



YONECO VOICE

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more about our work

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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

About Us

Our Vision

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



Our Mission

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



Our values

Integrity
Teamwork
Confidentiality
Respect for human dignity
Transparency and Accountability



Executive Director's Note...



with MacBain Mkandawire

Dear Esteemed Readers,

Welcome to the May 2024 edition of the YONECO Voice Monthly Newsletter where we get to know the work which YONECO is doing. This month, we are celebrating International Labour Day. I would like to join the president of the Republic of Malawi, as well as the community and various institutional leaders as we celebrate the Day on 1 May, 2024 under the theme 'Exploring the impact of Climate Change on Occupational Safety and Health'. We take note that climate change has affected a number of areas including the health and safety of workers in buildings and offices among others. We need to spend time honouring those who died in the line of duty due to climate change-induced accidents. However, more important is how we will rebuild our resilience.

On 3 May 2024, we will be commemorating World Press Freedom Day under the theme "A Press for the Planet: Journalism in the Face of Environmental Crisis". YONECO wishes all journalists the best on this day as they reflect on the challenges of the press in the emerging environmental crisis.

Malawi and the spirit of poverty that we move with and pass on to the next generation; Is it a generational curse? How do we deal with this poverty? Malawi will be 60 years old this year on July 6. We seem to have known Malawi as a developing nation and remain developing. Currently, we are among the leading nations in the category of the least developed countries. We have had several strategies in the country in responding to poverty. We had a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and mind you we were only meant to reduce poverty meaning we accepted that we need poverty. If we were serious about dealing with the vice called poverty, we could not have been focusing on reducing it but rather eradicating it. Our goal setting was too modest and it is not surprising that instead of reducing poverty it has increased and we seem to be comfortable living with it. We then had in place several other developmental blueprints including Vision 2020 which has now been replaced with Vision 2063 which is youth-centric with mindset change as one of its pillars.

Listening to the conversations, starting with our political leaders to business and local leaders, we are getting convinced that we have a 'Spirit of Poverty' moving around us. The spirit of poverty starts at household level where as a people of Malawi, we have stopped working hard. In our homes, we no longer help our children to work hard, even in school. We now have formalized cheating among students in our schools. It seems there is a general feeling that we cannot pass an examination without cheating. This, in our view, is the spirit of poverty. We then go to our various places of work where employees believe that they are working for their bosses. However, when the month ends, they do not share the amount they receive with their bosses. If we get into the government systems, the attitude is '*nzaboma izi*' (there is no need to work hard after all this is nobody's business). As we get possessed with the "Spirit of Poverty" we utter sentiments like '*kulimbikila kemeneku mukufuna akutameni ndani*' (who do you want to impress with your hard work?), '*mukugwira ngati nzakwanu*' (you are working hard as if this belongs to your family), "*musamawalemelese anthu ena*" (working hard in this institution only makes others but you rich). But when salaries for these delays, you will see how much they cry, we know this is the Spirit of Poverty. Why should they be crying and yet they were not working as hard?

Maybe as we clock 60 years of independence and 30 years of democracy, we need to have a serious reflection on how we are fairing in terms of responding to this 'Spirit of Poverty'. We need to think about the donor aid investments and our own financial investments and ask if we are making progress. We need to ask about the level of corruption and theft at various levels and question the impact of these issues in Malawi. We need to ask whether aid is being invested in the right schemes. This will help us to reflect on whether our aid is used correctly. We need to reflect on 480 days of allowances in a year. We need to reflect how budgets for our programmes all reflect DSAs and how various sectors of government and NGOs are prioritizing workshops likening them to investments. We need to reflect on how donors focus on the "Burn rate" as opposed to the outcomes knowing that we will be happy with the burn rate irrespective of where the funds went. Sometimes you wonder whether all these workshops are necessary.

All this is because we have the "Spirit of Poverty" that needs to be dealt with. If it is a generational curse, maybe we need deliverance.

Happy Labour Day.

CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE: THE YONECO BATTALION

By Gracium Mkonda
Chithonje

On this day, in this month of global
homage to labor,
We raise our voices in jubilant song,
Hailing a battalion, steadfast and
valiant,
In its relentless quest for a self-reliant,
healthy, empowered, resilient, and
responsible society

Here stands a formidable battalion,
battle-tested and true,
Its ranks fortified by trials endured
No compromise, no wavering view,
Dedicated to the realization of an
untainted, inclusive society.

This is no mere gathering of wage-
earners,
Their commitment runs deeper, their
resolve firmer,
For they freely offer their lives to the
cause,
In pursuit of a society built on
democratic values and principles.





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for Social and Economic Development of Youth,
Women and Children.*



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YONECO Engages Young Leaders in Meaningful Youth Participation

By Edward Baxter Nyirenda



Insert: Members of Jaghala Youth Club during the engagement meeting which YONECO officers facilitated in Rumphi district.

On April 19, 2024, YONECO officers at the Rumphi District office visited Jaghala Youth Club to assess the initiatives they are implementing within the district. Recognizing the low uptake of contraceptives among youth in Malawi, the officers engaged in discussions with the youths regarding the use of contraceptives and dispelled various myths and misconceptions surrounding family planning services.

The dialogue highlighted that factors such as religion, peer pressure, inadequate knowledge, and cultural norms act as barriers hindering the adoption of these services among the youth.

To address these challenges, the officers encouraged the youth to shift their perspectives towards family planning services. The club, in collaboration with the officers,

agreed to organize multiple youth open days throughout the year to disseminate crucial information on the subject to more young individuals lacking this knowledge. This proactive approach aims to combat issues like teenage pregnancies, early marriages, abortions, and the concerning trend of population growth in Malawi.

During the session, the officers distributed 434 male condoms and 90 lubricants to promote safe sexual practices. The session was a reflection of the ongoing efforts to educate and empower the youth in making informed decisions regarding their reproductive health.

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referrals on HIV
and SRHR**

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RD



Mbiri ya ufulu wa anthu achialubino

Kuphwanyidwa kwa ufulu ndi kuchitilidwa nkhanza kwa anthu akhungu la chialubino zakhala zikulembedwa komanso kuchitika kwa nthawi yayitali mu Africa.

Ngakhale izi zakhala zikuchitika, Ufulu wanga ndi wotetezedwa ndi malamulo akulu a dziko la Malawi ngakhale ndondomeko ndi malamulo okhudza ufulu wa anthu pa dziko lonse lapansi.

Boma la Malawi lidakhazikitsa dongosolo ndi ndondomeko zazikulu sikuluzikulu zothana ndikupondezedwa, ndipo ikukhudza, anthu a khungu la chialubino, makolo a ana akhungu la chialubino, nthambi zaboma ndi mabungwe omenyera ufulu wamunthu.

Mabungwe osiyanasiyana akutengapo mbali pothandiza kuphunzitsa anthu m'madera awo za chitetezo, umoyo, maphunziro, chilungamo ndi za kapezedwe ka chuma.

Ndondomeko ya bomayi imayang'ana za kukwanilitsa ufulu wa anthu a khungu la chialubino.

Kodi ine ngati munthu wa khungu la chialubino, ufulu wanga ndi uti?

Pokhala ndimoyo, ndili ndiufulu wachibadwidwe. Palibe amene angandilande ufulu wanga.

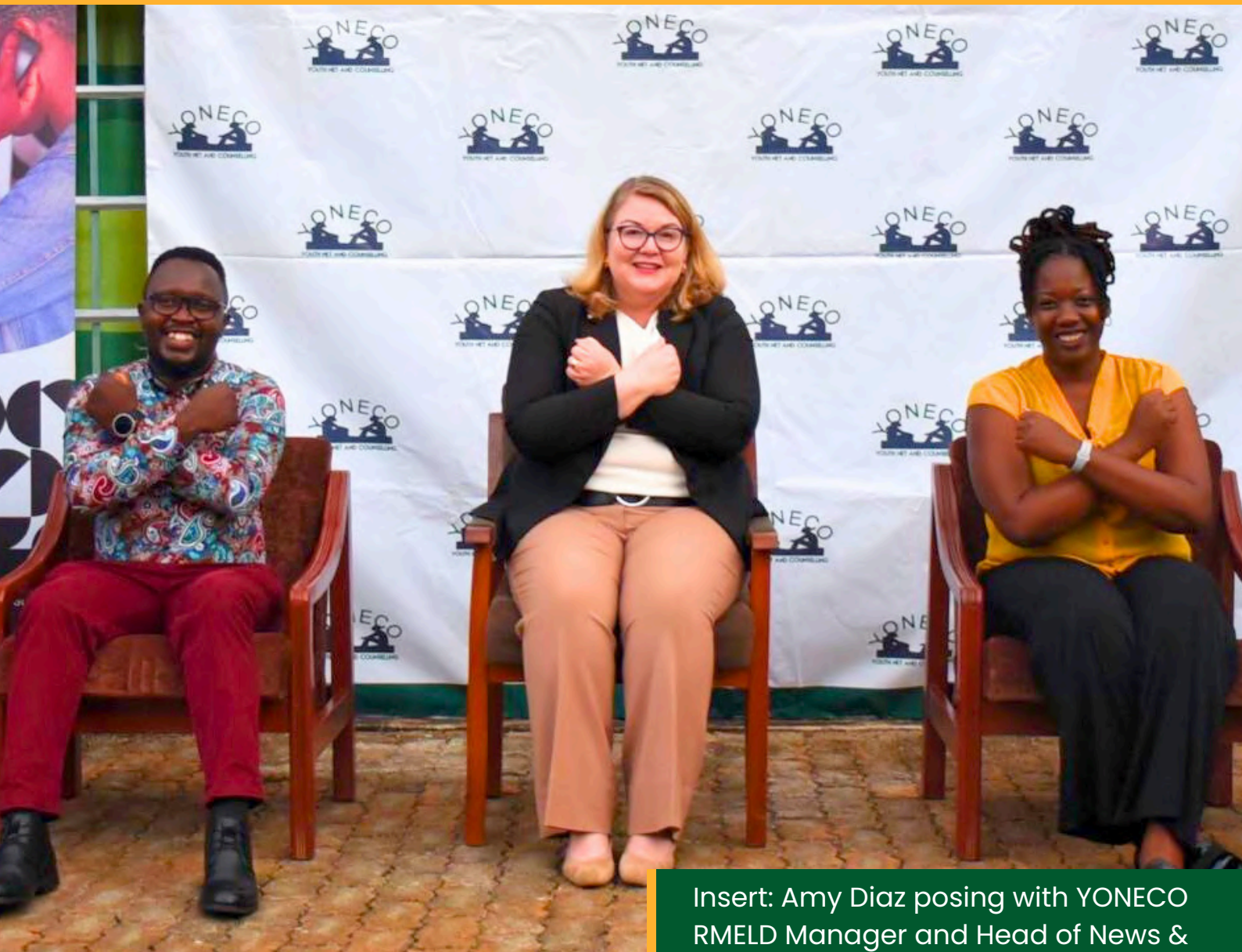
Ufulu wanga ulemekezedwe, ndipo ndipatsidwe ulemu ngati munthu wina aliyense.

Dziko la Malawi lili ndimalamulo oteteza ufulu wanga. Malamulowa aonetsetse kuti ufulu wa anthu a khungu la chialubino ku sukulu, pabanja, m'dela ndi kuntchito ukulemekezedwa.

Kusintha kachitidwe ka zinthu kapena malo ndicholinga chokuti nditengenawo gawo pazochitika chitika kukuyenera kuchitika, kuti nditenge nawo mbali.

Mwachitsanzo, kuvala chipewa mkalasi, unifomu yaitali manja, kukhala kutsogolo kufupi ndi bolodi mkalasi kuti ndithe kuona ndizina mwa zomwe zili zondiyeneleza.

YONECO Head Office Hosts US Chargé d'Affaires to Malawi



Insert: Amy Diaz posing with YONECO RMELD Manager and Head of News & Current Affairs during the visit at the Head Office in Zomba.

The United States Embassy Chargé d'Affaires to Malawi, Amy Diaz, visited YONECO Head Office in Zomba on a learning visit which mainly focused on appreciating the organization's advocacy work on issues that affect the youth, women and children in Malawi.

In her remarks, the Chargé d'Affaires commended YONECO for its tireless efforts to ensure that women and children can enjoy their birthrights.

During the visit, the Chargé d'Affaires toured YFM Radio Stations studios where she was featured as a surprise guest in Y-Sunset Programme.

Currently, YONECO is implementing a five-year HIV prevention project with technical and financial support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

EU Ambassador to Malawi Visits YONECO



Insert: The EU Ambassador to Malawi, Rune Skinnebach with YONECO Executive Director, MacBain Mkandawire during the visit in Zomba.

The European Union in Malawi Ambassador Skinnebach also visited Ambassador, Rune Skinnebach, made a courtesy visit to the YONECO Head Office in Zomba on Friday, 27 April, 2024.

During the visit, Ambassador Skinnebach toured the YONECO ICT Centre. He appreciated YONECO's efforts in the application of various of web-based platforms for data management and case tracking.

The Ambassador concluded his visit at the YONECO FM (YFM) studios, where he was interviewed on various socio-economic development issues.

YONECO and Angaza Conduct Quarterly Project Review Meeting



Insert: Programme staff listening to remarks from the Executive Director, MacBain Mkandawire during the meeting. Below: Staff engaging each other during a breakaway session.

YONECO, in partnership with Angaza Foundation held a three-day quarterly review meeting for Addressing Unmet Needs in HIV Testing Services (HTS) for Men and Key Populations Project' which YONECO is implementing in Chikwawa, Mwanza, and Chiradzulu.

The meeting was held in Blantyre to improve programme effectiveness, enhancing the quality of service delivery and fostering staff development among other things.

Addressing Unmet Needs in HIV Testing Services (HTS) for Men and Key Populations Project is being implemented with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



YONECO Participates in the Malawi International Tourism Expo 2024

By Andrew Govati

YONECO participated in the Malawi International Tourism Expo 2024 as an official media partner of the Ministry of Tourism, showcasing the organization's commitment to promoting inclusivity, fairness, safety, and the general well-being of vulnerable groups within the tourism sector.

The expo was held at Bingu International Convention Centre (BICC) from 25th to 27th April 2024 and YONECO highlighted the various social services we provide to support youth, women, and children in the industry.

At the expo, YONECO utilized its national radio station, "YFM," to engage with both exhibitors and attendees, amplifying the dissemination of speeches and activities from the event. Through interviews and live broadcasts, we facilitated meaningful conversations about the importance of inclusive tourism and the empowerment of marginalized communities.

YONECO was honoured to welcome the Minister of Tourism, Vera Kamtukule, to the organization's pavilion. The Minister acknowledged the organization's efforts and emphasized the potential for mutually beneficial partnerships between the Ministry and YONECO.

Honourable Kamtukule recognized YONECO's presence in Zomba, a city rich in heritage and



Insert: YONECO staff posing at the pavilion which they set up during the event.

natural beauty, as an opportunity for collaborative initiatives to promote and safeguard tourism resources.

During her official speech, the Minister expressed gratitude to YONECO and other partners for their contributions to the event and underscored the importance of collective efforts in advancing the tourism sector.

Additionally, YONECO engaged with key stakeholders, including the Executive Director of the National Youth Council of Malawi, who commended YONECO's dedication to representing the youth of Malawi. He highlighted the need for strategic partnerships to enhance youth development initiatives, echoing YONECO's belief in the power of collaboration for positive social change.

YONECO remains committed to fostering partnerships, promoting inclusivity, and advocating for the well-being of all members of society.

YONECO Participates in Women Leadership and Social Norms Workshop

By Mercy Makondetsa



Insert: Participants from various organisations who attended the workshop posing for a group photo.

The event employed various participatory approaches to analyse the effectiveness of these methodologies, underscoring the importance of comprehending community norms and addressing power dynamics. Notably, a field visit to Kapalamula Village in Ntcheu District provided invaluable insights, reinforcing the workshop's objectives.

With representatives from four countries, including Malawi, in attendance, the workshop brought together implementing partners focused on gender-based violence prevention and response, including YONECO, the Women's Legal Resource Centre (WORLEC), and the Coalition of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (COWLHA).

YONECO recently took part in a significant five-day workshop organized by Trocaire, held at the Sun Bird Lilongwe Hotel from Monday 22 to Friday 26 April.

The workshop, funded by Trocaire Ireland, was aimed at deepening understanding of social norms and work approaches, with a specific focus on strategies to foster an environment conducive to women's voice and leadership.

Through the workshop, Trócaire and its partners reviewed strategies that will smoothen implementation of SASA! Faith and Masidama, tools designed to challenge harmful norms that hinder women's and girls' voice and leadership.



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LET'S GROW WITH US

YONECO Trains 60 Lilongwe-Based SASA Facilitators



Insert: Participants posing for a group photo after the training session in Lilongwe.

The trained facilitators have been engaged to support adolescent HIV prevention interventions which YONECO is implementing in communities surrounding the following health facilities; Kawale, Bwaila, Kangoma and Area 18.

The training was among the activities which YONECO is implementing through Connect Malawi Plus – Action for Adolescent Girls and Young Women Project which is being funded by VIV Health Care under Positive Action window. The project promotes peer-led interventions in addressing HIV among adolescent girls and young women.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is one of the key drivers of HIV in Malawi. Addressing various sociocultural factors that perpetuate violence which is often perpetuated against women and girls is key in reducing the spread of HIV.

It is against this background that YONECO trained 60 community members from Lilongwe city to facilitate community dialogue sessions on the prevention of GBV using SASA! approach. SASA! is Swahili for “now” and it is also an acronym for the approach’s four phases: Start, Awareness, Support and Action.

Mposa CHWs Embark on Climate Change-Induced Health Challenges Awareness Campaigns

By Jacob Phiri

Community Health Workers (CHWs) in the area of Traditional Authority (TA) Mposa in Machinga district have embarked on community sensitization campaigns on climate change-induced health challenges.

The campaigns are aimed at empowering communities to understand and effectively respond to various health risks that are associated with climate change. The CHWs have embarked on the activities following a training that was previously organized by YONECO under the Making Communities Resilient to Climate Change-Induced Health Challenges Project.

Innocent Mnong'odza, the medical officer in charge of Mposa Health Centre, indicated that the campaigns were conducted in 15 villages across TA Mposa's area, where 8,200 people were reached. Mnong'oneza stated that the campaign further focused on promoting the identification of area-specific climate-induced health challenges and stimulating community urgency in a bid to promote resilience.

During sensitization sessions, CHWs and community members discussed several mitigation



Insert: Member of Area Development Committee (ADC) making her remarks during the one of the awareness campaign meetings at TA Mposa in Machinga district.

measures for various climate change-induced health hazards. Among others, the community members agreed to boil water to make it safe for drinking in instances where there is no choline. Communities acknowledged an increase in cases of waterborne diseases, including cholera, which affected 2,303 people and claimed 86 lives in Machinga district only between March 2022 and April 2023. This is the highest impact ever, and it was attributed to climate change.

In addition, it was noted that community members had gaps in knowledge regarding the proper usage of mosquito

nets, which resulted in feelings that they were ineffective in the prevention of malaria. In the same vein, health workers have been using the campaign to promote the proper use of mosquito nets and discourage practices that render the nets ineffective. Making Communities Resilient to Climate Change-Induced Health Challenges Project is being implemented by YONECO with support from Foundation S-The Sanofi Collective in the areas of Traditional Authorities (T/As) Mposa and Mwambo in Machinga and Zomba, respectively.

YONECO Takes Nutrition Awareness to Expectant Mothers in Rumphu

By Edward Baxter Nyirenda



Insert: Field Officer for Rumphu, Edward Nyirenda engaging with expectant women and their guardians during the session.

YONECO officers in Rumphu visited pregnant women and their guardians at the District Hospital's Guardian Shelter to discuss the importance of practicing good nutrition.

The interactive session aimed to empower women with knowledge and skills to ensure optimal nutrition for themselves and their unborn children during pregnancy and lactation. The session emphasized the significance of nutritional support for pregnant women during the first, second, and third trimesters,

promoting good health for both the mother and the unborn child. Encouragingly, the women displayed a profound understanding of the Malawi Six food groups and their examples. The officers seized the opportunity to encourage them to maintain these healthy eating habits throughout pregnancy and during the lactation period, thereby preventing Protein-Energy Malnutrition, a leading cause of death among under-five children in Malawi. Pregnant women were introduced to various food options suitable for consumption during different stages of pregnancy, including the first, second, third trimesters, as well as during delivery and lactation periods.

Participants actively engaged in the session, asking questions, sharing comments, and expressing enthusiasm for improving their eating habits and adopting the recommended nutrition practices. A total of 53 individuals participated in the event, including 3 men and 50 women.

Eradicating Child Marriages for a Brighter Tomorrow

By Mary Chimenya



Insert: Officer for YONECO in Mwanza (in brown t-shirt) engaging with one of the young couple in the district.

Early marriages in Malawi have exposed numerous girls to a range of detrimental consequences, including sexual violence, risky pregnancies, fistula, and HIV transmission. Furthermore, such marriages contribute to rapid population growth as young girls begin childbearing prematurely, increasing their vulnerability to maternal mortality and childbirth complications.

YONECO is dedicated to empowering youth, women, and children while promoting good health, fostering productivity, and supporting the Malawi 2063 agenda. Reports surfaced alleging that some girls near the Mwanza Border were engaged in sex work, prompting YONECO staff in the district to conduct scouting and sweeping exercises in the vicinity, in collaboration with the Office of Social Welfare and Community Policing.

On April 18, 2024, a joint operation involving Mwanza YONECO staff, the police, and the Social Welfare office was conducted to combat child prostitution at the Mwanza border. During this operation, it was discovered that a 15-year-old named

Chifundo, engaged in sex work, was married to a 17-year-old boy named Chimwemwe from Faiti village in Traditional Authority Kanduku. Subsequent investigations revealed that Chifundo and Chimwemwe resided together in Kanyani village, the girl's hometown. Marriage counselors were brought in to counsel the couple, emphasizing that their actions were jeopardizing not only their own futures but also the nation's. They were informed that marrying a child under 18 is illegal, and Malawi now imposes severe penalties for those facilitating underage sexual activities.

Additionally, they were informed of the recent legislation raising the legal age of childhood to 18 years. The team also involved the village headman in efforts to combat child marriage by advocating for changes in cultural norms and practices that perpetuate this harmful tradition. Ultimately, the marriage was annulled, and the young boy was instructed to return home, marking a step towards ending child marriages and safeguarding the well-being of Malawi's youth.

YONECO and Partners Deliver Awareness Sessions and HTS Services in Nsanje District

By Praise Chitsonga



Insert: YONECO staff together with district stakeholders during one of the awareness sessions in GVH Mnemba in Nsanje

YONECO, through the Tithandizane National Helpline Services, in conjunction with Nsanje police and Nsanje District Hospital conducted an awareness session and provided HIV testing and counseling (HTS) services in Zuze village, GVH Mnemba, in Nsanje district. During the exercise, 17 clients underwent HIV testing and counseling, 4 underwent STI screening, 1 accessed ARVs, and 4 received PrEP. Additionally, 2,010 male condoms were distributed, and 24 women received family planning methods.

The session aimed to educate the community on good nutrition, the importance of HTS services, and the prevention of Protein-Energy Malnutrition, which is a leading cause of death among under-five children in Malawi. The team also followed up on four cases related to physical assault, child maintenance, and child marriage, with two cases closed and the others pending.

The Publicity of YONECO toll-free lines was done, and survivors were urged not to hesitate to call the lines whenever they need guidance and counseling

on various issues of abuse or any general issues that affect their lives. The Inspector General of the Malawi Police Service emphasized the need for proper service centers for Victim Support Units, which should be child-friendly, gender-sensitive, and victim-centered.

The community, represented by Senior GVH Mnemba, expressed gratitude for the initiative, highlighting the lack of support from government officials since the displacement caused by Cyclone Freddy. The team was encouraged to proceed with their plan for the betterment of the survivors.

A similar exercise was also conducted at GVH Kalonga in TA Mbenje in the same district where 24 clients underwent HIV testing and counseling, 27 received self testing kits, 5 underwent STI Screening; 20 accessed ARVs, 9 received Prep and 2,640 pieces of male condoms were distributed and 19 women received family planning methods.

YONECO AT THE TAKULANDIRANI MALAWI INTERNATIONAL TOURISM EXPO 2024





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5600

Youth Helpline
393

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