



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.
- 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

As we dive into the fourth month of 2024, it is crucial to reflect upon an aspect of community development that was neglected some three decades ago – the "Youth Week." This initiative involved schools and communities uniting for extensive development endeavors without expecting monetary compensation. In Traditional Authority Katuli, Mangochi, Malawi, a sturdy structure stands proudly, bearing the inscription "Youth Week Project 1978," a testament to the enduring community effort. It is imperative to document and highlight such projects.

Youth Week was a beneficial endeavor that facilitated the transfer of skills from older to younger generations, providing essential labor for infrastructure development, such as school block construction, road clearing, and sanitation management in schools, health centers, and other communal areas. Additionally, it fostered patriotism and a sense of ownership towards the nation.

Regrettably, in some areas, Youth Week has been replaced by food-for-work programs, potentially leading to challenges in fostering a sense of ownership, where communities expect compensation for all efforts. This shift has created obstacles in cultivating patriotism where such initiatives are absent. It is crucial to rethink the National Youth Week and rebrand it as a Community Development Week, as being community development conscious and contributing to national development, where small acts at the community level can lead to significant developmental actions.

We have roads and paths that require rehabilitation, yet they are left unattended. These roads lead to schools, health facilities, and other communal amenities. Imagine a treacherous road leading to a health facility, and a maternity case must be referred to a district or rural hospital. An already complicated maternal health situation becomes exacerbated by a bumpy and difficult road, which instead of a 20-minute journey to the main road, takes over 1 hour and 30 minutes on a rough and bumpy path. Are we truly serious about preventing maternal deaths? Do we relate these maternal health issues to road infrastructure? Is this small path road part of the national road network? In Machinga, around Traditional Authority Nyambi, when villagers were working on the Integrated Functional Literacy project

around 2006, they constructed a bridge that connected a health facility to the main road. There was no money for this work, but communities identified this as a need in their area. We are aware of the constituency development fund, but we do not believe this fund is sufficient to clear paths to some village-level engagements.

Reintroducing and rebranding Youth Week as a "Community Development Week" is a stride towards mobilising and educating communities on the importance of participating in development projects. Engaging businesses to support community initiatives, involving youth, and fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in national development are key objectives.

By depoliticising development efforts and promoting civic engagement, we can enhance community participation. Village Development Committees, Area Development Committees, and ward councillors play pivotal roles in driving these development initiatives forward.

Let us embrace the opportunity in April 2024 to revitalise community development efforts and instil a sense of pride and responsibility in our communities.

Have a fruitful month.

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UPLIFTING UNITY: FIGHTING FOR ALBINISM RIGHTS

By Gracium Mkonda
Chithonje

In the vast expanse where joy takes flight,
Resounds the cry, "Ufulu! Ufulu wanga!"
The European Union extends its hand,
Binding Beyond Skincare, Standing
Voice,
And YONECO in solidarity's unity,
Championing the rights of people with
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Spreading awareness, nurturing
empathy,
For those whose voices often go
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Training the Youth to Incorporate Theatre into HIV Awareness and Engagement

By Shadreck Sindiza



Insert: Petros Matope (middle) Theatre for Development trainer from YONECO together with young people from Tsabango and Chitukula areas during the training session in Lilongwe

YONECO has trained 45 young people from Lilongwe city to utilize theatre as a tool for engaging young people and communities in a bid to address the rising rates of new HIV infections among young people and promote access to Sexual Reproductive Health (SRHR) services.

The training which was concurrently held at Kalulu Primary School and Kawale Health Centre targeted young

people from Tsabango and Chitukula areas.

The participants were selected from various youth clubs around Tsabango and Chitukula, areas.

This initiative signifies a proactive effort to upscale peer-led actions and empower individuals to make a positive impact on HIV prevention within their communities.

Importance of Regional Collaboration in the Implementation of Youth Interventions

By Mbanandi Mahala

Stakeholders have underscored the crucial role of regional collaboration in ensuring the success and impact of interventions that target young people.

The remarks were made during the NAC learning visit, which took place at Cresta Thapama Hotel in Botswana under the 'Enhancing Access

to Integrated HIV/AIDS Services among Young People through M-Health in Southern Africa project.

The project was being implemented by YONECO in Malawi, BOFWA in Botswana, and Youth Advocates of Zimbabwe as the principle recipient funded by the SADC HIV Round 2 Special Fund.

YONECO Engages Youth Leaders in Meaningful Youth Participation

By Davis Kambewa



Insert: Tithandizane Helpline Services Field Officer Chipiliro Zimba posing for a group photo with the youth leaders after the meeting.

On 14 March 2024, YONECO conducted a capacity-strengthening session with members of Likangala Youth Network in Zomba to equip them with skills for mobilizing young people to actively participate in socioeconomic activities in their areas.

Malawi boasts a youthful population which requires the necessary support to tap its potential in accelerating the sustainable socio-economic growth of the country.

The members of Likangala Youth Network members listed several challenges that prevent young people from the area from participating in various decision-making processes that concern their area. Among other things, the young people bemoaned the lack of financial support to pursue their studies beyond secondary school. In addition to this, the youth leaders also indicated that there are

a few opportunities for the youth to venture into businesses as they neither have capital nor collateral to access loans.

The leaders vowed to continuously mobilise their fellows to take up active roles that contribute to the growth and development of their societies. The youth network members underlined environmental protection as well as disaster management and response as some of the most critical areas to which young people should also pay attention.

Likangala Youth Network is comprised of Youth club leaders from Chilupsa, Chizalo, Chikanda and Kazembe villages that are within the area of Group Village Head (GVH) Chikanda, Traditional Authority (T/A) Chikowi in Zomba.

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Helpline Services Department Raises Awareness on Human Rights

By Ebeleth Mathias



Insert: Tithandizane Helpline Services Field Officer Ebeleth Mathias egaging the community members during the awareness session

In a bid to enhance the rights of women, children and other vulnerable groups, YONECO, through the Tithandizane National Helpline Services department conducted a human rights session at Maluwa village, Group Village Head (GVH) Maluwa, T/A Chikowi, in Zomba district.

The session was organized to equip the community members with a deeper understanding of human rights.

Particularly, issues of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and child abuse were discussed at length with community members coming up with key action points on how to address the root causes.

In the end, the community members described the session as an eye-opener. In total, the session was attended by 31 people, of which 19 were females and 12 were males.

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

- Tikugwira ntchito limodzi: kuonetsetsa kuti anthu achialubino akuonetsa kuthekera kwawo.
- Paii 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 achitlidwa nkhanza ndi mabanja awo, monga, kuwamangira nyumba zotetzeka.
 - Kupereka thandizo lakuchipatala ndi maphunziro.
 - Kutukula anthu a khungu la chialubino.



This publication was co-funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Standing Voice and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union

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.
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- Kutukula anthu a khungu la chialubino.



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Rumphi Commemorates International Women's Day in Rumphi

By anet Manjawira



Insert: YONECO staff explaining the various services that the organisation provides to patrons during the function at Bolero Community Ground.

On 23rd March 2024, various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and district stakeholders organized a district commemoration event for International Women's Day that was held at Bolero community ground in Rumphi.

The event was organized to raise awareness about gender equality and women's rights.

The event was commemorated under the theme **"Invest in women: Accelerate progress"**.

YONECO showcases various interventions which the organization use to promote the rights and welfare of women in Malawi.

International Women's Day is a global commemoration which is held on 8 March every year. The commemoration further serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggles that women face in achieving equality and empowerment.

Empowering Young Women Through Safe Spaces



Insert: Field Officer for Mangochi engaging young women during the meeting in the district.

By Grant Dulla

During a meeting on 12 March with 20 young women in TA Katuli at Luwalika village, discussions revolved around health, emphasizing personal hygiene for good health and the importance of family planning. The young women highlighted women's rights, stressing the right to engage in business and the importance of gender equality in work participation. They noted positive outcomes since the establishment of Safe Spaces, such as reduced school dropouts, decreased GBV cases, increased awareness of rights, improved access to SRHR services, and skill development in making reusable sanitary pads and hairdressing.

YONECO, through the Peace Building project with support from UNFPA, trained Safe Space facilitators in all the targeted Traditional Authorities (TAs) and established Safe Spaces.

These Safe Spaces serve as supportive environments where young people can freely express themselves, discuss Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and enhance their knowledge and skills. The Safe Spaces also focus on improving the referral system and protecting young people from abuse.

Moreover, the young women were encouraged to become economically empowered to reduce conflicts and prevent exploitation by men from Mozambique seeking marriage or labor. They also identified challenges, such as the need for more family planning methods like Norplant and condoms, which YONECO promised to address by following up with the District Health Office for necessary services.



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LET'S GROW WITH US

Rumphi District CSOs Engage on Child Protection Efforts

By Larah Mbewe



Insert: Field Officer for YONECO in Rumphi district Larah Mbewe presenting to stakeholders during the meeting.

Rumphi District Hospital coordinated a a awaiting court proceedings. The network of stakeholders in child protection remaining cases are under active follow-up. amid rising cases of child abuse in the district.

During the meeting, YONECO highlighted However, challenges were noted by the cases of child defilement handled since YONECO officer regarding stakeholder January 2024. The district office managed a involvement. Some stakeholders were a total of 7 cases, involving 5 instances of child unavailable when needed for case marriage, 1 case of incest, and 1 case of child follow-ups, and there were issues with abduction. Among the child marriage cases, 2 communication gaps when decisions girls were successfully removed from were being made concerning the cases. marriage, while the incest case is currently

BEFIT Programme Satisfies Teachers and Students in Chitipa and Rumphu

By Edward Nyirenda and Mackson Mhango

Primary School in Chitipa which is among the districts in Malawi where the government and various partners including YONECO are implementing a programme called Building Educational Foundations through Innovation and Technology (BEFIT).

The Open Day served as a platform for Nanchiwe Primary School to showcase the impact and progress towards the implementation of the BEFIT Programme. The session was attended by community leaders, parents and other key stakeholders.

During the session, both students and teachers acknowledged the positive impact of the BEFIT Programme towards promoting education. The teachers and learners demonstrated how the BEFIT Programme has enhanced learners' aptitude for reading and mathematics on top of stimulating the interest of learners in education.

On their part, the teachers indicated that the introduction of tablet lessons has improved the performance of students in class and their cognitive skills which they described as very critical for academic excellence.



Insert: School Open Day at Chankhalamu Primary school in Rumphu (Inside) A learner from Nanchiwe Primary School in Chitipa, Martha Mlungu.

One of the students, seven-year-old Martha Mlungu who is in standard 2 of her studies expressed her satisfaction with the BEFIT programme. Martha firmly acknowledges the role which the programme has played in making her academic journey easy.

“Matablet session anali bwino mokuti mayeso a teremu ino ndikhonza bho kwambiri!” (the tablet study sessions were great and I am confident that I will ace this term's examinations), explained seven-year-old Martha Mlungu, a standard 2 learner at Nanchiwe Primary School in Chitipa.

Similarly, an open day was also conducted in Rumphu district at Chankhalamu primary school where a total of 105 (50M, 55F) learners participated.

BEFIT is a national programme which is being led by the Malawi Government aimed at improving the foundational literacy and numeracy skills of all primary school learners in Standards 1 to 4. The programme is being implemented by various organizations with technical, operational and coordination support from Imagine Worldwide, VSO, and One Billion.

Promoting Positive Parenting to Combat School Dropout and Academic Underperformance

By Richard Nkhonjera



YONECO in collaboration with Ntcheu District Gender Office (DGO) organized a parenting workshop targeting parents whose children are students at Nthumbi Community Day Secondary School (CDSS) in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Champiti in Ntcheu district.

The Parents-Teacher Association (PTA) and the school authorities of Nthumbi CDSS necessitated the session in a bid to combat the rising school dropout rate and improve academic performance among students. Against this backdrop, 12 girls from the school who are all below the age of 15 dropped out of school within one term due to unintended pregnancies. In addition to this, the school authorities also noted an increase in instances of juvenile delinquency which have also been associated with the underperformance of many students.

Insert: Some of the parents who attended the parenting workshop at Nthumbi Community Day Secondary School in Ntcheu district.

During the session, YONECO and the District Gender Officer (DGO) engaged parents on various aspects of Adolescent and Youth Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRRH).

Parents recognized the importance of young people's access to comprehensive sexuality education, sexual and reproductive health (SRHR) services, as well as the decision-making power to protect their health.

In total, the session was attended by 269 parents and guardians of which 108 were men and 161 were women.

YONECO Reaches Children Connected to the Street with Life Skills Education

By Chifundo Mhango



Insert: The streets of Ntcheu Boma where most children connected to the streets wander around with some calling it home.

Children who are connected to the streets face a lot of challenges in their lives and this is a group that requires all the necessary support to ensure their successful transition into adulthood. It is against this background that YONECO organized a life skills education session targeting children who are connected to the streets around Ntcheu Boma.

The children were equipped with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their lives including resisting negative peer pressure. The sessions also focused on helping the children understand the importance of discovering one’s skills and abilities and how to optimize them to reach their full

The children also had an opportunity to seek answers to various questions ranging from education, health, human rights and various legal issues.

“The sessions have helped me to realize that I should not give up as I still have a lot of productive tears ahead of me. I am hopeful that one day, things will change for the better,” said a 14-year-old boy from Zakutchire Village.

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YONECO Conducts SRHR Group Counselling Session with FSW in Mwanza

By Mary Chimenya

On 23rd March 2024 Mwanza YONECO conducted a Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) group counselling session which targeted Female Sex Workers (FSW) from Thambani area in Mwanza district.

The session focused on access to Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) services which include contraceptives, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) screening and treatment, prenatal care, and access to various HIV services.

The groups were also equipped with the necessary life skills to make informed decisions about their SRHR.

The activity was conducted as part of a project titled Addressing Unmet Needs in HIV Testing Services for Men and Key Populations for HIV/AIDS Services through Effective Delivery Models. YONECO is implementing the project in Chikwawa, Chiladzulu and Mwanza with financial and technical support from the Centre for Disease Control (CDC).

Call 393 to get information and referrals on HIV and SRHR

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Nutrition Session Empowers Women in Likangala in Zomba



Insert: Women representatives from CBOs who attended the session together with Tithandizane Helpline Services Field Officers after the meeting

Importantly, they were reassured that healthy eating can be affordable by sourcing nutritious foods locally.

The session underscored the role of good health in boosting the immune system and reducing the likelihood of chronic illnesses. Women were urged to disseminate this knowledge within their communities and to prioritize preparing healthier meals for their families.

Eleven women from six Community Based Organizations (Mubarak, Chikanda, Ngwirizano, Go for Life, Chitsime, and Taoloka) in Likangala Ward participated in the session. YONECO also promoted its toll-free helpline numbers (116, 5600, 6600, and 393) for additional support.

By Davis Kambewa

On 14 March 2024, the Tithandizane National Helpline department organized a nutrition session for women representing Community Based Organizations in Likangala Ward. The primary objective was to educate them on the significance of nutrition in daily life.

During the session, participants discovered that good health is fundamental for community development. They learned practical ways to enhance their diets, such as cultivating local fruits and vegetables, avoiding processed foods, and ensuring an adequate intake of water.

YONECO Engages Men to Address Gender Disparities in Parenting



Insert: Men who were engaged in Lilongwe posing for a group photo after the session.

Some men in Lilongwe have acknowledged limited opportunities for developing parenting skills as young people transition into adulthood, which is an important element in building a healthy society. This sentiment was expressed on March 6, 2024, at YONECO's office in Lilongwe, where the organization hosted Lilongwe Traders Community Based Organization (CBO).

The engagement session focused on the creation of safe spaces for men to address gender disparities in parenting. The discussions were guided by Men Care Toolkit. The toolkit was endorsed by the Men Engage Alliance, of which YONECO is also an affiliate. The conversation mainly centred on the Three Ps of Parenting: Presence, Partner Support, and Preventing violence.

During the engagement, it was noted that poor parenting is the root of various challenges people face at every stage of their lives. It was further observed that couples shape their parenting style through a combination of the way they were brought up and some elements of self-discovery.

As the session progressed, it was also noted that 'men' are usually viewed as mere breadwinners with no or limited expectations in the role of fostering relationships with their children or supporting their spouse by taking up some of the chores within the home.

Furthermore, it was noted that being 'feared' as a father by children and spouse is often mistaken as an indication that the presence of the 'man' is evidenced. However, the meeting agreed that this situation simply erodes an opportunity for men to foster healthy relationships with their children and spouses.

Interestingly, the participants acknowledged the importance of men's presence in their families as they provide physical, emotional and social support to their children and spouses. Being the 'peace-maker' in the family was also identified as a significant role for men within the family.

Based on the feedback, the participants acknowledged their newly found perspectives on being a parenting partner to a spouse.

In total, the session was attended by 28 male members of the Lilongwe Traders CBO. The development ushers in an opportunity for parenting skills development for men and communities.



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YONECO Takes Climate Change Awareness to People's Doorsteps

By Sharon Ndhlovu



On 12 March 2024, YONECO held door-to-door awareness sessions in the area of Village Head Beni, Traditional Authority (T/A) Kwataine in Ntcheu district in a bid to combat climate change and its impacts.

The sessions focused on sensitizing people about climate change and on how individuals and households can build resilience and ably contribute towards mitigating its impact. During the interaction, community members were able to share vivid examples of how climate change has affected their lives.

Among other things, community members acknowledged that drought conditions and floods have increased in frequency and

Insert: Human activities such as wanton cutting down of trees is one of the biggest contributing factors to climate change

intensity due to the current level of global warming.

Community members were encouraged to participate in tree planting activities as a way of mitigating climate change impacts. They were more particularly encouraged to plant water-conserving trees along river banks and they were introduced to various climate-smart agricultural practices.

The sessions reached out to 108 community members from a total of 27 households.



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