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YOIECO VOICE outh Net and Counselling

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Trains Community The Impact of yclone Freddy on Child Protection Good Health and HI Prevention **Advocates**

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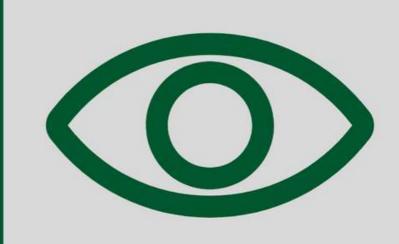
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- **Governance and Human** Rights.
- Media, Collaboration, **Networking and** Coordinating.
- **Climate Change and** Disaster Management.
- **Institutional Management.**
- Research and **Documentation**

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
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Executive Director's Note...

with MacBain Mkandawire



Dear Esteemed Readers,

I welcome you to February 2024 with full knowledge that it is a month the world celebrates Valentine's Day and I would like to ask all young people to understand what the day is all about. This falls on 14th February every year. While Valentine's Day has lots of good memories for some young people, others have bad memories. For others, it is the day they find new love and are quite excited and emotionally happy. There are some young people, Valentine's Day means something very different because of previous bad experiences. It is the day they got Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), unwanted pregnancies or they were gang raped. Therefore, as we approach Valentine's Day, we need to approach it with care. Let Valentine's Day be the source of happiness for all of us and ensure that we are safe and healthy.

A growing cancer has emerged among young people at various levels in our society and continues to be a menace for the youth. This is the abuse of alcohol and other hard drugs. What is sickening is the future of such young people, who could have been productive but are being wasted and we need to do something about it. The Minister of Home Affairs is the custodian of the issues of drugs and hosts the Dangerous Drugs unit. However, we have not seen much progress on the Dangerous Drugs Act and it is not clear in terms of how we are managing the component of underage drinking. We have so many alcohol outlets and this has become big business. Malawi has an alcohol policy that provides for access to and age limits for the same. But these guidelines are not being adhered to. More challenging is the unlicensed alcohol that is being brewed and distilled in our communities. These need to be regulated. As a country, we need to be proactive.

The biggest challenge is that parents are not prepared to manage children who are on drugs and those with alcohol use disorder. They have no skills to cope with this and require some effective management. The sad aspect is that this costs parents huge sums of resources including time to care for children who have become addicted to alcohol. On a different note, the systems and structures that were available to support people recovering from drug and alcohol abuse have almost collapsed leaving hospitals overwhelmed with cases. We need to rethink

Executive Director's Note...

with MacBain Mkandawire

the strategies for dealing with the problem of drug and substance abuse which is in our midst.

Let me finish this note by saying that we have less than 24 months before Malawi goes to the polls in September 2025. We have observed that silent and unofficial campaigns are being done. We are also seeing several challenges in the processes and political intolerance within the parties. We, therefore, urge the citizenry to realize that voting is a right and that every eligible person should plan to vote in the forthcoming elections.

I wish you a wonder month of February.



MELODIES OF LOVE ON YONECO FM

By Gracium Mkonda Chithonje

Atop an anthill, a young man sits,
His back turned to the village,
Yet his gaze fixed upon the woodland's edge.
He whistles and sings with pure delight.

A radio set dangles loosely from his neck, Tuned to the real voice of the youth, women and children,

Broadcasting across the airwaves, piercing even the densest realms,

Crystal clear on frequencies 101.0 and 100.8.

The young man's face radiates joy,
His soul enriched by the artfully woven
programming,
Generously broadcasted on the waves of
YONECO FM,
Skillfully blended with tunes that shape
behavior.

In this month of love, a smile graces the young man's lips,

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Promoting Healthy Behaviours among Learners in Rumphi



On January 22, 2024, YONECO in Rumphi district conducted an awareness session on promoting healthy behavior at Rumphi Catholic Primary School. The session targeted Standards 5–8 students and aimed to shift mindsets towards seeking positive behavior change.

Teachers reported an increase in cases of students engaging in sexual relationships, drug abuse including marijuana and alcohol, and issues with school discipline. The YONECO officer urged students to end relationships and focus on academics, emphasizing the serious consequences of risky behaviors like unplanned teenage

Insert: YONECO Field Officer for Rumphi district Edward Nyirenda (In green vest) engaging the learners during the awareness session

pregnancies and school dropout. The officer also publicized toll-free helplines students could contact for support.

Teachers reported an increase in A total of 167 learners participated in cases of students engaging in sexual the session, including 85 males and relationships, drug abuse including 82 females.

YONECO plans follow-up sessions at reinforce school to the the on messages. The district office will also engage parents and community leaders efforts towards to align positive youth development.

YONECO Conducts Drug and Substance Abuse Session with Young People in Blantyre



Insert: A group of young people who were reached with drug and substance abuse awareness session in Blantyre.

On January 11, 2024, YONECO Blantyre negative peer pressure and poverty, conducted a session on drug and and effects like school dropout and substance abuse with young people. It juvenile delinquency. aimed to raise awareness and educate on the harmful effects of alcoholism and YONECO further explained ways to substance abuse on families, workplaces, and society.

When asked to abuse, a responded that it is the excessive use of emphasized. drugs like alcohol, medications, or illegal these sessions in various locations with drugs, leading to harm. The interactive different youth. discussion covered causes, like

individuals, avoid drug and substance abuse, including avoiding negative peers and having high self-esteem. Seeking help define drug and for mental illness and reporting those youth quickly experiencing it for counseling was YONECO will

Tithandizane

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Ufulu Wanga Project Trains Community Advocates



Insert: Executive Director for Standing Voice, Bonface Massa engaging with the stakeholders during one of the training sessions in Machinga district.

trained a total of 100 community advocates in with albinism have been having in people Machinga and Zomba districts under Ufulu surrounding them and that the two parties Wanga Project. The trained community cadres will now start moving towards the same have been drilled to protect and advance the direction. with albinism rights of people in their designated areas.

Zomba, the Executive Director of YONECO, people have platforms to speak out on all MacBain Mkandawire, urged the trained cadres the abuses that are experienced in their to tirelessly speak out against the violence and localities," explained Massa. abuse that People with Albinism (PWA) experience. Mkandawire said that one of the One of the participants in the training, Edward heart-breaking challenges is that communities Chiphwanja, a Health Surveillance Assistant are too silent about the killings and abductions (HSA) at Chingale Health Centre described of PWA.

strong community activism and amplifying the his key role in promoting the rights of PWA. voices for the authorities to take action to prevent violence against PWA, Mkandawire.

Director for Standing Voice, expressed his Ntcheu, Balaka, Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba, optimism that the training will contribute

In partnership with Standing Voices, YONECO towards bringing back the lost trust people

"The take-home message of this training is that you should cement the relationship Speaking during one of the training sessions in amongst stakeholders and ensure that

the training as an eye-opener. Chiphwanja explained that the training In addition, Mkandawire said there is a need for enlightened him and made him comprehend

explained Ufulu Wanga Project is a two-year project with the primary goal of protecting the rights of people with albinism. The project is being In his remarks, Boniface Massa, Executive implemented in eight districts namely Dedza, Phalombe and Mulanje.

Lost in the Aftermath of Cyclone Freddy: Sabina's Struggle for Dignity and Education



Insert: Sabina preparing for her lessons at Mudi Primary School in Blantyre.

By Enallah Msukwa

destitution and continue to emerge from the maintain her hardworking spirit. areas that were hit by the disaster.

was a polite, cheerful and hard-sitting on the However, the end of Cyclone school. loved and cherished. cyclone-induced floods away foodstuffs, clothes, and Mary children of which Sabina is the and the rugs she second eldest.

several months, accounts of Despite all the hardships, Sabina far behind her classmates. desolation resolved to remain in school and

However, one late veranda. working standard 7 student at aroused their interest and they promised continued support. Mudi Primary School in Blantyre. inquired why she was not at Sabina explained Freddy which occurred between ordeal from the point she was 11 and 13 March 2023 also meant given a one-week suspension by the end of various things she a male teacher for absconding The from school.

explained that other household items for the absconded from school after an family of six people comprising incident whereby she soiled her a father, his wife and four uniform as she was menstruating

used due to lack of sanitary pads failed to hold and ended up soiling her dress. She left school with her face down as her fellow students, especially boys, heartlessly mocked her.

Feeling shy, Sabina failed to explain to the male teacher why she was absent from school. Sabina's confidence escaped her and the teacher translated her silence as having no good reason for her absenteeism. The suspension was the last straw as Sabina realized that her parents lost their sole source of income and there was no hope that the parents would be able to give her Thus, having lost the commodities money for sanitary pads in the small-scale business following months. Sabina also felt venture which brought food to the that the days she was absent due to The socioeconomic aftermath of table as well as enabled the lack of sanitary pads and the Cyclone Freddy seems long- family to meet other necessities, suspension she got from school all lasting. Despite the passage of everything came to a standstill. affected her studies as she was left

The mother groups took up the matter with the school authorities Monday who re-enrolled Sabina. In addition morning, mother group members to this, the office of the School Health Before Cyclone Freddy, Sabina from her area found her at home Nutrition Coordinator supported her This with sanitary materials and she was

> The mother groups were specifically trained by YONECO to intensify their efforts in dealing with the female learners as it was noted that various factors were affecting their studies after the tropical cyclone. The she training was conducted with support from Unicef through Strengthening Child Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations through the National Helpline Services Project.

YONECO Calls on Political Aspirants to Outline Strategies for Protecting People with Albinism

Insert: Let the aspiring presidents, members of parliament and ward counsellors come forward with information on how they will address the security concerns of PWA - Mkandawire.

The Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire has called on political aspirants for the forthcoming 2025 Tripartite Elections in Malawi to clearly outline their strategies for safeguarding the rights of Persons with Albinism (PWA).

Mkandawire expressed his worry over the continued lack of political will, which he described as one of the major contributing

factors that hamper success in the promotion of the rights of people with albinism in Malawi.

"Malawi will be going to the polls aspiring year. Let the next presidents, members parliament and ward counsellors come forward with information on how they will address the PWA," security concerns of explained Mkandawire.

The Executive Director of YONECO bemoaned that there is little being done by politicians to the brutal prevent killings, abductions and other gross human rights violations which PWA have been facing in Malawi. Mkandawire stated that it will be easy to track progress and hold the leaders to account when they have the strategies safeguarding the welfare of PWA articulated in their manifestos.



Mangochi and Zomba DECs Approve Making Communities Resilient to Climate-Induced Health Challenges Project.



Insert: Programme Support Manager for YONECO Sewenthe Mahwayo making a presentation of the project to the District Executive Committee in Zomba.

On 26 January 2024, District Executive Committees (DECs) for Machinga and Zomba approved YONECO's bid to implement of 'Making Communities Resilient to Climate-Induced Health Challenges Project.'

Zomba and Machinga are among the districts in Malawi that have been greatly affected by the impact of climate change. Thanks to the financial support of Foundation S -The Sanofi Collective, we will

be able to work with community members and various stakeholders to deal with the impact of climate change on people's health.

The two DECs advised YONECO to continuously work with various community structures to ensure the continuity of the interventions after the three-year time frame.

The DEC meetings were conducted after the project was recommended by Machinga and Zomba District Health Management Teams (DHMTs).

The Impact of Cyclone Freddy on Child **Protection**



By Enallah Msukwa

Cyclone Freddy, which hit Malawi The Malawi. A lot of people lost their man who is older by over half lives, and property and many her age. others were left destitute as their houses and food were washed The survivor's uncle away by the cyclone-induced informed of the incident and, sexual abuse under Section floods.

capitalized on the situation to marry the expectant girl. After YONECO engaged the parents carry out their malicious deeds. being left at the man's house, and relatives of the minor to One such case was reported to the girl's relatives YONECO district office in Blantyre warned her to stay at her implications in October, 2023. The reported 'matrimonial' house or face a associated with forcing a child case involved a 15-year-old girl severe who was alleged to have been returning sexually abused by a 34-year-old home. The case meant one With their understanding, the man. The Standard 7 student at mouth less to feed hence the parents joined YONECO in Kapeni Primary School was lured parents and relatives simply following up on the case till it by the promise of getting some perceived doughnuts into the house of a opportunity and not an abuse man who defiled her. that the girl suffered

The survivor kept the ordeal a However, the man chased her 21-year prison sentence. secret under the threat of being the next morning and the girl killed by her assailant if she told was destitute and she had YONECO anyone. The incident happened nowhere to go. Fortunately, a Psychosocial in August of 2023 but it came to neighbour light two months later when the matter to YONECO. The case intends to return to school girl's mother discovered that her was immediately referred to after delivery. daughter had fallen pregnant.

girl narrated what girl and medical a in March of 2023, devastated the happened on the day she examination also revealed lives of many people in some experienced the traumatic that the girl was two months parts of the southern region of incident at the hands of a pregnant.

agreed confront

Unfortunately, some individuals perpetrator and force him to beating to her this as

reported

the Police who interviewed the

assaulter on 19 October 2023 was to answer charges of child together with other relatives, 138 (1) of the Penal Code of

This led to the arrest of the

the Malawi.

sternly educate them about the legal upon into marriage and the legal parents' implications of child neglect. an was concluded in court.

> After being found guilty by the court, the man was handed a

has scheduled counselling the sessions for the





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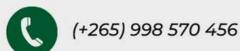
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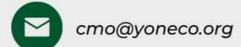
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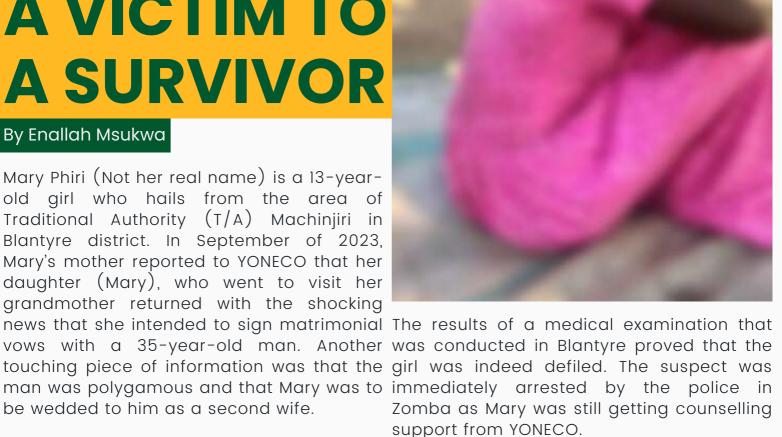
A GIRL'S **JOURNEY FROM BEING A VICTIM TO A SURVIVOR**

By Enallah Msukwa

Mary Phiri (Not her real name) is a 13-yearold girl who hails from the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Machinjiri in Blantyre district. In September of 2023, Mary's mother reported to YONECO that her daughter (Mary), who went to visit her grandmother returned with the shocking be wedded to him as a second wife.

YONECO swiftly followed up and organized a between July and August, 2023. Mary imposed a 14-year jail sentence. explained that the man had promised to drop out of school and marry him.

With these details, YONECO referred the of-term examinations. matter to the Police in Blantyre who notified to follow up on the case.



counselling session with Mary in which she The Zomba First Grade Magistrate's Court revealed that she was defiled twice found the suspect guilty of the crime and

buy her clothes and a chitenje (a sarong). Mary is continuing with her studies and she Mary added that the man further promised is currently in standard 5 at Namilongo her a comfortable life once she agreed to Primary School in Blantyre. During the last academic, she was on position number 12 in a class of 60 learners who sat for the end-

contacted their colleagues in Zomba where "I am putting in extra effort and I am alleged incidents of defilement confident that I will make my dream of occurred. At the same time, YONECO Child becoming a police officer a reality," Protection Officers in Zomba were also explained Mary during one of the home visits which YONECO conducted.

Dr. Juliet Nyasulu Donates to Promote Computer Literacy among the Youth



Insert: YONECO Rumphi District Manager, George Mbizi, receiving the items from Dr. Juliet Nyasulu together with the district staff.

District Office YONECO's in district.

Dr. Nyasulu is a lecturer at Stellenbosch In addition to this, Dr. Nyasulu, in collaboration South Africa and University donation will versed in technology.

In this venture, four young people will be their peers in the targeted area. selected by members of their

Rumphi youth clubs to undergo a comprehensive received a generous donation of a computer training course, which will be computer, printer and toner from Dr. facilitated by Youth Hub. The trained youth Juliet Nyasulu in a bid to promote representatives will be tasked with the computer literacy among the youth in the responsibility of creating a ripple effect of computer literacy in their respective areas.

her with Stellenbosch University, also supported significantly contribute the training of peer educators from Thofu area towards enhancing young people's tech- in Mzimba district. The young cadres were savvy skills and ensure that they are well-drilled in the delivery of life skills, Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), as well as HIV/AIDS and positive living sessions among



Insert: Young people from Mbulumbuzi during the SRHR awareness session that was organised in the district.

health foundational Good is a of element sustainable development. Our work in women empowerment and youth further development extends Reproductive promoting Sexual Health and Rights (SRHR).

Thus, with support from Centre for Diseases Control (CDC), YONECO is implementing interventions that are aimed at reducing the spread of HIV.

Among other activities, project officers conduct SRHR awareness sessions covering topics around Pre-

CDC Collaborates with YONECO in Promotion of Good Health and HIV Prevention

exposure prophylaxis (Prep), HIV Testing and adherence to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), correct condom use, as well as Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).

With support from CDC, YONECO is implementing a project that is aimed at addressing unmet needs in HIV Testing Services (HTS) for Men and Key Populations for HIV/AIDS services through effective delivery models in Malawi under PEPFAR. The project interventions are being implemented in Chiradzulu, Chikwawa, and Mwanza.

Taking Action to Combat Climate Change-Induced Health Challenges



Insert: YONECO staff flanked by the Executive Director, Mr. MacBain Mkandawire posing for a group photo after the inception meeting in Liwonde.

On 12 and 13 January, YONECO organized an inception for 'Making Communities Resilient to Climate Change-Induced Health Challenges Project' meeting for its members of staff at Liwonde Sun Hotel in Machinga district.

With the financial support of Foundation S
-The Sanofi Collective, YONECO will
implement the three-year project in the
area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Mposa
and Mwambo in Machinga and Zomba
districts respectively.

In his remarks, the Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, reminded the meeting that the impact of climate change on health is huge hence the need to tirelessly support community members to evade the health hazards.



YONECO Conducts SRHR Awareness Session with Youth in Rumphi



Insert: Field Officer for YONECO in Rumphi, posing with young people who come to access services at the DIC.

On January 12, 2024, Rumphi YONECO officers conducted an SRHR awareness session with local youth. The interactive session covered comprehensive sex education, teenage pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted infections, safe sex practices, and managing peer pressure.

Participants were oriented on the consequences of engaging in unsafe sexual activities. The officers distributed 105 male condoms and 20 water-based lubricants to promote protection.

YONECO plans to continue SRHR education efforts in Rumphi district through additional youth workshops and community outreach. Future sessions will incorporate roleplaying and quizzes to reinforce learning. The organization aims to partner with local schools and clinics to maximize reach.

A total of 10 young people actively participated in the discussion.











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