

5 SEPTEMBER 2020: MEDIA RELEASE

**On International Day of Charity, The School of St Jude Launches “Challenge Yourself for St Jude’s”
- A national appeal to fund a pathway out of poverty for the people of Tanzania -**

Today, on International Day of Charity, Gemma Sisia AM, the Australian born woman who had a dream to build a school that’s building a nation, has launched the *Challenge Yourself for St Jude’s* appeal to help fund vital education for Tanzania’s poorest, brightest children in The School of St Jude’s ongoing fight against poverty.

Tanzania is one of the world's most impoverished nations. 80% of the population are living below the poverty line on less than AU\$4.60 a day with as few as 25% of Tanzania's school-aged children attending secondary school in an overstretched, under-resourced government school system that produces poor educational outcomes for Tanzanian society as a whole.

Hunger, malnutrition, poor health and limited access to essential health services, clean water, sanitation, housing and skilled employment; are all consequences of the people of Tanzania having limited or no access to education.

To fight endemic poverty, improve community health, literacy, increase skilled employment and address critical shortages of qualified professionals across all essential services including health, housing and education; the primary solution is to provide the children of Tanzania with access to quality, life-changing education.

In 2002, The School of St Jude opened its doors to just three students with one volunteer teacher in the belief that a free, quality education should be the right of every child irrespective of their religious, cultural or economic background with the philosophy that education is the strongest weapon in the fight against poverty, corruption and political instability.

Named after the patron saint of hopeless causes, today The School of St Jude is recognised as a Centre of Excellence for teaching and learning and acknowledged as a world-leading model of how ordinary people are doing extraordinary things in the fight against poverty in building a nation through education.

With a culture of understanding, acceptance and a holistic approach to ending poverty through education; from humble beginnings, The School of St Jude now provides free, quality education at one primary and two secondary schools to 1,800 students of Christian, Muslim, and other faiths from 69 different tribes.

Each year, St Jude’s also provides boarding for more than 80% of students, one million nutritious meals, school uniforms and health checks for students while creating a ripple effect in the fight against poverty by injecting millions of dollars into the local economy through employment and purchasing goods and fresh produce from local suppliers.

Gemma Sisia, founder of The School of St Jude, said, “From day one, every day’s a challenge at St Jude’s. Our teachers challenge themselves to consistently deliver the highest quality education possible. Our students challenge themselves to learn and achieve academic excellence. And I’m constantly challenging myself to raise vital funds so we can continue to deliver the highest quality education that provides our students with a sustainable pathway out of poverty.”

In launching our *Challenge Yourself for St Jude’s* appeal, Gemma Sisia said, “We’re hoping Australians will open their hearts and their wallets to help us meet St Jude’s ongoing challenge to continue to provide free, quality education for Tanzania’s poorest, brightest students; and together we’ll be lighting the way to a brighter future for them and their families.

“The more funds we generate, the more students we can educate. The more students we educate, the greater the impact we will have on reducing poverty to build social capital and capacity in Tanzania.

“Australian families, individuals, schools, corporates and clubs can all participate in the *Challenge Yourself for St Jude's* appeal and help us give bright, poor Tanzanian students access to free, quality education so they can lead their family, community and country with respect, responsibility, honesty and kindness to growth and prosperity,” Ms. Sisia said.

St Jude's is a happy, inspiring place where students are eager to learn, wide-eyed with wonder at what the future may hold. Thanks to the free, quality education received and the generosity of Australians, to date St Jude's has produced 675 proud graduates, with no limit to the opportunities, goals and dreams they can pursue.

Many go on to study medicine, science, business, engineering and humanities - taking them one step closer to becoming the next generation of leaders that will deliver a sustainable and a self-determining future for the people of Tanzania.

“The fact that our graduates have come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds in one of the poorest countries in the world, have completed secondary school and are now pursuing higher education; makes overcoming the daily challenges of keeping The School of St Jude funded, all worthwhile,” she said.

From the very beginning, Australians have opened their hearts to help The School of St Jude overcome significant challenges to provide life-changing education for Tanzania's poorest, brightest children. The challenge to raise funds and build St Jude's first classrooms. The challenge to purchase books and learning materials. The challenge to feed and clothe hundreds of students. The challenges of employing skilled staff and buying busses to transport students safely to and from school. The challenge to build more classrooms, libraries, sporting and boarding facilities; and, the day-to-day challenge of managing St Jude's continued growth.

“In recent times Australians have had to overcome our own tremendous challenges with drought, bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic. But, for the 45 million people of Tanzania who have little support, there is no respite from pandemics or poverty in their daily challenge to survive,” Ms. Sisia said.

“As long as there's a need to fight poverty in Tanzania, the challenges for St Jude's will go on, with the greatest challenge being to find the funds to continue supporting St Jude's life-changing work.

“With the valued support of Australians and the belief that no challenge is so great it can't be overcome, together we will tackle every challenge to empower students to fulfil their academic potential and develop leadership qualities to lift their communities out of poverty,” she said.

Through The School of St Jude's long-term investment in education and the local economy, and by instilling in students the passion to change the lives of others for social good, St Jude's graduates will continue to challenge themselves. St Jude's provides the fundamental building blocks for a brighter future so graduates can challenge the status quo to become community-focused leaders that drive change for their families and the 45 million Tanzanians living in poverty.

The *Challenge Yourself for St Jude's* campaign will run from 24 October to 1 November. All Australians are invited to help us lead more students out of poverty through education. Visit schoolofstjude.org to register for your personal challenge, the Trivia challenge, to make a donation or sponsor a student's academic scholarship.

Together we'll be helping the people of Tanzania overcome the greatest challenge of all - poverty.

-ENDS-

**#TheSchoolofStJude #ChallengeYourself #FightingPovertyThroughEducation
#ChallengeYourselfForStJudes #TriviaChallengeForStJudes #ThePowerOf10**

MEDIA REQUESTS: Insight Communications: +61 2 9518 4744

Clare Collins M: +61 414 821 957 - E: clare@insightcommunications.net.au

Alice Collins M: +61 414 686 091 - E: alice@insightcommunications.net.au

Photographs and footage can be downloaded [here: bit.ly/SoSJ-Challenge](https://bit.ly/SoSJ-Challenge)

Journalist Notes: Please see page 3 or visit our website for more details.



What will you do to challenge yourself?
**24 October to
1 November 2020**

Visit schoolofstjude.org to register
for the St Jude's Community Challenge.

Follow us on    



JOURNALIST NOTES - "CHALLENGE YOURSELF FOR ST JUDE'S" APPEAL

THE SCHOOL OF ST JUDE – Key facts

In 1998, what seemed to be an impossible dream to many is now so much more than we could ever have imagined. Today, The School of St Jude is recognised as a world-leading model of the impact that free, quality education has in fighting poverty, epitomising how ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things - with a little help from our friends.

Since opening our doors in 2002 with just one basic block of amenities, three students and one volunteer teacher, The School of St Jude has come a long way. Today, St Jude's provides free, world-class education to 1,800 students annually across three schools. We also contribute to the education of thousands of government school students through our Beyond St Jude's Community Service Year program where our graduates dedicate their first year following graduation to volunteering as teachers in Tanzania's overcrowded and underfunded government schools.

We provide jobs for more than 300 staff and inject millions of dollars into the local economy annually. St Jude's has produced hundreds of graduates who have gone on to study medicine, science, business, engineering and humanities. It is these graduates who will become the community-focused leaders of tomorrow to drive change for their families and the 45 million Tanzanians living in poverty.

Through providing free, quality education, The School of St Jude is lighting the way to a brighter future for our students, their families, their communities and their country.

GEMMA SISIA AM – The Australian woman who built the school that's building a nation

In 1998, after teaching in a local school in Uganda for three years, Australian born Gemma Sisia formed the fervent belief that free, quality education should be the right of every child and that education is the strongest weapon in fighting poverty, corruption and political instability. Gemma's dream of building a school for the poorest, brightest students in Tanzania was born.

Gemma Sisia's, The School of St Jude, opened in 2002 with one volunteer teacher and just three sponsored students. Today, The School of St Jude continues to provide free, quality education to 1,800 students across a primary and two secondary schools; and annually provides students with one million nutritious meals; health checks and boarding facilities for more than 80% of students.

Since 2015, each year The School of St Jude also contributes to improving the education of thousands of government school students in core subjects through the Beyond St Jude's Community Service Year program for graduates. From small, humble beginnings, today St Jude's provides jobs for more than 300 qualified staff; injects millions of dollars into the local economy annually; and, has produced hundreds of graduates who've gone on to study medicine, science, engineering and humanities.

Without Gemma Sisia's school, these students would have become a statistic among Tanzania's four million-plus children unlikely to attend school or complete their education perpetuating the cycle of poverty in Tanzania. Currently, there are over 675 St Jude's graduates. With many supported by the Beyond St Jude's program, which provides funding to graduates for higher education studies, St Jude's is taking graduates one step closer to becoming the next generation of leaders to deliver a sustainable and a self-determining future for the people of Tanzania.

In 2007, Gemma Sisia's achievements were honoured with an Order of Australia Medal, and her inspirational story has been featured twice (2005 and 2009) on the ABC TV documentary program, Australian Story. In 2012, Gemma was named a New South Wales finalist for the honour of Australian of the Year and was among the Australian Financial Review and Westpac's 100 Women of Influence in the Global category. In 2000 and 2019, Gemma was awarded a Sapphire Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF FOR ST JUDE'S – A Fundraising & Awareness Campaign

The School of St Jude was founded by Gemma Sisia, an Australian-born woman who started building her dream with a modest donation of just \$10. Since 1998, the majority of all St Jude's funding has been contributed by generous Australians who shared Gemma's vision and supported her challenge to fight poverty through funding free, quality education to the poorest, brightest children in Tanzania.

From just three students in 2002, today The School of St Jude educates 1,800 students at one primary and two secondary schools and is regarded internationally as a leader in fighting poverty through education. But St Jude's global success had not been without its challenges. The challenge to raise funds and build St Jude's first classrooms. The challenge to purchase books and learning materials. The challenge to feed and clothe hundreds of students. The challenges of employing skilled staff and buying busses to transport students safely to and from school. The challenge to build more classrooms, libraries, sporting and boarding facilities; and, the day-to-day challenge of managing St Jude's continued growth - but the greatest challenge of all is to find the funds needed to continue St Jude's life-changing work.

Just as Gemma Sisia and her supporters overcame significant challenges to build and grow the school to become the global success story it is today; our 2020 *Challenge Yourself for St Jude's* campaign aims to firmly lay the foundations of St Jude's as a children's charity worthy of support in the hearts and minds of Australians.

As long as there's a need to fight poverty in Tanzania, the challenges for St Jude's will go on. Through establishing and growing this annual campaign, we will ensure a sustainable future for our school, its students, their families and communities in the fight against poverty in Tanzania.

Campaign Key Dates

Campaign Announcement	5 September 2020	International Day of Charity
Registrations Open	5 September 2020	Registrations are online via St Jude's website
Campaign Week	24 October to 1 November	Fundraising is conducted by the community
St Jude's Day	28 October 2020	St Jude's Awareness Day – Fundraising focus

Taking the Challenge for St Jude's to 'The Power of 10'

The "*Challenge Yourself for St Jude's*" campaign is about ordinary people doing extraordinary things to help fight poverty in Tanzania. Everyone is invited to challenge themselves for St Jude's in a fun, creative way to raise much needed funds to help The School of St Jude continue to provide free, quality education to light the way to a brighter future for the students of The School of St Jude.

Gemma Sisia's challenge to transform a nation through education, started with a single donation of \$10. The power of this first \$10 started a wave of support for The School of St Jude and now we're inviting everyone to take the Challenge for St Jude's and raise vital funds to 'The Power of 10'. By taking the Challenge for St Jude's, individuals, families, schools, universities, Rotary Clubs, clubs, religious groups, organisations and companies, can undertake personal, family or group challenges while fundraising in multiples of 10 for St Jude's.

Everyone can participate in the Challenge for St Jude's by creating their personal, group or team challenge and inviting friends, family and work colleagues to sponsor them to the power of 10 for \$10 or multiples of 10 to raise \$100, \$1,000, \$10,000 or even more. Challenges can be physical, mental, personal development, or even go-without challenges, while families, schools, clubs and companies can participate in the St Jude's Trivia Challenge or create any number of group challenges. A list of possible challenges that can be undertaken is on our website along with lots of fundraising ideas and resources to share with family, friends and colleagues.

There is no limit to 'The Power of 10' or the power of good that will be achieved through fundraising or donating to The School of St Jude to help us in our fight against poverty in Tanzania.

THE CHALLENGES RELATING TO POVERTY IN TANZANIA

POVERTY

With 80% of people living below the poverty line on less than AU\$4.60 a day, Tanzania is one of the world's most impoverished countries. Poverty in Tanzania is endemic with causes attributed to a lack of nutrition, poor access to healthcare, clean water, sanitation, housing, literacy, and a severe lack of education being among the key contributing factors to underemployment and unemployment that sustains a decline in Tanzanian living standards.

EDUCATION

Tanzania has one of the lowest enrolment rates in secondary education in the world with less than 3% of children in Tanzania graduating from secondary school. At the same time, a gender imbalance significantly favours boys. Indicators suggest that rates of overall enrolments of eligible students in government schools have fallen. If students continue to have severely limited access to education and a lack of long-term human resources, outside the scope of Tanzania's largely unskilled workforce now heavily based in agriculture, it will continue to restrict the development of Tanzania. A forecast that sustains poverty, hunger and significant health challenges through limiting employment opportunities for the people of Tanzania.

HEALTH

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Tanzania is a country faced with major health challenges. These include child mortality, maternal mortality, diseases including malaria, HIV/AIDS and pneumonia, a lack of clean water and sanitation, extreme poverty, hunger and shortages of highly qualified health professionals mostly due to low education levels. These all combine to have a very negative impact in Tanzania's progress in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDG) set by the United Nations (UN) to eradicate poverty, mortality, and combatting diseases.

Achieving the MDG goals is an essential significant step toward Tanzania, improving the overall state of wellness of its society. The MDG goals established by the UN include:

- ✦ Goal 1: Eradicate poverty and hunger
- ✦ Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- ✦ Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- ✦ Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- ✦ Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- ✦ Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

THE ST JUDE'S SOLUTION – Fighting poverty through education – Creating 'Ripples in a Pond'

EDUCATION SHOULD BE A RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD - Not a privilege

To fight endemic poverty, improve community health and literacy, increase skilled employment and address critical shortages of highly qualified professionals across all essential services including health, economics, business, social services, education and more; the primary solution is to provide the children of Tanzania with accessible, high-quality education.

With over three-quarters of Tanzania's school-aged children not attending secondary school, this leads to an inability to access skilled employment to provide a future without poverty. With the Tanzanian government school system overstretched, under-resourced and producing poor educational outcomes for Tanzanian society as a whole; The School of St Jude is lighting the way to a brighter future for the children of Tanzania, their families and communities.

Through providing free, quality education for Tanzania's brightest, poorest students, The School of St Jude is recognised as a pioneering leader in charitable education in Africa. It has established itself as a global leader in fighting poverty by providing free, high-quality education that builds social capital and capacity in disadvantaged communities.

BACKGROUND ON THE SCHOOL OF ST JUDE – A dream that's building a nation

In 1994, Australian born Gemma Sisia was just 22-years-old when she arrived in Africa to work as a volunteer teacher and embarked on a journey that would change the lives of thousands of Tanzanians. Having witnessed the depths of poverty in Tanzania, Gemma believed that by giving the brightest, poorest students a free, quality education; they would be empowered to lift their families, communities and country out of poverty. Through respect, responsibility, honesty and kindness, these future leaders would shape growth and prosperity to build the nation's future.

In 1998, Gemma was gifted a small plot of land in Arusha, Tanzania. And, with a single donation of just \$10 from a friend, the help of family, friends and local Rotary clubs from her rural NSW hometown of Armidale, Gemma was able to raise an initial AU\$20,000. With seed funds in the bank, Gemma embarked on building her dream that would become one of the world's most inspiring success stories – a free school providing quality education to fight poverty in Tanzania.

On 29 January 2002, a young Gemma Sisia flung open the school gates to just three students and one volunteer teacher, taking the first significant step toward driving change to break the poverty cycle in Tanzania. Named after the patron saint of hopeless causes, today, The School of St Jude is recognised as a Centre of Excellence for teaching and learning. With three campuses made up of two secondary schools, a primary school and boarding for over 80% of students, St Jude's provides free, quality education to 1,800 students living in poverty each year.

In addition to providing free, quality education, the school's holistic approach to learning incorporates the health and welfare of every student, ensuring each student receives the best possible opportunity to build a bright future beyond poverty. Everything at St Jude's is free – education and learning materials; school and boarding uniforms; hot, nutritious lunches; annual medical checks by international volunteer healthcare professionals; safe, reliable transport to and from school for non-boarding students; and nurturing boarding accommodation with reliable electricity, clean water and three healthy meals a day for boarding students.

Founded on one woman's dream and the belief that no challenge is so great that it can't be overcome, The School of St Jude is a happy, special, inspiring place made up of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Every day, students are challenged to do more than succeed through achieving academic and moral excellence. St Jude's drives change by instilling in students the need to challenge themselves and work hard to improve the lives of others - to challenge the status quo by doing extraordinary things that can transform their community for social good.

The commitment of St Jude's to fighting poverty in Tanzania through education doesn't stop after students graduate. Before hundreds of St Jude's alumni go on to pursue higher education, through the Beyond St Jude's program graduates participate in a Community Service Year, volunteering at either St Jude's or teaching essential core subjects to thousands of students in government schools. Through this unique annual program, St Jude's extends its Vision, Values and Ethos beyond the school's parameters to broaden its significant social impact on alleviating poverty through education for the people of Tanzania.

Equipped with the finest education possible and having contributed to improving the education and inspiring students in government schools, the Beyond St Jude's program allows St Jude's graduates to pursue their dreams through higher education and fulfil their academic potential. To date, our graduate's chosen fields of tertiary study have included; science, medicine, nursing, public health, law, engineering, economics, accountancy, finance, banking, information technology, hospitality and tourism, business administration, human resources, education, wildlife and animal science, horticulture, agriculture and natural resources management, humanities and social science.

Students of The School of St Jude grow up to become respectful, responsible, honest and kind citizens gainfully employed and capable of true leadership in their communities and at a national level. At the same time, each graduate continues to give back to their school and the communities they love to build social good for the people of Tanzania.

If it weren't for one woman's dream to build a school that's building a nation, none of this would be possible.