

## **Autobiography of Lydia Chebet Lokomol**

My name is Lydia Chebet Lokomol. I was born on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1993 at Sostin Sub location, Sekerr location in West Pokot County.

I am the first born in the family of eight siblings. My father had a polygamous family with three wives with my mother being the second wife. I grew up in very challenged live since my father had many responsibilities to care both our families and the resources were scars.

In the year 2000 I was enrolled at Sostin Primary School where I began my primary education. When I was in standard four, problem began in our family where my father was admitted at Marich Mission Hospital in West Pokot because of prolonged sickness that led to his death. Since mum was unable to care the family due to hunger at that period, I was taken to my uncle who promised to take care of me.

My uncle decided to take me to Sengelel Primary School where I joined standard five and six. Due to long distance from my uncle's home to school, he decided to take me to a neighbor who lived near the school though we were not related. There I faced a lot of challenges where I was required to fetch water early in the morning before going to school and at the evening I was required to cultivate some portion of land before going to sleep. All in all I didn't give up for my education since I wanted to change my life and also my family's life from the state we were in. After suffering for two years, my uncle again came for me and took me to Ortum Girls Primary School where I joined standard seven and eight due to my hard work, progress and good performance.

I completed my primary level in the same school where I did my Kenya Certificate of Primary Education successfully and I scored two hundred and ninety-nine marks (299). This marks were to take me to provincial school but due to lack of resources mu uncle advised me to either join district school or to stay at home. I decided to join the district school because I understood our background.

At school, I was working hard but I had challenges for school fees, where I was being sent home frequently. The school was 25 km from home and I was footing all those distances without food to eat on the way, I was also walking barefooted since I was talking care of the school shoes so that it can last for long. In school, also I was nog having basic needs such as soap, oil, sanitary towel and tooth paste. Sometimes my friends helped me with some basic needs and I was using branches of trees to brush my teeth. Though I had all this challenges I didn't lose hope and I completed my form one and form two successfully with good performance doing eleven subject. When I was to begin form three my mother was admitted at Kapenguria hospital and since I was the first born I decided to remain at home to take care of our younger children. My mother was given medical services but no improvement only to be given medicine to take at home and that lasted for three years.

At home I was growing crops, feeding the children, fetching firewood form the forest to sell so that to get money for paying school fees for our children in primary school and buying food and school uniforms for them. I also volunteered to teach Chepotwo Primary School during my free time to offer knowledge to the children since I knew the importance of education also to refresh my mind since I was planning to go back to school though there were no resources at home.

It was God's will my mother recovered. She advised me to go back to school though she had no support. One day I was teaching children under a tree, there was a visitor who visited the school,

she found me teaching and she looked at me with compassion and after that lesson she requested me to have a conversation with her.

She congratulated me for the work and gave me 6000 shillings. It was a great day for me and I planned how I would use the money. The visitor was called Petra Munneke.

I continued with my work until the school was closed. I took one thousand of the money to buy needs for my brother who was in standard eight at Sostin Primary School. I used two thousand for family expenses and the remaining amount was three thousand.

When the school opened, I decided to return to my uncle to request him to take me back to school after staying at home for three years. He refused due to family issues. I decided to go back to school alone. I used the three thousand shillings to buy metal box which I would use to keep my belongings at school and one pair of school uniform with two books and two pens.

I didn't return to school where I was earlier, because I couldn't afford it but I joined a nearby school called Sekkerr Mixed Secondary School. At that school the principal and his teachers denied me to join form three since I had stayed at home for a long time so they advised me to repeat form two. I reverted them to give me an exam so that if I pass I would join form three and if I would fail I would repeat form two. When the day of the exam reached, I did it and with good luck I passed. After that I could join form three. I was assisted by my friends Chepkite and Irine in terms of basic needs like soap, sanitary towel and oil.

Since I had not payed fees, I was sent home though my mother had promised me to come to school after two weeks to pay fees but she didn't manage. When I wens home my uncle told me to leave school and take care of my children who I gave birth to when I stayed at home for three years due to forced marriage by my other uncle who was a drunkerd; the man was very poor and cruel that is why I decided to return to school.

I sent my mother to school to go and explain to the teacher the problem. When she returned she told me that the principal said that the only way is to fence the school compound so that the money should pay my school fees. I accepted and went back to school leaving mum behind with my two children who were still very young. During games time at school I used to fence for about two weeks when we were doing end term exam. There were many visitors who came to our school that day and I was called to go to the principal's office where the visitors were. I was very happy to see Petra with her friends. I shaded tears of joy and I lacked words to speak. I was given a receipt to sign, the receipt was to pay all my school fees for the whole year. She also supporte me with money for buying six set books and a scientific calculator. After that day my life became comfortable and I progressed with my education without any problem. Only at form four, when I was doing National Examination I felt sick and I was taken to Sengelel Hospital where was no improvement in my health and therefor I was admitted to Ortum Mission Hospital. My mother borrowed the money that was used to pay Hospital bill since she was not able to raise the money that would be enough to pay the bill. The money was six thousand shillings. My mother has not payed the money since that time up to now.

After recovery, I went back to school and I did complete my National Exam where I passed very well. I had a mean grade of B minus.

I was then called to Kenyatta University to take Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education) but again I had a challenge of school fees. Because I did well in our village, our church contributed for me money which helped me to pay transport form home to school. On arrival to school I stayed with my friend Catherine from the same county for about one month while sharing her belongings like soap, oil, beddings and others.

I managed to finish my first year due to assistance from Petra who paid for first semester and the church assisted me with the second semester. Life in university is still hard since back at home my mother is not able to pay even my transport to school and there are other siblings back at home lacking school fees and basic needs. Even me here at school I don't have somebody to assist me to meet my basic needs but I utilize what my mother sends to me even if it is very little. Regardless of all these challenges, I am praying God to open doors in my life and the lives of my parents back at home so that we can progress though I don't know how??

My plans for the future:

1. helping people who have problems like mine
2. to transform the community
3. showing good example to other people
4. to encourage people not to lose hope in life.