

Dear Friends,

With the new school year starting at Ibba Girls Boarding School (IGBS) on February 2nd, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the progress, partnerships, and achievements of the past year at Friends of Ibba Girls School (FIGS). Last year was a year of resilience, ambition, and remarkable accomplishments, made possible by the dedication of our teachers, staff, partners, and supporters. Together, we continue to ensure that IGBS is a place of learning, care, and hope for over 320 girls, inspiring families, communities, and leaders across South Sudan.

As we celebrate these successes, we also pause to remember those who have helped make them possible. Our dear friend and long-standing supporter Edward Hackford passed away in December. Edward was a committed advocate for girls' education, and we will miss his enthusiasm and kindness. His warmth, generosity, and engagement remind us that progress is powered by people. Edward will be deeply missed by all of us at FIGS, and our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

It is in this spirit — honouring the contributions of those who have supported IGBS, and looking ahead with the same sense of purpose — that we now turn to the year ahead.

To ensure IGBS continues to develop and thrive, our priorities for the year include:

1. Ensuring the school remains open and continues to provide high-quality education, pastoral care and vocational training
2. Strengthening school infrastructure, including new classrooms and a further dormitory
3. Developing the school farm to strengthen vocational skills, improve food sustainability, and deepen links with the local Ibba community
4. Continuing to expand our network of loyal supporters to sustain and increase the school's impact

Together, we can ensure that 2026 is another year in which students at IGBS thrive, communities are strengthened, and education continues to transform lives.

Very best wishes,

Chris Trott CVO

Chair of FIGS Trustees  
His Majesty's Ambassador, Holy See

### **A New School Year Begins at Ibba Girls Boarding School**

The new academic year began on 2 February, welcoming girls from across Western Equatoria to learn, grow, and develop as leaders at Ibba Girls Boarding School (IGBS). In 2025, 322 girls were enrolled across Primary 4 to Senior 4 classes, reflecting the school's commitment to providing opportunities for girls and young women from all ten counties of Western Equatoria State.

Each February, 40 new girls aged 10–15 join the school in Primary 4 following successful interviews. Additional students join Senior 1 in May to maximise opportunities for girls to continue into secondary education, helping ensure that each class reaches its target of 40 learners. Recruitment processes happen in 4 different centres across Western Equatoria. Ibba, Maridi, Yambio and Nzara. Maridi will host learners from Mvolo, Mundri East and Mundri West, while Yambio will host learners from Enzo, Tombura and Najero

100% pass rate for Senior 4 Class of 2024 in national exams

The Class of 2024 achieved another significant milestone in the South Sudan National Secondary Examinations. All 21 young women from IGBS passed, maintaining the school's remarkable 100% pass rate. IGBS serves as the nationally designated examination centre for both secondary schools in Ibba County, and a further seven students from the co-educational school also passed.

Of the IGBS students, six are progressing to Primary Teacher Training Scholarships, helping address the shortage of trained teachers in Western Equatoria. The remaining school leavers are being supported by FIGS and Windle Trust International to access further education and vocational training opportunities. Meanwhile, the Class of 2025 has recently sat its national examinations, and results are awaited.

Primary 8 progress and academic development

Primary 8 exams remain a key milestone for upper primary students, preparing them for the transition to secondary education. Exams were held in April, and every girl passed — continuing the strong academic record of recent years.

Joint learning events with local Ibba schools, St Peter's Primary School and Downey School, encouraged cross-age learning and collaboration, helping students build confidence, teamwork, and communication skills.

Across all classes, termly exams enabled teachers to assess progress and provide targeted support, strengthening the school's consistent delivery of the South Sudan

national curriculum.

#### Life beyond the classroom

Co-curricular activities such as debate, sports, music, dance, and drama engaged all 322 learners, helping them discover talents, build confidence, and develop teamwork skills. Boarding life fosters cultural tolerance and peaceful co-existence, giving girls space to explore their potential free from the pressures of early marriage or domestic responsibilities.

The year was not without its challenges. Despite strong pastoral care and safeguarding systems, seven girls were unable to complete the year due to pregnancies that occurred during school holidays. This remains one of the most significant barriers to girls' education in South Sudan and underlines the importance of IGBS's protective boarding environment, life skills education, and community engagement.

#### Learning through agriculture

The school's farm and garden continued to provide practical agricultural learning. Girls planted maize, pineapple, oranges, and papaya, and cared for pigs and goats — building teamwork and life skills while supplementing the school diet.

Together, these achievements demonstrate how IGBS continues to transform young lives — equipping girls with knowledge, confidence, and practical skills to thrive in school, with their families and inspiring communities across Western Equatoria.



Primary 8 Exams



Joint learning events with local Ibba schools, St Peter's Primary School and Downey School

### **Building for the Future: Classroom Construction with Africa Educational Trust**

Strong learning environments are central to academic success. Africa Educational Trust (AET), a specialist education charity now part of Street Child, has been commissioned to construct a new block of two classrooms at Ibba Girls Boarding School (IGBS), with funding provided through the Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) programme. The new classrooms will support the growing secondary section of the school and help ease pressure on existing teaching space.

Foundations were laid in January, and construction is progressing steadily, with the classrooms expected to be in use early in the school term. While additional infrastructure does not remove all the challenges of operating a school in this context, it does provide safer and more appropriate spaces for teaching and learning, supporting both staff and students as the school continues to develop.

Alongside this classroom expansion, FIGS is also working towards the construction of the school's final (seventh) dormitory. Completing this building would allow IGBS to reach its full intended capacity of 360 girls, ensuring demand for places can be met

safely and sustainably. Nearly half of the required funding has already been secured, and FIGS is hopeful that the remaining funds can be raised during 2026, enabling the school to complete this final phase of its original vision.



Construction of Classrooms with The African Educational Trust

**Welcoming a new Trustee: John Forde**

We are very pleased to announce that John Forde is joining FIGS as a Trustee.

John brings over 35 years of senior leadership experience in public health, spanning the NHS, local government, and international roles. He is a registered Public Health Specialist and a Fellow of the Faculty of Public Health, with a career focused on reducing inequalities and strengthening health systems.

His connection to IGBS goes back to 2013, John has remained a committed supporter ever since.

As John reflects:

“I became involved with Ibba Girls Boarding School when I was the Acting Director of Public Health for NHS Coventry. A chance meeting with John Benington ended up with me accompanying him to Ibba in 2013. The school was just a plot of land, with dug foundations and solar-powered water bore holes. I wrote a summary needs assessment for the charity as part of that visit and have been a supporter of FIGS ever since.”

Earlier in his career, John worked as a VSO volunteer in southwest Uganda, leading a community-based healthcare project that shaped his long-term commitment to international development.

More recently, he has held senior international roles with Public Health England in Pakistan and Ethiopia, working closely with governments and partners including the World Health Organisation (WHO), Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the US CDC, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now a Consultant in Public Health at Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, John brings deep strategic experience, strong governance skills, and a long-standing commitment to Ibba Girls Boarding School. We are delighted to welcome him to the Board.



John Forde, FIGS Trustee

**Sharing Success Globally: Dr Kuyok and Education Cannot Wait**

Ibba Girls Boarding School (IGBS) is part of a growing movement of schools in South Sudan that are helping to transform the lives of young women. In 2025, Dr Abol Kuyok,

South Sudan's Minister of General Education and Instruction, spoke with Education Cannot Wait about the country's priorities for advancing education in crisis-affected contexts.

Dr Kuyok highlighted the importance of equitable access, quality teaching, and safe learning environments, noting that education is a life-saving investment that protects children from exploitation, child marriage, and long-term poverty. He also emphasised the role of partnerships — local, regional, and international — in expanding access, improving teacher training, and supporting vulnerable children.

“Education is one of the most effective, life-saving investments we can make in a crisis. In a world of competing priorities, education is not a secondary concern — it is the foundation that protects children from forced recruitment into armed groups, exploitation, child marriage and long-term poverty.”

Through initiatives supported by organisations like Education Cannot Wait, schools in South Sudan are building safer, more inclusive learning spaces and ensuring that girls and other vulnerable learners are not left behind. The interview underscores why investments in education are critical for both individual futures and national development.



Dr Kuyok at IGBS in 2025

[Read the full interview here](#)

A new year is the perfect time to take on new challenges and make a real difference. Could 2026 be your year to fundraise for Friends of Ibba Girls School (FIGS)?

One of our supporters has already signed up for the AJ Bell Great Birmingham Run in May!

From running a marathon, walking a challenge, or cycling, to hosting a coffee morning, celebrating a birthday, or marking a personal milestone, every fundraising effort helps IGBS thrive. Your efforts support over 320 girls to learn, help provide high-quality teaching and pastoral care, fund scholarships and infrastructure, and ensure the long-term stability of the school.

Every pound raised helps to:

Support over 320 girls to learn, grow, and thrive

Sustain high-quality teaching and pastoral care

Invest in that crucial seventh dormitory and other infrastructure, scholarships, and long-term stability

You don't need to be an experienced fundraiser — just a willingness to turn a personal goal into lasting impact for girls in South Sudan. FIGS is here to support you with ideas, materials, and encouragement in whichever ways you find useful.

Contact us for more information!

### **We are hiring! Fundraising and Communications Officer**

We are excited to be recruiting a Fundraising and Communications Officer to join our small UK-based team.

This is a varied, hands-on role at the heart of FIGS' work, supporting fundraising, communications, donor engagement and essential administration. Working closely with our Head of Fundraising and Communications and our engaged Board of Trustees, the successful candidate will help ensure we can continue to support over 320 girls at Ibba Girls Boarding School.

We're looking for a strong communicator who is organised, proactive, and enjoys working in a small, mission-driven charity. The role will involve a combination of fundraising, communications and operational tasks. It is home-based within the UK, with some travel to supporter and fundraising events.

We'd be very grateful if you could share this opportunity within your networks, and if this

sounds like a role that you might be interested in – or if you know someone who would be a great fit – please do get in touch! Personal recommendations from supporters often help us reach exactly the right people.

Application deadline: 23 February

Interviews: Held remotely in early March

Apply via: Charity Jobs

[Click here to view the full job description](#)

[Give a Girl the Power to Learn: Donate Today](#)