

Jambo!

I am Boniventura Mwapule, a graduate of ISM, Class of 2004, and now a Sophomore at Duke University. My family's total annual income is less than US\$3000, but I attended ISM as a boarding student and am now here at Duke where it costs over US\$40,000 per year to attend. You may wonder, how did all this happen, a child from an ordinary Tanzanian family attending such an expensive school? Here is my story and why I think the ISM Scholarship Programme is worth investing in.

I was born in 1983, in Iringa, Southern Tanzania. I attended a public primary school and in those days, I had to walk the five kilometres to school carrying a broom, water drum, books and sometimes a hand hoe, slasher or cow dung for the school farm. In 1996, my father was transferred to Tanga. There I completed my primary education and gained admission to one of the best schools in Tanzania, Ilboru Secondary School in Arusha. At Ilboru, I enjoyed a very rewarding education with challenging classes and a competitive atmosphere.

In my fourth year of school at Ilboru, I was among ten students chosen to compete for one full scholarship to attend ISM and complete the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. It was one of those turning points in my life which I will always have to tell to my grandchildren. To tell the truth, I was not the brightest student in my class and this group of ten students was randomly selected because most students were hesitant to try for the scholarship. Some feared what would happen if they failed the IB Diploma because they could not adapt to an international school. Most students wanted to attend a government school as that is the best gateway to receiving government funding for a place at Tanzanian universities.

When we arrived at the ISM Moshi Campus to take the scholarship exams, it was the first time in my life I had seen so many white people attending a school in Tanzania. We were warmly welcomed by Mr White who took us to the dining room. We decided to eat a lot because the food was really delicious and we knew that only one of us would ultimately be selected for the scholarship, hence we might as well enjoy ourselves by eating a lot. Yes, most of my friends ate a lot that day and just before the scholarship exam. I am not ashamed to admit that I passed the scholarship exam simply because I ate less than most of my colleagues.

After the scholarship exam, three of us were selected for an interview, and a few weeks later I received a letter of acceptance and scholarship notification from ISM. I was more than just delighted and decided to take the IB Diploma at ISM rather than attend High School at Ilboru. Not everyone in my family approved of this decision as they were worried that I might not score very well in the IB Diploma and so would fail to get a full scholarship from a university overseas. It was an understandable concern as the Tanzanian government only gives very limited funding to a few university students who have normally graduated from schools following the Tanzanian curriculum. My father left it up to me to decide and I joined ISM in August 2002.

It did not take me as long as I had expected to adapt to the school and soon I found myself participating in more and more activities. As well as attending classes, I joined the soccer team, performed community service with Moshi Chapel, took piano lessons, and participated in school music concerts. I also played a lead part in the school production of a "Midsummer Night's Scream", and climbed to the top of Mounts Kilimanjaro and Meru.

While at ISM I studied Swahili, French, Ecosystems and Societies, History, Economics and Maths. My teachers were very, very helpful - I really cannot stress this enough. I got 38 points in the final IB Diploma exams, with a 7 (full score) in Swahili and French, and a 6 in History. While at ISM, I had applied to many universities but did not receive an offer of full financial aid, meaning that I

could not attend. So after graduating, I took a gap-year and returned to ISM to work as an Assistant Librarian. The school's Guidance Counsellor then worked overtime to help me apply to more universities. We worked on my applications late into the night at his house and even travelled to Dar es Salaam to meet American college Admissions Officers on their African tour. ISM arranged and financed all of this support, even though I had already graduated. Finally, after a lot of hard work and assistance I was offered a full scholarship at Duke University, where I am now majoring in Economics and taking a minor in French. While here at Duke, I not only study but also play soccer and am involved in the AIDSCLIMB, a student group dedicated to organising mountain hikes and selling artwork to raise money for groups combating AIDS in Tanzania, particularly in the Kilimanjaro region.

After graduation, I plan to work on Economic Policy in poor African countries. Ultimately, I want to go back to Tanzania and work to improve our struggling economy. Tanzania needs people like me to come back and help, although many Tanzanians who have been educated overseas do not returning after completing their degree.

Now that you have read my story, I want you to understand how ISM has impacted my life and the lives of those individuals to whom I will dedicate my life's service. It is impossible for any ordinary Tanzanian family to afford an international university education. Yet poor countries like Tanzania badly need well-educated experts to help build their economies. Such an education is most readily available at the moment in developed countries where Tanzanians can more easily gain acceptance if they have attended an institution like ISM. By donating to the ISM Scholarship Programme, you are not just helping an individual student to enjoy a high quality education; you are not just paving those students' ways to institutions like Duke University where, upon graduating, they may gain employment with some of the top companies in the world; you are also playing an active role in the eradication of poverty in Tanzania and Africa. Some of us will start development projects and others will return to Tanzania equipped with very effective ways to combat poverty and bring development to Africa. I therefore call upon you to play your part in creating a better world for everyone by donating as much as you can to the ISM Scholarship Programme.

Yours, in the eradication of poverty,

Boniventura Gregory Mwapule



Five of the nine ISM Scholarship Students to date.
Boniventura is on the left.



Boniventura at his ISM graduation
June 2004