



YONECO VOICE



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Production Team

Layout and Design

Wilson Mkandawire

Contributors

Gracium Chithonje
 Enallah Msukwa
 Dunreck Pande
 Chancy Kumwenda
 Chimwemwe Mikwala
 Edward Baxter Nyirenda
 Grant Dulla
 Thokozani Maulidi
 Mbanandi Mahala

Research, Monitoring & Evaluation Manager

Daniel Chikatentha

Executive Director

MacBain Mkandawire

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

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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...



Dear Esteemed Readers,

with MacBain Mkandawire

I would like to start this entry with a conversation I had with Mr. Gracium Chithonje, YONECO's Finance Officer, over work performance issues. In his reflections, he said it would be necessary for employees to contemplate whether they would hire someone with their attitude, work approach, and performance and alike if they were an employer. In other words, would we employ ourselves in our current state? He sounded very philosophical maybe because he is a pastor. I found his line of thinking very interesting and inspiring.

We seriously need to reflect on whether we are in government offices, working in NGOs or managing our businesses. "In our current state as an employee of the organizations or company we are working for; would we employ ourselves in the organization or company? Would the organization or company move forward? What would it take to move?" Would this be the reason why our business fails to thrive? We have restaurants that open at 08:00am and close at 04:45pm and expect to make the same amount of money as someone who opened at 05:00am and closed at 09:00pm.

Our approach to work, business and life in general leaves a lot to be desired. The majority of us develop plans for our bosses and supervisors and have no clue how useful this is in our lives. We seriously have to reflect on these matters. It is so unfortunate that for every wrong, we point fingers at the government, leaders or the president. Others will say it is about leadership. But do we also perceive ourselves as part of those leaders?

Over the last few weeks, we have been talking to young people about their visions and missions. The results have been devastating. A simple question of "What do you want to achieve when you reach 50 years?" has sent the majority of our young people packing with no clear direction. We are wondering whether this is a reflection of the current standards of our education or not. Mind you, there are young people with diplomas or degrees and they have no clue in terms of what they want to become. We are asking ourselves whether career counselling is still operational or not. This poses a great threat to our young people because if they have no direction, then the country has no direction at all. Personal leadership

development is fundamental and starts with “defining a personal vision and mission.” If one cannot define a personal direction, it means every direction is possible. Defining a personal vision means that you will channel all your energies to this vision and mission. In line with the Malawi Vision 2063, every individual has a contribution to make. Take time to reflect on your vision and mission and set targets for yourself.

As we move ahead, it is worth highlighting that Malawi has experienced El Nino which has seen the southern region and other parts of the central region being hit by drought. As we reflect on our operations, let us spend time on how we are going to support the affected areas and people. What plans do we have and how are we going to address the situations in the communities?

Allow me to conclude this entry by reminding everyone that March 3, 2024, is a day when we remember those who died for the liberation of Malawi. However, as we remember these heroes, we should also reflect on the recent developments in the political environments where we are seeing very retrogressive events of political party clashes. We are over 18 months to the Tripartite Elections day and it is so unfortunate that we have now begun witnessing political violence. We urge political party leaders and their supporters to refrain from inciting violence. Our goal should be to make Malawi a great nation and a real democratic state. Young people, do not be used in these appalling acts.

Thank you and have an interesting read.

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WHISPERS BENEATH THE MOONLIGHT

By Gracium Mkonda
Chithonje

Centuries-old men, gathered beneath the
moon's soft gleam,
Around the fire's flickering light, they convene,
Recalling tales of bygone days, it seems,
Their voices weave a saga of days of yore.

In laughter and solemnity, their discourse
flows,
Setting the evening's mood as darkness
grows,
They speak of battles fought, of blood that
flows,
Of youthful valor and sacrifice untold.

Dreams of a unified land, free and grand,
Where tribal and political divides are banned,
Yet, they lament, the promise remains
unmanned,
As struggles persist and peace eludes their
hand.

They mourn the souls of martyrs past,
Witnessing today's tribulations amassed,
Youth ensnared by alcohol's grasp,
Gender violence rampant, shadows cast.

Children, too, face new trials each day,
Their innocence lost in life's rough play,
Despite sacrifices made along the way,
Economic woes still hold sway.





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Tel: 01 525 764 - 01 526 199

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Email: stationmanager@yoneco.org



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YONECO Hosts SADC Youth Helpline project IPs on NAC learning visit.



Insert: Young girls from DOMASI Institute of Management and Social Sciences performing their act during the community activation session

On 13 February 2024, YONECO hosted Zimbabwe Youth Advocates during a community activation session that was held at Domasi Institute of Management and Social Sciences in Zomba. The activity was aimed at promoting young people’s access to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services.

The delegates first made a courtesy call to the office of the District Commissioner for Zomba where the visitors appreciated how the use of the toll-free Youth Helpline (393) has enhanced young people’s access to individualized information, counselling and referrals on HIV and AIDS.

The community activation session attracted college students and other young people from the vicinity of the college. The activity was electrified by dynamic live performances by

various groups and the YONECO Cultural Troupe. Among other activities, the groups performed plays as well as traditional songs and dances.

The Youth Helpline initiative is being led by Youth Advocates – Zimbabwe with financial support from SADC.

The intervention enables youth access to comprehensive information through a toll-free Youth Helpline (393). Young people voluntarily sign up by texting a short code, or by sending a free “call me back” using mobile phones. Once registered, young people access individualized HIV and AIDS as well as SRHR information services, specialist counselling, referrals to high-impact HIV services, reminders for their service appointments, and confirmation of service uptake.

YONECO Drills 59 Young People with Life Skills in Rumphu

By Edward Baxter Nyirenda

In February 2024, YONECO conducted a series of life skills sessions at Rumphu Youth Drop-In-Centre targeting young people between 10 and 18 years of age from the vicinity of the centre.

The sessions were aimed at equipping the young participants with the necessary life skills to enable them to resist peer pressure which is among the leading factors that drive many young people into drug and substance abuse.

Consequently, many young people in the areas have been struggling with mental health problems. In addition, authorities in the districts also bemoaned the high prevalence of juvenile delinquency.

Thus, this compelled YONECO to intervene by engaging the young people themselves to understand the dangers of drugs and substance abuse and ably make informed choices.

In total, 59 young people comprising 25 girls and 34 boys attended the education sessions that were conducted for three weeks.



Insert: Young people who attended the life skill session in the district

YONECO Conducts Drug and Substance Abuse Awareness Campaign in Mangochi

By Grant Dulla



Insert: A cross sectional view of some participants during the awareness session in Mangochi.

On 14 February 2024, YONECO through its district office in Mangochi organized a drug and substance abuse awareness session targeting young people from the township.

The session helped young people to comprehensively understand the potential physical and mental health dangers and other negative effects of drug and substance abuse.

During the session, the facilitators focused on how young people can avoid falling into the addiction trap. Some young people demonstrated a prior understanding knowledge of the dangers of drug and substance abuse and they were interested to learn new ways of avoiding the malpractice.

Finally, the young people who attended the session were also urged to reach out for support whenever they or someone they know is having mental health problems.

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Door-to-Door Campaign to End GBV

By Grant Dulla



Insert: YONECO officers at one of the houses during the door to door campaign to end GBV in the district.

Several emerging issues and unreported cases of GBV were unearthed. Thus, the session facilitated the cases and made the necessary referrals for other stakeholders to provide other services.

The women and adolescent girls who were engaged during the campaign were urged to report all GBV cases using the available reporting mechanisms that were shared as well.

ATTENTION!

CHANGE OF PHONE NUMBERS

Please note that we have changed our ground lines and the new numbers are as follows:

MAIN LINES

- +265 111 626 199
- +265 111 625 560

FAX LINE

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

- +265 111 624 018

UPCOMING DAYS

MARTYRS DAY

3 MARCH, 2024

- **Martyrs' Day** is a public holiday observed in Malawi every year on March 3. The holiday helps to honor the political heroes who gave their lives in the struggle against British colonialism.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8 MARCH, 2024

- **2024 Theme:** "Inspire Inclusion"

WORLD WATER DAY

22 MARCH, 2024

- **2023 Theme:** "Water for Peace"

YONECO Facilitates the Establishment of VSLA Group at Machinjiri, Blantyre

By Sewenthe Mahwayo



Insert: Members of the newly established VSLA from Machinjiri after their group was formed at YONECO offices in Blantyre

YONECO has facilitated the establishment of a Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) at Machinjiri in Blantyre to enable the members to save and invest in small-scale businesses to improve their economic status.

There are multiple barriers that prevent women from accessing loans including their inability to satisfy collateral requirements. As such, the establishment of a VSLA is the best way to ensure that women are contributing some shares to form a pool that enables them to access soft loans from their savings.

After the establishment, YONECO will train the members in business management and financial literacy. The VSLA members were also urged to start considering the business they should venture into by analyzing the market gaps that are in their areas.

"Most of us are single mothers and we look after our children. With the current economic hardships, managing a small-scale business is very important and we are looking forward to a day when we will have enough money to borrow a start-up capital," explained one of the VSL members.

Tikuchitapo chani poonetsetsa kuti anthu akhungu la chialubino akupeza thandizo pamene ufulu wawo waphwanyidwa

Tikugwira ntchito limodzi kuonetsetsa kuti anthu achialubino akuonetsa kuthekera kwawo.

Pali dongosolo lalikulu laboma lothandizira kupereka thandizo kwa anthu a khungu la chialubino kuno ku Malawi.

Dongosololi likuyang'ana magawo awa:

- Kudziwa ufulu wanu.
- Kuteteza ufulu wanu.
- Kufalitsa mauthenga wosonyeza kuthekera kumene anthu akhungu la chialubino alinako.
- Kuthetsa nkhanza ndi kusalidwa kwa anthu a khungu la chialubino.
- Kuthandiza anthu amene achitilidwa nkhanza ndi mabanja awo, monga, kuwamangira nyumba zotetezeka.
- Kupereka thandizo lakuchipatala ndi maphunziro.
- Kutukula anthu a khungu la chialubino.



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CDC Malawi Country Director Visits IPs in Blantyre and Chiladzulu

By Thokozani Maulidi



Insert: CDC delegation led by CDC Malawi country director, Kelsey Mirkovic, during one of their visits in Chiradzulu district where YONECO is implementing key population interventions.

On 1st February the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) Country Director, Kelsey Mirkovic, visited some of YONECO's impact areas in Blantyre and Chiladzulu districts.

In her remarks, CDC Malawi country Director expressed her satisfaction with the quality of work which the CDC Malawi implementing partners are doing. Apart from YONECO, Kelsey Mirkovic also paid a visit to EGPAF, MACRO and DAPP who are in Chiradzulu and Blantyre implementing similar interventions.

Some of the key successes that have been registered across all partners include the linkage to care for all key populations who tested HIV positive, and the ability of partners to continuously reach hard-to-reach areas. In addition, the partners have also contributed to reduced stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS and that many children are being withdrawn from hot spots among others.

With financial support from CDC, YONECO is implementing interventions to address the unmet needs in HIV services for men and key populations for HIV and AIDS services through effective delivery models in Malawi under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).



Stakeholders Hail SADC HIV and AIDS Youth Helpline Project

By Chimwemwe Mikwala



Insert: Delegates from NAC, YAZ and YONECO posing for a group photo after engaging the District Commissioner for Zomba on the success of the project.

Stakeholders have hailed the SADC **“Enhancing Access to Integrated HIV and AIDS Services Among Adolescents and Young People Through M-Health in Southern Africa”** project for enabling youth access to free information through the youth helpline toll-free line on HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services.

During a courtesy call on Tuesday, Zomba District Commissioner, Reinghard Chavula said the project has helped young people to freely express themselves due to the anonymity aspect, which has saved most from dying in silence.

The project, which is being implemented in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Botswana, aims at enhancing access to integrated HIV/AIDS

services among adolescents and young people through M-health in Southern Africa.

The leader of the Zimbabwe delegation from the National Aids Council-NAC, Freeman Dube said they have drawn pertinent lessons from the project that will help enhance their service provision.

On his part, one of the implementing partners, Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) through its Executive Director MacBain Mkandawire, attributed the project's success to collaboration between partners and stakeholders.

Mkandawire expressed hope for a more holistic approach going forward with the project.

Youth Advocates Zimbabwe Hosts YONECO, NAC and MoH on a learning visit

By Mbanandi Mahala



Insert: Delegates from Malawi, Botswana and Zimbabwe during the learning visit for the Enhancing Access to Integrated HIV and AIDS Services among Adolescents and Young People in Zimbabwe.

Young People Project. The SADC-funded project which was implemented for three years in Malawi by YONECO, Youth Advocates in Zimbabwe and BOFWA in Botswana.

YONECO programme team and delegates from the Malawi National AIDS Commission (NAC), and the Ministry of Health went on a learning visit in Zimbabwe where they were hosted by the Youth Advocates.

The project aimed to address the unique needs of young people between the ages of 10 and 24. The project focused on HIV prevention interventions such as service provision, referral support, as well as Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information.

This visit was aimed at facilitating knowledge exchange, promote collaboration, and enhance the overall dissemination of results in the operations and management of youth helplines.

The learning visit was organized under Enhancing Access to Integrated HIV and AIDS Services among Adolescents and



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YONECO Takes Legal Awareness to Communities

By Grant Dulla



Insert: Community members from Masi Village during the awareness session

Community members fail to exercise or safeguard their rights due to limited knowledge of the law. Despite a strong legal framework for the protection of children and the prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The cases keep soaring because the laws are not properly reinforced due to various factors which also include a lack of knowledge about their existence among people at the community level.

As such, on 2 February 2024, YONECO conducted a legal awareness session at Masi Village in Mangochi. The session mainly focused on child protection and GBV-related laws. The laws that were looked at include the Gender Equality Act (2013), Child Care, Protection and Justice Act (2010), Marriage Divorce and Family Relations Act (2015) as well as other key sections within the Constitution of Malawi.

During the session, community members requested YONECO to produce and share the popular versions of the laws for reference.

A total number of 148 participants attended the session of which 56 were males and 92 were females.

YONECO Schedules Mental Health Sessions in Primary Schools

By Edward Baxter Nyirenda

Young people need to be equipped with the necessary life skills to navigate through everyday hardships and seek help when required. Young people usually turn to negative coping mechanisms, like alcohol and drug abuse, which not only fail to help them but worsen their situation.

Rumphi has also been registering a lot of mental health cases. Statistics indicate that the police in the district recorded 10 cases

of suicide from January to June 2023 as compared to 5 cases recorded over the same period in 2022. Heartrendingly, some of the reported suicide cases involved primary school learners.

It is against this background that YONECO has scheduled a series of mental health sessions in various primary schools to help young people find proper ways of dealing with various issues.

The first session was conducted at St Dennis Primary School where the learners acknowledged an increase in underage drinking, as well as drug and abuse of various substances among their peers.

YONECO Officers raised awareness of the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse, shared some best coping mechanisms and urged all the learners to reach out for help when they are in need.



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LET'S GROW WITH US

The Impact of BEFIT Programme in Chitipa District

By Dunreck Pande

Chitipa is one of the districts in Malawi where Building Education Foundations through Innovation and Technology (BEFIT) Programme is being implemented to improve the foundational literacy and numeracy skills of primary school learners.

Through the BEFIT Programme, a lot of children in Chitipa have been motivated to go back to school after staying at home for several academic years. Significantly, the programme has contributed to a substantial reduction in dropout rates in the targeted schools.

Thomas Mulungu is a 12-year-old Standard 4 learner at Meru Primary School in the district. Thomas hails from Vongonyo Village, in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Mwaulambia. Thomas comes from a financially disadvantaged family and more often than not, he goes to school on an empty stomach. Thomas is just one of the many learners in the area whose parents do not have reliable means of earning income to fully provide the necessary support to their children.



Insert: Thomas Mulungu engaging with a tablet during one of the sessions at Meru Primary School.

Before the introduction of tablet learning under the BEFIT Programme, Thomas was a perpetual absentee due to poverty. Consequently, this reflected badly on his academic performance.

The introduction of tablet lessons at Meru Primary School has invigorated Thomas, who has not missed a single class in this academic term.

One of the teachers alluded to the fact that Thomas' performance has greatly improved, and he is enjoying his studies despite the other socioeconomic challenges that are there.

Stimulating Community Action to End Child Marriage

By Chancy Kumwenda



Insert: Stakeholders during the child rights education and community awareness raising to end child marriage engagement meeting.

Child marriage continues to obstruct Malawian girls from achieving their dreams. The current robust national legal and policy framework needs to be complemented by other interventions like child rights education and community awareness raising to end the problem.

YONECO, in collaboration with various stakeholders, has been conducting child rights education and awareness sessions at various levels targeting both children and the general population.

Community Policing Coordinator for Chitipa, Inspector Kundimbule bemoaned the tendency of parents to force their children into marriage as a way of evading their parental responsibilities. Inspector Kundimbe warned the

communities against the malpractice at a child rights awareness meeting that YONECO and Chitipa Police Station organized in the area of Senior Group Village Head (SGVH) Mukumanyama in the district.

In his remarks, SGVH Mukumanyama, urged his subjects to use the various available reporting mechanisms to report child marriages and other abuse cases.

In total, the session was attended by 250 community members of which 150 were men and 100 were women.

Malawi is among the countries in the world that are still grappling with shockingly high rates of child marriage cases. According to Unicef, approximately 42 per cent of girls in Malawi are married before the age of 18, and 9 per cent of them sign their matrimonial vows before their 15th birthday.

YONECO Promotes Male Involvement in Family Planning Among Bicycle Taxi Operators



Insert: Some of the bicycle taxi operators that were engaged during the family planning sessions in Blantyre.

Bicycle Taxi Operators (BTOs) are among the hard-to-reach groups of people with information due to the nature of their occupation. Thus, in a bid to promote male involvement in family planning, YONECO has been engaging various groups of men in various spaces.

“Men do not need to be involved in family planning because it is a woman's responsibility,”

On 13 February 2024, YONECO BTOs at Mnthawira Bicycle Taxi Rank in Blantyre. During the discussion, it was noted that some men strongly believe that family planning is the responsibility of women alone. Furthermore, it was also established that many men prevent their spouses from using modern

said Stanford Nahawa, one of the BTOs at Nthawira Bicycle Rank.

During the session, YONECO officers demonstrated the correct and proper ways of using condoms, water-based lubricants and HIV self-test kits before distributing the materials.



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Engaging CHWs in Preventing Climate Change-induced Health Challenges



Insert: Community Health Care workers from Traditional Authority (T/A) Mposa in Machinga district, together with YONECO staff posing for a group photo after the two-day meeting.

In a bid to combat health challenges that are induced by climate change, YONECO engaged Community Healthcare Workers (CHWs) on how to address the issues.

The CHWs acknowledged that there is an increase in incidences of certain diseases due to issues of climate change. The healthcare workers first listed down several climate change-induced challenges that are common in their areas before devising possible ways of dealing with the issues.

During the two meetings, it was noted that there is a need to strengthen the capacity of community members to avoid the various health hazards that result from the impact of climate change.

“Embracing preventive measures of climate change-induced health problems is more certain and effective than responding to the consequence,” explained one of the participants Hadija Abani.

The sessions that were attended by community health nurses, clinicians and Community-Based Distribution Agents (CBDA) were conducted in the areas of Traditional Authority (TA) Mposa and Mwambo in Machinga and Zomba districts respectively.

In total, 40 CHWs attended the two meeting sessions that were held under ‘Making Communities Resilient to Climate Change-Induced Challenges Project which YONECO is implementing with financial support of Foundation S -The Sanofi Collective.



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