

#### **Monthly Newsletter**

#### February 2025

Issue 2

Volume 12

## Inside

YONECO Educates Mayembe Primary School Learners on Drug Abuse

PAGES

Promoting CFMs in Drought Relief Intervention

PACE 13

Community Collaboration for Improved Sanitation in Nsanje



Sustaining Institutional Growth and Independence for Social and Economic Development of Youth, Women and Children

#### Contents

Executive Director's Note	
School Prefects Commit to Support Zero-tolerance Approach to SGBV	
YONECO Donates to Miyombo Primary School through BEFIT Programme	8
YONECO Educates Mayembe Primary School Learners on Drug Abuse	
Parents Commend YONECO ECD Services	10
Modification of Harmful Practices Key in Combating Child Marriage	10
Promoting Adult Literacy to Drive Socioeconomic Development	12
Promoting CFMs in Drought Relief Intervention	1
YONECO Donates to Mozambican Refugees	14
YONECO Employs Theatre-Based Psychosocial Support for Mozambican Refugees	12
YONECO Collaborates MPS in Youth Rights Awareness	16
YONECO FM Signs MoU with Edukans	17
Community Collaboration for Improved Sanitation in Nsanie	18

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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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#### Visit our website to learn more about our work

#### **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 Fransparency and Accountability



# **Executive Director's Note...** *with MacBain Mkandawire*



Dear readers

January 2025 has seen our continued frustrations with people spending more time in fuel queues than doing work. We have encountered misinformation from various sources. Social media has been flooded with posts claiming that fuel is on its way, while simultaneously stating that normalcy will not return soon. What is crucial, however, is for Malawians to seek answers as to why we are experiencing this situation. Confusion reigns as people rush from filling station to filling station. Vehicles are idling at filling stations, and fights are breaking out. One must question whether leadership is aware of this challenge. It is disheartening to see well-educated and experienced economists posting on social media that the situation is fine. We seem to mislead our leaders too often. For once, provide the leadership with correct and balanced information and explain the impact this crisis is having on the country's economy and the cost of living for Malawians in general. It is essential for advisors and leadership to remove politics from the fuel management crisis.

While still on social media, we are concerned about how it is being utilised by various political party affiliates. A smear campaign is underway, and the politics of hate are being promoted online, creating a significant challenge. We are also troubled by various related comments and feedback. Malawi has cyber security laws that protect citizens, but these are not being enforced robustly. Facebook and other social media platforms have guidelines against promoting hatred among citizens and fellow humans. We must therefore refrain from hate speech and messages on social media and promote unity among Malawians.

January 20th, 2025, was noteworthy because we saw the President of the United States signing several Executive Orders, including the significant order on realigning foreign aid. This has resulted in the suspension of various US Government-funded interventions, leaving many organizations without clear direction. Some organizations have sent their staff on leave without guidance, and services have been disrupted, particularly in the health sector. While this has occurred, criticisms have been levelled at the US President with little reflection on what we, as developing countries, need to do. A critical lesson to learn is how we can mobilise some resources locally and from other funding sources. The issue in the US centres on aid realignment, which signifies changes in policy. Policy shifts are ubiquitous, and we must accept this reality. We need to focus on investing in our own

country. It is concerning to hear of some politicians investing in other countries. We must ask fundamental questions: Are we honest as a country? Local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are suffering the most. Let us strive for self-reliance and mobilize our own resources to sustain our work. International aid should be supplementary. We need serious design considerations that reflect these matters.

The Commission on Social Development will convene from 10 to 14 February 2025 in New York. The priority theme is strengthening solidarity, social inclusion, and social cohesion to accelerate the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The emerging issues for the session are social resilience and social development. Reading through the commitments, one wonders if we are making progress as a country, and we need to rethink our strategies. Malawi has laws in place relating to social development, but implementing them is a major bottleneck. Malawi committed to creating an economic, political, social, cultural, and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development; yet, our political operations, economic situation, and cultural beliefs and systems continue to hamper our development. Poverty levels remain high, with Malawi ranking within the bottom ten, raising concerns about being grouped with wartorn countries. Recent developments in US funding are worsening the situation.

As we approach Valentine's Day on 14 February, we must remember that sharing love is not the problem, but we need to be very careful. Don't get into debt to make your loved ones happy, and don't live other people's lives. For young people, protect yourself during this period.

Wishing you happy reading and a happy Valentine's Day!



## **UNSHAKEN RESOLVE**

### By Gracium Mkonda Chithonje

Through storms that rage and fires that burn, We hold our ground, we will not turn. No force can dim our inner light, We press ahead, we claim our right.

When doors are slammed and paths are blocked, With local hands, we will unlock. No distant voice will steer our course, Our roots are deep, our strength a force.

The youth we guide, the lost we find, We heal their hearts, we free the mind. Through trials faced, through fears we rise, We plant new hope beneath the skies.

Let others build their walls and chains, We rise as one, through shifting pains. YONECO stands, unbroken, free, A force of change for all to see.



ivindikiro pa bowo la chimbuzi Gntche zisafikire bibi kenako pachakudya chathundikufalitsa

Sustaining Institutional Growth and Independence for Social and Economic Development of Youth, Women and Children.

# YONECO CULTURAL TROUPE Experts in: Community Mobilization For bookings

Advocacy

SBCC

Contact: The Executive Director or The Station Manager Yoneco FM P.O Box 471 Zomba, Malawi. Tel: 01 525 764 - 01 526 199 Mobile: +265 888 919 623 Email: stationmanager@yoneco.org

#### www.yoneco.org

## **YONECO Empowers School Clubs with Environmental Conservation Training**



Insert: YONECO Executive Director, MacBain Mkandawire engaging with students during the training in Ntcheu district.

YONECO, in collaboration with the under 'Promotion of Forest Land Department of Forestry in Ntcheu Restoration trained members of District environmental conservation clubs in schools catchment area.

The training included 14 school- Among other topics, learners based conservation clubs, each with a establish and manage tree membership of 20.

The Schools and Communities around the Landscape of Mpira Catchment Project Area targeted clubs were established Interventions' project which is being funded by Food Agriculture and around Mpira Dam Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

> environmental are being trained on how to nurseries and woodlots.

### School Prefects Commit to Support Zerotolerance Approach to SGBV



Insert: Field Officer for YONECO in Mulanje posing together with the prefects after the SGBV workshop.

In a bid to promote the rights of students, YONECO organised a workshop for prefects at Nachimango Community Day Secondary School in Mulanje district on creating a zerotolerance environment to schoolrelated Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in the school setting.

SGBV compels survivors, particularly girls, to withdraw from school, and in some instances, it affects the overall performance of students. As such, the session aimed to create a violencefree environment by formulating tailor-made strategies for responding to and addressing SGBV at the school.

participants further The were oriented on the forms and prevention strategies of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), survivor support and reporting mechanisms, as well as GBVlegal frameworks related and policies.

The participants pledged to monitor GBV issues and ensure that all students are enjoying their right to education.





### YONECO Donates to Miyombo Primary School through BEFIT Programme



Insert: School Management Committee (SMC) members for Miyombo Primary School in Chitipa district together with YONECO staff after the handover of the materials.

YONECO distributed classroom mats, liquid soap bottles, and buckets at Miyombo Primary School in Chitipa district.

The gesture is intended to enhance hygiene and improve the learning environment.

In his remarks, the School Management Committee (SMC) Chairperson emphasized the importance of the materials that were distributed.

"As a community, we will ensure that handwashing and sitting on mats during lessons remain a routine at our school," he added.

YONECO has distributed the items the Building Education under Foundations through Innovation (BEFIT) Technology and BEFIT is Malawi Programme. a Government programme that is improving aimed at the foundational literacy and numeracy skills of all primary school learners in Standards 1-4.



## **YONECO Educates Mayembe Primary School Learners on Drug**

Abuse



Insert: Edward Nyirenda (Standing) Field Officer for YONECO in Rumphi district interacting with the learners during the session.

A total of 93 standard 5 to 7 learners participated in an interactive drug and substance abuse awareness session which YONECO organized at Mayembe Primary School in Rumphi district.

YONECO Field Officers conducted a group counselling session focusing on the key push factors for young people towards drug use. The learners who participated in the session were encouraged to concentrate on their studies, resist negative peer pressure, and seek help when facing challenges.

The session aimed to empower young people with information to make informed for YONEGRUP BUMPHORIEFUST interacting with the declsions about Wirenda (Standing) Field Officer ng the session Similar activity at Namilango Primary School in relation to drug and substance abuse.

Among others, the learners identified various issues that lead them to fall into the trap of drug and substance abuse. They mentioned negative peer pressure, the influence of celebrity lifestyles portrayed on television and social media, and the need to cope with various socioeconomic challenges they face.

in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Mchinjiri in Blantyre.

In the two sessions, facilitators shared YONECO's toll-free Youth Helpline (393) and the Drug and Substance Abuse Helpline (6600). The students were also made aware of various institutions and spaces where they can get help on mental health as well as drug and substance abuse.

## Parents Commend YONECO ECD Services



Insert: Some of the parents who attended the meeting.

On 17 January 2025, the Machinga YONECO office organised a meeting with the parents of children attending Early Childhood Development (ECD) school.

The aim of the meeting was to discuss a number of issues, including school uniforms, time management, the food children consume at school, parenting, and children's behaviour.

One of the ECD caregivers, Annie Makoka, emphasised the importance of parents demonstrating commitment to their children by asking them what they have learned at school.

The parents expressed their appreciation for the work that YONECO is doing and alluded that they have noted significant improvements in their children's cognitive and learning abilities.

### Modification of Harmful Practices Key in Combating Child Marriage

YONECO has intensified efforts to ignite collective action towards ending child marriages in Mulanje district by engaging parents, traditional leaders, and various community gatekeepers.

Child marriage is one of the violations of rights that has perpetuated women's overreliance on men, which exposes them to health problems due to early childbearing and Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Among other initiatives, YONECO's strategic engagements have focused on promoting the modification of harmful practices that fuel child marriages in the district.

In one of the meetings, village heads from the Area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Njema acknowledged that poverty is a significant factor contributing to child marriage in their area. The traditional leaders concurred that child marriage worsens poverty rather than alleviating it.

In this undertaking, YONECO is collaborating with the district's social welfare office, the police victim support unit, and other key stakeholders.

YONECO has scheduled additional engagement sessions to ensure that the rights of the girl child are respected in the area. So far, a total of 145 community gatekeepers, traditional leaders, members of various community rights committees and parents have been reached under the initiative.

## Tithandizane National Helpline Services

Child Helpline 116

GBV Crisis Line 5600

Trōcaire

Youth Helpline 393 Drug & Substance Abuse Hotline 6600



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## Promoting Adult Literacy to Drive Socioeconomic Development

Adult Literacy Education (ALE) is key to the realization of Malawi's development goals, as it increases literacy and enhances meaningful participation in various development processes.

Against this background, YONECO conducted a series of advocacy meetings with community members and their leaders to create a sustainable demand for adult literacy education in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Mapira in Mangochi district.

Some parents in the Mapira area do not send their children to school, and the few who enroll, especially young girls, drop out before reaching senior primary school classes. Consequently, this leads into an increase the number of community members who cannot read or write.

As such, YONECO has embarked on targeted advocacy and awareness sessions to promote education and increase literacy levels in the area. Insert: YONECO officer captured here during one of the advocacy meetings in Mangochi district.

In his remarks, Village Head Chipalamawamba acknowledged the importance of literacy and numeracy skills in socioeconomic development of a society. The Village Head explained that the area has a affirmed his support towards the promotion of education and adult literacy in his area.

"We need to break the cycle of illiteracy and increase meaningful participation in development activities," explained Village Head Chipalamawamba.

## **Promoting CFMs in Drought Relief Intervention**

CADECOM, conducted human have the rights targeting Drought Response delivery points. Malawi Project in the area of Traditional

Blantyre District.

aimed at have been affected by the said TA Kunthembwe. hunger crisis in the targeted of power abuse stakeholders providers.

and welfare of the Malawi Zomba. Drought Response Project, YONECO has been tasked with operating and managing the Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFM) component within the project.

YONECO, in collaboration with Among other things, communities option of using awareness meetings YONECO's toll-free helplines or beneficiaries of using suggestion boxes that will humanitarian aid under the be strategically placed in all aid

Authority (T/A) Kunthembwe in "It has been three years since the people from Kunthembwe area had a proper harvest due to The awareness sessions were drought. We will support all the empowering partners to ensure that the aid is community members who reaching the right beneficiaries,"

area to report all incidents of The Malawi Drought Response by the Project is being funded by the and services European Union (EU) and it is being implemented in Blantyre, Thyolo, Nsanje, Chikwawa, In a bid to protect the rights Mangochi, Machinga, Balaka and



### YONECO Donates to Mozambican Refugees



Insert: YONECO Field Officer for Nsanje district Victor Majola together with district social welfare officers presenting the buckets at the camp.

On 20th January 2025, YONECO donated 400 plastic pails at Nyamithuthu Camp in Nsanje district to support people who fled from Mozambique due to post-election violence.

The donation aims to promoting sanitation and hygiene at the camp. The gesture is YONECO's continuous efforts of promoting the rights and welfare of the refugees of which some are children, adolescent girls, women and the elderly.

The donation was made after a visit by the Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, who identified various critical needs for the refugees including health hazards due to lack of sanitation facilities.

"We are very grateful to YONECO for the timely support. We were at risk of infections that are caused by poor hygiene, which are more prevalent during the rainy season." Explained Otis Kaitano, one of the refugees at Nyamithuthu Camp.

The refugee community at Nyamithuthu Camp are also in need of good, proper beddings, medication and various social services among others.

### YONECO Employs Theatre-Based Psychosocial Support for Mozambican Refugees

From 12 to 20 January 2025, YONECO Cultural Troupe used theatre performances at Nyamithuthu Camp in Nsanje district as a tool for providing psychosocial support (PSS) to Mozambican citizens who fled from their country after the eruption of postelection violence.

YONECO has employed the use of theatre as a tool for promoting the mental health and emotional well-being of the Mozambican refugees who faced severe trauma and stressful situations before fleeing their country.

The refugee communities include children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and expectant women.



Insert: YONECO Cultural Troupe members using theatre as a tool for providing PSS to the refugees.

### YONECO Hosts Career Guidance Session at Mangochi Secondary School



Insert: YONECO Field Officer for in Mangochi district during career guidance session with learners at Mangohi Secondary School.

Career guidance sessions in schools are very important. The sessions help students in decision-making, setting realistic goals, and bringing in a sense of motivation.

It is against this background that on 28th January 2025, YONECO conducted a career guidance session at Mangochi Secondary School.

The session was facilitated by young professionals from various fields, including social work, teaching, and health. Some of the session facilitators were also alumni of the school.

Each presentation was followed by question-and-answer sessions, which helped the participants to have a clear understanding of the key aspects in the various fields. The Deputy Headteacher thanked the facilitators and requested YONECO to organize more career guidance sessions in various schools across the district. The Deputy Headteacher further expressed her optimism that the session would have a positive impact on the students.

"The session was more than just a career guidance session; it was a roadmap to our future," said one of the students who attended the session.

The session was attended by 190 students, of whom 70 were boys and 120 were girls.



#### **YONECO Collaborates MPS in Youth Rights Awareness**



Insert: YONECO staff and various other district stakeholders and community members in Machinga posing for a group photo after the awareness session.

11 2025, On January, YONECO collaboration with the Malawi Police people's futures and the society. Service (MPS) has embarked on a human rights awareness campaign in the area of "I will keep on reminding my fellow community Group Village Machinga district.

The campaign aimed to address critical Expel Asani. issues affecting young people in the violations in the area.

Change), seeks to address various root of young girls. causes of challenges such as child labour dropout rates.

The function also served as a platform for raising awareness about the negative

in consequences of these practices on young

Head (GVH) Msoma, members that education is a means of Traditional Authority (T/A) Liwonde in breaking the cycle of poverty and it plays a pivotal role in protecting children from exploitation," explained one of the patrons,

community. The activity was prompted by During the campaign at GVH Msoma's area, an increase in the number of various YONECO and the MPS shared some insights into recurrent and emerging youth rights the role of community members in safeguarding the rights of children. Community members were further reminded of the harmful effects of child The campaign, dubbed Tisithe (Let's marriages and how they hinder the development

in informal gold mining activities, cyber Additionally, YONECO also publicized its toll-free exploitation, child marriage, and school helplines lines 116 (child helpline); 5600 Gender-Based Violence Crisis Line, and 393 (Youth Helpline).

## YONECO FM Signs MoU with Edukans



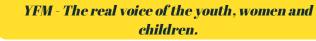
Insert: YONECO and Edukans team after signing the MoU at YONECO head office in Zomba.

YONECO FM (YFM) officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Edukans at YONECO's headquarters in Zomba.

BEFIT programme, aimed at fostering community involvement and enhancing educational outreach.

The MOU is focused on raising awareness, promoting education, and engaging communities in Zomba and Machinga, with a particular emphasis on the BEFIT programme that Edukans is currently implementing in three districts.

Under this agreement, YFM and Edukans will collaborate to produce and distribute media content as part of the The BEFIT program is a game-changing initiative by the Government of Malawi to improve foundational literacy and numeracy skills for all learners in Standards 1-4.







The real voice of the youth, women and children



## **Our frequencies** 100.8 MHZ

## 101.0 MHZ

For program and business placement



Communications and Marketing Officer



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## Community Collaboration for Improved Sanitation in Nsanje



Insert: Stakeholders posing for a group photo after the exercise. Below: Clearing off the drainage at the Boma.

YONECO, in collaboration with the Nsanje District Council, Nsanje Police, Jesuit Centre for Ecology and Development (JCED), and the youth from the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Malemia, conducted a clean-up exercise at the Ntowe Bus Stage in Nsanje Boma.

The initiative aimed to improve sanitation, reduce the risk of diseases, and promote public health in the area. Participants included local youth, community leaders, and residents, who worked together to clear waste, dispose address of garbage properly, and stagnant water, which can contribute to the spread of diseases such as malaria and cholera.

The clean-up effort also provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the

importance of maintaining a clean environment and the role of each community member in preventing health hazards.

The involvement of Nsanje Police, JCED, and T/A Malemia Youth reinforced the importance of collaboration between community members and authorities in ensuring the success of such initiatives.



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GBV Crisis Line 5600

Youth Helpline 393 Drug & Substance Abuse Hotline 6600

## 

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