

# The East African Fund Inc. (CFN 16123)

## Annual Report

1st October 2004 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2005

### Letter from the Director Chairman – Gemma Sisia

It is extraordinary to look back on the last year and realise how much has been accomplished - 200 new pupils have been sponsored; six new classrooms are in use; 11 new teachers have been employed; five new school buses are on the road, our huge Assembly/Dining Hall is in operation; the school website is on the net; new sponsorship programs are in place; a long term volunteer block with 10 rooms capable of housing 20 volunteers has been completed; more land has been purchased; new playground equipment installed; internet is up and running; a borehole has been drilled; hundreds of volunteers and visitors have stayed for long and short periods; a successful safari/school tour from Australia was arranged. And there are fast growing building works in progress such as the new classroom block of eight rooms, the storeroom/water tower and two new long-term volunteer/visitor blocks of units.



Although the infrastructure of the school is important, the reason we have it is to provide the vital weapon for fighting the crippling poverty in Tanzania – education. And in this regard I am very proud to announce that our first Standard 4 class sat the mock Government exam in May and the pupils of St Jude took the first 22 places out of 563 pupils who sat the papers. The remaining five St Jude students were all in the top 10 percent. We were immensely proud of the students, teachers and volunteers who have worked hard to achieve such astounding results. This is a clear indication that we are doing it right!

As we surge forward into the school's 5<sup>th</sup> year of existence, the ongoing success of the child sponsorship scheme means that, currently, we have a further 150 pupils already sponsored for 2006. These children will fill the five new classrooms that will be completed by January. This now puts pressure on our busses but we hope the new Sponsor-a-Bus scheme will garner support in time to save asphyxiation of bus passengers who, currently, are sitting four deep. The Sponsor-a-Teacher scheme is also ensuring that we are able to pay good wages for the best available staff for the new classes.

It must be realised that none of the above could be accomplished without the tireless effort, valued support, generous donations and continual encouragement from so many people around the world. I cannot stress strongly enough that the relatively small team in Tanzania is just the large boulder on a huge mountain of amazing folk who are ALL so important to the continuing success of The School of St Jude. I would love to be able to acknowledge them individually but that would be a treatise to rival the World Book Encyclopedia!

There are so many members of Rotary Clubs, institutions, clubs, schools, libraries, businesses, families and individuals from around the world who are supporting us in so many ways. Financial donations are made with extraordinary generosity. Personal time is given unstintingly. Personal physical effort is willingly afforded the school from packing boxes and containers overseas to building construction here in Tanzania. Expertise in areas of legal matters, finance, management, education, IT, design, construction, time management and health and safety is gratefully received and implemented.

It is impossible to be anywhere in the school without seeing evidence of the generosity, kindness, thoughtfulness and love given freely by our supporters worldwide. These are the foundation blocks of the school and the values instilled in the children, staff, volunteers and visitors on the ground here in Tanzania.

*Gemma Sisia*

# GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT

## 1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2004 TO 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2005

### THE PUPILS

On the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004, there were 322 children enrolled at the school. By the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2005 another 180 were on the enrollment list, bringing the total at the end of the financial year to 502.

Of the pupils enrolled, 85% are sponsored. Although we are getting many enquiries from possible fee paying parents, it is only in the Nursery, Kinder and Prep classes that places are available. We have had no need to advertise the school in Arusha this year.

Sponsored children are coming from villages up to 10 kilometres away and, as per the school's policy, all these children have passed an academic test, have been assessed as having aptitude and suitable attitude and come from poor homes or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Children from three local orphanages are sponsored at the school – Huruma (8 children), St Joseph's (11 children) and Samaritan Village (3 children).

### THE STAFF

Fulltime Staff	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2004	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2005
Academic Staff	13 Tanzanian + 3 foreign + 5 teaching assistants	25 Tanzanian + 3 foreign + 6 teaching assistants
Grounds Men	2	2
Cooking/Cleaning Staff	6	12
Security Guards	4	4
Drivers	5	10
Administration Staff	5	7



**Angela Bailey** (pictured at left with all the gifts and some of the hundreds of well-wishers at her leaving party) started the school with the Director in 2002. Sadly for the school, she returned to Australia in January to continue her academic studies. From being the Nursery teacher, Angela was the Head Teacher of the school when she left and handed over to Mr Andrew McLean from Scotland.

Mr McLean left the school in June 2005 and Mrs Gemma Sisia, Director of the school, took on the role, assisted by **Mr Nestory Msoffe, Head of Academic Staff** and **Mr Benard Mainga, Deputy Headmaster**

In September 2004 volunteers staying at least 12 months were paid a local teacher's wage (US\$200/month). This meant we were able to encourage well-qualified and experienced professionals, who have adapted to the Tanzanian syllabus and lifestyle, to spend at least a year teaching at the school. The school was fortunate to have **nine fulltime overseas staff members** this year.

We started the 2005 school year with 15 new local and overseas teachers. Several staff members left for various reasons. We were lucky to find replacements of a higher standard and those with sympathies in line with the school's teaching policy.

The school has been able to raise the standard of the teaching staff by offering higher wages (increased by US\$20 – 50 depending on qualifications, experience and length of stay at this school) to attract the most qualified and experienced staff available and retain the good staff we have already. It is common for schools in the area to attempt to entice away teachers held in high regard by other schools, as this is the best recommendation and most reliable reference.

With the school starting Standard 4 in 2005, it was important that the quality of teachers, for that year in particular (Standard 4 is a Government run exam), were of the highest standard. We have been very fortunate to find these.

## THE BUILDINGS

The December/January holidays saw painters, bricklayers, electricians and plasterers living at the school in the classrooms. In six weeks they had to get the steel on the roof of the new 50m long hall, **six new classrooms** built, repaint the 13 existing classrooms, and finish **10 new volunteer units** for all the new staff that were coming in the first week of January. It happened. All of the 502 students (including 180 new students) had a fresh, clean classroom to start the new year; the roof was on the hall and our overseas staff moved into spacious, furnished, self-contained units. The original Volunteer House built in 2003 will be used for short-term volunteers and visitors.



The main section of the **Assembly/Dining Hall** was completed in March. Hot lunches are now served to the children and staff at tables and benches under the shelter of the huge iron roof.

School assembly is held here every Friday and meetings are conducted in comfort instead of under the trees in the dust or the mud of the playground.

The kitchen and stage areas are in the final stages of completion but will be in full use by the end of 2005.

A four-level **water/storeroom tower** is under construction. This will provide better water pressure in the ablution blocks and storeroom space for dried foodstuffs within easy access of the kitchen area.

## THE FACILITIES

**Computers:** In the library, 28 Pentium computers were installed. Students and staff now have greater access to research material as well as the chance to practise advanced computer skills.

The 10 computers in the staff room are all on shared files with the administration office computers so that the staff are able to input data such as exam results, student reports and areas of responsibility reports. This system has increased efficiency by saving time and resources by allowing access to any staff member who requires it at the press of a key. (Left, Mr Nestory keys in his latest Kiswahili exam results).

In the computer classroom, the 18 off line computers are for learning basic computer skills.

**The Library:** Jane Kennedy was the qualified school librarian who came over for a year to supervise the setting up of the library when the new space was completed and furnished. Over 10,000 fiction, non-fiction, adult and children's books have been catalogued and filed for easy access. As well as being a great resource for English classes, it is also a very popular place during recess and lunch times for recreational reading. The staff has found the resources invaluable for broadening the very basic Tanzanian curriculum.

Jane returned to Australia in October 2004 but left well tutored local and overseas volunteer staff to maintain the high standard of efficiency she was able to attain during her year at the school.

Although there is a very real problem with pilfering from libraries in this area, through tougher rules for bag inspections and vigilant surveillance, the school has been able to curtail the majority of attempts.

**Playground:** In the area around the swings and play equipment used by the junior classes, it has been impossible to keep any grass growing, mainly due to constant use and very little rain in the last few years. Several truckloads of gravel have been spread across the area, which has greatly improved the visual aspect as well as the problem of dust being kicked up into classrooms.

A grass area is being nurtured in front of the office by roping off an area to allow grass to establish.

**The Staff Bar:** In December a bush bar was erected opposite the short-term volunteer house. The Sisia family owns the land, on which it was built, and the school provided the materials for the construction. Therefore, an arrangement was made – the profits from the pool table go to the Sisia family and the volunteers who are in charge of the accounting, policing, staffing and ensuring the smooth running of the bar, manage the bar profits. To date, the volunteers have put the profits back into the bar.



**The Farm:** The school has two acres of land under cultivation to provide produce for the school meals. In July the kidney beans were harvested and it was estimated that the school would not have to buy beans for a year. Sorting the beans is a very labour intensive job, as the inedible ones have to be manually picked out and discarded. This would be an expensive and tedious process but for the parents of the sponsored children who are asked to assist the school with this procedure.



## **THE BUSES**

The year started with 5 buses. The children were piled in three deep on seats and crammed sardine-like in the aisles. We are grateful to our good drivers that, with care and caution, they got the children to school and home every day with no mishaps.

Eventually the funds were found to purchase new buses and the Sponsor-a-Bus scheme inspired further donations. By the end of the year there were four large buses and one small bus added to bring the total fleet number to ten buses.

## **PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION**

**Australian Story:** Australian Story is a popular, half hour documentary program depicting the lives and highlighting the accomplishments of extraordinary Australians through personal interviews and with those associated with the subject. Due to budgetary constraints, it is not often that the producers venture beyond Australia but in this case the ABC felt Gemma Sisia was such a remarkable person that a film crew was dispatched to Arusha with little hesitation. They were not disappointed.



In July, producer Ben Cheshire (pictured left, with the Director) spent a week filming at the school and interviewing Gemma and Richard on safari. In Australia, Gemma and her family and friends were also interviewed for the show.

The show went to air on August 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 2005, followed by an online forum, and from the response it received it was deemed one of the most popular episodes of the series. We have been advised that the show will be repeated on February 4<sup>th</sup> 2006.

**The Website:** Pressure was on to have the website up and running before the television program as there would be so many people wanting information it would be impossible to handle via email. We had experienced this problem previously when the Director spoke on radio in Australia.

Richard Pagliaro, one of the school's sponsors, put a team together to solve this problem. He was able to persuade talented web designer Ben Aird to give of his time and expertise to design the website [www.schoolofstjude.co.tz](http://www.schoolofstjude.co.tz) which was up and running in time.

Donations and sponsorship payments can be made on the secure online site and newsletters can be viewed saving a huge amount of administration time by cutting out the mass emailing to all sponsors and donors every month.

The website will be updated and revised on a regular basis with the help of Richard and Ben and the Administration team at the school.

**Rotary Conferences in Australia and New Zealand:** In March the Director was asked to attend various Rotary District Conferences. The Rotary Districts involved paid all travelling and accommodation expenses. Some of the conferences that she spoke at were:

1. District 9710 held at Moss Vale, south of Sydney NSW
2. District 9830 held in Hobart, Tasmania
3. District 9810 held in Bendigo, Victoria
4. District 9800 held in Hobart, Tasmania
5. District 9650 held in Armidale, NSW
6. District 9680 held in Newcastle, NSW

Gemma also had the opportunity to spread the word about the school at several Sydney high schools such as SCEGGS Redlands, St Vincent's College, Potts Point and SHORE, North Sydney.

On Angela Catterns' ABC radio show, Gemma was invited back to follow up a previously successful interview and update the listeners who had been very responsive to the story of The School of St Jude.

**Rotary Conferences in New Zealand:** The final stop on Gemma's trip overseas was at Rotorua in New Zealand to attend a combined New Zealand Rotary Conference, which brought together around 1000 Rotarians from districts 9910, 9920 and 9930.

**Rotary Conferences in the United States of America:** In September the Rotary Clubs of Rushmore Rapid City, who sponsor four children at the school, provided Gemma's travel and accommodation expenses to attend their district conference. It was a great opportunity for Gemma to meet many of the school's supporters who, previously, were known only through letters and emails. The face-to-face encounters and shared stories cemented closer ties and greater friendship between the school and these overseas sponsors.

## THE VOLUNTEERS

Short term and long term volunteers made valuable contributions to the school throughout the year. The majority of volunteers still come from Australia but this year we also had people from France, Germany, America, Austria, Canada, Ireland, Poland, New Zealand and Belgium.

## THE VISITORS

Too numerous to document individually were the huge numbers of visitors who passed through the school gates this year. They included organised groups of representatives from different Rotary Clubs from New Zealand, USA and Australia; a team from St Vincent's college who brought over 13 students and staff for two weeks in January; Richard Tulloch, the author of many popular children's books and creator of the famous 'Bananas in Pyjamas' television show and over hundreds of child sponsors and donors as well as tourists, travellers and trekkers who were passing through Arusha and had either heard of the school or came upon it by chance. [Right: Judy Wagner, along with her family, is one of our many loyal and generous sponsors. Judy enjoyed a visit with her sponsor child and her family]



## TOUR GROUPS

The first international tour group was arranged for sponsors and donors from Australia in July. The idea was to provide a package tour that included flights to and from Australia, experience of life at St Jude's for a week, trips to a local hospital, school, flower farm, Maasai market, a five-day safari to the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater, a trip to Zanzibar and what was most successful, a home stay with one of the carefully chosen local village residents who had a sponsored child at the school.



Angela Bailey was warmly welcomed back to the school when, as travel coordinator in Australia and tour guide, she lead the group of 23 people.

Due to the success of this inaugural tour, it has been decided to run subsequent tours throughout the following years.