



YONECO VOICE



Monthly Newsletter

February 2024

Issue 2

Volume 50



Inside

Ufulu Wanga Project Trains Community Advocates

PAGE 8

The Impact of Cyclone Freddy on Child Protection

PAGE 12

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

PAGE 16

Contents

Executive Director's Note.....1

Promoting Healthy Behaviour Among Learners in Rumphi.....5

YONECO Conducts Drug and Substance Abuse Session with Young People in Blantyre.....6

Ufulu Wanga Project Trains Community Advocates in Machinga District.....8

Lost in the Aftermath of Cyclone Freddy: Sabina's Struggle for Dignity and Education.....9

YONECO Calls on Political Aspirants to Outline their Strategies for Protecting People with Albinism.....10

Mangochi and Zomba DECs Approve Making Communities Resilient to Climate-Induced Health Challenges Project.....11

The Impact of Cyclone Freddy on Child Protection.....12

A Girl's Journey from Being a Victim to a Survivor.....14

Dr. Nyasulu Donates to Promote Computer Literacy among the Youth15

CDC Collaborates with YONECO in Promotion of Good Health and HIV Prevention.....16

Taking Action to Combat Climate Change-Induced Health Challenges.....17

YONECO Conducts SRHR Awareness Session with Youth in Rumphi.....18

Production Team

Layout and Design
Wilson Mkandawire

Contributors

Gracium Chithonje
Enallah Msukwa
George Mlowoka
Titus Linzie
Sewenthe Mahwayo
Chipofya
Edward Baxter Nyirenda

Research, Monitoring & Evaluation Manager

Daniel Chikatentha

Executive Director
MacBain Mkandawire

TITHANDIZANE HELPLINE SERVICES

Seek Support today

CHILD HELPLINE	YOUTH HELPLINE
116	393
GENDER BASED VIOLENCE CRISIS LINE	DRUG & SUBSTANCE ABUSE HOTLINE
5600	6600

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.
- Research and Documentation



Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO)
C/o Youth Leadership Development Centre
Along M3 Zomba-Lilongwe RD
Next to Calvary Family Church
P.O Box 471, Zomba,
Malawi.

About Us

Our Vision

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



Our Mission

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

Our values

Integrity
Teamwork
Confidentiality
Respect for human dignity
Transparency and Accountability



Executive Director's Note...



with MacBain Mkandawire

Dear Esteemed 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.





Tsopano mutha kumvetsera wayilesi yanu yokonededwa ya YFM pa:

100.8 MHz
Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and surrounding areas.

101.0 MHz
Zomba, Thyolo, Chitipa and surrounding areas.

CHIDZIWITSO CHA KUSINTHA KWA MA FREQUENCY

MA FREQUENCY ATSOPANO

YFM - Liwu leni leni la achinyamata, amayi ndi ana.

www.yonecofm.com

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,
His steps steady, knowing YONECO FM cares,
His eyes nourished by words of love and
concern.
For 'Lovers' Corner Special' is brimming with
captivating love wisdom.





*Sustaining Institutional Growth and Independence
for Social and Economic Development of Youth,
Women and Children.*



YONECO CULTURAL TROUPE

Experts in: **Community Mobilization**

Advocacy

SBCC

For bookings

Contact:

The Executive Director or The Station Manager

Yoneco FM

P.O Box 471

Zomba, Malawi.

Tel: 01 525 764 - 01 526 199

Mobile: +265 888 919 623

Email: stationmanager@yoneco.org



www.yoneco.org

Promoting Healthy Behaviours among Learners in Rumphu



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

On January 22, 2024, YONECO in Rumphu district conducted an awareness session on promoting healthy behavior at Rumphu 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

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

A total of 167 learners participated in the session, including 85 males and 82 females.

YONECO plans follow-up sessions at the school to reinforce the messages. The district office will also engage parents and community leaders to align efforts towards 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 conducted a session on drug and substance abuse with young people. It aimed to raise awareness and educate on the harmful effects of alcoholism and substance abuse on individuals, families, workplaces, and society.

When asked to define drug and substance abuse, a youth responded that it is the excessive use of drugs, leading to harm. The interactive discussion covered causes, like

negative peer pressure and poverty, and effects like school dropout and juvenile delinquency.

YONECO further explained ways to avoid drug and substance abuse, including avoiding negative peers and having high self-esteem. Seeking help for mental illness and reporting those experiencing it for counseling was emphasized. YONECO will continue these sessions in various locations with different youth.

Tithandizane National Helpline Services



Youth Helpline
CALL 393
For FREE
Smart choices for young people

Drug & Substance Abuse Hotline
Seek Help
CALL 6600

Child Helpline
Let the Child Speak
CALL 112

GBV Crisis Line
Speak out and Stop Violence
CALL 112

Telephone
Face to Face
Social Reconciliation
Case Management
Safe Place
of GBV
other S
Free &



YONECO PRINTING & DIGITAL DESIGN SERVICES

Your one-stop design & printing shop

Offering you the best quality services at an affordable price

- Brochures
- Flyers
- Banners
- Booklets
- Magazines
- Newsletters

Services

- ✓ Website design, hosting & management
- ✓ Bulk Printing
- ✓ Color Printing
- ✓ Graphic design
- ✓ Screen printing

Location

YONECO Head Office
Along Zomba-Lilongwe RD

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.

In partnership with Standing Voices, YONECO trained a total of 100 community advocates in Machinga and Zomba districts under Ufulu Wanga Project. The trained community cadres have been drilled to protect and advance the rights of people with albinism in their designated areas.

Speaking during one of the training sessions in Zomba, the Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, urged the trained cadres to tirelessly speak out against the violence and abuse that People with Albinism (PWA) experience. Mkandawire said that one of the heart-breaking challenges is that communities are too silent about the killings and abductions of PWA.

In addition, Mkandawire said there is a need for strong community activism and amplifying the voices for the authorities to take action to prevent violence against PWA, explained Mkandawire.

In his remarks, Boniface Massa, Executive Director for Standing Voice, expressed his optimism that the training will contribute

towards bringing back the lost trust people with albinism have been having in people surrounding them and that the two parties will now start moving towards the same direction.

“The take-home message of this training is that you should cement the relationship amongst stakeholders and ensure that people have platforms to speak out on all the abuses that are experienced in their localities,” explained Massa.

One of the participants in the training, Edward Chipwanja, a Health Surveillance Assistant (HSA) at Chingale Health Centre described the training as an eye-opener. Chipwanja explained that the training greatly enlightened him and made him comprehend his key role in promoting the rights of PWA.

Ufulu Wanga Project is a two-year project with the primary goal of protecting the rights of people with albinism. The project is being implemented in eight districts namely Dedza, Ntcheu, Balaka, Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba, 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

The socioeconomic aftermath of Cyclone Freddy seems long-lasting. Despite the passage of several months, accounts of destitution and desolation continue to emerge from the areas that were hit by the disaster.

Before Cyclone Freddy, Sabina was a polite, cheerful and hard-working standard 7 student at Mudi Primary School in Blantyre. However, the end of Cyclone Freddy which occurred between 11 and 13 March 2023 also meant the end of various things she loved and cherished. The cyclone-induced floods took away foodstuffs, clothes, and other household items for the family of six people comprising a father, his wife and four children of which Sabina is the second eldest.

Thus, having lost the commodities for the small-scale business venture which brought food to the table as well as enabled the family to meet other necessities, everything came to a standstill. Despite all the hardships, Sabina resolved to remain in school and maintain her hardworking spirit.

However, one late Monday morning, mother group members from her area found her at home sitting on the veranda. This aroused their interest and they inquired why she was not at school. Sabina explained her ordeal from the point she was given a one-week suspension by a male teacher for absconding from school.

Mary explained that she absconded from school after an incident whereby she soiled her uniform as she was menstruating and the rags she

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 money for sanitary pads in the following months. Sabina also felt that the days she was absent due to lack of sanitary pads and the suspension she got from school all affected her studies as she was left far behind her classmates.

The mother groups took up the matter with the school authorities who re-enrolled Sabina. In addition to this, the office of the School Health Nutrition Coordinator supported her with sanitary materials and she was promised continued support.

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 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

By Titus Linzie



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

The Executive Director of YONECO bemoaned that there is little being done by politicians to prevent the brutal 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 for safeguarding the welfare of PWA articulated in their manifestos.



Mangochi and Zomba DEC's 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.

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

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.’**

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

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

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 in March of 2023, devastated the lives of many people in some parts of the southern region of Malawi. A lot of people lost their lives, and property and others were left destitute as their houses and food were washed away by the cyclone-induced floods.

Unfortunately, some individuals capitalized on the situation to carry out their malicious deeds. One such case was reported to the YONECO district office in Blantyre in October, 2023. The reported case involved a 15-year-old girl who was alleged to have been sexually abused by a 34-year-old man. The Standard 7 student at Kapeni Primary School was lured by the promise of getting some doughnuts into the house of a man who defiled her.

The survivor kept the secret under the threat of being killed by her assailant if she told anyone. The incident happened in August of 2023 but it came to light two months later when the girl's mother discovered that her daughter had fallen pregnant.

The girl narrated what happened on the day she experienced the traumatic incident at the hands of a pregnant girl and a medical examination also revealed that the girl was two months pregnant.

This led to the arrest of the assailant on 19 October 2023 to answer charges of child sexual abuse under Section 138 (1) of the Penal Code of Malawi.

The survivor's uncle was informed of the incident and together with other relatives agreed to confront the perpetrator and force him to marry the expectant girl. After YONECO engaged the parents and relatives of the minor to sternly educate them about the legal implications that are associated with forcing a child into marriage and the legal implications of child neglect. With their understanding, the parents joined YONECO in following up on the case till it was concluded in court.

After being found guilty by the court, the man was handed a 21-year prison sentence.

However, the man chased her the next morning and the girl was destitute and she had nowhere to go. Fortunately, a neighbour reported the matter to YONECO. The case was immediately referred to the Police who interviewed the



The real voice of the youth, women and children



Like & follow



ADVERTISE WITH **YONECO FM** AND GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Our frequencies

100.8 MHz

101.0 MHz

For program and business placement

WE OFFER



EXTENSIVE AUDIENCE REACH

Let your product or service reach to a multitude of people from across Malawi



AFFORDABLE RATES

Place your adverts and get the most affordable rates



VALUE FOR MONEY

Choose YFM and get the best service and value for your money.

CONTACT

Communications and Marketing Officer



(+265) 998 570 456



cmo@yoneco.org



Along Zomba-Lilongwe RD, Next to Calvary Family Church

www.yonecofm.com

LET'S GROW WITH US

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

By Enallah Msukwa

Mary Phiri (Not her real name) is a 13-year-old 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 news that she intended to sign matrimonial vows with a 35-year-old man. Another touching piece of information was that the man was polygamous and that Mary was to be wedded to him as a second wife.

YONECO swiftly followed up and organized a counselling session with Mary in which she revealed that she was defiled twice between July and August, 2023. Mary explained that the man had promised to buy her clothes and a chitenje (a sarong). Mary added that the man further promised her a comfortable life once she agreed to drop out of school and marry him.

With these details, YONECO referred the matter to the Police in Blantyre who contacted their colleagues in Zomba where the alleged incidents of defilement occurred. At the same time, YONECO Child Protection Officers in Zomba were also notified to follow up on the case.



The results of a medical examination that was conducted in Blantyre proved that the girl was indeed defiled. The suspect was immediately arrested by the police in Zomba as Mary was still getting counselling support from YONECO.

The Zomba First Grade Magistrate's Court found the suspect guilty of the crime and imposed a 14-year jail sentence.

Mary is continuing with her studies and she is currently in standard 5 at Namilongo 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-of-term examinations.

"I am putting in extra effort and I am confident that I will make my dream of becoming a police officer a reality," explained Mary during one of the home visits which YONECO conducted.

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

By George Mbidzi



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

YONECO’s District Office in 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 district.

computer literacy in their respective areas.

Dr. Nyasulu is a lecturer at Stellenbosch University in South Africa and her donation will significantly contribute towards enhancing young people’s tech-savvy skills and ensure that they are well-versed in technology.

In addition to this, Dr. Nyasulu, in collaboration with Stellenbosch University, also supported the training of peer educators from Thofu area in Mzimba district. The young cadres were drilled in the delivery of life skills, Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), as well as HIV/AIDS and positive living sessions among their peers in the targeted area.

In this venture, four young people will be selected by members of their



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

Good health is a foundational element of sustainable development. Our work in women empowerment and youth development further extends to promoting Sexual Reproductive 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.

Tithandizane National Helpline Services

- Youth Helpline**
CALL **393**
For FREE
Smart choices for young people
- Drug & Substance Abuse Helpline**
CALL **6600**
For FREE
to seek support on drug & substance abuse
- Child Helpline**
Let the Child Speak.
CALL **116**
For FREE
to report any form of Child Abuse
- GBV Crisis Line**
Speak out and Stop Violence
CALL **5600**
For FREE
to report any form of Gender Based Violence

Other Services
Free & Confidential

Emails:
drug.yoneco.org
help@tithandizanehelpline.org
gbv.yoneco.org
www.tithandizanehelpline.org

Visit our website: www.yoneco.org

YONECO Conducts SRHR Awareness Session with Youth in Rumphi

By Edward Baxter Nyirenda



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.



Irish Aid
Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Trócaire



116
CHILD
HELPLINE



5600
GBV CRISIS
LINE



393
YOUTH
HELPLINE



6600
DRUG &
SUBSTANCE ABUSE
HOTLINE

TITHANDIZANE NATIONAL HELPLINE SERVICES

 Free and confidential services

OTHER SERVICES

-  Telephone Counselling.
-  Face to Face counselling.
-  Social Rehabilitation.
-  Case Management.
-  Safe Places for survivors of GBV and VAWC.

Email:
drug@yoneco.org | help@tithandizanehelpline.org
gbv@yoneco.org | visit www.tithandizanehelpline.org for more.



www.yoneco.org