

## FROM STRUGGLE TO STRENGTH THE STORY OF SEMA MAULANA SENA

In the heart of Madzi Village in Mchinji district, where tradition often overshadows ambition especially for young girls lives a remarkable girl named **Sema Maulana**. In a community where early marriage is not just common but culturally accepted, Sema dared to dream differently. Her passion for education burned brightly, even as the odds stacked against her.

At just 14 years old, while still in Standard 4, Sema faced a life-altering challenge she became pregnant. It wasn't an early marriage that interrupted her childhood it was an unexpected pregnancy that brought judgment, whispers, and isolation. Her peers and even members of her community questioned her, saying she was "too young to be pregnant." The stigma was harsh, and the emotional toll even harsher.



*Picture 1. Sema Maulana*

Yet, Sema refused to let her circumstances define her. She continued attending school, determined to hold on to her dreams of becoming a nurse or a teacher roles she saw not just as careers, but as ways to uplift others like herself. She stayed in school until her pregnancy reached two months, showing a resilience that few could muster.

This is not just a story about hardship it's a story about hope, courage, and the unbreakable spirit of a girl who chose education over silence. Sema's journey is a powerful reminder that dreams can survive even in the most difficult soil and with enough determination, they can bloom.



*Picture 2. Sama's Father, Mother, Sema carrying her son*

Despite the whispers and judgment from the community, Sema's greatest strength came from home. Her parents both her mother and father stood firmly by her side. They didn't just accept her situation; they embraced it with love and compassion. From the very beginning, they assured her that once she gave birth, they would help raise the child so she could return to school and continue chasing her dreams.

This unshakable support became the foundation of Sema's self-esteem. She never felt abandoned or excluded. Instead, she felt deeply loved. Her **mother**, in particular, became her strongest pillar. Through every hospital visit, every check-up, and every emotional hurdle, her mother was there holding her hand, encouraging her, reminding her that this was not the end of her story.

During an interview, Sema's mother shared her perspective with quiet strength

***"I never felt ashamed of my daughter. Things happen. What matters is how we respond. I will raise her child as my own and make sure she goes back to school. No matter what the community says, we stand together."***

That kind of love doesn't just heal it empowers.



*Picture 3. Sema and her son*

After giving birth, Sema spent a full year at home, breastfeeding and caring for her son. It was a challenging time she was still just a child herself but with her mother's help and her father's support, she managed. And when she turned **16**, she took a brave step forward. With her mother by her side, Sema returned to Mazinga Primary School, the very place she had left behind when her life changed. The headteacher welcomed her warmly, recognizing the courage it took to come back.

Thanks to the Mother-Group Committee, a special support team within the school, Sema was not just readmitted she was embraced.

They sat down with her and her classmates to nurture understanding and kindness. The message was clear

***"Everyone has the right to education. No one should be judged or discriminated against. We are one."***

This moment was transformative. Sema felt seen, accepted, and empowered. The school didn't just open its doors it opened its heart.

Now back in school, **Sema Maulana Sena** is writing a new chapter one filled with determination, discipline, and dreams. In her own words, she shares

***"My school life is going well so far. It's not easy, but I'm managing. I wake up early every day to do house chores and take care of my son before I go to school. I'm still passionate about my education, and I haven't given up on my dream to become a teacher or a nurse."***

Her routine is demanding, but her spirit remains unshaken. Sema is not just a student she's a young mother, a role model, and a fighter. Her ability to balance motherhood and academics is a testament to her resilience and maturity beyond her years.

Her teachers have taken notice too. The Headteacher shared

***“We’re proud of Sema. Seeing her return to school after such a difficult experience is inspiring. She’s adapting well to the school environment and performing impressively in her studies. Her pregnancy may have been a setback, but it hasn’t stopped her from moving forward.”***

Sema’s journey is more than just a personal success it’s a beacon of hope for other girls in her village and beyond. She’s proving that early pregnancy doesn’t have to mean the end of education, and that with love, support, and determination, girls can rise above societal expectations and reclaim their futures.

Her story reminds us that every girl deserves a second chance and when given that chance, they can achieve extraordinary things.

**Written by:** *Travis Stonken* (Communications Officer)