



YONECO VOICE

Monthly Newsletter

April 2025

Issue 4

Volume 12



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Production Team

Layout and Design

Wilson Mkandawire

Contributors

Davie Msumba
Sayilesi Sinyanya
Cassim Mkali
Jones Makandanje
Andrew Govati
Mbanandi Saka Mahala
Patrick Makonde
Vitumbiko Phiri
Cephas Phiri
Chancy Kumwenda
Richard Nkhonjera
Osman Bakali
Smart Sochera
Mable Makondetsa
Christopher Majola
Angela Bisani
Ketson Mulebe
Tiwonge Banda

Research, Monitoring & Evaluation Manager

Daniel Chikatentha

Executive Director

MacBain Mkandawire

Our Programmes

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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

For more information contact

The Executive Director
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Malawi.

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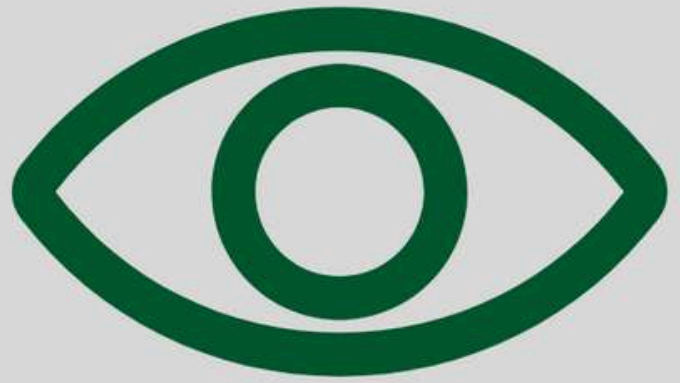


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Confidentiality
Respect for human dignity
Transparency and Accountability



Executive Director's Note...



with MacBain Mkandawire

Dear Readers

April 1 marks the beginning of quarter two of 2025 and about 169 days to the 2025 General Elections which are slated for September 16, 2025. We see escalating intra and inter party political violence with some language that does not resonate with a democratic culture. We are seeing a lot of intolerance within political parties and between political parties. Young people continue to be objects for violence and this is a worrisome situation. We therefore need to tame this. We continue to ask the political parties, general population at large and young people in particular to desist from these behaviours. There is only one Malawi which we will call home and we have to guard and protect it heavily.

The economic situation is currently biting and the cost of living is skyrocketing like a plane taking off into the sky with no one having the power to stop it. The prices of basic commodities have significantly increased. For instance, the price of cooking oil has risen from approximately MK 3,000 per liter to around MK 9,000 per liter. Similarly, a 5-liter bottle now costs about MK 45,000, up from MK 15,000. Interestingly, there has been silence on these matters as we only talk about them on Social Media. We have not had serious civil society engagement on the matters affecting the people of Malawi. Does it mean that our civil society does not see the issues in the country anymore? However, an emerging issue recently which was highlighted in December 2024 is that either the civil society is compromised or its space has shrunk. Whichever the case, technically civil society is also afraid of each other and this is shrinking the space. We need to revisit our approach if we are representing the people as things are getting out of hand.

We should not just focus on the political atmosphere, we also need to relook at people's right to good food, decent living standards and access to basic health and education services. It is clear from all this that our human rights activism has been thrown to the dogs. Maybe we are doing political human rights. The unfortunate part is that human rights are interdependent and therefore failure to enjoy one has repercussions. Organisations in the human rights space need to revisit the scope and ask each other questions about whether we are still relevant or not.

We just concluded the 69th Session of the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW69) in New York and I was excited to see numerous participation of various state and non-state actors at the event. While this was the case, we also did not reflect on what was the benefit for Malawi? Can we translate what we learnt to our constituents here in Malawi? Are we stuck with New York Phobia and failing to implement programmes? As we came

Executive Director's Note...

back from New York, we were greeted with the full page of the issue around adoption of children in Malawi and girls are the greatest numbers. As a country we need to reflect seriously on these findings from the Malawi Human Rights Commission and put up strategies to respond to the same. We need to ask questions especially for care institutions that are dealing with this and possibly revoke some licences.

April has two critical days for the protection of children worldwide. Firstly, this is the time we celebrate with children connected to the street on 12 April. The theme this year is participation of street connected children to matters that affect their lives. As we commemorate the day, we also need to recognize the critical nature of responding to the plight of the street connected children. Secondly, we have the "Blue Umbrella Day" which falls on the 16 April. This is the day to recognize the sexual abuse of the boys worldwide. While this has not been given attention, there is more emerging evidence about the silent epidemic of sexually abused boys whose voices are not heard. Join Yoneco in celebrating the "Blue Umbrella Day" and support the campaign to make the day recognized by the United Nations by signing a petition on <https://familyforeverychild.org/bud-signature-campaign/en/>

It would be naïve if we don't comment on the population issues in Malawi. The Commission on Population and Development under the theme tag of ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing of all at all ages. As a country we need to reflect on the population growth against the matters relating to environmental pressures and engagements. We need to think critically of engaging young people in population and development agenda

We wish you happy reading

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By Davie Msumba

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21st Gen Club Organizes Healing and Rhythm Session in Zomba



Insert: YONECO Cultural Troupe performing one of their pieces during the Healing and Rhythm session in Zomba

YONECO Cultural Troupe and the University of Malawi (UNIMA) 21st Gen Club, organized a Healing and Rhythm session that was held on the evening of 22 March, 2025 at Blend Kitchen and Lounge in Zomba.

The event was organized to promote Mental Health and wellbeing of individuals by promoting healthy seeking behaviours. The event featured various theatrical activities including spoken word, poetry as well as traditional songs and dances. YONECO Cultural Troupe mesmerized the audience with traditional dance antics and songs that conveyed the importance of prioritizing mental health and well-being of all people in the society.

YONECO Support Students in Tree Planting Exercise



Insert: Students captured here planting trees at the school during the exercise in Machinga district.

YONECO organized a tree planting exercise at Lutha Private Secondary School in Machinga district on 20 March, 2025.

The exercise was aimed at promoting environmental conservation and accountability among young people. In total, the students planted a total of 15 seedlings around the school and they avowed to ensure the survival of the trees.

“Planting trees is really cool and I will also encourage my peers to

start planting trees in their areas,” explained one of the students, Pamela Kachala.

The trees that were planted during the exercise were sourced from a nursery that was established by YONECO as one way of supporting afforestation in the area.

The school director led the exercise with active participation from the students. This initiative not only contributed to a greener environment but also educate the students on benefits of trees.



On 11 March 2025, YONECO organized a mobile school session targeting children in Mwenyekondo Village, Area 36, Lilongwe.

The session was organized to provide a targeted learning opportunity for children and to enhance their interest in education, among other benefits. In addition, mobile school sessions promote the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills while building their confidence.

"I have learned that education can happen anywhere, and this session has excited me as it has challenged me to solve complex problems," said Herbert Chingeni, a child from Mwenyekondo Village.

The session was attended by a total of 41 children, consisting of 31 boys and 10 girls. Mobile school sessions offer valuable learning opportunities and pave the way for children's brighter futures.

Prior to the session held on 11 March, YONECO has also been organizing various mobile school activities in the city of Lilongwe and more sessions are scheduled to reach all critical areas of the city.

Empowering Young Minds through Mobile School Sessions

Empowering Futures in Phalombe Through Role Modelling and Career Guidance



Insert: Students at Mpatsa Secondary School captured here during one of the role modelling and counselling sessions in the district.

On February 14th and 16th, YONECO partnered with CAVWOC (Centre for Alternatives for Victimized Women and Children) to conduct role modelling and career guidance sessions for children receiving bursaries from CAVWOC. The goal of these sessions was to inspire students and provide them with the knowledge and motivation to navigate their educational paths and future careers.

The initiative targeted three schools: Mpatsa CDSS, Holy Family CDSS, and Michesi Secondary School, reaching a total of 123 students, including 81 females and 42 males.

During the sessions, students were encouraged to work hard in their studies and set clear, achievable goals. Role models, including a nurse, a police officer,

and representatives from YONECO and Cavwoc, shared their personal stories and career journeys. They emphasized the importance of perseverance, hard work, and education as keys to unlocking opportunities. Hearing these firsthand accounts inspired students to envision their own potential.

The sessions also featured interactive discussions, allowing students to ask questions and engage directly with the role models.

In addition to career guidance, YONECO took the opportunity to promote its Tithandizane toll-free lines during the sessions.



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YONECO, MPS Gear Up to Strengthen Child Protection in Phalombe



Insert: Learners listening to a Malawi Police Service officer during one of the child rights violations awareness session in the district.

In response to rising cases of child rights violations in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Kaduya in Phalombe, YONECO and the Malawi Police Service (MPS), organized a series of awareness campaigns in a bid to put in check the vice.

The awareness campaigns were conducted both in school around the area and at community level. At community level, YONECO and MPS facilitated the establishment of a community protection panel in the area of Group Village Head (GVH) Mkhakhe in the district.

The panel has been established to lead the formation of village protection committees in the area.

During the session, community members were urged to abandon harmful cultural practices that perpetuate violence against children.

The community members and leaders who attended the session were also reminded that engaging in practices that fuel child abuse is against the law and has serious legal consequences.

On their part, local chiefs expressed their gratitude for the awareness sessions and acknowledging that their area has been facing significant challenges such as forced child marriages, child labour among other child rights violations.

On the other hand, the awareness sessions in the surrounding primary schools aimed at ensuring that learners are aware of their rights, responsibilities and where to report any form of abuse they experience or witness.

In total, the awareness session reached 1, 133 learners (531 boys and 602 girls) and 265 community members.

YONECO, Nsanje DSWO Intensify GBV Awareness Activities for the Impact of SCTP

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) negatively impacts on socioeconomic development as some capable members of the society are excluded from participating in economic activities because of their gender.

As such, YONECO collaborated with Nsanje District Social Welfare Office in raising awareness about the importance of preventing and responding to GBV at community level. The awareness session was held at Dinde Primary School in the district targeting the beneficiaries of the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP).

Ending gender-based violence is essential for unlocking the full potential of community members. It was a great session and we have learnt a lot," explained Clement Kanguwo, one of the participants.

The activity was conducted under the Social Protection (SP-GEAR) Project which is being implemented in Malawi with financial support from UNICEF, the European Union and the government of Ireland.

Stakeholders Unite to Tackle Poor Academic Performance in Chitipa

YONECO and authorities at Chipitu Primary School in Rumphi hosted various community-level education stakeholders in a bid to address various pressing issues that are contributing to marginal academic performance of learners at the institution.

The participants shared their concerns, experiences and insights on the matter. The meeting bemoaned poverty, parental neglect and harmful social norms as some of the factors that are contributing to the unsatisfactory performance of learners at the school.

To address these challenges, the stakeholders collectively devised a comprehensive plan, which includes conducting community sensitization campaigns to raise awareness on the importance of education, and strengthening partnerships with local leaders and organizations to address harmful sociocultural norms.

The engagement meeting was attended by Primary Education Advisors (PEAs), members of various community structures including Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), Mother Group (MG), School Management Committee (SMC), as well as village heads.



Insert: Participants posing for a group photo after the engagement session at Chipitu Primry school in Chitipa district.

Learners Commend BEFIT Program for Promoting Hygiene and Student welfare



Insert: Learners at Kapenda primary school in Chitipa district captured here washing their hands at the handwashing facility in preparation for a tablet session.

Learners at Kapenda Primary School in Chitipa district have expressed their appreciation to the Building Education Foundations through Innovation and Technology (BEFIT), which they have commended for promoting hygiene and student welfare while improving academic outcomes.

Mercy Banda, Standard 4 learner: "Before BeFIT, we used to sit on the floor during lessons, which was uncomfortable and unhygienic. But now, we have mats to sit on, and they are comfortable!"

Julius Lwsha, Standard 4 learner: "We are no longer distracted by the hard floor or worried about getting our uniforms dirty as we now have to sit on. We are now able to concentrate on our lessons and learn comfortably using tablets."

Heston Kapenda, Standard 3 learner: "We have learnt the importance of washing our hands regularly, especially before eating and after using the toilet. It has now become a habit for us."

Julius, Standard 3 learner: "We're grateful for the hand-washing facilities. They are helping us to prevent diseases that are caused by poor hygiene."

BEFIT is a government of Malawi-led program enhancing literacy and numeracy skills for learners in standard 1-4 across all public primary schools through supplemental, individualized, self-paced instruction through tablet-based learning.

Malawi Celebrates 2025 International Women's Day in Style



Insert: Deputy Minister of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, Honourable Halima Daud appreciating YONECO pavilion during the event.

Today YONECO joined Malawi government and various stakeholders in commemorating the 2025 International Women's Day.

The event was graced by the Deputy Minister of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, Honourable Halima Daud, as the guest of honor who officially launched the 2025 International Women's Day celebrations in Blantyre. The Deputy Minister also visited YONECO's booth, where the institution showcased its various efforts addressing issues of GBV and women empowerment.

The event also featured a breakfast meeting with several guest speakers, a Small and Medium Enterprise Clinic and a business expo.

IWD is an annual commemoration event that was set aside to recognize and honor the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women and to call for action to accelerate gender parity.

The theme for the IWD commemoration event was "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment."

YONECO Trains CAGs and Faith Leaders in GBV Prevention and Response



Insert: some members of Community Action Groups (CAGs) from Balaka during a breakout session at the training.

YONECO, with support from Trócaire and CAVWOC, has trained members of Community Action Groups (CAGs) and faith leaders from various areas in Balaka district on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention and provision of Psychological First Aid (PFA) for Community from various areas around Balaka district.

The training aimed at addressing gaps in GBV prevention and referral pathways as well as enhancing skills of Community Action Groups and faith leaders in provision of PFA.

In total, 52 community-based facilitators participated in the training and acquired necessary knowledge and skills to bring positive change in their designated communities.

During the session, the Tithandizane National Helpline Services toll-free numbers were also shared for reporting of cases and further support.



The Impact of SLGs on Gender Empowerment and Resilience



Insert: Members of Mwendowangoma Savings and Loans Group pictured here together with YONECO District Manager for Chikwawa during the meeting.

Mwendowangoma Savings and Loans Groups (SLGs) was established under the Social Protection for Gender Empowerment and Resilience (SP-GEAR) Project in September 2024 in the area of Senior Traditional Authority (STA) Golasi in Chikwawa.

The group was established to help recipients of the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP) in graduating to economic independence by saving and investing through the designated SLGs.

Three months after inception, the group members have benefited significantly, and they are now envisioning a brighter future through the SLG initiative. In the last three months of 2024, the SLG managed to accumulate MK 975,000. The amount was later shared at the end of the year.

Six months down the line, the individual members of the SLG have successfully ventured into various small-scale businesses, including poultry and goat farming.

Through the SLG methodology and the financial literacy training that was organized for the group members, each participant is now able to run a small-scale business venture, enabling them to support their families with basic needs and pay school fees for their children.

The group has a total of 28 members (13 men and 15 women), all of whom are beneficiaries of the SCTP.

The SP-GEAR Project is being implemented in Malawi with financial support from UNICEF, the European Union and the government of Ireland.

Ntcheu DSWO Urges Inclusive Support for Social Cash Transfer Beneficiaries



Insert: Ntcheu District Social Welfare Officer, Rodwell Chunga making his remarks during the case management training.

Ntcheu District Social Welfare Officer, Rodwell Chunga, has called on community leaders to ensure that beneficiaries of social cash transfers are not excluded from receiving other forms of social protection support. Therefore, he urged community leaders to avoid discriminating against these individuals by excluding them from other community interventions.

He made the plea on Tuesday during the ongoing case management training under the Social Protection for Gender Empowerment and Resilience (SP GEAR) project in Ntcheu. "Social cash transfer funds are limited, and community leaders must recognize that excluding beneficiaries from other forms of support is both discriminatory and harmful," Chunga said.

Chunga emphasized that while social cash transfers provide crucial financial assistance, the amount is often insufficient to cover the daily needs of beneficiaries. The SP GEAR project, which is being implemented by Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO), is funded by the European Union and Irish Aid through UNICEF.

A similar training is taking place in Mulanje as part of the project's protection component.

CSW69 Concludes with a Powerful Declaration for Gender Equality and Empowerment



Insert: Human rights activist, policymakers, and development partners sharing approaches that empower communities to prevent GBV effectively.

The 69th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), that was held at the UN Heard Quarters in New York, USA, from 10 to 21 March 2025, brought together global experts, advocates, and policymakers to accelerate progress toward gender equality.

The session focused on reviewing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

During the session YONECO, Pamodzi Kuthetsa Nkhanza and Ministry of Gender and social welfare co-hosted a side event titled "What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls: Leveraging Local Leadership," which explored proven strategies for addressing gender-based violence (GBV). The session convened grassroots activists, human rights

activist, policymakers, and development partners to share evidence-based approaches that empower communities to prevent GBV effectively.

In his remarks, the Executive Director of YONECO, MacBain Mkandawire, stressed the critical role of engaging local leaders, women, and youth as champions of peace and advocates against GBV. He emphasized that sustainable change can only be achieved by strengthening community-led initiatives, fostering partnerships, and ensuring that prevention efforts are deeply rooted in local contexts.

As the end of the CSW69, delegates adopted a strong and powerful Declaration and a multi-year Programme to respect, protect, and champion the rights, equality, and empowerment of women and girls across the globe.

YONECO Capacitates Mulanje Police Officers in Community Policing



Insert: Participants posing for a group photo after the capacity building workshop in Mulanje district.

Police officers have been urged to prioritize professionalism when handling cases involving children and other marginalized groups to avoid infringing further harm.

Station Officer responsible for Mulanje police station Superintendent Clement Mwale, said the law enforcers must always be competent in handling such matters to ensure the rights of all people is respected.

The remarks were made in Mulanje during the opening of a three-day training workshop, organized by Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) which has brought together officers from Mulanje district Police Units with the aim of capacitating them on issues of community policing.

Participants of the training are expected to gain skills on various topics including child protection policy and guidelines, handling of sexual offences, arrest/detention and bail of children.

Mulanje District Coordinator for YONECO Patrick Makonde, said protection issues are central hence the need to capacitate the law enforcers on issues to do with community policing so that they can cascade that information to the communities where they are operating.

YONECO is implementing SP-GEAR project in three districts of Mulanje, Nsanje and Chikwawa with funds from European Union (EU) and Irish Aid through UNICEF.

Reflecting on Progress Made in the SP-GEAR Project in Chikwawa



Insert: Chikwawa district stakeholders sharing their experiences and lessons during the meeting.

YONECO organized a District Social Support Committee meeting to review the progress which is being made in the implementation of the social protection component of the SP-GEAR project in Chikwawa district.

The meeting served as a platform for engaging the District Training Team (DTT) to reflect on their experiences in implementing project activities.

One of the key highlights of the discussions was the positive reception of the Savings and Loans Groups (SLG) component among the beneficiaries of the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP).

The committee acknowledged the impact of the initiative, emphasizing its role in enhancing financial resilience within communities.

The meeting brought together 27 participants, representing various sectors, including the District Social Welfare Office (DSWO), YONECO, and the District Community Development Office (DCDO), among others. Participants shared both successes and challenges encountered during implementation.

The meeting is expected to further enhance collaboration among the partners and stakeholders, which is critical to ensuring the successful implementation of the project.



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YONECO Collaborates with Chikwawa Agricultural Office to Promote Nutrition



Insert: Community Based Trainers in Chikwawa demonstrating some of the healthier foods that they prepared during the cooking demonstration event.

YONECO, in partnership with the Chikwawa District Agriculture Office, conducted a cooking demonstrations for SLG members hands-on training session for facilitators in and ensuring that the knowledge gained in cooking demonstrations under the Social the sessions is being cascaded to the wider Protection for Gender Empowerment and community. Resilience (SP-GEAR) project.

The training aimed to equip 23 Community-Based Trainers (CBTs) with essential skills in preparing nutritious meals. These trained CBTs will, in turn, share their knowledge with Savings and Loans Groups (SLGs) within their communities, promoting healthier eating habits among beneficiaries of the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP).

The cooking demonstrations will further reinforce the SP-GEAR project’s commitment to enhancing community well-being through sustainable and impactful development practices.

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ECHO Malawi Drought Response Project Supports Disaster Affected Households in Thyolo



Insert: Chief Preventive Health Officer for Thyolo District Hospital receiving the items from YONECO Field Officer in the district during the handover ceremony.

Partners that are implementing the Malawi the Tropical Cyclone which led to the Drought Response Project, which is being contamination of water sources and sanitation funded by ECHO, have handed over Water, facilities in the affected areas,” explained the Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) materials to Chief Preventive Health Officer. Thyolo District Council to support 188 households that have been affected by Cyclone Jude.

The partners, YONECO and FOCCAD, led by Self Help Africa, provided the humanitarian assistance that included WASH items such as soap and chlorine.

The Chief Preventive Health Officer for Thyolo District Hospital described the gesture as timely, stating that it will ensure sanitation and hygiene among the affected households.

“These items will serve individuals from a total of 188 households that are at risk of diseases caused by poor hygiene due to

Malawi’s ECHO Drought Response Project is being implemented by a consortium of eight partners in response to the El Niño-induced drought that has affected thousands of people in the country. The by CARE Malawi, aims to provide life-saving cash assistance to vulnerable communities, particularly women, children, and people with disabilities, to help them cope with the crisis.

The other partners in the consortium are CARD, Eagles, Save the Children, and CADECOM.

YONECO Takes Women Rights to Antenatal Section of South Lunzu Health Centre



As part of the efforts to combat Gender -Based Violence (GBV) and empower women , YONECO officers in Blantyre conducted an awareness session with antenatal women who gathered at South Lunzu Health Center to access antenatal services.

The session focused on GBV, legal protections, and strategies to build resilience against abuse. During the session, different forms of GBV, including physical, emotional, economic, and sexual violence. Women were educated on recognizing early signs of abuse and encouraged to break the silence by reporting incidents. The facilitator emphasized that GBV often stems from societal norms that tolerate discrimination, reinforcing that no form of violence is acceptable.

Participants were also informed about Malawi’s Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2006) which protects women’s rights and provides legal recourse against abuse. Women were also empowered with strategies to assert their rights, access support services, and build resilience through peer networks and community resources.

In addition, the session encouraged women to form peer support groups where they could share experiences and offer mutual encouragement. Seeking assistance from healthcare providers, community structures, and organizations like YONECO was also emphasized as a crucial step in addressing GBV-related challenges.

The session concluded with a call for women to become advocates for change within their families and communities. By fostering open discussions on GBV and promoting women’s rights, YONECO aims to create a safer society where women can live free from violence.

Insert: Osman Bakali, Field officer for Blantyre district engaging with women at the facility.

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YONECO Intensifies Transparency and Accountability in ECHO Project



Insert: Beneficiaries of the cash disbursement program in Blantyre being registered and vetted during the exercise in TA Kunthembwe.

As a way of ensuring transparency and accountability, YONECO officers from Blantyre were on the ground in the areas of TA Chigalu and Kunthembwe where Cash Disbursement program under ECHO project was conducted.

In partnership with officers from CADECOM, YONECO supported the activity from 24th to 25th March 2025 in both TAs where more than 1,200 households have benefited from the program which has distributed K185,000 per beneficiary which caters for two months of February and March.

Among other interventions, YONECO officers reminded the beneficiaries that the program prohibits anyone including the community leaders to force them to share any cash received.

In addition, YONECO’s toll-free lines were publicized, fliers and posters distributed, and suggestion boxes were placed at the disbursement centers.

Furthermore, the officers followed up cases that were reported following the first and the recent phase of cash disbursement.

As an immediate intervention, YONECO had a help desk in all the distribution sites for beneficiaries to lodge their complaints.

In total, 10 cases were registered from GVHs Kayesa, Chigalu and Kunthembwe. Most cases were on forced sharing and plans are underway to follow up on all reported cases in collaboration with relevant partners including CADECOM.

Elifa Gonthi (79) and Edson Chiwaka (75) who are among the beneficiaries from Chiwaya village in the area of TA Chigalu have expressed gratitude with the money they received saying it will save them from acute hunger which is threatening their lives.

YONECO is a lead partner in handling Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) model in the Malawi Drought Response (ECHO) project which is being implemented with funds from EU.

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