

Attachment D - Piris's Story

In His Own Words

My name is **Piris Castigo Rocha**. I was born on 11 September 2004 in Xai-Xai, Gaza Province, Mozambique.

My childhood was very challenging. When I was two years old, I went to live with my grandmother because my father said that I was not his son. When I was four years old, my mother passed away. I then went to live with my father, but after only a few days he took me to my aunt's house, left me on the veranda, and drove away without saying a word. My aunt took me in and did her best to raise me and keep me in school.



When I was ten years old, I was expected to care for my grandfather because he could no longer cook, clean, or fetch water for himself.

Going to school was never easy. My school was approximately four kilometres from where I lived. My aunt could not afford transport money, so while the other children travelled by bus, I walked to and from school every day. On my way home, I often asked friends to carry my school bag to the bus stop near my house so that I could collect sticks and firewood along the road. These were needed for cooking when I got home.

Many times I did not have money for school materials. In Mozambique, even government schools require learners to provide their own books, uniforms, and examination fees. When I could not pay for these things, teachers sometimes would not allow me into the classroom. I was often bullied because I did not have a proper school bag. From Grade 5 to Grade 9, I carried my books in a plastic bag. One day some boys took my books and nailed them to the classroom door for everyone to see. Despite all of this, I never wanted to stop going to school. Every day on my walk home, I would pray and thank Jesus for allowing me one more day in school. Sometimes I was sick, tired, or late because of my responsibilities at home, but I kept going because I believed education would one day help me build a better future.

Grade 10 was especially difficult because of COVID-19. We were told to complete schoolwork on mobile phones, but I did not own one. Classes were only offered once or twice a week, and I could not always access the work that other students received. As a result, I failed the year and had to repeat it.

The final two years of school were some of the hardest. By then I was old enough to do odd jobs for people in the community. The little money I earned helped me pay for some of my school expenses. I finally completed school in 2023. After finishing school, my aunt told me that I was now on my own. It broke my heart because I desperately wanted to continue studying and make something of my life. I wanted the opportunity to create a better future for myself.

I continued doing piece jobs wherever I could find work, but I could not earn enough money to study further. During this time, I prayed constantly and asked God to send someone who could help me continue my education.

God answered that prayer through Lee-Ann.

I had done some piece jobs for her, and she listened to my story. She opened her heart and her home to me. I truly believe that God sent her into my life. My dream of becoming an electrician started while I was caring for my grandfather. Whenever something electrical broke, such as his old radio that we used to listen to the news, I wanted to understand how it worked and how to fix it. Over time, I developed a real passion for repairing electrical equipment. I believe that becoming an electrician will give me the opportunity to earn an income, support myself, and build a better future.

My ultimate dream is to continue studying and to learn languages, especially English. I believe that being able to communicate in English and other languages will help me succeed in business and in life.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story.

My prayer is that our Great Father, the God of Jesus Christ, will bless every person who reads this report with wisdom, favour, provision, and peace in every area of life.

Thank you for believing in young people like me and for giving us hope for the future.

Piris Castigo Rocha