

Ignorance of law driving sexual abuse, says NGO

By **Massim Majesole**

Executive Director of Action Hope Malawi, Sammy Aaron, has attributed the rising cases of sexual offences against young girls to widespread ignorance of the law among men.

He said that the law is clear that any person who engages in sexual relations with, or marries, a girl under the age of 18 commits a criminal offence.

He noted that many people, particularly in rural communities, remain unaware of this legal requirement.

"Many men commit sexual offences against children

because they only look at physical maturity and do not bother to ask about age," said Aaron.

He disclosed that Action Hope Malawi will soon begin community outreach programmes in rural areas to educate people on the dangers and illegality of child marriage and sexual relations with underage girls.

Aaron added that the organisation will work closely with the Zomba District Social Welfare Office and the Malawi Police Service to raise awareness on child protection laws and the harmful effects of sexual abuse on young girls.

Zomba Police Station Victim Support Unit Coordinator, Assistant Superintendent Nelson Chibondo, said cases of sexual abuse involving young girls are on the rise in the district.

He stressed the need for continuous sensitisation of traditional leaders and the general public on the legal and social consequences of child marriage and sexual abuse.

"It is important that communities understand that marrying or having sex with an underage girl is not only harmful but also a serious crime under the law," said Chibondo.



AARON—The law is very clear