



Youth Net and Counselling

YONECO VOICE



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Production Team

Layout and Design

Wilson Mkandawire

Contributors

Enalla Msukwa

Richard Nkhonjera

Jacob Phiri

Grant Dulla

Sewenthe Mahwayo

Michael Mwanachawa

Doreen Luwe

Edward Nyirenda

Kettie Yotamu

Research, Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning & Documentation Manager

Daniel Chikatentha

Executive Director

MacBain Mkandawire

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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 Esteem Readers,

Welcome to October 2023 and we hope you are well and will be enjoying the newsletter. We, at YONECO, are excited that you are with us and we are there for you.

We begin this column by reflecting on the fact that mid September 2023, The Malawi National Examination Board released the results of the Malawi School Certificate of Education examinations. One striking feature that came out was the performance of some schools and it was all over social media that we had the Catholic managed schools as being best performers of course not forgetting Maranatha. At YONECO we felt that this was a critical component of the programme that we need to think about. We need to ask some serious questions around "what is it that is common for these schools?. What are they doing that other schools are not doing? What lessons can we draw from these schools?". One commentator said in these schools discipline is paramount. Is there anything that we could do to enhance discipline in these other schools? In one of the newsletters this year we tackled this and we need to revisit it. Then the last page of the statement from MANEB highlights that we have schools with zero pass rate. One wonders if we have zero pass rate. It's sad that after four years of schooling, we now have individuals with no qualifications. Again we have seen insults to the teachers ranging from quality of teachers to teachers behaviours. However, it would be important to reflect on the issue with sober minds by asking "what these schools have in common? Did they have enough resources? What about quality control in the schools and the education sector as a whole? Do we place the whole issue on the teachers and students? Were parents interested in monitoring the performance of the children? We therefore need some serious soul searching for schools that are performing badly. Our advice on the matter is that let us join hands to improve the quality of education in Malawi.

While still on education, YONECO is one of the Implementation Support Partners (ISP) for the Building Education Foundations through Innovation and Technology (BEFIT) programme in Malawi. We applaud the government for such an innovation and we are very excited. Children continue to be excited and motivated with the innovation. However, some serious issues are emerging. Teacher availability in schools is a very serious issue. We have schools where Standard 1 to 8 only has 4 teachers which means 2 classes per teacher. Do we expect such teachers to perform? We therefore ask the government to consider the allocation of the teachers to the schools in order for us to build the education foundations we claim to push for.

We could not finish the education aspect without reflecting on the incident at Robert Blake Secondary School where school violence led to the burning of the school. As we reflected in one of the newsletters, school violence is becoming the norm and we all have to come together to curb and tame the vice. Replacing the lost property will be expensive and students from this school may have to stay out of school for long periods of time. Parents, teachers and students are called upon to know that school violence is not a solution. We need serious soul searching exercise to

understand where we are getting it wrong for school vandalism as a tool to resolving conflicts. We need to begin engaging in peace building initiatives. We also need the create drug free schools.

Finally, we say Happy Mothers Day in this month of October 2023.

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RESILIENT VOICES: EMPOWERING HOPE IN EDUCATION

By Gracium Mkonda
Chithonje

In this unwavering anthem, we sing,
Of hope's sturdy pillar, a voice unwavering
and true,
Confidence, unyielding, like a beacon's
gleam,
Inspiring women, youth, and children to
pursue.

Mighty winds tested its foundation's core,
On wings of lies, hatred took to flight,
Slandering voices in relentless uproar,
Yet hope, steadfast and resolute, withstood
the night.

The unyielding voice, its strength did soar,
In Chitipa and Rumphi, praises rise,
A guiding light, a beacon on the shore,
Leading learners to excellence, where
knowledge lies.

BEFIT, YONECO, and Malawi's Government
hand in hand,
A potent alliance, united and strong,
Boosting class attendance across the land,
Unlocking talents, a melody in lifelong song.





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YONECO CULTURAL TROUPE

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For bookings

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The Executive Director or The Station Manager

Yoneco FM

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Mobile: +265 888 919 623

Email: stationmanager@yoneco.org



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Empowering Youth in Zomba Through the Toll-Free Youth Helpline 393



Insert: Young people from Bimbi and Matawale captured during the monitoring exercise for the SADC 393 Project

A cornerstone of the Youth Helpline's mission is the dissemination of up-to-date and accurate information. Adolescents and young adults are often bombarded with conflicting information, making it challenging to make informed decisions. The Helpline serves as a reliable source, offering evidence-based information on topics such as safe sex, contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and more.

The Youth Helpline understands that sometimes callers require more than just advice; they need access to high-impact health services. To address this, the Helpline incorporates a referral component. Trained counselors can connect callers with local healthcare providers and support services, enabling them to navigate the complex network of HIV/AIDS and SRH service providers effectively.

The Youth Helpline 393 has made a significant difference in the lives of young people in Bimbi village and Matawale township, as well as neighboring areas. Its impact can be seen through several lenses. By providing accurate information and counseling, the Helpline has empowered young people to make informed choices about their SRH. This knowledge is invaluable in reducing risky behaviors and promoting healthier lifestyles.

The referral component has been instrumental in ensuring that callers are connected to essential health services promptly. This has resulted in improved access to HIV/AIDS testing, treatment, and SRH care, ultimately contributing to better health outcomes. The Helpline's commitment to anonymity and confidentiality has helped break down societal stigmas surrounding SRH topics. Young people now feel more comfortable seeking assistance and discussing sensitive issues openly.

Beyond SRH, the Youth Helpline also addresses the mental and emotional well-being of callers. It offers a safe space for young individuals to talk about their fears, anxieties, and stresses, providing vital mental health support.

In recent years, the toll-free Youth Helpline 393 has emerged as a beacon of hope for the young people of Bimbi village and Matawale township in Zomba. This innovative initiative has had a profoundly positive impact on the ability of these adolescents and young adults to make informed decisions concerning their Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH). Rooted in a commitment to providing critical health services, this Youth Helpline has become a lifeline for countless individuals, offering anonymous and confidential counseling, advice, referrals, and up-to-date, accurate information free of charge.

The Youth Helpline model is founded on the principles of accessibility and confidentiality. It recognizes the unique challenges that adolescents and young people face when it comes to SRH and strives to provide them with the support and resources they need. Here's a closer look at the key components of this remarkable initiative.

At the heart of the Youth Helpline is a dedicated toll-free Call Centre, reachable by dialing 393. This easily accessible channel ensures that young people can seek help and guidance without the burden of financial constraints. Whether they have questions, concerns, or simply need someone to talk to, the Call Centre is there to assist them 24/7.

Confidentiality to all callers. This assurance encourages open and honest discussions, allowing young people to express themselves without fear of judgment or stigma.

Empowering the Youth with SRHR and GBV Information

By Michael Chanunkha



Insert: Field Officer for YONECO in Zomba, Mr. Chanunkha, during the engagement with students from Kingdom Builders Academy.

Recognizing the critical need to address Gender-based Violence (GBV) within both school and community environments, the awareness session also emphasized prevention strategies. Students were educated on recognizing the signs of GBV, understanding their rights, and the importance of reporting any instances of abuse or violence.

YONECO officers underscored that GBV is not only a violation of human rights but also a major impediment to personal growth and academic success. Empowering young individuals to recognize and stand against GBV is a crucial step toward creating safer and more equitable communities.

Empowering participants to take control of their SRHR, YONECO encouraged them to report instances of GBV and seek SRHR services when needed. Students were made aware of available resources and support networks that could assist them in safeguarding their well-being and securing their future. The SRHR awareness session was attended by approximately 200 enthusiastic female and male learners.

As the new academic year gains essential knowledge about momentum, YONECO continues its unwavering commitment to ensuring that young people in Zomba District have the knowledge and resources needed to enjoy their right to education and make informed choices about their Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

On September 22, 2023, YONECO officers embarked on a vital SRHR awareness session at the Kingdom Builders Academy, targeting students in forms 1 to 4. This enlightening session delved into critical topics, including the prevention and risks associated with adolescent pregnancies, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), and the prevention of Gender-based Violence (GBV) within both the community and school settings. The heart of the session revolved around equipping students with

the prevention of adolescent pregnancies and the risks posed by STIs. YONECO officers engaged students in candid discussions, addressing the importance of making informed choices and understanding the consequences of early sexual activity. Through informative presentations and open dialogues, students gained insights into the physical, emotional, and social consequences of adolescent pregnancies and STIs. They were provided with age-appropriate information to help them make responsible decisions, emphasizing the significance of education and personal development.

Empowering Zilakoma's Youth through MCGL-Pact and YONECO Project

By Michael Mwanachawa



Insert: Melida Mhone, Mentor for Chawana Safe Space in Tukombo, Nkhata Bay

Melida firmly believes that this initiative will be a catalyst for positive change. She envisions a future where the troubling issues of teenage pregnancies, STIs, and information gaps become mere relics of the past in her community. The MCGL-Pact and YONECO project have kindled a beacon of hope for Zilakoma's youth, illuminating a path to a brighter and healthier future.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the project for gracing our community with this invaluable opportunity. The impact of this initiative is palpable, and we anticipate that it will continue to reach and inspire many more adolescents in areas that have yet to experience its transformative effects. Together, we are shaping a future where our youth can thrive and realize their full potential.

We are delighted to share a compelling story of transformation and empowerment unfolding in Traditional Authority Zilakoma. The youth of Zilakoma have long grappled with daunting challenges such as teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and a lack of knowledge about sexual reproductive health and rights. However, a ray of hope dawned with the introduction of the MCGL-Pact and YONECO project into their community.

Meet Melida Mhone, a dedicated mentor who manages the Chawana Safe Space. Melida's journey began when she received comprehensive training at Tukombo Primary School, generously supported by Pact and YONECO. Fueled by her commitment to the cause, Melida has become a steadfast advocate for reproductive health in her community.

Since the inception of the project, Melida has organized and led numerous safe space meetings with her mentees. Today, Chawana boasts a growing community of 30 mentees and counting. What is truly inspiring is the ripple effect generated by these gatherings. As adolescents share the knowledge they gain, more young people are drawn to join the initiative, eager to learn and grow.

UPCOMING DAYS

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR OLDER PERSONS

1 OCTOBER, 2023

- 2023 Theme: "Fulfilling the Promises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for Older Persons: Across Generations."

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

5 OCTOBER, 2023

- 2023 Theme: "The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage."

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

10 OCTOBER, 2023

- 2023 Theme: "Mental Health is a Universal Human Right."

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

11 OCTOBER, 2023

- 2023 Theme: "Digital generation. Our generation."



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LET'S GROW WITH US

YONECO Internship Program: Intern Profiles



My name is Yvonne Kazembe, a 25-year-old native of Zomba district. I hold an Advanced Diploma in Public Health Management from Domasi Development College which I obtained in 2022. This fundamental achievement set the stage for my subsequent endeavors.

In September 2022, I embarked on a four-month academic practicum with Youth Net and

Counselling (YONECO). Little did I know that this experience would be transformative.

Approaching December 2022, the time when I was scheduled to conclude my placement, I found myself at a crossroads. It became evident that my time at YONECO had not only met but exceeded my expectations. During this period, I acquired a multifaceted skill set, encompassing activity facilitation, adept case management, the art of crafting comprehensive reports, cultivating meaningful stakeholder relationships, and the

creative process of proposal concept development.

Given the profound impact of my time with the organisation, I made the conscious choice to extend my journey and decided to continue my internship at the Machinga district office where I have found the ideal environment for my internship, one that fosters both professional development and personal growth.

My association with YONECO has equipped me with a diverse skill set, and my ongoing internship in Machinga district is a testament to my commitment to learning, growing, and making a meaningful impact

I am Thoko Chinyama Misoya, a 21-year-old from Mulanje district. I have an Advanced Diploma in Public Health Management from Domasi Development College which I obtained in 2022. This academic achievement marked the foundation of my professional aspirations.



In 2023, I embarked on an enriching journey by joining YONECO in Machinga district. My primary motivation was to further expand my knowledge and skills in the domains of public health and social work.

As my internship with YONECO unfolded, I quickly recognized the profound importance of hands-on experience in the realm of effective learning. This experience has been key in refining my abilities and

enhancing my practical understanding of public health. Today, I find myself confidently applying my public health knowledge and expertise in practical ways. I engage in impactful hygiene and sanitation sessions, meticulously document our activities through comprehensive reports, adeptly manage cases, and proudly represent our organization in strategic district meetings.

This internship with YONECO has not only been educational but also deeply rewarding on a personal level. It has instilled within me a newfound sense of confidence, focus, and determination. Armed with this experience, I am resolute in my commitment to pursuing my career goals and, most importantly, serving the communities that I hold dear.

My journey with YONECO has been nothing short of transformative. I am now poised to achieve my career aspirations and make a positive impact on the communities I serve, thanks to the invaluable practical knowledge and experience I have gained during this remarkable internship.

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YONECO Participates in Girls Reproductive Justice and Booklet Launch Campaign

By Sewenthe Mahwayo



Insert: A panel of discussion during the Reproductive Justice Campaign and Booklet launch in Blantyre.

Girls continue to face challenges to access comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health Services because of restrictive laws, policies and practices. Each year, 141,000 Malawian women have abortions, almost all clandestine. It is against this background that Nyale Institute for SRH Governance in collaboration with Human Rights and Rehabilitation champion public interest litigation to advance SRR In Malwawi.

Nyale and CHRR organized reproductive justice campaign and booklet launch to popularise engaging the courts to advance access to Comprehensive Reproductive Health Services, especially for vulnerable groups such as child survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

Speaking during the launch Dr Michael Kayiyasa from CHRR shared that unsafe abortion is one of the root causes of maternal death, hence the campaign will help to facilitate the vulnerable groups to voice out their issues and access justice so that in the end they should have a bright future

Dr Godfrey Kangau, Nyale Executive Director was quick to share that he was motivated with Senior Chief Chikumbu success story after helping a 11 year old girl who was defiled and

impregnated on her way from school by a male house maid. Her parents went to the hospital to access safe abortion because she was young but that did not happen because of restrictive laws and policies on safe abortion. Her parents reported the matter to Senior Chief Chikumbu in Mulanje district to seek further support. Upon seeing the that girl was too young for the pregnancy, the senior chief wrote a letter to some health workers to assist the girl to access safe abortion, from where she was assisted.

The good news is that the girl passed her PSLC and now is in form three. By then, she was in STD 5. He continued to say that advocacy is still ongoing with policymakers to clarify on who is at risk of death, since the laws of Malawi stipulates that when the life of a woman is in danger one can access safe abortion. He then wondered why minors who have been defiled are denied the same. In his conclusion, he urged CSOs to join hands in sensitizing communities about the campaign.

YONECO will play a critical role in popularizing the campaign considering that under child protection, the organisation deals with girls who are being defiled and impregnated but are not accessing justice as expected.

"As health Workers we are equally concerned with increased number of women and girls accessing post abortion care following unsafe abortion and we are patiently waiting for enabling policies and laws to allow us to support the vulnerable women and girls". Narrated one of the health workers from Chiradzulu district hospital.

The launch took place on 23rd September, 2023 at Malawi Sun Hotel in Blantyre district and same launch will happen in other districts.

YONECO Trains Tfd Members in Humanitarian Prevention and Response



Insert: TFD facilitators from the YONECO Cultural Troupe engaging with the youth during the training.

Youth in Machinga district were amused by YONECO’s Theatre for Development (Tfd) initiative during the month of September 2023. In its drive to involving the youth and women in development interventions, YONECO organized a 2-day Tfd training for youth in Traditional Authorities (TA) of Mlomba and Mtumbwinda.

During the training, the youth were oriented on issues of child protection and accountability to affected populations especially during disasters. Furthermore, the participants were enlightened on how to use Tfd for raising awareness on issues of humanitarian protection and ensure that survivors of disasters have access to relevant information on prevention and reporting of gender based violence and sexual exploitation.

“Survivors of disasters are prone to trauma and abuse due to their vulnerability, therefore, entertaining and civic educating them on their rights, especially the rights of children and women, is paramount to GBV prevention during disasters” explained Getrude Mulangali.

Mulangali urged the youth to be proactive in preventing and responding to disasters in their respective communities. She stressed that youth involvement is a key sustainability to development interventions in the communities. 20 youth (10 from Mlomba and 10 from Mtumbwinda) were trained in Tfd.

The training was conducted courtesy of UNICEF supported project called Strengthening Child Protection and Accountability to Affected Population through National Helpline Services.

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Collaborative Efforts Shine Bright in UNICEF–Funded Project for Cyclone Freddy Affected Communities

By Enalla Msukwa



Insert: Some of the stakeholders who who attended the meeting during one of the working sessions

To deliver effective protection services, the project focuses on capacity building for local stakeholders and organizations. This includes training on child protection protocols, disaster response, and gender-sensitive approaches. Recognizing the psychological toll of disasters on women and children, the project incorporates psychosocial support to help them cope with trauma and distress.

The two-day meeting in Blantyre district served as a vital platform for various stakeholders to come together, share insights, and chart a collective path towards achieving the project's objectives. Participants were engaged in collaborative discussions, pooling their knowledge and resources to develop a unified approach to address the complex issues faced by women and children affected by Cyclone Freddy. The meeting facilitated the sharing of critical information and data on the current situation in affected areas, enabling stakeholders to tailor their response strategies effectively.

YONECO, in collaboration with vulnerable populations, various stakeholders, recently particularly women and children, convened a crucial two-day to a range of challenges. This meeting on humanitarian response initiative seeks to address these in Blantyre district. This significant challenges through a gathering was organized under the coordinated, compassionate, banner of "Strengthening Child and accountable approach. Protection and Accountability to The project places a strong Affected Populations," a project emphasis on child protection. It being diligently implemented by aims to establish systems and YONECO with funding from UNICEF. mechanisms that safeguard The project was introduced to children's rights and well-being, bolster protection services for particularly those who are most women and children in areas that vulnerable in the wake of a bore the brunt of Cyclone Freddy, a disaster. Accountability is a core devastating natural disaster that principle of humanitarian wreaked havoc in several districts response. The project seeks to across the southern region of ensure that affected Malawi earlier this year. populations, including women and children, actively participate

The meeting also saw the facilitation of working sessions where actionable plans and strategies that prioritize child protection and accountability to affected populations were developed.

The "Strengthening Child Protection in decision-making processes and Accountability to Affected Populations" project carries a recovery. profound sense of purpose, focusing on enhancing protection services for women and children in the aftermath of Cyclone Freddy. The cyclone left a trail of destruction, displacing communities, and exposing

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YONECO Drills Machinga Stakeholders on Child Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations

By Jacob Phiri



Insert: Stakeholders posing for a group photo after the child protection and accountability training in Machinga district.

During the month of September, 2023, Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) facilitated a training for Machinga district stakeholders on child protection and accountability to affected populations. The training aimed at equipping partners working on child protection and women’s rights in humanitarian setting with knowledge and skills to better able support children, women and girls during disasters.

Among key topics discussed were humanitarian protection principles; safeguarding vulnerable individuals and groups; community engagement and participation; and psychosocial support. The attention of the participants was uniquely observed during psychosocial support discussion. The stakeholders stressed that counselling children is a huge task thus they wanted to learn more on better approaches of counselling children. On the same topic, YONECO Facilitators emphasized on the need for counsellors to pay attention to a child and make observations when counselling the child to avoid making premature judgments. “We are mandated by the law to align our interventions in the best interest of the

child as far as children are stakeholders, with so much knowledge and information on what is required for effective delivery of humanitarian work, we must therefore, I urge you all members to utilize knowledge and information gained through training in our respective interventions as far as prevention and response to disasters is concerned” Nkhonjera also urged stakeholders to abide by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence for effective and efficient humanitarian work.



“Operating during disasters does not require business as usual. We deal with people who are traumatized and require necessary attention. This training has equipped us,

Explained Richard Nkhonjera. we talk of delivery of humanitarian work, I urge you all members to utilize knowledge and information gained through training in our respective interventions as far as prevention and response to disasters is concerned” Nkhonjera also urged stakeholders to abide by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence for effective and efficient humanitarian work. Explained Mr. Supayo during the training’s closing remarks on behalf of the District Social Welfare Officer. 27 (18M 9F) stakeholders, state and non-state actors, attended the training.

YONECO organized stakeholders training under the UNICEF supported Strengthening Child Protection and Accountability to Affected Population through the National Helpline project. The project is being implemented in the seven southern region districts affected by Cyclone Freddy namely, Nsanje, Chikwawa, Blantyre, Mulanje, Phalombe, Zomba and Machinga.

Transforming Primary Education in Malawi through ICT-Based Adaptive Learning



Insert: Learners in one of the schools in Rumphi district during a tablet session.

Excitement and anticipation were in the air as the new academic calendar kick started on 11 September this year, specifically for primary schools in Chitipa and Rumphi districts. This year marks a significant milestone as the innovative ICT-based and child-directed adaptive learning program delivered through tablets was launched. This groundbreaking initiative, a collaborative effort between YONECO and the Malawi government under the Building Education Foundations Innovation and Technology (BEFIT) programme, is poised to revolutionize primary education in the country.

The BEFIT programme represents a visionary approach to education that aligns closely with the Malawi 2063 Agenda.

It places a strong emphasis on foundational learning for youth and the development of digital skills among both students and teachers. Under this programme, YONECO is spearheading efforts in Rumphi and Chitipa districts, with the goal of enhancing the foundational literacy and numeracy skills of primary school learners in standards 1 to 4.



Insert: Learners' excitement as they engage with the tablet for the first time.

One of the cornerstones of this initiative is the adoption of personalized learning solutions delivered through tablets. These solutions are designed to cater to the unique needs and learning styles of each student, ensuring that they receive a tailored education experience. By introducing learners to digital technology at an early age, the programme promotes digital literacy. This not only enhances their academic skills but also equips them with valuable 21st-century skills essential for their future success.

The initiative encourages child-directed learning, empowering students to take ownership of their education journey. It fosters curiosity and independent thinking, nurturing a love for learning. Through adaptive learning algorithms, the programme can track individual progress and adapt content accordingly. This personalized approach is expected to lead to improved learning outcomes, ensuring that students grasp essential concepts effectively.



For learners in the targeted districts of Rumphi and Chitipa, the prospect of learning with digital personalized solutions on tablets was met with great excitement. Many of these learners will experience this innovative approach to education for the first time, opening doors to a world of interactive and engaging learning experiences.

Empowering Youth Through Life Skills Development

By Edward Nyirenda



Insert: Field Officer for Rumphi, Edward Nyirenda engaging the learners during the life skills session at Jata Private School in the district.

Young people often find themselves navigating a complex web of moral dilemmas, peer pressure, and various challenges in their everyday lives. These issues can have a significant impact on their educational future and overall well-being. In response to the growing concerns in the district, YONECO took proactive steps to equip young learners with essential life skills.

On September 19, 2023, the YONECO team engaged with standard 6-8 learners at Jata Private Primary School to provide valuable orientation on life skills development. The session focused on critical topics such as self-awareness, self-esteem, and peer pressure, aiming to empower these students with the tools needed to make informed decisions and build a brighter future.

The life skills development session was conducted in a participatory

manner, fostering active engagement among learners. This approach emphasized the significance of encouraging students to become attentive, ask questions, and provide accurate answers when called upon. During the session, the learners candidly admitted to facing issues related to peer pressure, which sometimes led to teenage pregnancies and involvement in drug and substance abuse. This honest discussion created a safe space for addressing these challenges.

One of the key messages conveyed to the students was the importance of self-confidence. They were encouraged to believe in themselves and their abilities, enabling them to resist negative influences and make

choices aligned with their educational goals. The team emphasized the significance of saying no to peer pressure and provided strategies to resist negative peer influence, empowering them to make choices that prioritize their education and well-being.

At the end of the session, learners were asked to reflect on what they had learned. Their responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the key concepts discussed during the orientation. The school's management, including the deputy headteacher, expressed their appreciation for the YONECO team's efforts and encouraged future visits. Contact details were exchanged to facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration.



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Inspiring The Leaders of Tomorrow: St. Augustine CDSS Role Modelling Session

By Doreen Luwe



Insert: Doreen Luwe, Field Officer for Nkhata Bay interacting with the students during the role modelling session.

In an effort to nurture the potential within every student and guide them towards a brighter future, St Augustine CDSS in connection with YONECO organised an impactful role modelling session. The event aimed to provide students with unique opportunities to interact with accomplished professionals, gain valuable insights and be inspired to pursue their dreams.

A session at St Augustine CDSS focused on personal development and education empowerment, the session left a lasting impression on the young minds of St Augustine CDSS.

The role modelling session at St Augustine CDSS featured an impressive lineup of speakers and mentors from various universities as well as colleges. The lineup involved individuals from various fields including social work and public health who graciously shared their personal experiences and insights. Each speaker brought a distinct perspective, highlighting the diverse paths of success and encouraging students to explore their passions.

The session was interactive allowing students to actively engage with the speakers through open discussion and question and answer sessions. Students eagerly participated by asking questions and the interactive format fostered a sense of empowerment among the students as they realized the importance of taking ownership of their future and making informed decisions.

The speakers at the role modelling session shared their inspiring success stories, recounting their journey from humble beginning to achieving their goals. They emphasized the significance of hard work on one's ability to achieve the desired goals. Not only that, an insight on the challenges that would act as a barrier to fulfilment of goals was conducted so that students would be aware of different issues and factors that would limit them from succeeding and not reach where they want to be. St Augustine being one of the schools with high rates of teenage pregnancies, sessions on Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) were conducted by informing the students on the danger of teenage pregnancy and child marriages.

A total of 213 people were reached, however 90 were boys while 123 were girls across Traditional Authority Mkumbira, Timbiri, Mankhambira and ST/A Mndola in Nkhata Bay.

Parents Commend YONECO for Introducing an ECD Centre at Mapale

By Kettie Yotamu



Insert: Some of the ECD learners at Mapale ECD.

Parents around Mapale Township in Zomba have commended YONECO for establishing an Early Child Development (ECD) Centre in the area. The centre has been operating for five years and parents were engaged at the onset of the new academic year for a review meeting.

"We are very thankful to YONECO. Our children are now able to access quality ECD services within the vicinity," explained Acton Chimwaza, one of the parents.

One of YONECO's Child Protection workers in Zomba, Kettie Yotamu, explained that the centre came into being as a response to an outcry by some parents who were concerned about long distances to the existing learning centres.

Currently, the centre has a total of 59 learners of which 29 are boys and 24 are girls. In the just ended academic year, Mapale ECD Centre has graduated a total of 39 learners who have now enrolled in various primary schools.

Promoting Clean and Safe Healthcare Environments

By Edward Nyirenda



Insert: YONECO staff posing with some of the youth after the clean-up exercise in Rumphi district

In a remarkable display of community engagement and teamwork, our dedicated team joined forces with local youth for a clean-up exercise at Rumphi District Hospital. This impactful initiative was made possible through the generous support of the District Health Environment Office, which provided the necessary materials and resources for the endeavor. The primary objective of this joint effort was to bolster the healthcare workers' endeavors in ensuring that communities have access to health services within clean and germ-free environments, thus mitigating the risk of infections. Moreover, recognizing the crucial role played by guardians in patient care, the initiative also aimed to educate women serving as guardians about the paramount importance of hygiene and sanitation.

The focus of the clean-up was the hospital premises itself. The teams diligently worked to remove litter, debris, and other forms of waste from the surroundings, ensuring that



Insert: Picking up all the rubbish from the hospital disposal site.

the hospital presented a clean, welcoming, and safe environment for patients, visitors, and healthcare workers. The initiative was rooted in the idea that a clean and germ-free healthcare environment is fundamental to preventing the



spread of infections. By maintaining a hygienic facility, we aimed to support healthcare workers in their mission to provide high-quality care and safeguard the health of patients.

Guardians were educated about the importance of maintaining personal hygiene and practicing proper sanitation techniques. This knowledge equips them to provide better care to their loved ones while minimizing the risk of cross-contamination. Training sessions emphasized practical measures that guardians could implement to help prevent the spread of infections within the hospital setting. Simple yet effective practices, such as handwashing and surface disinfection, were highlighted. The guardians were also encouraged to share their newfound knowledge about hygiene and sanitation with their communities. This ripple effect can contribute to broader improvements in public health awareness and practices.

Empowering Kalambwe Primary School Through Sanitation and Hygiene Education

By Michael Mwanachawa



Insert: Some of the students who were reached during the session

On 14 September 2023, the district conducted sessions at Kalambwe Primary School. Imagine a school where students not only excel academically but also possess the knowledge and skills to lead healthy, hygienic lives.

In an effort to promote a healthy and empowered community, an awareness session on sanitation, hygiene, and education empowerment was recently conducted at Kalambwe Primary School in Nkhatabay by YONECO headed by the project officer Mr. Michael Mwanachawa supported by Richard Banda and Rachael Nyasulu(interns). These sessions aimed to educate students about the importance of maintaining proper sanitation practiced, personal hygiene and the transformative power of education.

The session began with a small number of pupils since it was an opportunity captured while the pupils were on their break time. By the end of the session there were about 48 children that gathered around to see exactly what was going on.

The session began with a comprehensive presentation on the significance of sanitation and hygiene. Pupils were educated on the importance of hand washing, proper waste disposal and maintaining clean surroundings. The session also highlighted the link between good hygiene practices and overall health, emphasizing the role of sanitation in preventing the spread of diseases like diarrhea.

Education empowerment was another crucial aspect covered in the session. The pupils were encouraged to recognize the transformative power of education and its impact on their future.

The session emphasized the importance of attending school regularly, studying earnestly and setting educational goals. The pupils were motivated to pursue their dreams and aspirations through education, understanding that it is a key tool for personal growth and community development and also the key tool that will take them out of poverty and be in self reliant better place to help not only themselves but also their families in the near future

The session at Kalambwe primary school proved to be a transformative experience for all involved by promoting the importance of maintaining clean and healthy environments and highlighting the power of education. It is through such initiatives that we can foster a bright future, where individuals are equipped with the knowledge and resources to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

Ntcheu District Council Protracts Clean-up Exercise



In the month of September, 2023, YONECO staff participated in a protracted district-wide clean-up exercise which takes place once every month in Ntcheu district.

The exercise is aimed at promoting sanitation and good health by evading hygiene-related diseases like chronic diarrhea and trachoma through proper waste management. The September clean-up exercise was led by Ntcheu District Community Development Office.

During the exercise, some streets and feeder roads were cleared, refuse was cleared and refuse pits and bins were properly emptied and their contents properly disposed-off in designated spaces.

Community members including business owners participated in the exercise by cleaning up their designated business premises.

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

Promoting Responsible Choices through SRH Education

By Kettie Yotamu



Insert: Some of the men who were engaged during the session posing with YONECO officers.

During the session, participants were encouraged to take the lead in areas such as Family Planning and Child-bearing, which had traditionally been perceived as primarily women's responsibilities. The aim was to empower these men to actively contribute to decisions and discussions surrounding these crucial aspects of family life.

As a practical demonstration of support and to ensure the accessibility of essential resources, a generous distribution of 288 male condoms was carried out. This tangible assistance underscored the commitment of Mapale DIC to serve the needs of the targeted users, ensuring they had access to vital tools for responsible sexual health.

Furthermore, the participants were educated about various family planning methods available to them. During this discussion, it was noted that several male participants expressed their reluctance towards the use of the injection method, citing concerns that it might impact their sexual performance negatively.



Insert: YONECO officers interacting with some of the men during the session

On September 28th, 2023, the dedicated officers at Mapale Drop-in Center (DIC) initiated a pivotal Awareness Session centered on the active involvement of males in matters pertaining to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). This enlightening session took place at three distinct locations: Tholo, Mpondabwino, and Chiphwanyamiyala Kabaza Ranks in the vibrant city of Zomba.

A total of 19 adult males gathered to partake in this insightful session, where they were sensitized about the paramount importance of their participation in issues related to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights. Historically, these topics were often considered to be the exclusive domain of women within their communities. However, this session aimed to shatter these stereotypes and inspire a more inclusive approach.

Breaking Barriers: Empowering Men for Healthier Communities

By Grant Dulla

On September 21st, 2023, YONECO conducted a comprehensive session on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) at Mwanyama. The participants were provided with vital information regarding the significance of either abstaining from sexual activity or maintaining a monogamous relationship. For those who engage in sexual relationships with multiple partners, the session emphasized the importance of using protection to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies.

The participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to learn about these crucial SRH topics, and they expressed a willingness to adopt preventive measures. As a parting gesture, condoms were distributed to those who requested them, ensuring that they had access to a reliable form of protection.



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