

Tiro on the street



I met Tiro through my brother. He used to come to our house and became part of it although he didn't stay with us.

Some time ago he asked whether he could not stay with us permanently because he loved it. This was not possible since I did not have enough money to adopt a child. I was already supporting eight young people.

But he still felt at home with us. One Monday while we were all at work, he came to our house, entered it and locked himself inside the house. He prepared a meal from the contents of our fridge, watched the telly and afterwards fell asleep in the bedroom.

When we came back, we found the house locked. After we had knocked several times, Tiro walked out of the house. He didn't say anything - just looked very innocently and walked away.

This is Tiro's life story: He was born in 1973 in a Katutura home. His mother was a very poor, uneducated single mother who had 5 kids.

He was sent to school when he was eight years old and completed Std 2. Then he was sent to a farm near Khorixas and became a goat herdboys.

When he was 12 years old, he got lost and stayed in the field for two days after he had lost the goats. Tiro walked without any direction until he reached Otjiwarongo.

There he stayed near the township and went to town begging and sometimes stealing. He made friends with other boys. Tiro picked up the habit of smoking, sniffing glue and just hanging around town.

The boys spent their days together. At night the other boys went to their homes where they slept but he just slept somewhere in the bush. He never told his friends that he had no home.

But one day they asked him to take them to his home. This was how they discovered that he had no home but just lived in the veld. One of his friends told his mother about Tiro who then reported him to the police. The police took him back to Windhoek.

He was kept in jail for many days until the police traced his mother. She came to fetch him from jail. They agreed to send him back to school. Tiro had to start with standard 1. He was now 14.

He also had no school uniform, food, etc. That made him feel uncomfortable and he dropped out of school again and just pretended to attend school. But in reality he spend his time in town, living on and off the street until he was caught again by the police.

His mother was never aware of his whereabouts until he got arrested. Then she chased him away from home and never supported him afterwards. Since that time he was sleeping in the players' dressing room at the Katutura soccer field.

Coincidentally, his mother and her boyfriend lived nearby the soccerfield. So they met again. But they don't talk.

His mother doesn't take care of him - he has to fend for himself. He spends his days roaming around, is illiterate, he has nowhere to go but he says if he could find work and buy clothes, take care of himself - that he would be fine.

But he cannot find a job because he has no qualifications. Tiro says he has a message for parents: The parents should not abandon their children, but support them and talk to them. He has no contact with his father but he thinks that fathers especially should also care about their kids and talk to them.

His message to other boys: They must listen to their parents so that they will not end up as outcasts like himself who cannot contribute to society. ■

Children have a right...

