

NGO empowers sex workers against vulnerability to HIV

EMPOWERMENT

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Correspondent

Action Hope Malawi has equipped 25 female sex workers and 25 caregivers in Machinga District with baking and cooking skills as part of efforts to empower them economically.

The organisation's executive director Sammy Aaron said on Friday that the training is part of a four-year programme, running from 2026 to 2029 and funded by Cisu-Aids Fondet Denmark, which seeks to improve HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive health, human rights protection, education and economic empowerment among key populations in Machinga, Zomba and Blantyre districts.

He said economic vulnerability remains one of the major factors exposing women and girls to HIV infection, exploitation and violence; hence, the need to equip them with



Sex workers face many challenges.

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practical income-generating skills.

"By providing vocational skills, HIV awareness and follow-up support, we want to improve livelihoods, strengthen resilience and create opportunities for safer and healthier futures," said Aaron.

He said the programme also

promotes HIV prevention, regular testing, treatment adherence and access to sexual and reproductive health services while strengthening legal protection and participation of key populations in community decision-making.

Apart from the vocational training, the organisation

conducted follow-up visits to sexually exploited girls who have returned to school to monitor their progress and identify challenges affecting their education.

Paramount Chief Kawinga commended Action Hope Malawi for implementing the programme in Machinga, saying the district is a hotspot for female sex workers, particularly in trading centres.

"I want to see real changes after the project. It should not just be a project that announces its entry and also announces its exit without changing the lives of the beneficiaries," he said.

One of the beneficiaries, Joyce Mwanyungwa, said the training has enlightened female sex workers about their rights and how to respond to abuse and exploitation.

"We face many abuses. Some men refuse to pay us after sleeping with us, others rob or torture us. But now we know our rights and how to seek help," she said.