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PRESS RELEASE

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TaLI CELEBRATES THE YOUNGEST UNIVERSITY GRAUNT IN ZIMBABWE, MAUD CHIFAMBA.

Tag a Life International (TaLI) joins Maud Chifamba, the Chifamba family and the rest of Zimbabwe in Celebrating her achievement, the youngest University Graduate in Zimbabwe to complete her first Degree in Accounting at the age of 18. The organisation takes a moment to acknowledge the potential the girl child has to make history and to improve their own lives when given a chance. Maud Chifamba has a rare story, one mixed with difficulty and determination, unusual intelligence and genius which amazes all that hear her story. She is the epitome of all things possible, and a symbol of reflection for all, both adults and children, of the potential children have, girls and boys.

Maud Chifamba is an orphaned girl who lost all her parents by the age of 13. She is also a girl who's shown us rare intelligence which is not found in many children, as she attains this degree at the age of 18, breaking the record in all Africa according to records. Skipping a number of classes in Primary School because of her intelligence as recommended by her primary school teachers, to 'self-teaching' in Secondary School up to Advanced level as a result of lack of funding to afford her education, she is one rare breed who broke all odds.

This cannot be said for the thousands of children who like Maud are out of school because of the inability to afford an education. Most children simply cannot self teach, but are faced with social institutional vulnerabilities where they end up being forced into marriages, trafficked to take domestic low paying jobs in the cities or across borders, where they become susceptible to abuse of all forms including sexual exploitation.

Zimbabwe's Constitution makes education a right for children, according to chapter 27 section 1 which says; **"The State must take all practical measures to promote (a) "Free and compulsory basic education for children"**. This makes primary and secondary education a must for all children to access, and by access meaning the opportunity to attend quality schools up to high school, within the distance that a child can safely reach. Nyaradzo Mashayamombe, the Executive Director and Founder of TaLI weighed in and said that while we celebrate the achievements that the 'whizz-kid' Maud Chifamba has done, the Zimbabwe government and stakeholders have a long way to go in achieving basic education for Zimbabwean children, with thousands still out of school owing to lack of funds to attain an education.

While the constitution has this provision, and also the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has a policy in place which allows children to stay in school if they cannot afford to pay school fees, the policy does not make it a reality for children who are out of school to be accepted into the schooling system without money. It remains our hope that the responsible authorities revise the existing policies to make all the out of school children, and those in need of second chance education have access to quality education.

TaLI wishes to congratulate all students who graduated or are graduating this season from different colleges, university and schools, and reminds the general Zimbabweans that, when we avail opportunities to children like Maud, girls can be removed from being the face of poverty and HIV, to transforming their own families, communities and society as we know that, empowering a girl means empowering a community. As an organisation, we have enjoyed the working relationship over the years with Maud who has gone on to be an advocate for other young girls and young women, for their rights including ending Gender Based Violence(GBV) in public and private spaces against girls and young women. At a time when the African Union and the world grapples with child marriages and HIV in Africa, prompting education and women leadership remains critical, as good as promoting good governance and accountability, for achieving the sustainable development goals. To Maud we say shine on, there are no limits, and no boundaries.

THE END.

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