

EZEKIEL CHIMIGOLI'S JOURNEY

By John Okoth, UKR Communications Team

All his life, Ezekiel Chimigoli has known only one parental figure, his maternal grandmother Rose. Rose reveals that her daughter, Ezekiel's mum, nursed Ezekiel till he was six months old and then left for the city to try and secure a better life to support her family.

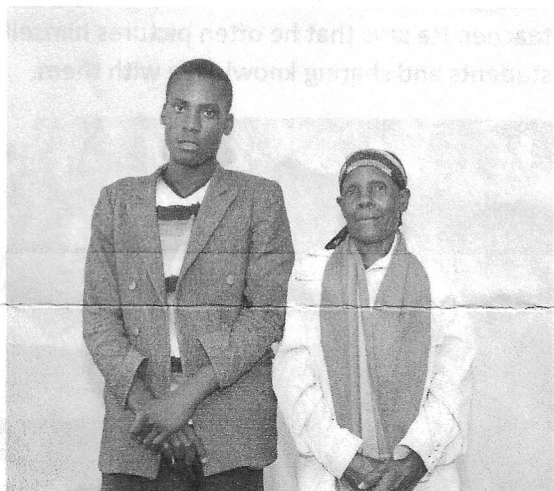
The life Ezekiel, now 19 years old, his cousin, and grandmother Rose have led since his mother's departure has been one of great challenges, confusion and uncertainty, all brought about by the lack of basic needs including sufficient enough food. The biggest hurdle, though, was always school fees and requirements, which get more expensive as education levels progress.

Through a teacher's referral from his primary school, Ezekiel after completing his primary education secured a high school sponsorship with United Kenya Rising. This enabled him to join an esteemed school in Western Kenya, St Peter's Mumias High School, which he was admitted into because of his high grades. UKR's sponsorship facilitated his school tuition and requirements for the four-years period he was at secondary school.

Ezekiel, keeping in mind that he needed to keep his grades at the very top to continue his educational scholarship past high school, recounts his high school journey to be quite engaging. He sure worked hard. The support he received from United Kenya Rising gave him the peace of mind he required to concentrate on his studies, instead of being sent home all the time to look for tuition balances like other needy students. "The privileges of a boarding school gave me comfort and I was able to fully explore my potential. I came to love sciences, biology in particular, and that is where I developed an interest to teach the subject, courtesy of my teachers' enthusiasm which made me interested," he narrates.

Ezekiel, as UKR's education officers note, kept scoring good grades through high school, and no single report form of his recorded a grade lower than B. In Kenya, grading systems are strict and only the top 10% or so of students secure a grade of B.

From his rigorous high school exit exams in December last year, Ezekiel once again recorded spectacular



results. He qualified for “direct entry” with a partial government scholarship to study for a Bachelors of Education Science at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in Kakamega Town.

Ezekiel is happy to be joining the institution because it is conveniently only 10 miles from his home and offers a diverse range of courses. He believes that pursuing a teaching course is the perfect career for him, and he feels joy with his new position as a future high school teacher. He says that he often pictures himself standing in front of his future class of students and sharing knowledge with them.



Ezekiel, as his grandmother Rose describes him, is a true ‘gem’. She admits that having been tasked for almost two decades with the responsibility of taking care of him as a peasant farmer felt like a big burden, yet she managed. Looking at the exemplary young man Ezekiel has become gives her a sense of pride. She has raised a reserved, at times passive, yet so thoughtful and bright young man. Ezekiel is

self-driven, hardworking, and possesses a passion for helping his grandmother with farming that seems to come from within him. Their small farm thrives when he is home, giving the family enough food. Rose feels blessed that her first grandchild shall set foot in a higher learning institution, herself having dropped out in grade seven. He is the first from his family to join a university.

Rose’s income from small-scale farming is a hand to mouth affair. Were it not for United Kenya Rising’s support, Ezekiel couldn’t have completed high school, let alone pursue a Bachelor’s degree.

Early this year, before receiving confirmation that UKR would be able to support Ezekiel in university, grandmother Rose was worried. At that time, she shared in the local Luhya dialect her stress, saying, “[s]ince we received news of Ezekiel joining university, I barely sleep. I have been praying that a well-wisher comes along and supports his studies. I am confident that help will come our way and Ezekiel will proceed to university.” When the family got news that Ezekiel would be supported, they were thrilled. Their prayers were answered.

Ezekiel reported to the Masinde Muliro University of Science & Technology campus in early September this year. In a few weeks, he will complete his first semester.

Ezekiel is brilliant, good at encouraging others, and a great team leader. On several occasions in high school, he landed the group leader role, and all the academic study teams he led excelled in their results. He will undoubtedly make a great teacher.