

Action Hope Malawi

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"Improving quality of life"



TITLE: **From Poverty to a Second Chance: Salome's Journey from Sex Work to Education**

QUARTER: Q3-2026

PROJECT TITLE: *Improving the lives of underage girls removed from sex work*



Image: 1 Salome Donald currently in STD 6

Poverty Pushes Salome into Sex Work, but Counselling Restores Her Hope

Salome Donald, 14, from Jali area under Traditional Authority Mwambo in Zomba District, was forced into sex work by poverty and her desire to support her struggling family. She dropped out of school in Standard 6 at the age of 13 to help her mother sell *Kaunjika* (second-hand clothes), abandoning her dream of becoming a bank manager. Her

father survives on piecework to provide for the family's basic needs.

After leaving school, Salome was introduced to sex work by fellow school dropouts as a way of making money. Her mother later noticed changes in her behaviour and that she was bringing home more money. When confronted, Salome confessed that she was engaged in sex work. Her parents counselled her and referred her to their church elder for further support.

During counselling, Salome admitted that she was not interested in sex work but felt unable to watch her parents and two siblings struggle with poverty. "I was not interested in sex work, but I could not watch my parents and siblings struggle with poverty," she explained.

Action Hope Malawi Helps Salome Return to School and Supports Her Family's Livelihood

Salome was connected to the area Child Protection Officer through her church elder and subsequently referred to Action Hope Malawi for support. Through the "*Improving the Lives of Girls Removed from Sex Work*" project, supported by the Kirk

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Fund through AidsFondet, she was identified during a girls' mapping exercise and re-enrolled in Standard 6 at Mtonda Primary School. Her mother was also trained in baking and learned to make samosas as an income-generating activity.

Despite returning to school, Salome continued to face educational challenges. During a third-term monitoring visit, she had ranked 55th in her class. She attributed her difficulties to overcrowding, noting that *"her class had 187 learners and only three teachers,"* as well as a shortage of textbooks and difficulties understanding English, which is used to teach most subjects.

"Extra-curricular classes would help me catch up in the areas I am finding difficult," said Salome while speaking with Action Hope Malawi's Project Officer, Prosper Chikapa.

Her mother also supported the idea of extra lessons, explaining that she could not provide much academic assistance because of her own limited education. *"Part-time teachers require K9,500 a month to teach our children, which we cannot always afford,"* she said.



Image: 2 Salome's caregiver with AHMs project officer, showcasing their product.

Empowering Girls, Empowering the Future

Salome's journey shows that re-enrolling girls in school is only the first step; continued academic support, learning materials and additional lessons are essential to help them overcome challenges and remain in school. Despite these difficulties, Salome remains determined to complete her education, understanding that education is key to rebuilding her future, gaining confidence and pursuing her dream of becoming a bank manager.