



YONECO VOICE



Monthly Newsletter

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- 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,

We begin the month of June 2024 with full realization that we are entering the second half of the year, which prompts a crucial question; are we making the right progress towards our goals and targets for the year? It is time to reflect on our half-year goals and revisit our plans. To achieve this, we must cultivate the correct mindset in all our endeavors. Our goals are geared towards the development of our country, and we must focus on this aspect to move forward.

As we work on our mindset, we must also dedicate time to rethinking how we approach life. Malawians have a tendency of indulging in gossip and creating stories without substance, and generally, we do not wish each other well. This narrow thinking starts at a young age. In the village, it is believed that you cannot run maize meal unless someone dies, implying that death is a prerequisite for success. Similarly, if someone becomes rich, it is often attributed to a woman or satanic influence. This narrative perpetuates the notion that Malawians cannot be rich through hard work.

When someone becomes rich, they become a topic of discussion, whether male or female. Conversely, when someone becomes poor, they are also a topic of discussion. What is concerning is that Malawians spend most of their time discussing people rather than discussing ideas that can improve their lives. We need to learn from successful individuals and identify what we can do to emulate their success.

June 2024 has two significant days that are crucial for children. We begin with the commemoration of the International Day of Child Labour on June 12 every year. The theme for this year is "Let us act on our commitment: End Child Labour." The fundamental question is whether we are living up to our commitments or not. Unfortunately, we often overlook domestic child workers who work on the streets, selling goods. Moreover, some employers of these children are not committed to child protection. We must keep our commitments and ensure that children are protected.

On June 16, we celebrate the Day of the African Child. The African Union theme is "Education fit for the 21st Century," which emphasizes investments in children's education to achieve the Africa Agenda 2063 and Malawi 2063. However, we are concerned that while we join the world in celebrating this day, we have sad stories of children in some schools with inadequate teachers. For instance, there is a school in Chitipa where there are only two teachers, a husband and wife, and the headmaster is the husband. We wonder how education can proceed in such a school, and another school in Mzimba that was handed over to the government but remains incomplete. As we celebrate the day with the theme of education fit for the 21st century, we must reflect on the quality of education and ensure that children are safe in these schools. If you are concerned about the safety of children, you can call 116 or 5600.

Have a wonderful month of June.



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CHILDHOOD DREAMS

By Gracium Mkonda
Chithonje

In Malawi's fields, where children play,
Their laughter sings on African Child's
Day.
Amidst towering trials, their spirits rise,
Dreaming of change under hopeful skies.

In schools with books and nurturing care,
They'll shatter barriers, futures to share.
With knowledge as their beacon bright,
They'll ascend to heights, shining with
might.

In communities where health abounds,
Their dreams will soar, unbound.
With nourished bodies and minds at ease,
They'll flourish, chasing destinies.

And YONECO's unwavering stance shall
remain,
Championing children's well-being, a
steadfast refrain.
In their hopes and dreams, we'll see,
A radiant tomorrow, for all to be.





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Gearing Up to Overcome Socio-Cultural Barriers to Girl Child’s Academic Success

By Chancy Kumwenda



Insert: Field Officer for Chitipa Chancy Kumwenda (Right) standing with two girls who were part of the group that attended the life skills session.

Harmful sociocultural beliefs continue affecting the progress of the girl child in various ways, including her academic performance. Thus, YONECO organized a life skills session growth and self-development session targeting female students at Chitipa Private Academy.

The sessions aimed at promoting girl child education by instilling a sense of self-worth, assertiveness and determination which are often suppressed by the various harmful sociocultural beliefs that assert that males are superior to females.

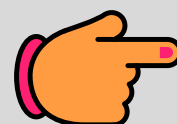
A simple survey which YONECO conducted with female students from various schools in the district revealed that girls firmly believe that they cannot outperform boys academically. The girls express their firm conviction that they were created with less intelligence than their male counterparts.

“The most unfortunate thing is that girls believe that it is a biological fact that they are second to men. This mindset has to be altered to ensure equal representation of both genders in various socio-economic development spheres of life in Malawi,”

explained Dunreck Pande, District Manager for YONECO in Chitipa.

“The session, which is one of the several activities that have been scheduled in schools around Chitipa, reached out to a total of 55 female students.

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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.

Insights from ‘They Call it Sustainability’ Conference



Insert: The Executive Director for YONECO, Mr. MacBain Mkandawire taking questions from the audience during the conference at University of Malawi’s Little Theatre.

The University of Malawi (UNIMA) and Loughborough University in partnership with YONECO and CRECCOM held a conference on sustainability dubbed ‘they call it sustainability’ that was held in Zomba on 15 May, 2024.

The event was attended by researchers, NGO leaders, academicians, journalists, and development communication experts with a specific focus on endeavoring to comprehend and respond to the question, “What does sustainable development look like?”

The conference presenters covered issues on communication, development, and social change, donor dependency, Discourses of sustainability, contested meanings projectification of development versus core work as well as Reflections on the localization agenda.

The Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, was among the speakers at the conference. Mkandawire delivered a

presentation titled ‘Rhetoric of Localization and Sustainability: Experiences from Engaging in Localization Movement in Malawi.’ Mkandawire’s profound narrative offered insightful perspectives on the subject of localization as it delved into the history, its importance and the issues that are derailing the operationalization of the localization agenda.

The event was spiced up by traditional dances that were performed by YONECO Cultural Troupe and a play titled ‘They Call it Africa’ which was performed by Chanco Travelling Theatre.

The conference was part of a broader research study on the sustainability of development and social interventions which is being led by Dr. Jessica Noske-Turner and it was conducted in collaboration with Loughborough University and the University of Malawi (UNIMA)

Nsanje District District Implementation Plan (DIP) Formulation Meeting

By Jaquelline Holla



Insert: Stakeholders during the District Implementation Plan formulation meeting in Nsanje district.

Stakeholders and partners in Nsanje have been encouraged to have a good plan of budget for them to effectively operate in the 2024/2025 fiscal year. Director of Health and Social Services (DHSS) for Nsanje, Dr. Gilbert Chapweteka, made the sentiments when he officially opened a three-day 2024/2025 District Implementation Plan (DIP) formulation meeting in the district.

He said the meeting was aimed at providing an overview of the Health Sector Strategic Plan III (HSSP III) and developing the 2024/2025 DIP for Nsanje. He emphasized that the meeting was consultative for organizations because there were gaps that needed complementary efforts.

Dr. Chapweteka expressed the expectation that UNICEF would support with funds for the implementation of project activities in the district. The UNICEF representatives, including senior management officers, were in attendance at the meeting.

The DIP formulation meeting brought together various stakeholders and partners to align their plans and budgets for the 2024/2025 fiscal year. The meeting provided an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss and prioritize health sector interventions, ensuring effective coordination and resource allocation.

Dr. Chapweteka urged all participants to actively engage in the discussions and contribute to the development of a comprehensive DIP that addresses the district's health priorities. He emphasized the importance of collaboration and coordination among stakeholders to achieve the goals set forth in the HSSP.

The three-day meeting was a crucial step in aligning the district's health sector plans with the national strategic framework and ensuring the availability of necessary resources for effective implementation. The active participation of stakeholders and partners, including UNICEF, was a testament to their commitment to improving health outcomes in Nsanje.

YONECO Participates in the 9th African Population Conference (APC)



Insert: Minister of Finance, Hon. Simplex Chithyola Banda, Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Catherine Gotani Hara and other dignitaries posing for a photo at our pavilion during the event.

YONECO participated in the 9th African Population Conference (APC) organized by the Union of African Population Studies (UAPS) at Bingu International Convention Centre (BICC) in Lilongwe from 20 to 24 May 2024.

The conference addressed issues of population and development under the theme "Road to 2030: Leveraging Africa's Human Capital to Achieve Transformation in a World of Uncertainty."

During the conference, the Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire was among the panelists of a high-level dialogue session that was titled 'Youth Empowerment for Malawi's Transformation: Building a Wealthy and Self-Reliant Nation through Meaningful Youth Engagement.'

YONECO mounted a booth where the conference delegates had an opportunity to learn and share experiences in youth development and how various interventions are contributing to the realization of the global and national development agenda.

The conference featured panel discussions, as well as technical and networking sessions.



Insert: Program Support Manager for YONECO, Hughes Munthali presenting some of YONECO's work to some of the delegates at the event.

YONECO Withdraws Underage Girls from Sex Work in Mwanza

By Mary Chimenya

In the month of May, 2024, YONECO managed to withdraw six young girls aged between 14 and 16 years from sex work in Mwanza district. All the six girls have returned to school and further follow-up visits have shown that they are attending classes regularly.

The girls were withdrawn following a tip-off from community members who frequent various drinking joints around the district. Thus, YONECO engaged Mwanza Police Victim Support Unit and the district's social welfare office who conducted a joint exercise to withdraw the girls from sex work. Community members from around Mwanza Boma are increasingly reporting child exploitation cases following a series of awareness campaigns which YONECO and Angaza conducted in the district.

YONECO and the key stakeholders traced the original homes of the girls where assessments were conducted to assist the parents and relatives in ensuring that the girls should not return to sex work. The girls were later repatriated to their homes where parents and relatives welcomed them. The intervention was conducted under the 'Addressing Unmet Need in HIV Testing Services (HTS) for Men and Key Populations for HIV/AIDS Services Through Effective Delivery Models in Malawi' Project which is being funded by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). YONECO is implementing the project in partnership with Angaza Foundation in Chiradzulu, Mwanza and Chikwawa districts.



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LET'S GROW WITH US

Empowering Women for Social Economic Development in Ntcheu



Insert: An officer from YONECO interacting with a women's group in the district.

Women empowerment and economic development are closely related. In one direction, development alone can play a major role in driving to inequality between men and women while in the other direction, empowering women may benefit development at individual, households, community, district and national as whole. It is a known fact that women are one of the vulnerable groups that are subjected Gender Based Violence as they are mostly regarded as feeble and dependent. As a result, they continue experiencing economic abuse be at household and community level.

In trying to put strategic measures tailored to comprehensively address the barriers and discriminatory practices that deny women their socioeconomic rights and restrict their economic opportunities, YONECO in Ntcheu conducted social economic session with 21 women at Khomba village in TA Ganya. During the session women were taken through business management so that they should know what involves in the business for proper planning. These women are in Savings and

Loans Group and apart from saving money they also support each other in buying utensils. The session has further opened their eyes, to start discussing issues on hygiene and sanitation, hold cooking demonstration as well as sharing of personal economic experiences and how they can effectively venture into individually or in a group business.

"We are very much happy that you put an effort to reach us and discuss these issues though we live very far from the town. We have also known what is needed in business and we believe we will do better when we start group business." That was a word of appreciation from one of the women. YONECO is geared to enhance the ability of women for them to make and act on decisions that involve the control over their income, invest in businesses and promote their financial stability through sessions.

YONECO Engages Female Sex Workers in Non-Communicable

By Mary Chimenya



Insert: Some of the participants who attended the session

The Mwanza team recently organized a session on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) at Kalanga, reaching out to 26 women. The session delved into understanding NCDs, focusing on conditions like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and certain cancers. Risk factors such as unhealthy diet, lack of exercise, and smoking were highlighted as common causes of NCDs.

Emphasizing the importance of promoting good health through lifestyle choices, the team discussed the benefits of incorporating easy exercises, affordable healthy eating options, and stress management techniques into daily routines.

Participants engaged in conversations about how certain sexual behaviors can impact the risk of NCDs and were encouraged to undergo regular screenings for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and NCDs.

Addressing the barriers that sex workers often encounter in accessing healthcare services, including stigma and discrimination, the team provided information on available services and support networks. Staff members also explored the link between substance abuse and NCDs, offering options for quitting or reducing alcohol and tobacco use. Participants were empowered to advocate for their health rights and access to healthcare services.

Furthermore, the team guided the women on navigating healthcare systems and seeking support when needed. The session prioritized creating a safe and confidential space where sex workers feel comfortable sharing their concerns and seeking help without fear, emphasizing the importance of confidentiality and trust in promoting overall well-being.

YONECO Conducts Mentorship and Supervision Visits to Peer Educators in Mwanza

By Mary Chimenya



Insert: YONECO Officers in Mwanza engaging one of the peer educators during one of the visits

On 15th May 2024 mwanza team conducted a mentorship and supportive supervision visit to the newly recruited FSW Peer educators at Tulonghondo and kalanga area.

PE supervisor Charles, empowered Female Sex Workers through Peer Mentorship where he examines the impact of peer mentorship programs on the empowerment of female sex workers which explores how mentorship from experienced peers can improve access to healthcare, reduce stigma, and enhance economic opportunities for this vulnerable population.

He further strengthened Supervision Strategies for Outreach Workers in Female Sex Worker Programs and effective supervision strategies for outreach workers engaging with female sex workers which explores the role of supportive supervision in improving outreach effectiveness, ensuring the safety of outreach workers, and enhancing the quality of services provided to female sex workers.

He explained that Building Capacity in HIV Prevention among Female Sex Workers is very important and further highlighted the role of mentorship in building the capacity of female sex workers to engage in HIV prevention efforts. He explores how mentorship from peer educators and healthcare professionals can enhance knowledge, skills, and confidence among female sex workers, ultimately leading to improved health outcomes.

The session provides valuable insights into the importance of mentorship and supervision in supporting and empowering female sex workers and other key populations. They offered practical examples of effective strategies and interventions that can be implemented to improve the well-being of this vulnerable group.

Raising Awareness About Rights and Goal Setting Among Female Sex Workers

By Blessings Chinula



Insert: YONECO and AngazaFoundation staff engaging with the clients during the session. Below: Sub Inspector Chisemphere taking his turn to share his insights.

YONECO and Angaza, in collaboration with Chimwawa Police unit, organized a session on right and goal setting at the Chimwawa Health Centre. During this session, a Police officer enlightened female sex workers (FSWs) about their rights. It was disheartening to discover that some women who experience gender-based violence (GBV) often retract their cases when seeking support from the Police, opting for monetary compensation instead.

This unfortunate trend hampers the delivery of justice, especially when the accused lacks the financial means to compensate the victim. Sub Inspector Chisemphere emphasized the importance for FSWs to

attend court hearings and testify, as this is crucial for ensuring that justice is served. YONECO and Angaza officers reiterated that safeguarding rights is a collective responsibility, and everyone has the right to be protected. The session successfully engaged with 19 FSWs, shedding light on the significance of upholding rights and seeking justice, even in challenging circumstances.



YONECO Board of Trustees Visit BEFIT Programme Impact Areas



Insert: The visiting team posing with stakeholders after taking part in a Quarterly Review Meeting of the BEFIT Program at Mwazisi TDC in Rumphi. Below: A group photo at Tenthele Primary School in the same district.

Some of the members of the Board of Trustees of YONECO conducted a monitoring visit to appreciate the impact of the Building Education Foundations through Innovation and Technology (BEFIT) Programme, which is being implemented in collaboration with Chitipa and Rumphi District Councils.

The visit was conducted from 6 to 10 May, 2024 and it involved engagement meetings with key district stakeholders and school visits in the Primary Education zones where the programme is being implemented.

Speaking on behalf of the delegation, Mr. Samuel Bota, Chairperson of the Programmes & Projects Committee of the Board, explained that the Board's role is mainly to provide strategic and policy direction.

Mr. Bota added that the visit to programme sites aims to inform the Board about the impact.

“Programme reports can be flowery. It is necessary to collaborate with what is on the ground through periodic physical visits,” explained Mr. Bota during a courtesy call to Chitipa District Commissioner’s office.



Insert: A group photo with staff members at Tenthele Primary School in the same district.

YONECO appreciates the members of the Board; Mr. Samuel Bota, Dr. Immaculate Chamangwana, Mr. Evance Mitochi, Reverend Father Dr. Pembamoyo and Mr. Geoffrey Sakala for their dedication to the exercise.

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