



Phydes Samazaka, CAMA member from Mpika, Zambia

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I am Phydes Samazaka. I am 22 years old and from Mpika, Zambia, which is located along the Great North Road. A Camfed bursary helped me to complete secondary school and college. This helped me not to engage in early marriage and prostitution, which is common in my community. This is because I was busy with school work.

Having been orphaned at the age of 3, I could only lean against the wall or on my knees, thinking about what tomorrow will be. But education became the shoulder that I could lean on. As my grandmother would say "my grandchild, there's nothing I can offer you this day, but just be focused on what you're doing. Not everyone has this opportunity, make use of it. Don't throw this away. Because of the education you're having, one day you'll have everything on the table."

Some of my friends who could not afford to go to school were involved in prostitution. They would wait for the truck drivers at 6 in the evening, along the Great North Road, to give them money in exchange for their bodies. Others married men who were twice their age.

I am a teacher. I graduated last year with a secondary school teacher's diploma. When I was a girl, I thought maybe I wanted to be a doctor, but I decided to become a teacher because it has given me an opportunity to interact with pupils on a daily basis. I encourage them and teach them about the importance of education. There are some girls who can afford to be in school, but they don't have someone to encourage them and tell them about the importance of education. The only thing they know is that they need to learn to read and write, not realising that there is a broader world that opens up through education.

When in class teaching, I see myself in some of the girls who have no hope for tomorrow, because they do not have anyone to help them stay in school. I see them stop school with tears in their eyes because they want to be in school. But they have no money to pay for the school fees.

If it were not for the support I received to be in school, I would have found myself in the same situation. I might have been married with 3 or 4 children, because in my community having many children is a symbol of honour and fertility. Instead, I now make informed decisions concerning my life. I know my rights. I am economically independent.

I am a role model in my community because people are now seeing that a girl's destiny is not only "in the kitchen" - she can become anything she wishes.

When you educate a child, everything changes. And for sure, many things have changed for me, because I'm now putting on a smile that was rarely seen on my face.