

Speech by Chifundo Gloss in Chikhwawa District, Malawi

Saturday, 23 February 2013

Honourable Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Paramount Chief Lundu, Executive Direct of Camfed Malawi, Distinguished Guests. Greetings!

We have all heard that “If you educate a girl you have educated the nation”. I am living proof of that.

Every child should get an education. They should stay in school and become educated. I am here because I was kept in school.

My name, as you heard, is Chifundo Gloss. I was born 7th in a family of ten. My family could not keep me in school. They were too poor. I even had to work as a maid to make ends meet. Camfed found me at that point in my life. They provided me with shoes, notebooks, uniforms, fees and other school items. Amazing things started happening and are still happening. I was not worried about where the next fees or pair of shoes would come from. For the first time, I could just be a child in school and concentrate on my books.

Education delays marriage. I am 18. I have no children and I’m still unmarried! Education does that for girls! Keeping girls in school also delays the age at which they can have their first child. An educated woman will not have too many children because she knows why it is important to only give birth to children she can manage. She wants the best for each of her children. One of the reasons why poverty continues in our country is because of overpopulation. Investing in education will end this. Girls will realise that they are not mere baby factories, created to give birth and multiply children. We can build a nation.

A mother who has gone to school is likely to send her own child to school. She knows from experience why this is important. She will have a reasonable number of children. To create generations of educated children we should therefore start educating girls today! Not tomorrow. Not next week. Not when we have money. Today!

Ladies and gentlemen, an educated girl’s thinking is widened. I am a different Chifundo now because I stayed in school. I am speaking to you in English because I learnt to speak it at school. My confidence grows every day. I am getting better and better. I think further and I aim higher. I think not only of what lies before me, but even beyond that. I have a future! I passed my School Certificate. I am waiting to go to University this year. I am the first in my family to have come this far and my journey is just starting. To think that I might have been one of the girls who dropped out of school tells us how much we are losing as a country.

Education makes it possible for girls like me to change their lives and their families’ lives too. I have high expectations for myself. My family expects their situation to improve as well. My community will not remain the same and neither will Malawi. You cannot educate a girl like me and not see the change. I am in a stronger position to dream big, have bigger and better goals. I do not feel helpless and hopeless. Education has given me hope.

I am grateful to Camfed, to my family, my teachers and everyone who has helped me to this day. I am excited today that we are launching a project to support thousands of girls like the Chifundo I was. I promise you Malawi will never be the same again.

Thank you.