



**The School
of St Jude**

Fighting poverty
through education

Gemma Sisia

Making dreams reality

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In 2007 Gemma's achievements were honoured by an Order of Australia medal. Her story has been featured twice in the ABC TV documentary program Australian Story, in 2005 and a follow-up in 2009. In 2012 Gemma was named one of The Australian Financial Review and Westpac's 100 Women of Influence, nominated in the Global category and was also a finalist in New South Wales for Australian of the Year.

www.schoolofstjude.org





How one woman's vision is changing the lives of thousands...

"I opened the gates to The School of St Jude on January 29 2002, with support from generous volunteers, donors and Rotarians, united by a shared goal; providing some of the brightest, poorest students in Tanzania with access to a free, high quality education.

On day one, St Jude's first three scholarship recipients stepped out of a small van and into a well-equipped classroom with a volunteer teacher.

The School of St Jude now boasts three campuses filled with 1,800 students, provides boarding facilities for 1,200 students, owns and maintains 25 buses which transport students and staff safely to and from school, provides 29,000 hot meals each week and employs over 290 people – more than 95% of whom are Tanzanian. This is only possible thanks to donors and supporters who believe in fighting poverty through education.

As a 22-year-old, newly qualified teacher from regional New South Wales, Australia, I travelled to Uganda to teach in an under-resourced girls' school. This experience shaped my belief that access to a good education should be a universal right, regardless of circumstances or whereabouts, and influenced my vision to build a school in East Africa.

I shared this dream with family, friends and Rotary groups in Australia, who enabled us to make this vision a reality.

From our heady early days of just three students, we are now able to support 1,800 students and over 350 graduates as part of our Beyond St Jude's Program. Between them, they have taught over 60,000 government school students as part of a Community Service Year before going on to tertiary education.

We've come a long way but there is still more St Jude's can do. In January 2020, we will be opening a girls' secondary school. Girls from a poor, rural background are the least likely to complete their schooling and yet, having educated girls is one of the surest ways to break the cycle of poverty. It's an important next step and I can't wait to share our success stories with you."

Hear Gemma's inspiring story, told by her. Request her as a speaker for your event during her March 2020 tour.

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