



YONECO VOICE

Monthly Newsletter

July 2024

Issue 7

Volume 11



Inside

**YONECO Staff
Drilled on
Disability Inclusion**

**NYCOM Executive
Director Pays Courtesy
Call to YONECO**

**Pushbikes Boost HIV
Prevention Outreach
Activities**

PAGE 12

PAGE 15

PAGE 20

Contents

Production Team

Executive Director’s Note.....1

YONECO Conducts Youth SRHR Awareness Campaign in Mangochi.....5

YONECO Welcomes Four ICT Interns.....6

Intern Profiles.....7

YONECO, Bar Owners Collaborate to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation in Drinking Joints.....9

Blantyre Man Handed 21 Years IHL for Defiling Stepdaughter10

YONECO Staff Drilled on Disability Inclusion.....12

YONECO Trains School-Based Violence Research Enumerators.....13

YONECO Dates Community Structures on SP-GEAR project.....14

NYCOM Executive Director Pays Courtesy Call to YONECO.....15

Mulanje District Council Nods to SP-GEAR Project 16

YONECO Gears Up to Address the Plight of Divorced Women in Chikwawa.....18

YONECO Empowers Key Populations to Access Quality Healthcare Services.....19

Pushbikes Boost HIV Prevention Outreach Activities20

YONECO Steps Up Efforts to Manage NCDs with More than Medicine21

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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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SCAN ME



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 Reader,

with MacBain Mkandawire

On 10 June 2024, Malawi experienced a significant event that will long be remembered. The aircraft carrying Vice President Saulos Klaus Chilima (SKC) was reported missing at approximately 10:14 am. Search efforts were initiated several hours after the last contact with the plane. The incident raised questions among the public, particularly regarding the timeline of events. Of note was the reported location of the crash site, which was said to be in relatively close proximity to a road. This detail, along with the 24-hour period before the aircraft was located, has led to discussions about the search and rescue protocols in place. The circumstances surrounding this event have naturally prompted inquiries from various sectors of society. As more information becomes available, it is hoped that a clearer picture will emerge to address the concerns raised by the public and to potentially inform future emergency response procedures.

While we are failing to find answers to the situation and accepting that it happened, it is quite important to draw a few lessons from SKC's life. SKC was a goal getter. Following him from his university days as a Director of Entertainment to the last day in his life, he had set goals and was meant to achieve them. As a people of Malawi, we need to learn how to set goals and follow them through. SKC was a focused person that never allowed the environment to determine his future. SKC was a motivator for both the old and the young; one question is how many people are motivating others. SKC was an achiever. At a young age, he was the vice president and one asks how possible was this to be believed by the old and young alike and that he supported in governing Malawi. SKC showed the importance of being open and frank with issues. During his tenure of office, we heard so many stories about SKC returning people from the meetings because they were late. He was a strict time keeper and no wonder he was achieving in so many areas. As a people of Malawi, one big challenge is time management and we misuse the time on things that we are not supposed to have misused on. We can write pages on SKC's life and what we learn from it. As of now, we need to reflect on his life and build the nation. May the Soul of SKC and the other 8 people rest in peace.

July 6 is independence day and we are informed that the Government has dedicated the day to the lives of SKC and the other 8 Malawians who died in a plane crash on 10 June 2024. While this is being done, the country should spend time reflecting on Malawi at 60 years as this is the 60th birthday of Malawi. 60 years of independence? Or 60 years of dependence? This is the question we are left to ponder with. We need to reflect on the achievements and failures for the last 60 years while thinking on how we intend to move

to the next 60 years. We have a vision for 2063 and we need to reflect whether our current strategies will make us move in the right direction or not. While thinking about these issues, it's high time people of Malawi start finding solutions to our challenges that are realistic and focussed on production and not consumption. We need to ask hard questions why we are exporting labour to countries that spend energy to have soft water while Malawi has a lot of fresh water fit for production. We just need a bit of rethinking and bringing back lost glory.

Child protection is not for the faint-hearted as it demands a lot beyond education and commitment. Child protection is a calling that needs to be enhanced if children are to be protected. Behind the child protection profession are HEROES that are never celebrated because they have not invented any extraordinary machinery. However, there are professionals or heroes that we do recognize. Heroes who spend sleepless nights and tiresome days to protect the children at different levels. Child Protection Professionals Day falls on 7 July every year. Let us shout out to these unsung heroes on this Day as we celebrate together for the good work to protect children. Send a message about these heroes on the 7 July 2024 to gbv@yoneco.org to recognize the child protection professionals.

July is blessed with a number of commemorations starting with World Population Day on 11 July. The World Population Day comes a few months after Malawi hosted a huge population conference in Lilongwe. The world population has already passed 8.1 billion and Malawi's population continues to increase with high levels of teenage pregnancies. The question that one continues to ask is "what are we doing to deal with this high population growth?". 15 July is the World Youth Skills Day under the theme "Youth Skills for Peace and Development". Enhancing peace development is focusing on mental health management as most young people do not have peace due to many economic challenges in Malawi. We therefore need to enhance young people's skills to create peaceful co-existence and management of the processes.

We finish our discussions with the realization that 1 in 3 victims of trafficking in persons worldwide are children. This is a daunting task for the world and Malawi in particular and it's high time we need to start focusing on child trafficking. As we commemorate the World Day against trafficking on July 30, 2024 under the theme "Leave no child behind in the fight against human trafficking", we need to reflect seriously on our actions in responding to trafficking in persons especially in our porous borders in Machinga, Mangochi, Phalombe, Dedza and Mwanza. Children are trafficked for purposes of child labour and this has become a norm. We need massive awareness and engagement.

Wishing you a Happy July.

RESILIENCE IN MOURNING

By Gracium Mkonda
Chithonje

In the heart of Malawi, a nation in mourning,
60 years of independence, now tinged with
sorrow,
As the 6th of July approaches with heavy
hearts,
The shadow of tragedy casts a dark, solemn
glow.

A plane crash on June 10th stole SKC, the
blessed, and 8 others,
Leaving a void, a silence deep in the nation's
soul,
Yet amidst the grief, unity shines through
tears,
As Malawians gather to honor those lost,
whole.

Flags will cease to fly at half-mast, lifted high
in resilience,
Songs will rise in remembrance, echoes of the
past,
Independence Day, joy tempered with solemn
reverence,
In the face of loss, our strength steadfastly
cast.

From the ashes of despair, we rise, unbroken
and strong,
Malawi's heart beats with a rhythm of hope
anew,
For in our unity and resolve, we belong,
A nation resilient, enduring, and true.





*Sustaining Institutional Growth and Independence
for Social and Economic Development of Youth,
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YONECO Conducts Youth SRHR Awareness Campaign in Mangochi



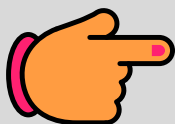
Insert: Field Officer for YONECO in Mangochi district during the SRHR awareness with some young people.

YONECO carried out a Sexual Reproductive Health (SRHR) awareness campaign on 15 June 2024, targeting young individuals in Kalonga village, Mangochi district.

Additionally, the young individuals were informed about YONECO's dedicated toll-free youth helpline, 393, that they can use to seek guidance and support on sexual reproductive health issues.

The objective of the session was to provide comprehensive SRHR education to empower young people to make informed decisions about their health. Strategically, the participants were requested to bring up a particular SRHR issue they wanted to understand. The topics of pregnancy, the functioning of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and modern contraceptive use were of particular interest to the young people who participated in the sessions.

Visit our LetsChill platform to learn more. Scan this



YONECO WELCOMES FOUR ICT INTERNS



YONECO has welcomed four young interns from the University of Malawi (UNIMA) who have joined our ICT Department for a period of one year.

Within the one-year tenure, YONECO will give them all the necessary support to have hands-on experience in their field of study. As the interns will be supported with technical and professional support to acquire the necessary industrial skills, the team is also expected to positively contribute towards YONECO's ICT for Development (ICT4D) agenda.

The four young interns who have joined our team are Peter Isulu and Francis Eneya who have just completed their Bachelor of Computer Science studies and Joseph Watcheni and James Kalulu who studied Bachelor of Science in Computer Network Engineering.

The internship initiative is part of YONECO's Youth Development Programme which, among other things, focuses on the empowerment of young people and advocacy for an enabling policy environment that supports the advancement of young people's rights and welfare.

YONECO provides internship opportunities to more than 80 students from various tertiary institutions every year. The interns are placed in different departments at the organization's Head Office in Zomba and others are assigned to district offices across Malawi.

UPCOMING DAYS

6 July:

- Independence Day

11 July:

- World Population Day

15 July:

- World Youth Skills Day

30 July:

- World Day against Trafficking in Persons

INTERN PROFILES

DUNIA MKANDAWIRE

Dunia Mkandawire is a third-year student pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Social Science at the University of Livingstonia (UNILIA). Dunia is a programmes intern at YONECO district office in Blantyre. Dunia is responsible for supporting women's economic empowerment activities, case management and youth development interventions.



JUDITH KUNTEMBE

Judith Kuntembe is a third-year student at the University of Livingstonia (UNILIA), pursuing a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Science. Judith joined YONECO District Office in Blantyre as a programmes intern supporting various interventions related to youth development, child protection and women empowerment.

THOKOZIRE MTONGA

Thokozile Mtonga joined YONECO as a programmes intern on 1st June, 2024. Thokozile is a third-year student at the University of Livingstonia (UNILIA), pursuing a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Science. Thokozile is currently stationed at YONECO District Office in Blantyre where she is supporting the implementation of activities that are aimed at promoting the rights and welfare of the youth, women and children.



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

Tikugwira ntchito limodzi kuonetsetsa kuti anthu achialubino akuonetsetsa 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.



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

YONECO, Bar Owners Collaborate to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation in Drinking Joints



Insert: A team comprising of YONECO, VSU and Social Welfare staff captured at one of the drinking joints during the assessment exercise.

YONECO and proprietors of various drinking joints have agreed to prevent children from engaging in sex work in bars around the district in a bid to safeguard the minors from exploitation and potential exposure to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

An assessment which YONECO previously conducted in the drinking establishments in the district indicated that there is a higher percentage of minors who are engaged in sex work. As such, efforts towards addressing the issue ensued in collaboration with the district's Victim Support Unit (VSU) and the Social Welfare Office.

Following a series of discussions with proprietors of the targeted drinking establishments, the parties agreed to implement measures for preventing minors from frequenting the joints.

Heartrendingly, some bar owners were reluctant to sanction the ban on minors from sex work activities in their establishments indicating that young girls attract more clients than older sex workers. However, the bar owners understood the need to have children protected from violence and exploitation. Since the agreement was made in April this year, a total of 10 monitoring activities have been conducted in the hotspots, and no underage girls were found in the drinking joints.

The engagements were conducted under a project titled Addressing Unmet Needs in HIV Testing Services for Men and Key Populations for HIV/AIDS Services through Effective Delivery Models in Malawi project. YONECO and Angaza are implementing the project with financial and technical support from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Blantyre Man Handed 21 Years IHL for Defiling Stepdaughter

On 5 June 2024, the First Grade Magistrate Court in Blantyre on 5 June 2024 sentenced a 29-year-old man to twenty-one years imprisonment with hard labour for defiling his seven-year-old stepdaughter.

The matter was brought to the attention of YONECO by the girl's aunt who called the Tithandizane National toll-free Child Helpline. The aunt noted that the girl was having difficulties walking. After being quizzed, the girl disclosed that her stepfather started defiling her when she was only seven years old. The girl kept this as a secret as the assailant threatened to kill her mother when she disclosed the ordeal to anyone.

YONECO engaged the nearest Malawi Police Service Station and the District Special Welfare and collaboratively followed up on the case. The girl was referred to the hospital for a medical examination which came out positive for defilement. This led to the stepfather's arrest.

In his first court appearance, the man pleaded guilty. After all the court procedures, the man was later handed the sentence. The girl's relatives and all stakeholders who were involved in following up on the case expressed their satisfaction with the court's ruling.



REPORT GBV. CALL **5600**
FOR FREE

REPORT CHILD ABUSE.
CALL **116** FOR FREE

Tithandizane National Helpline Services



Youth Helpline
CALL 393
For FREE
Smart choices for young people

Drug & Substance Abuse Hotline
Seek Help
CALL 6600

Child Helpline
Let the Child Speak
CALL 112

GBV Crisis Line
Speak out and Stop Violence
CALL 112

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Social Re
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Safe Plac
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Other S
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YONECO Staff Drilled in Disability Inclusion



Insert: YONECO staff members during one of the exercises at the disability inclusion workshop in Zomba. **Below:** David Curtis, International Director of PAFID illustrating a point during the exercise.

Disability inclusion is essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as such, it is necessary to optimize the capabilities of people with disabilities to realize their full potential. Inclusive so that every individual including those with disabilities benefits equally from the organization's initiative.

It is against this background that on 18 June 2024, David Curtis and Virak Kheng from People's Action for Inclusive Development (PAFID) - Cambodia facilitated a training session on disability inclusion for YONECO staff in Zomba.

The training aimed at equipping YONECO staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to help them understand and better serve people with disabilities.

The training also equipped YONECO staff with tools to adapt their services and ensure that they are more accessible and

YONECO's Executive Director, MacBain Mkandawire, applauded PAFID for the gesture saying that the training will further enhance the organization's commitment to mainstreaming disability considerations in its programmes.





YONECO Trains School-Based Violence Research Enumerators

From 7 to 11 June 2024, YONECO supported the facilitation of a five-day training of enumerators for a research study on school-based violence which the University of Malawi (UNIMA) in collaboration with the Centre for Global Research will be embarking on in various districts across Malawi.

During the training, YONECO particularly focused on equipping the study enumerators with knowledge of case management processes.

YONECO equipped the enumerators with the necessary skills to maintain professionalism and effectively manage any possible sensitive cases they may encounter during the exercise.

The research study is expected to generate reliable and comprehensive data regarding the prevalence of violence in schools.

YONECO Dates Community Structures on SP-GEAR Project



On 12 June, 2024, Nsanje District Council introduced the Social Protection for Gender Equality and Resilience (SP-GEAR) project to members of the Area Development Committee (ADC) in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Ndamera.

The project aims to reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience among women, girls, and marginalized groups in the district.

During the meeting, the Chairperson for Ndamera ADC, Malick Ganizani, applauded the Malawi Government and its partners for initiating the project.

In his remarks, Ganizani expressed his optimism that the project will have a significant impact on people in the district.

He emphasized that the project's focus on economic empowerment and improved access to social services is crucial for the community's development.

UNICEF Malawi the project's funder, and YONECO, which is providing complementary support to the Malawi government in the implementation of the project, attended the ADC meeting.

YONECO Engages District Councils on SP-GEAR project



YONECO together with UNICEF and officials from Nsanje, Mulanje and Chikwawa district councils held successful planning meetings for the Social

Protection for Gender Equality and Resilience (SP-GEAR) project.

The project aims at lessening vulnerability and increase resilience among women, girls, and marginalized groups.

The meeting in Nsanje brought together key players from the two district councils, UNICEF, and YONECO to discuss and complete these actions.

Officials from the council lauded the move to conduct the planning sessions saying that they will help to have a smooth and effective implementation of the project in the respective districts.

The three-year SP-GEAR project aims to enhance access to social services and encourage economic empowerment in the districts of Mulanje, Chikwawa and Nsanje. The project is being funded by Irish Aid and the European Union through UNICEF.

NYCOM Executive Director Pays Courtesy Call to YONECO



Insert: Mr. Rex Chapota being flanked by YONECO's Executive Director, Mr. MacBain Mkandawire and Business Development Manager, Mr. Vitumbiko Namondwe, during the visit. **Below:** Mr. Chapota inside YFM radio studios.

The Executive Director (ED) of the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM), Rex Chapota paid a courtesy call to YONECO Head Office in Zomba to appreciate the organization's programming in youth development.

During the visit, Chapota visited YONECO's ICT Centre, Tithandizane Helpline Services Call Center, which accommodates the GBV Crisis Line (5600), Youth Helpline (5600), Child Helpline (116), and Drug and Substance Abuse Hotline (6600).

In addition, Chapota also visited YFM Studios, where he had a brief live interview with YFM's presenter, Medson Jeffrey on issues of youth empowerment and meaningful participation in developmental activities.

Speaking after the tour YONECO Executive Director, MacBain Mkandawire, said the visit will help strengthen the collaboration between the two institutions towards youth empowerment.

In his remarks, Chapota commended YONECO's interventions in promoting and empowering the youth saying it is crucial for the country's development.

He also expressed optimism for possible partnerships and collaboration with the institution.



Mulanje District Council Nods to SP-GEAR Project



Insert: Stakeholders representing NGOs and various government departments captured here during the project's presentation at Mulanje district council chamber.

target 425 Early Childhood Development (ECD) caregivers in 80 Community-Based Childcare Centres.

On 11 June, 2024, Mulanje District Council gave the nod to the Social Protection for Gender Equality and Resilience (SP- GEAR) project which seeks to contribute towards reduced vulnerability and increased resilience of women, girls and marginalized groups benefiting from the Social Cash Transfer Programme.

The Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare will implement the three-year project in various districts with YONECO as a complementing support partner in Mulanje, Nsanje and Chikwawa.

The project is a build-up of the government's social cash transfer programme. Apart from targeting women and girls, the project will also

In addition, the project will also enhance girls' and women's access to social services and promote resilience and livelihood through the economic empowerment of women and girls who will be benefiting from the social cash Transfer programme.

Mulanje council Chairperson lauded the project saying it is very crucial and that it will help to economically empower and reduce poverty among beneficiaries of the social cash transfer programme.

The project, which will run from 2024 to December 2026, is supporting the Malawi National Social Protection Strategy (MNSPS) and it is being funded by Irish Aid and the European Union through UNICEF.



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LET'S GROW WITH US



Insert: District Manager for YONECO in Chikwawa interacting with some women during the GBV and child abuse awareness sessions which the district conducted.

Divorce and separation are common in Malawi. Many women and their children suffer as men, mostly the primary breadwinners, tend to neglect their responsibility of providing child support after separation.

While some women manage to recover and move on, many struggle to provide the necessary support for their children.

It is against this background that YONECO conducted a Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and child abuse awareness session targeting women in Chikwawa district. During the session, it was noted that the abandonment of children by their fathers after a divorce is, heartbreakingly, often accepted as normal.

YONECO officers enlightened the participants on various national gender-related laws like the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act and the Child Care, Protection, and Justice Act. The women were further informed about the available reporting mechanisms at both community and national levels.

YONECO Gears Up to Address the Plight of Divorced Women in Chikwawa

The participants also indicated that the few fathers who insist on retaining the custody of their children after a divorce tend to subject them to various forms of abuse. Further to this, women also reported that the culture of paying bride price compels women to stay with abusive husbands who threaten to claim their dowry back when a woman decides to opt for a divorce.

YONECO, in collaboration with Chikwawa District Social Welfare Office is following up on all abuse cases that were reported during the sessions. In addition to this, YONECO has scheduled to facilitate economic empowerment sessions for female-headed households in the targeted villages.

YONECO Empowers Key Populations to Access Quality Healthcare Services



Insert: Stakeholders engaging with some of the participants at Chikwawa district hospital.

YONECO in collaboration with Angaza The participants were educated on their rights Foundation, healthcare workers, social welfare to healthcare services and provided with and the Malawi Police conducted a 'Know your information on where and how to access provider' initiative to enhance access and confidential and stigma-free HIV services. uptake of HIV services among high-risk key populations in Chikwawa district.

Among other things, the activity was aimed at equipping the targeted participants with comprehensive information on HIV prevention and transmission, including how Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PREP) works and bridging the existing gaps in healthcare access.

Chikwawa is among the districts in Malawi with challenges in ensuring equitable access to healthcare, particularly sex workers, men who have sex with men, and transgender people. These groups of people often experience stigma and discrimination, which hinder their access to crucial HIV prevention and treatment services.

The activity centred on building trust and familiarity between healthcare providers and the key populations.

One of the participants, commended the initiative saying it has helped him gain confidence to seek healthcare services knowing that there are providers who understand their needs.

YONECO also took advantage of the activity to raise awareness about HIV prevention methods, encouraging regular testing, and promoting adherence to treatment among people who are living with HIV.

The activity was conducted under the Addressing Unmet Needs in HIV Testing Services for Men and Key Populations for HIV/AIDS Services through Effective Delivery Models in Malawi project. YONECO and Angaza are implementing the project in the districts of Mwanza, Chikwawa and Chiradzulu, with financial and technical support from the Centers for Disease Control.

Pushbikes Boost HIV Prevention Outreach Activities

Pilirani Matipulaye is among YONECO's Peer Educators in Chikwawa district who were supported with pushbikes to ease mobility challenges which the cadres were facing in reaching out to Key Populations in Chiladzulu, Mwanza and Chikwawa district.

Pilirani who hails from Mitondo village in the area of Makhuwira explained that the bicycle she received is helping her to discharge her duties more effectively. Pilirani cited that she has scaled up her catchment area from two to four villages where she now has 57 clients.

“Apart from reaching my peers frequently and in good time, I am also able to distribute more condoms and lubricants as the bicycle has enabled me to carry more cartons of condoms which I distribute in hotspot areas,” explained Pilirani.

Pilirani further thanked the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for the remarkable support being rendered to YONECO towards HIV prevention interventions.

A total of 100 pushbikes were distributed in early June this year to Peer Educators of the same number in Chikwawa, Chiradzulu and Mwanza districts.

YONECO and Angaza are implementing the 'Addressing Unmet Needs in HIV Testing Services for Men and Key Populations for HIV/AIDS Services through Effective Delivery Models in Malawi' project.

The project is being implemented in Mwanza, Chikwawa and Chiradzulu, with financial and technical support from CDC.



YONECO Steps Up Efforts to Manage NCDs with More than Medicine

Women, especially those who live in underserved communities, often face unique challenges in accessing healthcare and information to prevent Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) as these conditions are often due to lifestyle factors.

In response to this, YONECO organized an NCD sensitization session targeting women from Khama area in Machinjiri, Blantyre. The session was organized to educate and empower women with knowledge and strategies for safeguarding their health and that of their families.

During the session, the participants were informed about the prevalence and impact of NCDs on women and their communities. The women who participated in the session

shared their health concerns and experiences with NCDs.

The participants were also informed on how to make necessary lifestyle modifications including some practical tips on nutrition, healthy eating and the importance of physical exercises to prevent NCDs. The discussion also focused on the importance of regular health screenings and check-ups. Many women who attended the session voiced concerns about the logistical cost of medical visits, highlighting a broader issue of access to healthcare services.

The participants expressed their intent to organize similar awareness sessions in their communities



Tithandizane National Helpline Services

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116**

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**Youth
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