



Youth Net and Counselling

# YONECO VOICE



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- Media, Collaboration, Networking and Coordinating.
- Climate Change and Disaster Management.
- Institutional Management.
- Research and Documentation

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 Along M3 Zomba-Lilongwe RD  
 Next to Calvary Family Church  
 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,

We are just realizing that we are entering the sixth month of the year, and that we need to start taking stock of what we have achieved in the first half of the year. It is important to ask the fundamental questions about what we are achieving so far. Are we making more losses than gains or more gains than losses? Are our plans for 2023 really working or we have become complacent that we no longer think holistically?

As we start the month, International Child Labour Day falls first on June 12, 2023 under the theme "Social Justice for all: End Child Labour". One is compelled to think beyond and ask whether we have the social justice for the children who are into child labour. We see many children involved in agricultural child labour. However, there are some sections of child labour that we might not be paying attention to. Children in the domestic labour industry who are working as child minders, selling various products for families are usually not included in the social justice processes. One would then ask how we intend to end this form of child labour. Many, if not all of us pass by children selling numerous merchandise at awkward times during the day and specifically during school time; classifying them as worst forms of child labour. We also pass them at odd hours selling food and other non-food items around drinking places and often times, we put a blind eye to this. Amidst all this, one is compelled to ask, Is social justice only for the privileged few?

In June we also commemorate the Day of the African Child which falls on the 16th of June every year. We ought to be asking ourselves whether we are winning on the commitment of the Africa's Agenda for Children 2040 as we now have 17 years to go. This year's theme is "The Rights of the Child in the Digital Environment". The theme is about taking stock of what has been achieved thus far in ensuring that children are protected from all forms of online violence and abuse, and how they can fully enjoy their rights in the digital environment. As a country, we need to ask the big question of how are we ensuring that our children are protected from all forms of online and offline abuse. We therefore need to take an honest reflection and manage this to ensure that our children are operating in a safe digital environment that guarantees freedom and security.

It is therefore the duty of all stakeholders from government, the private sector, parents, guardians, caregivers, as well as CSOs to make sure that we promote and protect the rights of the child in this digital era and ensure that they realize their fundamental freedoms and rights such as freedom of expression, association and participation among others, while also ensuring that they are protected from the risks that comes with internet freedom.

Finally, June 19 every year, the world commemorates International Albinism Awareness Day where we celebrate the human rights of persons living with albinism across the globe. This year the day will be commemorated under the theme: "Inclusion is Strength" and highlights the need to involve persons with albinism in all spheres of life. In this regard, let us all join hands in raising awareness and protecting the rights and welfare of persons with albinism and create an inclusive society that respects their and dignity.

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

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# YONECO Reaches Out to Secondary School Students with Role Modelling Session

By Enalla Msukwa



Insert: A group of form 4 students from College Private Secondary School posing for a group photo after the role modelling session.

YONECO in Blantyre conducted a role modeling session with 19 form 4 students (11 girls and 8 boys) at College PVT secondary school.

The aim of the session was to encourage students to continue working hard as they are starting their exams in June 2023 despite the challenges they are experiencing. Students of the 2022-2023 academic year have gone through tough times such as the Cholera outbreak, cyclone Freddy among other challenges, which has affected most learners as some have lost their education study materials while others have lost their close relatives.

In view of this, YONECO thought it wise to visit students and encourage them that they can also make it despite all challenges they have gone through.

"We have really gone through a lot in this academic year but as students we will fight to make sure that our dreams should come true. We are happy that our teachers are very

committed to teaching us even during awkward hours even though some of them have also been heavily affected by the cyclone". Said one of the students.

Concurring with the students, one of the teachers at the school said that the Cholera outbreak and cyclone Freddy have really affected them since schools were suspended so many times in the 2022-2023 academic year.

"By the start of this academic year we had more than 35 form 4 students but after cyclone Freddy we only have 27 students. Plans are underway to follow up to find out why they are not reporting for classes". Said one of the teachers.

At the end of the session, the director for the school commended YONECO for motivating the learners and asked for more similar sessions with all learners at the school.

# YONECO Conducts SRH Session with Learners at St. Augustine 2 in Mangochi District

By Funny Chipofya



Insert: YONECO Field Officers interacting with the learners at St. Augustine 2 Primary School during the SRH session.

Sexual reproductive health (SRH) is an essential aspect of overall health, well-being and human rights. It provides age appropriate SRH information to young people and helps them to be more informed about their bodies, future plans, relationships and health. Mostly, young people face SRH challenges such as STIs teenage pregnancies and limited access to SRH services and information.

Thus, on 23 May, 2023 YONECO conducted an SRH session at St Augustine 2 primary school in Mangochi with 233 girls to discuss various issues. YONECO officers had an interactive discussion which provided a safe space for adolescent girls to discuss and share their concerns and experiences regarding SRH.

During the session, the girls learned about Cervical Cancer, how to prevent candidiasis and how to prevent STIs. The session also discussed the consequences of teenage pregnancies and how to prevent them. The session did not only inform the adolescent girls, but also empowered them to take good care of their bodies and make responsible choices.

The session provided an opportunity to adolescent girls to ask questions about SRH, to which YONECO officers provided factual and non-judgmental answers. The question-and-answer session helped to address the misconceptions that are prevalent in the areas and provided the adolescent girls with the right information.

The sessions impact was evident as the adolescent girls stated how they had benefited from the discussions and gained knowledge that they will apply in their daily lives.



# YONECO Drills Young People on Drug and Substance Abuse at Ambiri Akutero Garage

By Enalla Msukwa



**Insert: Some of the people who took part in the drug and substance abuse session at Manje.**

YONECO in Blantyre conducted drug and substance abuse session which reached out to 17 young people at Ambiri Akutero Garage at Manje.

The aim of the session was to equip the youth on the consequences of abusing drugs and alcohol so that they can make informed decisions.

*"This session has really helped us since we have now understood the consequences of abusing drugs and alcohol. Some of us started abusing drugs because of peer pressure and poor parenting and we thought by doing this our problems will end but there are more problems"* said one of the participants.

During the discussions, it was highlighted that diabetes, blood pressure and cancer are among the diseases that affect the youth as a result of excessive use of drugs and substances. The participants were given a chance to brainstorm some of the factors that lead most youth to abuse drugs and alcohol and most of them stated the lack of

employment, poor parenting and peer pressure as the contributing factors.

*"Most of us are graduates but we are just sitting at home jobless and having nothing to make us busy, which mostly makes us feel demotivated. That is why we are abusing drugs. Let me take this opportunity to appeal to government to create more jobs for us the youth and also to give us some farm inputs so that we can venture into irrigation activities".*

Another participant said.

At the end, YONECO publicized the 6600 drug and substance abuse toll free line to the youths for them to call and seek online counseling.

YONECO will continue conducting the sessions to reach out to more youth on drug and substance abuse.

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# YONECO Organizes Youth Open Day at Rumphu DIC

By George Mlowoka

As a way of ensuring that young people have access to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services, YONECO organized a youth open day at YONECO Youth Drop-In-Centre (DIC) in Rumphu.



Insert: a cross section of the youth who were part of the SRHR discussion at the DIC

Among other factors, the event was aimed at increasing youth awareness of SRHR issues for them to make informed decisions and engage them in meaningful conversations about their sexual and reproductive health.

substance abuse, child marriages, as well as safe sex and child marriages.

The discussions that were held during the event focused on sexual-related gender-based violence, the effects of drug and

The event was spiced up by poem recitals, drama performances, and a dancing competition.

## Bridging Youth SRHR Information Gaps through Peer Educators



Insert: Young boys and girls who from Traditional Authority Chilikumwendo during one of the SRH sessions

In a bid to influence positive behavior change among the youth, YONECO with support from UNFPA trained 20 peer educators from the areas of Traditional Authority (TA) Kaphuka, Kachere and Chilikumwendo in Dedza district under Action for Teen Mothers and Adolescent Girls Project.

intensifying peer learning through group and individual education sessions.

Through the established youth spaces, members of youth clubs decide on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) topics to discuss in their sessions.

Youth spaces have proved to be one of the most effective platforms for enhancing meaningful youth participation and information sharing. The peer educators who were trained have been

So far, the peer educators have reached a total of 455 young people of which 275 are girls and 103 are boys. Out of the total number of girls reached, 77 are teen mothers.

# YONECO Engages Primary School Learners on Dangers of Alcohol and Substance in Mzimba

By Esnart Chingwalu



Insert: YONECO Field Officer for Mzimba Khosolo, Esnart Chingwalu, engaging the learners at Kabena Primary School

Authorities from Kabena Primary School have commended YONECO for engaging primary school learners on dangers of drug and substance abuse which are among the factors that lead to increased cases of school drop-out and poor academic performance.

Speaking during a school awareness of dangers of alcohol and substance abuse which YONECO conducted on 18 May, 2023 at the school, the Head Teacher of Kabena Primary School, Visuzyo Almon Khoma, explained that learners need to be imparted with necessary life skills that should help them to make informed decisions and resist negative peer pressure.

Whilst appreciating the efforts which organizations like YONECO are rendering to learners to excel in their studies, Nkhoma also indicated that there is a need to address factors causes of child marriages which he said is among the common factors that contribute to increased school dropout rates among girls.

**"There is a need to promote the rights and welfare of the girl child as many of them do not return to school after long holidays due to forced child marriages," explained Nkhoma.**

In response to the call, YONECO has planned to conduct a series of community awareness campaigns in the area which have been scheduled to commence in June, 2023.





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# YONECO Trains Dedza and Mchinji District SASA! ToTs

By Larah Mbewe



Insert: District stakeholders who have been trained as ToTs posing for a group photo together with UNFPA and YONECO representatives.

YONECO has trained a total of 12 district stakeholders from Dedza and Mchinji as SASA! Trainer of Trainers (ToT) who are expected to drill community facilitators to use the tool in a bid to promote gender equality and empowerment of adolescent girls and women in their respective areas.

SASA! (Start Awareness Support Action) is an evidence-based community mobilization approach that is used to prevent Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Thus, the ToTs will in turn equip a total of 60 community cadres on how to facilitate GBV awareness and prevention sessions at community level.

The trained ToTs comprise District Youth Officers, Social Welfare Officers, district education officials, and Youth Friendly Health Service (YFHS) providers from the two districts. The ToTs completed the Action stage which is the final level of SASA! Training which is preceded by Support, Awareness, and Start phases.

The training was conducted under Action for Teen Mothers and Adolescent Girls in the Central Region Project which YONECO is implementing in Dedza and Mchinji with support from UNFPA and KOICA.

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## Promoting Access to SRH and GBV Services in Border Areas After Tropical Cyclone Freddy

By Grant Dulla



Insert: A YONECO officer engaging with an adolescent girl during one of the demand creation session in Makanjira.

Mangochi is among the 11 districts that was affected in March, 2023 by Tropical Cyclone Freddy whose socioeconomic impacts are still being greatly felt. Many people including the youth and women were cut off from accessing essential services as important roads were damaged with their bridges washed away by the cyclone-induced floods that ensued.

Thus, efforts to promote the uptake of Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) Services in rural and remote parts of Mangochi have seen Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYWs) accessing information and services through outreach activities which YONECO, with financial and technical support from UNFPA Malawi is currently conducting in some parts of the district.

The demand creation for the provision of integrated mobile SRHR and GBV service campaigns are being conducted in the areas of five Traditional Authorities (T/As) in the district namely Makanjira, Lulanga, Katuli, Bwananyambi, and Jalasi.



Insert: Community members carrying PA system equipment for community mobilisation.



Insert: A vehicle carrying field staff passes through a river as it heads towards one of the hard-to-reach community

The interventions are part of a broader Project which is being led by various UN agencies called Border Districts and Community-Based Conflict Prevention and Peace Building Project in Malawi. The project is focusing on Mulanje and Mangochi districts with the aim of strengthening capabilities to mitigate and respond to existing and projected conflict at the community level.

# YONECO Joins the Launch of Cholera Awareness Campaign in Blantyre

By Enalla Msukwa



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

As one way of complementing government's effort in the fight against the Cholera, our office in Blantyre joined other stakeholders in the launch of Cholera awareness and clean-up exercise which took place on 5 May, 2023 at Mdeka Trading Center in the area of Traditional Authority (TA) Chigalu.

The aim of the launch was to sensitize and create awareness of the dangers of cholera and to educate the public on the importance of personal and environmental hygiene. This event was presided over by the Blantyre District Council. The launch event was attended by the youth, vendors, health authorities, as well as community and traditional leaders from around the district.

In his remarks, the District Commissioner for Blantyre, Alex Mdooko, urged the business community, as well as political

and community leaders to invest in the provision of piped water in order to ensure that communities have access to clean water.

The event was held under the theme 'Let's join hands to end cholera in Blantyre district'.

Since the emergence of Cholera outbreak in March 2023, Blantyre district has registered more than 8000 cases with about 200 fatalities recorded. The ongoing cholera outbreak in the country was declared an emergency by the Malawi government on 5 December 2022.

In a bid to contain cholera, YONECO is being supported by Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR) in order to contribute towards prevention and response to the disease.



## YONECO Blantyre Preaches Nutrition and Hygiene to Pregnant Mothers

By Enalla Msukwa



Insert: Some of the women that were reached with nutrition and hygiene messages at the health facility

Developing countries like Malawi continue to keep themselves and their babies healthy. register increasing cases of Mothers were advised neonatal death as well as to eat a greater death of the new mothers amount and variety of during pregnancy, during healthy foods, such as and after childbirth every meat, fish, oils, nuts, year. Having no knowledge seeds, cereals, beans, about what to eat during vegetables, and milk pregnancy and after and do regular childbirth is one of the exercises to help them factors that contributes to feel strong. In addition, such deaths, the mothers were also encouraged to

To address this issue, breastfeed their YONECO in Blantyre visited babies 8-10 times a 78 mothers who were day until the baby accessing under 5 health reach 2 years of age.

services for their infants at Manje Health Centre. The Furthermore, the aim of the visit was to equip mothers were also the women with nutrition- encouraged to specific information, maintain hygiene and specifically on what to eat sanitation in order to from the first day of protect themselves pregnancy up to the last and their babies from month of pregnancy, and infections.

from the day of childbirth up until the baby gets to two years of age in order to

## YONECO Conducts Mental Health Session with Young People

Earlier this month, our team in Blantyre conducted a mental health session with young people who frequently patronize and play football games at Manja football ground. The aim of the session was to discuss the causes and effects of mental health and how they can deal with depression, stress and anxiety as well as dilemma. The youth disclosed that most of them are really affected by these mental situations as a result of being forced to get into marriages while still young. They continued to say that for most of them it is not easy to take care of their families because they do not have reliable sources of income.



Insert: YONECO Field Officer engaging young people during the mental health session.

The team encouraged the participants to utilise football as a tool for dealing with stress and anxiety and seek for help from their elders and child protection workers in the communities. Helpline toll-free lines were also publicised as another tool where they can access online counseling on mental health.

Participants were also encouraged to report to YONECO office or any nearby police station if they feel violated and if they have mental health issues.

" Now that we have been made aware about mental health and where we can seek counseling, we will reach out to our fellow youth with same information. We are not taking this information for granted because as young people, we go through a lot hence the increased cases of suicide among our peers". Explained one youth.



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# ICRAF Empowers Partners to Advance Agroforestry Practices

By



Insert: SAMALA Project staff from ICRAF, YONECO and TLC posing for a group photo after the training

The International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) – Malawi says there is a high hope that farmers in the country will benefit more if they adopt agroforestry agriculture systems within their fields.

The sentiments follow a four-day training of front-line workers that ICRAF conducted from 8 to 11 May at Lisasadzi Rural Training Centre in Kasungu district.

According to ICRAF Field Officer, Konisaga Mwafongo, the training has equipped the field officers with knowledge and skills in agroforestry technologies for them to ably spread the interventions to local farmers in their designated areas.

Mwafongo added that it has been very worrisome for farmers in the country to struggle every year to

afford fertilizer to apply in their fields and improve their degraded farmland just because many of them do not venture into agroforestry.

“Farmers should know that crop rotation or relying on fertilizer application every year can be substituted with agroforestry activities such as intercropping of fertilizer trees and crops as a way to restore the degraded landscapes,” said Mwafongo.

He then added that “time has come for farmers, especially in rural areas to apply the intervention saying it has a high possibility to improve and recover lands that are infertile.”

Echoing Mwafongo's sentiments, Programme Support Manager for YONECO – Hughes Munthali encouraged the participants to take into account issues of

inclusion as they advance agroforestry among farmers. He pointed out that, though they make up the majority, women and the youth are often neglected in many socio-economic development initiatives.

Some of the front-line workers who were trained include field coordinators from Total Land Care, YONECO, and officials from the Department of Forestry among others.

The training was conducted under Sustainable Management of Landscape (SAMALA) Project which is being implemented in Dowa, Kasungu, Ntchisi, and Mzimba districts with funding from the government of Flanders and the Embassy of Ireland.

# SAMALA Project Holds a Field Day Event at Khosolo in Mzimba

By Esnart Chingwalu



Insert: One of the beneficiary farmers explaining how project interventions are helping her agricultural activities.

“SAMALA project interventions offer incredible opportunities for farmers to generate more income from their agricultural endeavors. This is especially beneficial to women, who have consistently struggled due to traditional customs and lack of inspiration, in their fight for economic independence,” explained Chavula.

28-year-old Sibongile Shaba is a farmer who hails from Mapira Village Mzimba district. Sibongile is among the farmers who are benefitting from SAMALA Project activities. Sibongile explained that the project is helping the youth to respect and take greater responsibility towards environmental preservation.

In his remarks, Group Village Head (GVH) Mapira who was the guest of honor at the event, expressed his deep appreciation to SAMALA Project for the services that are being rendered in his area. In addition to this, the GVH went on to motivate men, women, and youth to actively partake in the implementation of the project.

SAMALA Project is being implemented in eight EPAs across four districts in Malawi: Dowa, Ntchisi, Kasungu, and Mzimba. SAMALA, a project is being funded by Irish Aid and Government of Flanders. The project commenced in 2022 and it will phase out in 2027

There are high hopes that the youth and women from the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Khosolo in Mzimba district will benefit from the new agricultural technologies that are being introduced in the area through Sustainable Management of Landscape (SAMALA) Project.

groundnuts, maize and other crops. The Assistant Extension Development Coordinator (AEDO) for Khosolo Extension Planning Area (EPA), Kingsley Chavula, hailed SAMALA Project's efforts to restore the degraded landscapes in the area. Chavula lauded the project for its innovative approaches which have contributed to improving the local environment.

This became apparent during a field day event that was held under the project on 16th May, 2023 at Mapira in the district.

During the event, SAMALA Project implementing partners; Total Land Care, YONECO, and International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) showcased climate-smart agricultural practices and technologies like various methods of making compost manure, energy-efficient stoves.

Community members also had an opportunity to learn modern agricultural practices through demonstration fields for



Insert: Group Village Head (GVH) Mapira expressing his appreciation for the SAMALA project.

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