



YONECO VOICE



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Our Programmes

- Youth Development.
- 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.
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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 Esteemed Readers,

Welcome to 2024! We have exited a year of difficulties which has included a devastating cyclone that killed over 1,000 people and left thousands of people destitute, major currency devaluations and high levels of inflation.

It was also a year in which we experienced a distressing surge in violence perpetrated against women and children as well as young people being exported to Israel for labour. During the just-ended year, we also learnt that 2 percent of the world's poorest people are living in Malawi. These stories and many more haunted Malawians in 2023. Heartrendingly, all these issues were recorded in a year that marked the 30th anniversary of the country's democracy.

As we are now in 2024, it is important to acknowledge that 39 years remain until the goal of the Malawi 2063 (MW2065). In addition, we are six years away from the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target year, which also marks the completion of Malawi 2063 First 10-Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1). We, therefore, dedicate this discussion to reflect on Vision 2063 and our thinking and ideologies. We start this conversation by acknowledging that those who are 60 and above will be 99 years old when Vision 2063 will be hitting the target. Those who are 20 today will be 59 years old in 2063. This, therefore, becomes the major reason why Vision 2063 was designed to be youth-centric. As such, we need to invest more in youth programmes that will change the long-standing narrative that has persisted for the last 30 years. A narrative in which we have developed a nation that is so dependent on external support. A narrative in which everyone thinks that we need handouts to survive. A narrative that promotes laziness right from the various levels of our education system.

We have seen in the last 30 years that our focus on education has been on the acquisition of academic certificates against learning. We have all accused the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) of the leakage of examinations but we have not questioned why there is a demand for cheating. This has continued into the universities where people cheat their way towards obtaining their first and master's degrees. We had recent situations at the University of Malawi (UNIMA) and the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST). We applaud the two universities for action taken but we need to dig deeper because others have just not been caught. Unfortunately, these habits are creating into the system and they continue cheating even when at work and in business. As a nation, we need to seriously reflect on these for us to make progress.

Malawi has become a nation that believes in handouts more than production and self-support. We have reached a level where we are being asked to work on our roads under the concept of "Food for Work" as a social security plan. While recognizing these efforts, as a

Executive Director's Note...

with MacBain Mkandawire



nation, we also need to see how this helps our goal of achieving sustainable socio-economic growth. Roads that have been done using hoes by communities have been washed away in the next season and we will be back with food for work. One Reverend Yassin Gama, in one of his sermons, asked why villagers cannot work on a road that benefits their community unless they get paid. Probably he was questioning the issue of patriotism. We have said this several times but our lack of mental independence continues to be the cause of this. We have a pillar in the Malawi 2063 agenda which is mindset change. As long as our mindset remains the same, we will continue receiving handouts, meaningful development will never happen in Malawi. We need to revisit several things to ensure that we are moving in the right direction.

As a country, we also need to stop the blame game. Malawi's development is a collective responsibility. Section 30 of the constitution reflects on the Right to Development of the people of Malawi. The enjoyment of human rights requires that rights holders should demand their rights while realizing that they are also duty bearers. If our right to development is being affected by corruption, for example, why is it that we are so comfortable getting services through corruption? You happily tell each other "ukangopeleka kanganyase kena kake zikatheka". We then come back and say the government is not doing anything to curb corruption. The citizens must reject and resist corruption. This is also about the mindset that we are creating. It should be borne in mind that this is done in front of our young people and they are growing up thinking that nothing will happen unless you bribe someone. This mindset will continue and we will never development

As we reflect from the onset of 2024, we need to find mechanisms for reducing our dependence. We cannot continue expecting to be bailed out from our poverty by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and neither can we rely on exporting labour for Forex. We need to turn Malawi into a production and not a consuming country.

Wishing you a Happy and prosperous New Year.

ECHOES OF BATTALION'S RESILIENCE

By Gracium Mkonda
Chithonje

In the atmospheric domain, a formidable
quake pulsates,
Its instability reaching its utmost limit,
Amidst harmonious and consistent
thunderous roars,
The year swiftly unfolds its chapters.

The hidden truth is exposed,
Its ongoing triumph relies on an unwavering
pledge,
An intense hunger, to be satisfied only through
a democratic, inclusive,
empowered, self-reliant, healthy, resilient, and
responsible society.

The battalion's endurance has been stretched
to its limits,
When friendly forces severed the supply
chains,
When the storm of defamation surged
unrelenting,
Yet, its unwavering focus remained on the
mission.

The echoes of victory reverberate,
Emerging from the YONECO battalion,
As 2023 draws to a close,
Submerged in resilience, crafting a society of
fortitude.





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The Power of Community Dialogue in Preventing GBV: Insights from Community Leaders



Insert: Community SASA facilitator during one of the community dialogue session in Dedza.

Community leaders from the area of Traditional Authority (TA) Kaphuka in Dedza district have described dialogue sessions as instrumental in preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

One community leader, Kennedy Njazi, explained that the sessions provide a platform for people to openly discuss specific issues that fuel violence and unearth critical bottlenecks that perpetuate the status quo. In turn, communities easily find lasting solutions to the identified factors.

Njazi further explained that the dialogue sessions have helped to raise awareness about various forms of GBV and the dangers of the vice to both individuals as the society.

“The increased awareness has stirred community members to speak out against such acts and support survivors of GBV” added Njazi.

Another community leader, Alinane Kamwendo, highlighted that the approach has been fruitful because there was involvement of men and boys in the dialogue sessions. She observed that that involving men in discussions about GBV helps to challenge prevalent gender norms and stereotypes that fuel violence.

During one of the dialogue meetings that was held on 16 December, 2023, community members explained that the sessions have also helped to foster a sense of accountability and responsibility towards addressing GBV.

YONECO trained 60 community cadres from Dedza and Mchhinji on how they can facilitate community dialogue session on ending GBV using Start Awareness Support Action (SASA!) Approach. The training was conducted under Action for Teen Mothers and Adolescent Girls Project which YONECO is implementing in the two districts with support from UNFPA and KOICA.

INTERN PROFILE

Leonard Chigwenembe

Leonard Chigwenembe is a dedicated and ambitious professional, currently serving as a programmes intern at the YONECO District Office in Rumphi. Leonard holds a Diploma in Nutrition and Food Security which he obtained in 2023 from Domasi Development College (DDC) in Zomba District. He has committed to utilize his academic knowledge in the practical realm as he gains even deeper insights from the team in Rumphi.

In his role, Leonard actively contributes to the implementation of a diverse range of activities, showcasing his ability to apply theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios. His primary focus revolves around supporting and monitoring initiatives related to youth development and women empowerment. Recognizing the interconnectedness of various issues, Leonard is also deeply involved in the implementation of climate-smart practices, as the issues also have their impact on the well-being of youth, women, and children.



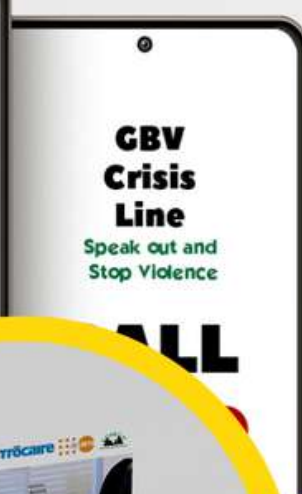
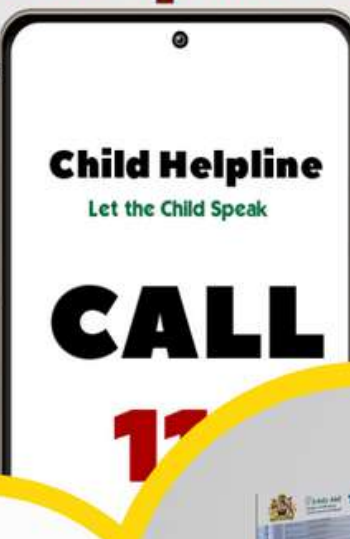
“I recognize the significant contribution of YONECO in moulding my professional growth as a nutrition and food security graduate”

In his role, Leonard actively contributes to the implementation of a diverse range of activities, showcasing his ability to apply theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios. His primary focus revolves around supporting and monitoring initiatives related to youth development and women empowerment. Recognizing the interconnectedness of various issues, Leonard is also deeply involved in the implementation of climate-smart practices, as the issues also have an impact on the well-being of youth, women, and children.

Expressing his gratitude for the invaluable learning experience, Leonard acknowledges the critical role YONECO has so far played in shaping his professional growth within the realm of nutrition and food security. His journey with YONECO commenced in October 2023, and during this relatively short period, Leonard has emerged as a noteworthy contributor to the organization's objectives.

Through his unwavering efforts, Leonard has earned recognition at various levels for his significant contributions towards advancing the welfare and opportunities for the youth, women, and children. His passion for making a positive impact in the community highlights his commitment to creating a meaningful difference in the lives of those he serves.

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Journalists Challenged to Drive Mindset Change



Insert: Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Honourable Madalitso Kazombo, YONECO Executive Director, MacBain Mkandawire, and other invited guests posing for a group photo after the AGM in Salima.

The Executive Director of YONECO who is also the managing Director of YFM Radio Station, MacBain Mkandawire, challenged reporters on their role towards the sustainable socioeconomic growth of Malawi by promoting mindset change among the citizenry.

Mkandawire made the remarks at Zomba Press Club Annual General Meeting (AGM) where he was invited as a guest speaker to the function. The event was held on 14 December, 2023 at Sigelege Beach Report in Salima.

In his address, he acknowledged the influential power of the media in shaping public opinion and emphasized the responsibility of journalists in driving positive change. He further underlined the need for media professionals to go beyond mere reporting of events and delve deeper into the root causes of societal problems.

“I would like to urge you all to critically analyze and challenge prevailing narratives, as well as providing balanced and unbiased coverage of issues”.

In addition, Mkandawire further urged the members of Zomba Press Club to give priority to stories that address social issues such as Gender-Based Violence (GBV), youth empowerment, and child abuse. He further explained that shedding light on the challenges that are faced by the marginalized groups of people while fostering understanding and compassion in the society.

In conclusion, Mkandawire acknowledged that promoting mindset change requires concerted efforts from the members of the press, the government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), and the general public.

“I therefore encourage you all (members of Zomba Press Club) to operate as active agents of change and use your influence to amplify the voices of the marginalized, challenge harmful sociocultural norms, and promote an inclusive and prosperous society,” concluded Mkandawire.

The Guest of Honour to the function was the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Honourable Madalitso Kazombo.

Malawi Commemorates Human Rights Day



Insert: Guest of Honor, His Excellency Dr. McCarthy Chakwera, ministers and other dignitaries during the commemoration event. Below: YONECO Programme Support Manager Sewenthe Mahwayo

On 11th December 2023, we joined the rest of the world with a sense of purpose at Chugumukire Primary School Ground in Blantyre, in solidarity with the Malawi government, our esteemed partners, and the vibrant members of the community in commemorating Human Rights Day. Together, we reiterated our dedication to the promotion and protection of human rights, a cause that binds us in a shared commitment to justice and equality.

Each year, this significant gathering serves as a platform for unity but also marks the commemoration of International Human Rights Day and the momentous 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a critical document adopted by the UN General Assembly. As we reflect on the



journey so far, we recognized the milestones achieved and acknowledge the work that lies ahead in ensuring the universal application of these fundamental principles.

The distinguished guest of honor during the occasion was the President of the Republic of Malawi, His Excellency Dr. McCarthy Chakwera. His presence added gravitas to the collective endeavor, emphasizing the nation's commitment to upholding the principles embedded in the UDHR.

In addition to the distinguished presence of the President, the event was also honored by the attendance of commissioners from the Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) and the heads of various governmental and non-governmental institutions. Their collective participation underscores the collaborative spirit essential for the realization of our shared goals.

In an effort to facilitate meaningful engagement and support, we established a dedicated pavilion at the venue where our passionate and committed team provided assistance on a wide array of issues concerning the rights and welfare of the youth, women, and children in Malawi.

YONECO Participates in NGO Day



Insert: Guest of Honor, His Excellency Dr. McCarthy Chakwera, making his speech during the event. Below right: YONECO staff captured at the pavilion that was set at BICC

At YONECO, we are grateful to the NGO Regulatory Authority – NGORA for organizing an incredible NGO Day, which took place at the Bingu International Convention Centre (BICC) in Lilongwe on 14 December, 2023. The interactions and exchange of ideas will significantly contribute to the creation of a strong and sustainable socioeconomic growth of the Malawian society we all aspire to realize. The event offered a platform to YONECO, various development partners as well as the general public to connect and engage in meaningful dialogue towards attaining an equitable environment for all people.

This year's NGO Day was held under the theme "A strong and vibrant NGO sector towards accelerated implementation for SDGs and Malawi 2063."

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a pivotal role in promoting the rights and welfare of people in the society. NGOs are essential in achieving the objectives of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs) and in championing the Malawi 2063 agenda.



YONECO Participates 16 Days of Activism against GBV Campaign Launches



Insert: Grant Dulla, Project Officer for Mangochi during this year's launch of 16 Days of Activism in the district.

Gender-Based Violence (#GBV) continues to cast a shadow over communities worldwide, impeding progress and hindering the realization of socioeconomic rights for all individuals. As we find ourselves immersed in this year's 16 Days of Activism against #GBV, we are heartened by the promising initiatives undertaken by numerous districts to reaffirm their dedication to eradicating this pervasive issue.

On 6 December, 2023, we took part in the 11th campaign of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, and we are delighted to share our active participation in the launch events held in Zomba, Nsanje, Mangochi, and Rumphi districts. These events have provided a platform to raise awareness but have also united communities in their collective commitment to building a safer and more equitable society.

It is crucial to recognize that addressing GBV is not a one-time effort; rather, it demands an enduring commitment sustained until it is no

longer a threat. Our collective responsibility extends beyond the 16 days of activism, urging us to integrate anti-GBV efforts into the fabric of our daily lives.

Reporting cases of GBV plays a critical role in this ongoing battle against gender-based violence. It serves as a catalyst for awareness, facilitates legal and disciplinary actions against perpetrators, and ensures essential support for survivors. Every reported case contributes to breaking the silence surrounding GBV and brings us one step closer to a world free from this scourge.

As part of our commitment to providing accessible avenues for reporting, we continue to encourage people to utilize our confidential toll-free helplines 5600, 116, and 6600. These helplines are available 24 hours a day, every day, ensuring that assistance and support are readily accessible to those who need it the most.

2023 YONECO Highlights



YONECO Commences BEFIT Programme Implementation

In June, 2023, YONECO commenced the implementation of Building Education Foundations through Innovation and Technology (BEFIT) Programme. The programme is aimed at improving the foundational literacy and numeracy skills of primary school learners in Standards 1-4.

BEFIT is a nationwide programme which is being supported by the Malawi government and several international partners including JBJ Foundation, Imagine World Wide and One Billion.

As one of the Implementing Support Partners (ISPs) YONECO is managing the programme's interventions in Rumphi and Chitipa.

The BEFIT Programme is aligned with Malawi's long-term vision; "Malawi 2063," which also focuses on foundational learning for youth and digital skill development for students and teachers.

YONECO Opens an Office in Chitipa District

The year 2023 had a number of noteworthy achievements for YONECO as an organization. For the first time ever, YONECO extended its reach and accentuated its physical presence by opening up an office right at the Boma of Chitipa district.

The office was opened to further fulfill YONECO's mandate of serving the youth, women and children in Malawi.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), district stakeholders and community members made it easier for our team to settle down. As YONECO, we have managed to support the process of following ups and referring cases of violence and abuse that were mostly perpetrated against women and children, providing life skills to young people, as well as promoting education and youth development.



NEAR Supports YONECO's Response to Cholera Outbreak

From March 2022, Malawi experienced a deadliest widespread cholera outbreak in years which was declared a public health emergency in December of the same year until August of 2023. The outbreak affected all 29 districts of the country thereby putting a strain on the country's health care system.

It is against this backdrop that Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR) provided financial support to YONECO to implement cholera prevention and response interventions in Blantyre and Mangochi.

The interventions were aimed at preventing and controlling the spread of the outbreak at community level, strengthening community mobilization and social behavior change, as well as promoting the delivery of services and support to cholera affected communities.



UNICEF Funds YONECO for Post-Cyclone Freddy Social Protection Activities

Malawi was heavily hit by Cyclone Freddy in March 2023 affecting nine districts in the southern region of the country. A total of 564,239 people were internally displaced; 511 people were confirmed dead; 533 people were missing and 1,724 people had sustained injuries. The impact of the cyclone also extended to a significant amount of damage to property and infrastructure.

The situation greatly weakened community protection mechanisms on abuse, violence and exploitation. Thus, with funding from UNICEF, YONECO has been implementing various interventions to ensure the availability and strengthened protection services for vulnerable children, women and other population affected by Cyclone.

The interventions increased reporting of Gender-Based violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and related issues, improved child protection in hard to reach areas, and enhanced the effectiveness of Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs). Additionally, women and children from the affected areas were equipped with information and services aimed at mitigating the risks of GBV

YONECO Hosts National Commemoration Event for the 2023 World Radio Day

On 28 March, 2023, YONECO Head Office in Zomba hosted the national commemoration event for the 2023 World Radio Day. The event was presided over by the Minister of Information and Digitalization, Honourable Moses Kumkuyu.

Other co-hosts of the function were Mzati Radio Station and Chanco Community Radio Station. The 2023 World Radio Day was celebrated under the theme 'Radio and peace.'

World Radio Day is an annual celebration which is commemorated to promote awareness among community members and the media about the importance of radio. The occasion draws attention to the significance of radio, which remains the best communication channel to reach the widest audience and is currently evolving by embracing new technology.



YONECO Implements Peace Building Project in Mangochi

In 2023, YONECO, with financial support from UNFPA, implemented a number of activities under Border Districts and Community-Based Conflict Prevention and Peace Building in Malawi Project. The eight months project was aimed at strengthening the capacity of communities to mitigate and respond to existing and projected conflicts in borderland areas across Mangochi district.

The project had the following key activities; conducting peace and security vulnerability analysis, training the youth, girls and women groups in peacebuilding, facilitating community forums for dialogue on discriminatory social and cultural norms, facilitating demand creation for the provision of integrated mobile Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services, training of youth safe space mentors, as well as strengthening tracking systems with support services for survivors of GBV. The project was implemented in five aTraditional Authorities (T/As) namely Katuli, Jalasi, Lulanga, Makanjira and Bwananyambi.



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LET'S GROW WITH US

Mary's Inspiring Journey with Tablet Lessons

By Dunreck Pande



Mary Kwiyoka, a 7-year-old girl who is in Standard 2, at Nachiwe Primary school, is rewriting the narrative of inclusivity in education. Born with a disability that affected her mobility and speech, Mary's journey exemplifies the transformative power of the BEFIT program which introduced tablet lessons that have helped her overcome her mobility and speech challenges.

Mary hails from Manse 1 village, Traditional Authority (T/A) Mwaulambia, Chitipa district. Mary faces challenges that would potentially deter many learners with similar disabilities, but her determination to embrace education knows no bounds. Despite the 30-minute walk to school, double the time it takes most learners, Mary's passion for learning remains unwavering. Accompanied by her parents, who lovingly escort her to school, Mary defies the odds, often insisting on walking independently.

In the inclusive learning environment fostered by tablet lessons, Mary's resilience shines brightly. Initially grappling with difficulties in walking and speaking, she faced challenges in adapting to tablet lessons. However, with time and dedication, Mary not only overcame these obstacles but thrived in the digital learning landscape.

Mary's progress extends beyond the physical challenges she faces. Through tablet lessons, she has mastered the ability to follow instructions independently and has also demonstrated marked improvement in various subjects, a testament to her rapid growth in analytical and reasoning skills. Her class teacher marvels at the strides which Mary has made, acknowledging her growth and determination.

What makes Mary's story particularly special is the broader impact on inclusivity within the education system. The initiative to integrate tablet lessons has created a space where learners with disabilities are not only accommodated but are thriving in their academic pursuits. The program goes beyond addressing numerical and literacy skills; it fosters an environment where every child, regardless of physical and socioeconomic challenges, can actively participate and contribute to the learning community.

Mary's journey symbolises the triumph of inclusiveness, turning challenges into stepping stones for success. Her story echoes the promise of a more inclusive and accessible education system in Malawi, where every child's potential is recognised and nurtured. Mary Kwiyoka stands as a testament to the transformative power of education in breaking barriers and fostering a more inclusive future for all.

Empowering Education and Igniting Passion in Malawi's Rural Schools

The BEFIT program in Malawi, spearheaded by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with various partners is emerging as a resounding success, transforming the educational landscape in Rumphi District. Among the triumphant stories deep in the Livingstonia mountains is Lwatizi Primary School, an active beneficiary in the programme since its inception in September 2023.

Frank Msiska, a proud parent of two from Lwatizi, has witnessed immediate impact of the BEFIT programme on his child's education. With the introduction of tablets into the learning environment, Msiska has observed a remarkable shift in his child's attitude towards education. The child's enthusiasm for attending classes and punctuality has notably increased, reflecting a newfound eagerness for learning.

In Msiska's account, his child not only embraces the technology but also eagerly shares post-school stories about the tablet-operating experience and the instructional content it provides. This engagement not only reinforces the child's connection with education but also fosters a more interactive and participatory learning experience.



Msiska points out tangible improvements in literacy and numeracy skills among students at Lwatizi. Notably, advancements in Chichewa proficiency stand out as a crucial aspect. The program has successfully enhanced the learners' ability to understand and read Chichewa, providing them with a solid foundation for academic success.

Expressing his satisfaction, Msiska emphasizes that the BEFIT programme has been a catalyst for positive change. He advocates for the programme's continuity, highlighting its role in fostering academic growth and skills development among the students. His call for the expansion of the program to other schools demonstrates a collective desire to extend these benefits to a broader spectrum of learners.

Through the strategic integration of technology, the program has not only elevated academic performance, but it has also ignited a passion for learning among learners, laying the groundwork for a brighter future.

YONECO Establishes Tree Nursery to Combat Climate-Related Disasters

By Charity Ligomeka



Insert: Part of the tree nursery showing tree seedlings that so far been produced.

In a bid to contribute towards mitigating the impact of climate change, we have established a tree nursery in Rumphi that will provide seedlings to local youth clubs and schools around Rumphi Boma.

Currently, we have raised 200 tree saplings intending to reduce climate-related disasters by planting trees around schools and other community structures. For a start, the tree seedlings will benefit five youth clubs and 10 schools before scaling up the initiative to other areas.

Annually, Rumphi Boma experiences heavy and devastating winds that cause significant damage to schools and health facilities.

We are grateful to Charity Ligomeka, our Field Officer, and our dedicated interns Anson Mughogho, Aron Luwe, and Leonard Chimbalanga for their untiring efforts in making the vision a reality.



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