LORETO VIETNAM
Flying into the future

SOUTH SUDAN
Curbing child marriage

AUSTRALIA
An open door to hope and dignity

SUSTAIN SPECIAL:
Meet the Women of our World

www.mwia.org.au
Mary Ward International Australia (MWIA) is a registered charity and is the Australian and international development organisation of the Loreto Sisters. Our Mission is to support the development works associated with the Loreto Sisters and their colleagues as they empower women to transform structures and systems that keep them oppressed and marginalised.

ABOUT US
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Message from Kim
“There is no such difference between men and women that women cannot do great things”
– Mary Ward

You will be moved to learn of the significant impact our Loreto Women of the World are achieving by giving refugees and asylum seekers hope and dignity, providing education and health care in remote regions, fighting human traffickers, saving young girls from early marriage, and so much more.

As another year comes to a close, we take this opportunity to recognise and acknowledge the outstanding generosity of all our supporters. We are an organisation rich in goodwill, and support comes from many sources including our Loreto Sisters, generous donors, students and staff of Loreto schools, volunteers and pro-bono advisers, all of whom continually raise the bar with their assistance - without them we could not continue to grow.

In the coming year, with a new Strategic Plan, we hope that our growth will be further enabled by the your continued and that of new friends.

We hope you enjoy this final edition for 2017 and sincerely wish you a joyful and loving Christmas with your families and friends and that 2018 is year filled with kindness and hope.

Warmly,
Kim Nass

SUSTAIN  Mary Ward International Australia www.mwia.org.au

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Join us in promoting justice and development
Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intention. So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally. The broken work waits in darkness or the light that is you.

– L.R. Knost

Our goal with showcasing a powerful group of change-makers is not only to celebrate their unique successes but to encourage others to find someone who moves them, someone who can spark a flame inside, so they too lead a life of courage and boldness.

Libby Rogerson ibvm
Co-founder House of Welcome, Australia

For more than 30 years Libby has worked with and advocated for refugees and asylum seekers. In 2003, when asylum seekers were summarily released from Villawood Detention Centre, Libby, and a group of religious women, with the help of the NSW Ecumenical Council and the Franciscan Fathers established the House of Welcome which now provides English classes, counselling, case work, referral, preparation for work and accommodation for asylum seekers.

Imelda Poole ibvm
Founder and President of RENATE, Albania

Loreto Sister Imelda Poole is President of the Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation (RENATE) which was founded in 2009. RENATE is a European network of religious and lay co-workers who are committed to work together in the fight against human trafficking and exploitation across 27 European countries.

Trish Franklin ibvm
Founder Loreto Vietnam Program, Vietnam

Loreto Sister Trish Franklin AO established the Loreto Vietnam Australia Program, now known as Loreto Vietnam, over 20 years ago. Since that time Loreto Vietnam has implemented development programs across seven very remote provinces in South Vietnam where few other NGOs are operating. New kindergartens/schools are built and educational facilities upgraded to strengthen curriculum outcomes in disadvantaged and isolated communities.

Sr Trish has since left Vietnam however her vision continues to flourish thanks to the dedicated team and loyal supporters who together have impacted the lives of over 60,000 children from underprivileged contexts, some of whom have disabilities and live in impoverished villages.

RECENT AWARDS & HIGHLIGHTS:
In 2015 Sr Trish was presented with the highly prestigious Friendship Medal, signed off by the President and Prime Minister of Vietnam. The Friendship Medal is the highest official recognition that a foreigner can receive.

Orla Treacy ibvm
Founder and Principal of Loreto Rumbek, South Sudan

Loreto Sister Orla Treacy is Principal of Loreto Rumbek which opened its doors in 2008 and has since grown to support 251 resident senior students and more than 600 boys and girls in their primary day school. Earlier this year the Loreto Girls Secondary School recently graduated 29 girls, believed to be the largest class of girls to graduate in South Sudan since the country gained independence in 2011.

RECENT AWARDS & HIGHLIGHTS:
In 2017 Sr Orla was awarded the Hugh O’Flaherty International Humanitarian Award for her work in South Sudan.
**A Sustain Special Report: Women of our World**

**Diaan Stuart and Natalie Houlihan ibvm**  
Local Coordinators of the Loreto Preschool and Community Centre, Timor-Leste  

Responding to a request from the local community in Gari-uai, Timor-Leste, the Loreto Sisters have built a Preschool and Community Development Centre. This project wouldn’t have been possible without the committed support from a number of Loreto Sisters who have made Timor-Leste their home over the years, and in particular, to Sisters Diaan Stuart, Natalie Houlihan, Margie Bourke and Francine Roberts. This work now continues with Sister Ai Thien Nguyen who is the Director of the Preschool.

**Elizabeth Donnan ibvm**  
Founder Teacher Training and Community School Support Projects, Zambia  

Over the past 11 years Loreto Sister Elizabeth Donnan has worked tirelessly to advance education in Lukulu District, Zambia. She has supported more than 20 community schools with various resources from basic pencils and books, to desks, boreholes and even classroom blocks depending on their greatest needs. Through Sr Elizabeth’s initiative almost 70 untrained voluntary teachers at these schools have upgraded their own schooling to achieve a full Grade 12 School Certificate. With MWIA support 17 have gone to college, some of whom have already graduated as qualified teachers and who have returned to teach in their local communities.

**Mary Owens ibvm**  
Co-founder and Executive Director of Nyumbani Village, Kenya  


**Patricia Hanvey ibvm**  
Founder Baby Milk Project, Zambia  

For the past 11 years Loreto Sister Patricia Hanvey has been committed to supporting primary health care in Lukulu, a remote corner of Zambia. One of the many projects she has founded is a baby milk project for orphaned and vulnerable babies who are at risk as a result of maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS. The program also improves the well-being of malnourished children in their initial growth, offering a better chance for them to grow stronger and lead healthier lives. Over the years close to 800 babies have been assisted.

**Recent Awards & Highlights:**  
Sr Diaan was presented with a certificate by the Queensland Catholic Education Commission for her nomination for the Spirit of Catholic Education 2017.

**Recent Awards & Highlights:**  
On National Youth Day 2017 Sr Elizabeth was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the Office of the President for her contribution to education and support of Community Schools in the District.

**Recent Awards & Highlights:**  
On Zambian Independence Day 2016 Sr Patricia was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the Office of the President, for her continued support in the Health and Education sectors through infrastructural development and facilitation of HIV & AIDS programmes in the District.

**Recent Awards & Highlights:**  
In June 2017 Sr Mary received an award from the Kenyan Government’s Ministry of Health in appreciation for her service and dedication to the Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) Program.

**Recent Awards & Highlights:**  
Actor Naomi Watts visited Nyumbani Village recently to learn about paediatric HIV treatment.

In recognising these Loreto Sisters it is important to acknowledge the ongoing support and commitment from all the colleagues and volunteers who have worked with the Sisters across these projects and many more.
Child and forced marriage remains a widespread practice in South Sudan, rooted in cultural and traditional beliefs, rather than religious, with 52 percent of girls marrying before their 18th birthday. Generally, these marriages are arranged by the families within and across tribes.

As an indirect consequence of the ongoing conflict in South Sudan, coupled with starvation and a financial crisis, child marriage is not only common but has been rising over the last three years. Arranged marriages provide a vital revenue stream for families, including cattle, money and other gifts for her hand in marriage.

“To understand why child and forced marriage is so prevalent it is important to appreciate how under-developed the country is: there is little education, no city power or water, and health care remains inaccessible to millions in South Sudan,” says Loreto Sister Orla Treacy, Principal of Loreto Secondary School in Rumbek, the region’s only all-girls boarding school.

In response to the growing crisis Loreto Rumbek implemented a Child Marriage Agreement nine years ago requiring each student’s guardian to sign a form at the time of enrollment promising not to remove the child until graduation. By doing so, Loreto Rumbek has grown to become a women’s refuge educating 251 resident senior girls and more than 900 boys and girls in their primary day school.

“Now, everyone knows that when your daughter goes to Loreto Secondary School she will not be married for at least four years,” says Sr Orla.

When the agreement began, around 50 percent of the girls were being taken out of the school for early marriage. Last year the number dropped to less than three percent.

Of the dropouts, none were forced marriages, instead, it is believed the girls left the school to be married willingly. However, there are still questions about the girls’ ability to consent and/or issues of coercion.

If any of the girls resist early marriage the school provides them with financial, educational, social and psychosocial support for as long as needed. Loreto Rumbek works to educate each girl about her human and sexual/reproductive rights and works with the UN and other NGOs to ensure the school continues to provide a secure learning environment without the threat of marriage.

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“At first the local community did not take the agreement seriously however, that has changed over time as the community recognised that the school will use all of its resources to protect the girls from these traditional practices. As long as the girl remains with us, and desires to stay, she will be protected, educated, and empowered,” Sr Orla said.

Out of all the girls that have graduated from Loreto Rumbek almost none have returned to traditional marriage roles. Some are married and having children, while many are working professionals.

“We have started to see some changes: the girls that are getting married are often allowed a higher level of input into their marriage as the family is keen to keep them close, where they can access the resources that they are bringing in.”

By empowering the girls academically and professionally the school has created an alternative for families; the girls themselves cease to be a resource and have instead become assets.

When asked if the rate of child marriage at Loreto Rumbek will ever drop to zero percent, Sr Orla responds, “we are optimistic that in the years to come we will be able to eliminate forced and child marriages from Loreto and that the community will follow suit. We just hope that the ongoing starvation and poverty doesn’t cripple our effort.”

Words: Communications Manager, Elouise Hahn

All children have the right to recreation; in a word, they have the right to be children

– Pope Francis

Images
1: Due to economic hardships, especially the lack of food security, the school experienced unprecedented levels of attendance this year.
2: Loreto Rumbek handed out school kits to the primary & secondary students. The children’s happiness in receiving the kits was palpable.
3-4: All the girls who sat for the 2016 national exams passed with amazing results, all receiving an average of 60 and above.
5-6: Loreto Rumbek secondary students enjoying their studies.
Nestled in the mountains and surrounded by forests lies the small village of Lolay where disadvantaged tribal villagers live. There are no shops in Lolay and the only infrastructure is the newly established Loreto Health Clinic along with the school, Church and convent. It is not uncommon for the locals to walk for over two hours for basic necessities, including water. The nearest town is only 17 kilometers away yet it takes over an hour to reach it in a four-wheel drive. This snaking road, built over a decade ago, is way too narrow, potholed and windy to accommodate a bus. If this sounds like an arduous journey, imagine what it’s like for the seriously ill – often having to be carried down the mountain on a chair.

The people of Lolay are mainly subsistence farmers living below the poverty line. There is no such thing as irrigation so if the rains don’t come at the right time and in the right quantity no crops can be harvested. Without a water supply these families, living in mud huts, have no toilet facilities making it nigh on impossible for hygiene levels to be improved.

The Loreto Sisters, going where the need is greatest, established the first Health Clinic in the area in February this year. Loreto Sister, Clara Kasper, manages the program and is supported by an experienced paramedic and social worker. Women, children, pregnant mothers, the physically challenged and elderly are the most vulnerable groups needing constant attention.

Operating six days a week the clinic staff have immunised over 55 children and provided polio vaccination for all the children under five-years of age. In addition to administering medicines the clinic has, through their awareness programs, successfully raised health and hygiene standards. Additionally, new mothers are provided with information on health care and nutrition for their babies – a much needed service never before offered.

The community continues to battle with high rates of child marriage, early pregnancy, school drop-out rates and alcoholism. However, through the presence of the Loreto Sisters managing the Health Clinic and initiating awareness and education programs, positive changes are occurring.

This project truly nurtures the vision of creating a better future through lifting the living standards in and around Lolay.

The Loreto Sisters provide much needed health care to a remote tribal village in India.
Anniversaries provide an opportunity to take a step back and marvel at the progress of small beginnings and gratitude for the progress made.

1997: Our beginnings

In 1997, Loreto Sister, Trish Franklin began the Loreto Vietnam Australia Program, now called Loreto Vietnam, in response to the needs she saw among the children living and working on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City. A committee, consisting of eight Loreto Sisters, was formed to advise the Provincial Council and to support IBVM personnel and workers in Vietnam. This committee created the guidelines and policies for Loreto Vietnam.

The proposal to begin the mission in Vietnam dated back to April 1994 when Sr Trish joined a Jesuit Refugee Service fact-finding mission in April of that year. Two years later the first Province project was approved to assist with educational requirements for the Hoc Mon School, an elementary school for 160 children and Sunrise House, a refuge for young girls.

2017: Current focus

As an organisation which has evolved and been responsive to identified community needs, Loreto Vietnam has recently changed its logo to include a sparrow. The sparrow was chosen to show that even if you are small you can make a difference. Hardworking sparrows value cooperation to protect and support their community, the very values that have driven Loreto Vietnam for 20 years. With love and determination, Loreto Vietnam continues to respond to the needs of underprivileged children in six southern provinces by improving access to quality education in disadvantaged areas through provision of school packs or bikes for students, and infrastructure and educational resources support.

Images
1: Sisters Ellison Taffe, Trish Franklin and Mary Wright with Sunrise House children in 1997,
3-6: Young children are supported by the Loreto Vietnam Program as they strive to ensure children are not denied access to education due to their personal circumstances.

Loreto Vietnam has been working for over 20 years providing underprivileged children with access to quality education.
For some years now the House of Welcome has been bursting at the seams of the old butcher’s shop in Carramar, Sydney – case workers, clients, visitors and volunteers vied for a space, any space. So it was a great relief when the possibility of taking over the old convent in South Granville became a reality.

The opening of the new premises was an utterly joyous and totally communal affair. Sausage sizzles competed with amazing canapés conjured up by Rui, cupcakes and cups of tea from the Parish ladies, sandwiches and biscuits from all and sundry. Children of every nationality and religion raced around with balloons and students from the local Catholic high schools were gracious escorts to the arriving visitors.

Bishop Long, introducing himself as a “queue jumping bishop”, spoke of his own journey as a boat person from Vietnam and his sojourn in a camp before coming to Australia. “I am one of you,” he said. He stressed the importance of welcome in the title House of Welcome. Catholic communities, he said, must be communities of hospitality and welcome.

Brian Brown, actor and refugee advocate, talked of that basic Australian value – the fair go. Helping out, he said, is part of our DNA and it is important that the community get behind a welcome to refugees and asylum seekers.

The official opening ended with an African drummer, former refugee and now Australian citizen, expressing his gratitude to the House of Welcome and leading some child dancers and drummers with wonderful African rhythms. He soon had all the audience clapping and moving to his drumming.

“To have a place where they know they can come and feel welcome”, said St Francis Social Services CEO, Lyn Harrison, “makes a huge difference for people.”

The new centre has 12 offices for counselling and case work, space for English classes and an area for community gatherings.

After such a wonderful day it was so distressing to hear, that evening, that Mr. Dutton was withdrawing financial and accommodation support from around 100 asylum seekers who had been sent from Manus Island and Nauru to Australia for medical treatment.

In response to this real threat of destitution the House of Welcome has joined with Jesuit Refugee Service, Asylum Seekers Centre and RACS to crowdfund support for these beleaguered people.

Pope Francis has left us in no doubt as to our responsibility for welcoming and caring for those who seek protection from violence and persecution: “We are all complicit in the suffering of refugees if we stand by and remain silent.”

Words: MWIA Board Director, Loreto Sister Libby Rogerson

Images
1. House of Welcome Social Activities client trip to Kiama, NSW.
2. The official opening day of the House of Welcome Granville centre.
3. Actor Brian Brown at the opening day of the House of Welcome Granville centre.
4. The Women’s Creative Hub sells their handmade products at Bondi Markets.
5. House of Welcome staff members outside the new centre in Granville.

MWIA is committed to supporting the House of Welcome which opens the door to a life of hope, dignity and belonging for people seeking asylum in Australia.
10 students and three staff members from John XXIII College, Perth, were fortunate to travel to India in September to gain a deeper appreciation of the work of the Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre (KMWSC).

The Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre’s vision is to ensure that the values of love, freedom, sincerity and justice are experienced and lived out by all. During our visit to the Mary Ward Society’s main office, we heard about their work to create a better life for poor and marginalised communities. We learnt about the education of child labourers, children in the red light district and children working in brick fields.

India has a population of over 1.3 billion people and, sadly, 30 percent of its population are living below the poverty line. As many as 48 percent of Indian children, under the age of five, are stunted, a sign of chronic malnutrition. The reality is that many children do not have an opportunity for education as they are required to work to support their families. Statistics indicate that one in every 11 children in India is working. The KMWSC is working to mainstream child domestic workers and provide them with educational opportunities so they are able to access formal learning. They organise and facilitate many Multipurpose Activity Centres (MAC) where children from the poor communities come for a few hours a day to learn basic literacy and numeracy. The children also have opportunities to meet with others and play games. Their parents and guardians see the value of the program as a number of children who attended the MAC clubs have moved on to join mainstream education and vocational training programs.

This program highlights the importance of education and, with different stakeholders in the community, as well as the government, the KMWSC has jointly formed a safety net to prevent children from falling prey to child labour.

We would like to thank everyone involved in the Mary Ward Society for welcoming us into their centres and communities. It is really encouraging to see so much hope for the children and future generations. The people working in the Mary Ward Society really inspired us to continue to support the works of Mary Ward, in our own country and in our school community of John XXIII college.

Words: John XXIII Students, Ciara Morrissey and Lucie Bardinet

Images
1: A very new MAC centre in one of the slums in the outskirts of Kolkata.
2: Drawing with the children at the MAC centre in Sonagachi.
3: John XXIII students giving a lesson about Australian animals.
4: Students meeting one of the dynamic MAC leaders.
5: Creative drawing time shared with friends.
Linking Projects with UN Sustainable Development Goals

**AUSTRALIA**

1. **EMPOWERED TO WORK PROGRAM**
   - SDG 10: Reduced inequalities
2. **MANAGE YOUR INCOME CONSULTATION PROJECT**
   - SDG 1: No poverty
   - SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
   - SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

**INDIA**

5. **LOLAY HEALTH CLINIC**
   - SDG 1: No poverty
   - SDG 2: Zero hunger
   - SDG 3: Good health and well-being
   - SDG 4: Quality education
   - SDG 5: Gender equality
   - SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

**SOUTH SUDAN**

16. **SECONDARY SCHOOL CAPACITY BUILDING: LORETO RUMBEK SCHOOL**
   - SDG 2: Zero hunger
   - SDG 4: Quality education
   - SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

**TIMOR-LESTE**

3. **LORETO GARI-UAI PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL**
   - SDG 4: Quality education
   - SDG 6: Decent work and economic growth

**VIETNAM**

6. **CHILDREN’S LIBRARIES**
   - SDG 4: Quality education
   - SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

**KENYA**

19. **NYUMBANI SCHOLARSHIPS**
   - SDG 3: Good health and well-being
   - SDG 4: Quality education
   - SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

**ZAMBIA**

11. **LUKULU TEACHER TRAINING**
   - SDG 4: Quality education
   - SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

**Accountability and Accreditation**

MWIA is accredited by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). We are committed and fully adhere to the ACFID Code of Conduct, managing our work with transparency, accountability and integrity.

Mary Ward International Australia

**REACHING NEW HEIGHTS for charity**

Earlier this year my mum and I successfully summited Mount Kilimanjaro. The summit on Mount Kilimanjaro is called Uhuru Peak and stands at 5,895m and, to put this in perspective, Mount Everest reaches 8,848m – just over 2,950m higher.

This was the most challenging thing I have ever done in my life but the experience will be something I treasure forever. The wonderful scenery, the friendly people that led us along the way, the beautiful wildlife, some of which you only see in the Kilimanjaro region, the challenges we encountered, climbing walls and walking at such high elevation.

When I look back at the first glimpse of the mountain afar, the pictures of the days’ progressing, I still can’t believe I did it - with my mum! I would definitely recommend this to anyone who’s willing to take on the challenge of attempting to climb the highest freestanding mountain in the world. One word of advice is “pole, pole”, meaning slowly, slowly so your body can deal with the altitude.

It has taught me to have confidence in myself, resilience and that anything is possible if you work hard and have a positive attitude. Being able to raise funds for Loreto Vietnam and to give girls my age an opportunity for an education provided me with further inspiration to complete the climb.

Now it’s time to plan the next challenge!

Words: Year 7 Loreto Kirribilli student, Eliane Champ
“Leave after you something on which others may build”  
- Mother Gonzaga Barry

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