



# St Jude's News

JANUARY 2021



Reaching Further,  
Achieving More

[Story page 4](#)



Meet the Parents

[Story page 6](#)



Looking Back to  
Move Forward

[Story page 8](#)



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**Top Proud Parents:** Parents and students embracing after receiving their new uniforms

## The Start of a Promising Future

Uniform Day, a special day for Standard 1 and 2 students as they radiate with hope in a new St Jude's uniform

[Continued on page 2](#)





**Left Proud Parents:** Parents and students embracing after receiving their new uniforms.



**Right Before meets After:** Joshua looking dashing after changing into St Jude's uniform.



# The Start of a Promising Future

Uniform Day, a special day for Standard 1 and 2 students as they radiate with hope in a new St Jude's uniform



It is 6.30am and eager parents and excited new students are lined up outside The School of St Jude gate, having been called for, what they thought was their children's first day of school. Little do they know, it's Uniform Day.

This day is a special day for St Jude's. It welcomes a new wave of the selected Standard 1 and 2 students to the school; preparing them to embark on their most significant educational journey with dreams of becoming the future leaders of tomorrow.

Uniform Day is an annual celebration and a cheerful day for the new students, parents and staff at St Jude's. On this day, students get their uniform fitted, shoe size measured and finally emerge in their new uniforms, ready to receive the gift of education provided by St Jude's.

Among the excited students who couldn't wait for the day to start was Joshua. With his bubbly and jolly personality and looking extremely smart in his new uniform, he couldn't stop smiling and admiring his new clothes.

"I'm so happy to be getting my new uniform, and now I'm ready to start school," Joshua jovially said.

He added, "I didn't know about St Jude's until my mother brought me here for Selection Day. Once I saw the school, it became my dream school, and I was praying to be selected so that I can join in."

Describing the uniform, Joshua said, "The uniform is very nice, I love it. I'm wearing dark blue trousers, dark blue socks, black shoes, a blue shirt and a dark blue sweater. Also, my shirt has a yellow stripe on its collar, which means I'll be in Yellow House."



Joshua was amid over 1,000 students who came for registrations on Selection Day for Standard 1 and 2 late last year. Coming from an underprivileged background, Joshua was studying in a government school, scoring in the top of his class... a class that had more than 100 students.

Outside the gate, parents including Lina, Joshua's mother, was shocked and filled with tears of joy after seeing her son, coming out of the gate looking fresh in his new uniform.

Uniform Day is kept a surprise to parents whose children have qualified to join St Jude's and get to find out about the transformation on the day that it's happening.

"Today is the happiest day of my life. I'm so proud of Joshua, and I know he'll do us proud," said Lina.

She added, "I have nothing to say but a big thank you to St Jude's for selecting my son and to everything that the school is doing to help poor families, like mine. We are forever grateful."

Uniform Day is not just a joyous day for the new students and parents; it is also a unique, emotional and an unforgettable day for St Jude's staff.

"I can't believe I still get emotional and cry on this day. This is my tenth uniform day, but each one has a special place in my heart," Theopista, Community Relations Assistant, said with tears welling in her eyes.

She further explained, "Doing house checks paints you a picture of where these students are coming from. So, when you see these students selected to join St Jude's, you see so much hope in the eyes of these families, knowing that their children will be receiving the gift of education."

For some staff, this was their first experience of Uniform Day.

"This was my first Uniform Day. I feel like a proud sister watching the young students come in and transform into their new uniforms. I tried to remember how my first day of school was, but I cannot relate," Rehema, a Supporter Relations Officer joyfully said.

"These students' lives were changing forever right before my eyes. It was a thrilling moment, especially when I saw some of the students whose homes I had visited during house checks. They made it! It was an honour to watch," she added.

Uniform Day marks the start of a promising future for these students. You can help support them reach their full potential by sponsoring their academic scholarship. With your help, there is a brighter future!

*(Some quotes used in this article have been translated from Kiswahili to English)*

[Click here to watch behind-the-scenes of Uniform Day.](#)



**Above Welcome to St Jude's:** Theo (L) and Rehema (R) welcoming the new students on their first day of school.

**Below Future Generation:** The new students are all smiles and ready to learn.



Support Standard 1 and 2 students, like Joshua, and their families to transform their lives by fighting poverty through education. **Sponsor an academic scholarship.**



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# Reaching Further, Achieving More



The School of St Jude staff go above and beyond to reach students from remote regions in Tanzania

Long drives, bus breakdowns, walking for hours and crossing rivers on foot are just some of the experiences that The School of St Jude staff encountered while performing house checks for potential Form 1 students. However, these run-ins did not discourage them from going above and beyond the call of duty.

A house check is the final stage of the selection process after prospective students go through registration, academic entrance tests and document verification during Student Selection Day. During a house check, St Jude's staff conduct a poverty assessment at the students' home and interview their family to determine their level of need.

This year, staff stretched far beyond Arusha region, extending the pool of selection of bright, poor students to Kilimanjaro and Manyara regions.

Although the roads were treacherous and some of the homes were barely reachable, this did not extinguish the staff's spirits.

"We had to drive between 5 and 15 kilometres from one house to another. And at times we had to leave the car and walk the same distance to reach these students' homes," said Philip, Head of Community Relations.

Sharing his experience, Philip explained, "It was an intense and emotional experience for me. There were a lot of things that were different in comparison to our normal house checks in Arusha. We realised some people around these regions were extremely poor. Finding basic things like wooden chairs was hard in some of these homes, we had to do house checks either standing up, sitting on the floor or sitting on tree logs."

"My highlight on this house check was when I met a man with nine children and four wives who were struggling. When we talked, he said to me that he didn't believe in education, but after talking to teachers and as time went by, he regrets not having educated the rest of his children. To make up for his mistake, he would like to give his daughter, who is last born in the family, a chance to be educated."



**Right Far and Beyond:** St Jude's staff heading to a house check in Manyara, Tanzania.

**Below Left House Check:** Philip and his team talking to family members of a prospective student.

**Below Right Team Spirit:** Elizabeth, Donor Relations Coordinator, crossing a river while heading to a house check.







**Above Smiling Through It All:** Noel (L), Database Coordinator, with fellow team members Laurian, Facilities Manager, and a parent representative pose for a photo before their next house check.

According to World Bank reports, 80% of the Tanzanian populations lives on less than AU\$4.60 per day with over 45 million living below the poverty line. Beyond the persistent gaps between urban and rural areas, there are large disparities in the distribution of poverty across geographic regions.

Recalling the experience, Elizabeth, Donor Relations Coordinator, uttered, "This is my second or third time doing house checks. Honestly speaking, with these faraway house checks, we saw more students who are in greater need of free, quality education which St Jude's can provide."

"Though we got stuck, and at some point, we were even walking on our hands and knees..." Elizabeth chuckled, "... but we had to do all that we could to select these students. To me, that was true, team spirit. It was worth it, and I will never forget that."

"At the end of the day, it's really fulfilling to see success stories of our students especially once you know where they are coming from, their living conditions and their family backgrounds," Elizabeth commented with a smile.

With all hands on deck, eight teams were spread across Northern Tanzania, ensuring that every student had a fair chance of being selected for an academic scholarship at St Jude's. A team comprises a scribe, a translator, an investigator, a parent representative and a driver, each role just as important.

Noel, Database Coordinator, was one of the investigators during the house checks. He jokingly said, "I think I've done all the exercise I need for this year."

"The neighbours live far apart from each other. Most of these families live in the middle of nowhere among snakes, hyenas, leopards and other wild animals. So investigating was a bit challenging. I remember I had to walk very far to look for some of these families' neighbours," Noel explained.

"For the students that qualified, we really delivered some good news to these families, it was the happiest moment for them," he added.

Doing house checks this far from Arusha and for this many nights was a first and a humbling experience for St Jude's staff.

"This house check experience has taught me to be more appreciative of life. As humans, we complain over small things, but these families are poor and seem very happy," Focus, Community Development Coordinator, described enthusiastically.

With the help of all eight House Check teams, St Jude's successfully selected and enrolled 112 new Form 1 students who commenced their academic scholarships earlier this month. The new students, plus our existing 131 students, makes a grand total of 244 total students enrolled in Form 1 at St Jude's this year.

St Jude's is spreading its wings and expanding its scope, united by one mission; to educate disadvantaged, bright students in Tanzania to become the moral and intellectual leaders Tanzania needs, fighting poverty through education.

You can **sponsor the academic scholarships** of our newly enrolled Form 1 students; supporting them throughout their entire secondary educational journey.

**Below A Sense of Accomplishment:** Focus, Community Development Coordinator, and other team members feeling proud after completing their last house check; with a glimpse of Mount Kilimanjaro in the background!





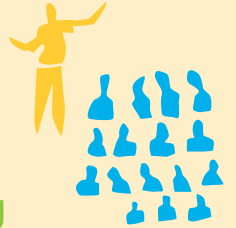


**Listening Keenly:** Parents and students from the primary school (Above) and girls' secondary school (Below) paying close attention to the school's regulations being read to them.



# Meet the Parents

The parent community of St Jude's gathers for the annual Parent Expectations Meeting



The Parent Expectations Meeting is hosted annually by the school. On this day, students' parents or guardians get to meet the school's leaders and discuss what is expected from both sides.

For the new parents, the morning was exciting. The School of St Jude staff, assisted by smartly dressed girl scouts, directed the parents to the appropriate locations... primary students in the primary dining hall and secondary students in the girls' secondary school.

Parents and students grabbed their seats and eagerly waited for the meeting to start.

"It's important for parents to meet annually and be reminded of the school's policies and what they should expect from the school and vice versa," said Charles, a Parent Representative.

The school strongly encourages parent involvement and is fortunate to have five dedicated Parent Leaders who oversee a larger committee of nearly 50 volunteer Parent Representatives. These representatives are voted in by the school parent community to act as spokespeople for all parents and guardians of St Jude's students.

The Parent Representatives each oversee an area in which students' live in the Arusha region. Working closely with the school, Parent Representatives investigate any issues at home and keep parents informed at all times by holding meetings with fellow parents and giving feedback to the school's leadership.

Charles added that, "It's imperative for all parents to read and understand these rules and regulations. That's why, once we agree and sign, one document stays at the school and we take a copy home to make sure we read, understand and don't forget the provided guidelines."

**Below Paying Heed to Advice:** A student listens to Mr Charles, a Parent Representative, who explains the school's expectations.





Echoing the Parent Representatives, Mr Elimringi, Headmaster at the girls' secondary school, explained that it was also important for students to understand the expectations.

"This document is an agreement between the parent, student and the school. That's why it's essential for all students to sign this agreement as well. Once the parents sign and leave the campus, what remains is the implementation of these directives. That's why it's absolutely necessary for the student to also agree and sign this document," clarified Mr Elimringi.

The document covers general expectations, uniform and dress code, communications, academic expectations, health and welfare with a strong emphasis on the fact that their child is receiving a free, quality education that must not be taken for granted. Another one of the school's policies mentioned is that, all students must follow and live by the school's values and principles, which are; Honesty, Respect, Responsibility and Kindness.

"Parent Expectations Meeting is the best part of the year. This is when we get to introduce the school to the new parents, what we do and what we expect. If we cannot sign this document with the parents, it means that we can't hold the parents accountable," said Mr Mcharo, Academic Manager.

Describing the importance of the meeting, Mr Mcharo further added, "Before anything or any documents are distributed to the parents, we have to educate them first. I would say this meeting is like a workshop, as both parents and students also get a chance to ask as many questions as possible about the school and how these policies work."

"For the old parents, this meeting is a chance to update them about the school's progress and students' performance. It's crucial for both new and old parents to attend this meeting because rules and regulations are adjusted from time to time. So it's vital to get this information out to everyone," he insisted.

The Parent Expectations Meeting is organised annually. For primary and O Level, parents meet with the academic leaders and teachers in January, while the A Level meeting is hosted in July, when the academic year for Form 5 and 6 starts.

The School of St Jude thrives off its parent and guardian community, all united in fighting poverty through education, so their children, can one day become the future leaders that their country needs.



**Above Left Reading Out Loud:** Mr Elimringi, Headmaster of St Jude's Girls' Secondary School (third from left) reciting the school's rules and regulations to the parents.



**Above Right Speaking of Importance:** Mr Mcharo, Academic Manager, using his strong leadership skills to address the parents.

**Below Signed and Sealed:** Parents and students all smiles and ready to start the year.



The academic year for students has started. **Your donation** will help in educating the future leaders of Tanzania.





**Left Onwards and Upwards:** A round-up of 12 major events from 2020, each capturing The School of St Jude in action!



**Above Reaching a Milestone:** Gemma (L), Founding Director, joining the guest of honour and Mr Elimringi (R), Headmaster girls' secondary school, in cutting a cake during the opening ceremony of the girls' secondary school.

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## Looking Back to Move Forward

As we look with anticipation to the year ahead, we reflect on the year that was and, the journey you've been part of.

The School of St Jude's motto is 'Challenge Yourself'. The last 12 months have certainly brought that concept to the fore, as we, like the rest of the world, have adapted to rapid changes.

Incredibly, thanks to you – our loyal supporters – alongside efforts from our passionate staff, diligent students and astute school boards, we rose to the challenge.

Despite the tumult of 2020, we continued fulfilling our core mission and vision: fighting poverty through education and nurturing the future moral and intellectual leaders of Tanzania.

This week, that dream officially turns 19 years old. The gates of Sisia Campus opened to its first three students on January 29 2002. For nearly two decades, The School of St Jude has stood as a shining beacon of possibility.

Last year launched on an incredible high, with the opening of St Jude's Girls' Secondary School in January 2020. The grounds of Sisia Campus were teeming with excited international visitors and Tanzanian officials who joined us to celebrate the special occasion.

Whispers of a new virus had only just surfaced, and we certainly couldn't have foreseen the challenges it would bring, just weeks after celebrating such a milestone!

At the same time as opening the new school, our Founding Director, Gemma Sisia, was keenly preparing for her annual promotional tour to Australia.

By mid-March, three weeks into the trip, COVID-19 had been deemed a global pandemic, forcing the promotional tour to reach a sudden (yet necessary) halt.







**Above Reaching Out to the Community:** Theopista (R) delivering a COVID-19 Care Package to a parent in Same, Tanzania.

**Below Selection Day:** Prospective students sitting for the academic test during the Form 1 selection process in Moshi, Tanzania.



**Below Bringing the Students Closer:** Gemma live streaming in a classroom during a Zoom session with supporters.



“It’s incredible how quickly the world changed... during our transit from Australia back to Tanzania, the country declared its first case of COVID-19. Tanzania’s government immediately enforced closure of all schools to prevent the spread of the virus,” Gemma explained.

Many schools around the world transferred their classrooms to the virtual world. Overnight, teachers became tech-experts so that students could continue learning.

St Jude’s students are among the poorest within Northern Tanzania; electricity is unaffordable for many of our families, let alone access to reliable internet. Delivering online learning content was next to impossible.

St Jude’s academic teams vowed to keep students engaged and educated during the school closure, which ended up lasting nearly three months. Four academic packs were distributed to each of our 1,800 students, allowing them to continue learning at home.

We didn’t stop there... Gemma was determined to provide extra support to St Jude’s families.

“It was unsettling to hear that families were going hungry and didn’t have access to supplies such as hand sanitiser and disinfectant. We also really missed seeing our students and wanted to remind them that St Jude’s community cares about them. Again, our brilliant supporters from around the world rallied together and we were able to distribute thousands of COVID-19 Care Packages to students, some graduates and staff, which contained essential household items,” Gemma shared.

“We did what St Jude’s does best: tackle any issue with a tremendous spirit of hope and unity,” she reflected.

Furthermore, in November, we expanded our Form 1 Student Selection intake, with testing centres established in three major regions: Arusha, Kilimanjaro

and Manyara. This enabled us to select deserving students from much further afield.

“Student Selection was such a blast! Staff worked extremely hard to make sure we selected the poorest and brightest students from these regions. Out of thousands we tested, 112 received scholarships. These students can start the new year feeling positive about opportunities they’ll enjoy at St Jude’s,” Gemma said.

The challenges of 2020 also delivered an exciting chance to embrace technology. Although phrases such as ‘social distancing’ and ‘isolation’ have recently dominated many conversations, we managed to keep connected with you.

“The boom in Zoom gifted us with amazing opportunities! Although we really miss visitors, we held special online events. Supporters from all over the world met students and key staff who deliver our shared dream of fighting poverty through education.”

“These last 12 months have been tough. We’ve been tested in a range of ways, from the complexities of COVID-19, to the sorts of challenges that make running a large charity school hard anywhere, let alone in Africa. However, I couldn’t be prouder of our resilience and, most of all, the way we’ve come together,” Gemma beamed.

Our classrooms are built of more than brick-and-mortar. They’re built from the goodwill of thousands of people who believe that Tanzanian students, regardless of economic background, deserve high-quality education.

**With our 19th birthday upon us, will you give the gift of education? Your donation goes a long way in the fight against poverty.**





# The School of St Jude

Fighting poverty  
through education



[www.schoolofstjude.org](http://www.schoolofstjude.org)