YONECO VOICE

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Inside

Mbenjere Students Chart Their Path to Success PAGE 5

Mangale Community Calls for Action to Keep Girls in School PAGE 11

YONECO Trains UNIMA Students in GBV Safe Space Management PAGE 17

Contents

Executive Director's Note....1
Youth Club Session Promotes Life Skills and Child Protection....4
Mbenjere Students Chart Their Path to Success....5
Mulanje Women Urged to Act Against Child Marriage....8
YONECO Encourages Students Urged to Speak Out Against Violence....9
Chitipa Learners Urged to Embrace Responsibilities to Protect Their Right to Education....10
Mangale Community Calls for Action to Keep Girls in School....11
Motorcycle Taxi Operators Join Fight Against GBV In Mwanza....13
Victoria's Financial Comfort Under the SP-GEAR Project....14
Mulanje Youth Embrace Climate Resilience and Savings....15
YONECO Joins Partners for Inception Meetings of FCDO-Funded Project in Nsanje....16
YONECO Trains UNIMA Students in GBV Safe Space Management....17
GOs Push for Innovative Solutions During 2026 National NGO Day....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**

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

YONECO VOICE-Monthly Newsletter
October 2026

Executive Director's Note...

with MacBain Mkandawire

Dear Reader,

During a courtesy visit by the NGO Humanitarian Committee to her office on 10 September 2026, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Malawi, Rebecca Adda-Dontoh, remarked that "the elephant in the room is localization." This followed the NGO humanitarian presentation on localization in practice progress and bottlenecks. The realization that we have an elephant in the room called "localisation" with no solutions to deal with it leaves a lot to be desired. This meeting highlighted that while many international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) claim to be implementing localization, their approaches are often superficial. A key observation was the concentration of sector leadership within INGOs, with very limited devolution of leadership to local actors.

Unfortunately, as detailed in the presentation, local actors often lack the courage and drive to address these issues. This reluctance stems from fears of losing funding, intimidation and the politics of aid, where Western funders often prioritize their own established institutions. This creates an inherent weakness among local actors regarding localization, which is not surprising given that localization guidelines have existed for over four years without significant implementation. Unless local actors become united and pursue a common agenda, localization in Malawi will remain a distant dream. It is crucial to remember that localization is not just about money.

With only five weeks remaining until the Second Global Ministers Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, Malawi is on track with its preparations. However, we must dedicate time to reflect on children in need of special care, including those trapped in child labor (agriculture, domestic and fishing), children living on the streets and those in institutions. In many countries, including Malawi, these groups are being robbed of their future in broad daylight. As we plan, it is important that we spend time considering their plight. The Ministers meeting in Manila presents a huge opportunity to revive the advocacy efforts.

Malawi has been identified as among the high-risk countries for the impacts of the 2026/2027 El Niño, and stakeholders are actively working to identify and get necessary resources. While this is the correct way of responding to the matters, there is a pervasive "business as usual" attitude. We were informed about the impending El Niño around March 2026, yet comprehensive planning for it was lacking. Therefore, we urgently need to strengthen both mitigation as well as resilient plans.

We would like to inform the public that YONECO has launched a new Youth Development Strategy. This blueprint guides YONECO's youth work and approaches, aligning with the organization's Strategic Plan, Vision, Mission, and overall programme delivery. For more information, please contact executive@yoneco.org.mw

Enjoy the read!

YONECO
Youth Net and Counselling

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

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Youth Club Session Promotes Life Skills and Child Protection

Members of Tsenga Youth Club posing for a group photo with YONECO officers.

YONECO organized a life skills session targeting members of Tsenga Youth Club in Mwanza district.

The session aimed to equip them with practical life skills, empower them to make responsible decisions and enable them to respond effectively to challenges affecting their well-being.

The session covered various topics such as decision-making, effective communication, positive relationships, and developing coping mechanisms for life's challenges.

The session also provided a platform for young people to discuss various health-related issues and underscored the importance of taking personal responsibility for their well-being.

Furthermore, the session included a child protection component, encouraging participants to understand their rights, identify potential risks and know where to seek assistance if their rights are violated.

Mbenjere Students Chart Their Path to Success

Learners at Mbenjere listening to YONECO facilitator during the session.

Students at Mbenjere Secondary School in Machinga district are being encouraged to take charge of their future by remaining focused on their education, persevering through challenges and making positive decisions.

The message was delivered on 29 September 2026 during a youth empowerment and motivational session organised by YONECO and attended by 320 students, comprising 205 girls and 115 boys.

The session encouraged students to set clear and realistic targets, identify the steps needed to achieve them and remain committed to their aspirations.

and to learn from challenges rather than allowing difficulties to discourage them. Additionally, the students were also urged to seek guidance, stay motivated and make responsible choices as they pursue their educational and personal aspirations.

"I have learnt that setbacks should not stop me from pursuing what I want in life. I will stay focused on my education, work hard and make decisions that will help me build the future I want," said one of the students.

Interns Profiles

Clive mamiwa is a third-year Bachelor of Business Communication student at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS). He is currently gaining practical experience at YONECO as an intern. Clive is developing his skills in Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC), community engagement, and communication for development(C4D) to promote social change.

Caroline kokota is a third-year Bachelor of Business Communication student at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS). She is currently gaining practical experience through her internship with YONECO. Caroline is developing her skills in Social and Behaviour Change Communication, community engagement, and communication for development, with a strong interest in using communication to create positive social change.

Esther victor is a third-year Bachelor of Business Communication student at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS). She is currently gaining practical experience through her internship with YONECO. Esther is developing her skills in Social and Behaviour Change Communication, community engagement, and communication for development, with a strong interest in using communication to create positive social change

Happy mtendere is a third-year Bachelor of Business Communication student at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS).he is currently gaining practical experience through his internship with YONECO. Happy is developing his skills in Social and Behaviour Change Communication, community engagement, and communication for development, with a strong interest in using communication to create positive social change

Peter Mkandala is a third year Bachelor of Arts in Business Communication student at Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS). He is currently doing internship at YONECO headquarters in Zomba and Zomba district office at Chinamwali. He is developing and gaining his practical experience in marketing, social behaviour change communication, communication for development, community engagement organisation behaviour with a strong interest in using communication to create positive social change.

Mulanje Women Urged to Act Against Child Marriage

A team from YONECO interacting with some women during one of the awareness session.

Women in Mulanje have been urged to strengthen efforts to prevent child marriages and protect children from practices that can undermine their rights and future opportunities.

The call was made on 29 September 2026 during an awareness session that was organized by YONECO at Gulumba Village, Traditional Authority (T/A) Chikumbu in Mulanje District. The session focused on child marriage prevention and the relationship between early marriage and rapid population growth.

During the discussion, participants observed that child marriages can contribute to increased population pressures, potentially placing additional strain on household resources and access to social services.

The women also raised concerns about the role of parents in perpetuating child marriages, particularly when families fail to adequately respond to the needs of children at different stages of their development.

Participants further highlighted economic vulnerability among girls as a factor that can expose them to sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse, calling for greater parental responsibility in protecting children.

The discussion also emphasised the importance of educating children and protecting their rights, with participants noting that education and proper care can help children develop positive attitudes, improve their psychosocial wellbeing and become self-reliant, contributing to national development.

Participants were also informed about available reporting mechanisms for cases involving forced or child marriage. YONECO officers encouraged them to report cases through the 116 Child Helpline, a toll-free child protection service, or to relevant and trusted authorities within their communities.

YONECO Encourages Students to Speak Out Against Violence

Learners at Lilongwe Primary School listening to YONECO Field Officer during the GBV awareness session.

Learners at Lilongwe LEA Primary School have been encouraged to speak out against violence and seek help from trusted adults to protect their safety, wellbeing and education.

The call was made during a School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) awareness session conducted by YONECO, which equipped learners with knowledge on different forms of violence at school and home, prevention measures and reporting mechanisms.

YONECO officers introduced learners to the organisation's 116 Child Helpline, a toll-free and confidential channel for reporting abuse and seeking support.

The officers noted that fear and silence can prevent learners from reporting violence, potentially affecting their concentration and academic performance. Learners were therefore encouraged to understand that reporting abuse is not a sign of weakness, but an important step towards protection and support.

Chitipa Learners Urged to Embrace Responsibilities to Protect Their Right to Education

Field Officer for YONECO in Chitipa, Mackson Mhango, engaging with the learners during the session.

YONECO has urged learners at CCAP Primary School in Chitipa District to embrace their responsibilities as a key step towards protecting their right to education and achieving their academic goals.

The call was made during a child rights and responsibilities awareness session targeting 53 Standard 7 learners, comprising 21 boys and 32 girls.

The session focused on helping learners understand the link between their rights and responsibilities, with emphasis on the need to remain disciplined and make positive choices that support their education.

Learners were encouraged to avoid behaviours such as drug and substance abuse, early sexual relationships and child marriage, which can disrupt their education and limit future opportunities.

The session was welcomed by the class teacher, Mary Sichula, who commended YONECO for supporting the learners.

"Many children know their rights but not their responsibilities. This session has helped our learners understand that they must be disciplined and responsible to enjoy their right to education," explained Sichula.

Mangale Community Calls for Action to Keep Girls in School

A cross section of community mebers who took part in the engagement meeting in the district.

Community members around Mangale Primary School have called for stronger measures to combat poverty, improve inadequate school facilities and enhance the enforcement of child protection laws.

These issues are significantly contributing to low retention and completion rates among girls in the area.

These concerns were highlighted during a community engagement session that was organized by a Parliamentary Committee focused on children's welfare and protection, in collaboration with representatives from Mangochi District Council.

The engagement brought together Senior Chief Chowe, other traditional leaders, parents, Mother Groups, the School Management Committee and various community structures.

Supply, poor road infrastructure, and limited economic opportunities as primary obstacles to children's education. They also voiced worries about children participating in temporary income-generating activities and the long distances students must travel for examinations because Mangale School is not a Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) examination centre.

"Poverty affects education. We need more support for families and better school facilities," stated Enelesi Mikundi, a community member.

Furthermore, the community advocated for reinforced district by-laws, increased awareness of shared parental responsibility and enhanced teacher accommodation.

Currently, Mangale School serves 340 Standard 1 learners with only 12 teachers, which places considerable strain on the teaching and learning environment.

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Motorcycle Taxi Operators Join Fight Against GBV In Mwanza

Some motorcycle taxi operators who were reached with GBV awareness information in the district.

Motorcycle taxi operators in Mwanza are now engaged as community allies in the fight against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) following a sensitization session that was organized by YONECO in the district.

The engagement meeting, held on 1 October 2026, brought together male riders who operate along the Mwanza border corridor. The operators were equipped with knowledge on GBV prevention, survivor support and referral mechanisms.

The session emphasized the important role motorcycle taxi operators can play in promoting safer communities, due to the nature of their trade which involves daily interactions with women, girls, families and travellers.

Participants discussed various forms of GBV, including physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse. The session also covered harmful gender norms, consent and positive masculinity.

Furthermore, the riders were also oriented on Malawi's GBV laws and the role of the Victim Support Unit (VSU) in handling cases, with a strong emphasis on referring survivors to trained authorities and service providers.

The riders pledged to become anti-GBV champions by promoting zero tolerance for violence at their stages, sharing referral information and working with community structures to report cases of abuse, trafficking and exploitation.

Victoria's Financial Comfort Under the SP-GEAR Project

Victoria Joseph, a 42-year-old woman who hails from lives in Palato Village, GVH Chavala, under Traditional Authority (TA) Kasisi in Chikwawa District. After her husband's death, she alone shouldered the heavy burden of raising her three children: Matias, Christina, and Cynthia John.

With limited means, she relied solely on selling tomatoes, but the income was insufficient to meet her family's needs.

In 2024, driven by the hope of finding stability and support for her children's education at Chiponde Primary and St. Monica schools, she joined the Tikondani Savings and Loans Group under the SP-GEAR Project.

Through the seed capital injected by the project, Victoria expanded her small business beyond tomatoes. She began selling eggplants, onions, rape, and later extensively added Irish potatoes, recognizing their profitability.

Her initial plan focused on eggplants, onions, rape, Chinese vegetables, and tomatoes, but the inclusion of Irish potatoes gave her business a stronger foundation and diversified her income sources.

This transformation has enabled her to provide for her children and ensure food security in her household.

Mulanje Youth Embrace Climate Resilience and Savings

A facilitator handing out climate change-related flyers to some of the youths after the session.

On 8 September 2026, Mulanje YONECO Officers conducted an awareness session on Climate Change and Youth Empowerment at Nkhonya Village, T/A Chikumbu in Mulanje district.

The session focused on the importance of following weather forecasts to help youth plan daily activities and adapt to changing weather and seasonal patterns. Participants acknowledged the need to change their mindsets and adopt practices that would help them cope with the effects of climate change.

The discussion also addressed the economic challenges faced by the youth. Participants explained that they rely on casual labour, such as collecting and selling sand. However, the low prices offered by buyers make it difficult to meet basic needs and improve their financial situation.

The youth requested guidance on saving money despite their limited and irregular incomes. In response, Mulanje YONECO Officers introduced Village Savings and Loan Groups (VSLGs) as a method for encouraging saving and supporting income-generating activities. Additional training on VSLGs will be provided to the youth to enhance their financial management and economic resilience.

YONECO Joins Partners for Inception Meetings of FCDO-Funded Project in Nsanje

Stakeholders during one of the meetings at Ngabu in Nsanje district

YONECO joined consortium partners for inception meetings held on 7 and 8 September 2026 with Area Development Committees and Area Disaster Risk Management Committees in Traditional Authorities Ngabu, Ndamera and Mbenje in Nsanje District.

The meetings introduced the second phase of the FCDO-funded Climate Adaptation and Resilience for Communities through Malawi Humanitarian NGO Consortium Project, which seeks to strengthen communities' ability to withstand recurring climate shocks such as floods, droughts, crop losses and food insecurity.

YONECO also highlighted its role in protection and safeguarding by promoting the project's Complaints and Feedback Mechanism, through which communities can raise concerns, provide feedback and seek clarification. Reporting channels include national helpline services, suggestion boxes, helpdesks and trained community focal persons.

Community leaders welcomed the project and pledged to support its implementation and sustainability, noting its relevance to the challenges facing communities in Nsanje.

YONECO Trains UNIMA Students in GBV Safe Space Management

Some of the students who took part in the training in Zomba.

YONECO, with support from the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI), has trained 60 University of Malawi (UNIMA) students to serve as peer moderators in gender-based violence (GBV) safe spaces under Pamchezo Peer-led GBV Safe Space Initiative.

The initiative seeks to strengthen student-led responses to GBV by creating safe environments where students can discuss their experiences, access basic support and be connected to appropriate professional services when needed.

The training, conducted in collaboration with the University of Stellenbosch, Zomba District Gender Office and the Malawi Police Service, equipped the students with practical skills to facilitate peer discussions and provide basic psychosocial support to fellow students.

The moderators were trained in psychological first aid, survivor-centred support, safe-space management, referral pathways, conflict prevention and resolution, confidentiality and other ethical considerations.

The trained peer moderators will also promote awareness of GBV prevention and help in strengthening access to support services within the university community.

NGOs Push for Innovative Solutions During 2026 National NGO Day

Stakeholders from participating NGOas, government and private sector during the commeration side event in Lilongwe.

As Malawi continues facing complex development challenges, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the country have renewed calls for innovative, community-centred solutions to create lasting developmental change.

The call was made during the 2026 NGO Day commemoration event that was held at Bingu International Convention Centre (BICC) in Lilongwe where YONECO joined partners and stakeholders in showcasing the contribution of NGOs to inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development.

The gathering acknowledged the need to work with communities to formulate interventions that effectively address emerging development challenges. Stakeholders observed that greater innovation, collaboration and meaningful community involvement are catalysts for meaningful and sustainable impact.

Held under the theme "Doing More with Less: Partnerships, Innovation and Efficiency for Inclusive Development," the event was presided over by the Minister of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, Honourable Mary Navicha.

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