adults that have grown up in endemic areas, children are yet to develop the necessary immunity to defend themselves against malaria.

YONECO Conducts SRH Session with Young People in Ntcheu

By Richard Nkhonjera



Insert: A YONECO Youth Worker (standing) interacting with the youth who attended the session at Gondolo village in the district.

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is an essential aspect of overall health, well-being, and human rights. Providing age-appropriate SRH information to young people is crucial because it helps them make informed decisions about their bodies, relationships, and future plans. Young people face various SRH challenges, such as teen pregnancies, STIs, and limited access to SRH services and information.

Thus, on April 13, 2023, YONECO organized an SRH session in Gondolo Village in Ntcheu. The session brought together 17 boys and 14 girls to discuss various SRH issues. YONECO staff and participants had an interactive discussion, which provided a safe space for young people to

share their concerns and experiences regarding SRH. During the session, the participants learned about contraceptives and how to prevent STIs. They also discussed the consequences of teen pregnancies and how to prevent them. The session was not just informative, but also aimed to empower young people to take care of their bodies and make responsible choices.

One of the essential aspects of the session was the opportunity for young people to ask questions about SRH. The youth workers provided factual and non-judgmental answers to their questions. It helped to address the misconceptions

that are prevalent in the area and provided young people with the right information.

The session's impact was evident as the young people expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to learn about SRH. They also mentioned how they had benefited from the discussion and gained knowledge that they could apply in their daily lives. Such sessions are crucial in creating awareness and promoting SRH education, especially in areas where SRH services are limited.





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FDH Bank Supports YONECO to Reach Out to Survivors of Cyclone Freddy

By Larah Mbewe



Insert: Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire and FDH Bank Zomba Branch Manager, Julia Mvula, handing over some of the relief items to survivors of Cyclone Freddy at Komiha Evacuation Camp in Zomba.

YONECO with support from FDH Bank and other well-wishers has supported disaster survivors in four disaster evacuation camps in the areas of Traditional Authority (T/A) Mwambo and Ngwelero in Zomba district.

After Tropical Cyclone Freddy, a number of evacuation camps were established in the affected areas around the Southern Region of Malawi where many people lost their lives, food, houses, crops and livestock.

Thus, the survivors were supported with both food and non-food items namely fortified maize flour, beans, soya pieces, sanitary pads, beddings, clothes, soap, chlorine, and plastic pails.



Insert: FDH Bank Zomba Accounts Relationship Officer, Doris Tembenu, handing over sanitary pads to some of the girls who are at the camp.

The affected populations have been reached out to in the following camps: Komiha Evacuation Camp in the area of TA Ngwelero as well as Mbidi, Chibisa and Namisanga camps in TA Mwambo's area.

In total, the gesture has reached out to 326 households that are being accommodated in the evacuation camps.

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Consortium Launches Ufulu Wanga Project

By Larah Mbewe DNS W MALAW



Insert: EU Ambassador to Malawi, His Excellency Rune Skinnebach, YONECO Executive Director, MacBain Mkwandawire, Standing Voices Country Director, Bonface Massa posing with other delegates at the launch.

Minister of Health, Honourable Halima Daudi, presided over the launch of Ufulu Wanga (My Rights) Project at a function that was held at Mtendere Secondary School Hall in Dedza district.

Ufulu Wanga Project will be implemented in eight districts across the country in Zomba, Ntcheu, Dedza, Balaka, Mulanje, Machinga, Mangochi and Phalombe.

Ufulu Wanga Project, which is being funded by the European Union (EU), will be implemented in a bid to promote the rights and welfare of people with albinism in the targeted areas. Thus, the project interventions will focus on enhancing justice for people with albinism, providing counselling support services, and community sensitization on the rights of people with albinism.

In her remarks, the Guest of Honour at the function, Hon. Halima Daudi, avowed government's commitment to ensure a successful implementation of the project which she described as a timely intervention.

The project will be implemented by a consortium of three partners: Beyond Suncare, Standing Voice, and YONECO.



Insert: His Excellency Rune Skinnebach giving his speech during the launch.



Insert: Minister of Health, Hon. Halima Daudi making her speech during the launch.

The EU Ambassador to Malawi, His Excellency Rune Skinnebach, who was also present at the function explained to the media that the EU, through the project, will ensure that health facilities in the targeted districts have sunscreen lotions for persons with albinism.

YONECO and OCHA Team Up to Visit Evacuees in Zomba Camps

By Larah Mbewe



Insert: YONECO staff and UN OCHA delegation posing for a group photo at YONECO Head Office in Zomba.

On 20 April 2023, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in collaboration with YONECO, conducted a visit to Katambasula and Makawa evacuation camps in the areas of Traditional Authority (T/A) Mwambo in Zomba district.

The visit was conducted in order to understand the living conditions of people who are still living in disaster evacuation camps. During the visit, the team held separate meetings with camp leaders as well as groups of men, women, and young people.



Insert: Members of the delegation inspecting some of the sanitation facilities at the camp.

The team found that the people are living in deplorable conditions and are in need of more assistance. The camps that were visited are also accommodating expectant women, lactating mothers, people with disabilities, and people living with HIV.

"We have received food assistance from both government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), however, due to the increased number of people who are being accommodated here, the food barely lasts a day," explained Jacob Chilwa, a Camp Committee Chairperson whose centre has a population of about 408 people.

The team was also accompanied by officials from Zomba Disaster Risk Management office.

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