

Mary Ward Loreto Annual Report 2014

Executive Summary

“Far below the surface of the ocean, a soft bodied creature with a single eye, unruly tentacles and a strong outer shell knows what it takes to embrace change. The chambered nautilus has survived for 400 million years. It continues to thrive to this day by jet propelling itself into the unknown. It has navigated ancient seas and changing currents by building an ever-expanding shell in which it lives. Over time, as it grows, it builds a new, larger chamber and vacates the previous one. It always lives in the newest chamber. The other vacated chambers are individually sealed and injected with varying amounts of gas that allow the nautilus to regulate its buoyancy and movement. Past chambers help the creature stay afloat.” (Information, the Bulletin of the Religious Formation Institute, 21, 4, Winter 2012



In 2014 Mary Ward Loreto, in a fast and challenging way, has cast off its first chamber and has taken the risk to step out into the unknown and to allow new chambers to grow out of the strong foundation created in 2013. From just four staff in its beginning two years ago, there are now 17 staff and many volunteers. The charism and ethic of Mary Ward has been the force and energy penetrating the structure and each member. This has given the body a strong focus and a way forward with the principles of Freedom, Justice, and Sincerity rooting steadily in each person and in each project as it emerges in its implementation.

In January, 2014, the head of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, spoke at the Guild Hall in London of our moving into a new global reality where economic growth can only come from a stance of inclusivity and where the rich need to include the poor and offer openings for a renewed role for women at every level of society and especially in the levels of decision making. Growth does not come from exclusion. She also said that, “Right now, the young countries are seeing a “youth bulge”, with almost three billion people—half the global population—under 25. This could prove a boon or a bane, a demographic dividend or a demographic time bomb. A youthful population is certainly fertile ground for innovation, dynamism, and creativity. Yet everything will depend on generating enough jobs to satisfy the aspirations of the rising generation. This calls for a single-minded focus on improving education—and, in particular, on the potentially massive effects of technological change on employment.’ (Richard Dimpleby lecture, Guild hall, January, 2014.).

The developments in 2014 have been a response to such a statement. The staff are Albanian young people under 35 years of age. They are highly qualified in their field of expertise and have a passion for the work in which they are engaged. They lead 5 new Mary Ward centres, they lead new projects, develop new brandings, new marketing materials for the Foundation, ensure everything is working effectively and efficiently. They form a collective power house with a common mission. Together they work as one.



New initiatives have been begun and new developments in what was happening in 2013 have been realized. This year a new and exciting youth project has been launched in Mary Ward Loreto called Youth Education for Prosperity (YEP). 1,000 youth took part in a research to establish the way forward for this innovative project. In order to confront issues such as the lack of ethic and corruption in nearly every statutory system in Albania, a voluntary group of academics has also been established at Mary Ward Loreto to bring about systemic change and in particular in the education system. This project has named itself Mary Ward Loreto/ Think Tank Education in Albania. The Pilot Research was completed and reported on at a prestigious conference in Tirana, in December 2014, at which many ministers from the government were present including the Minister of Education. Mary Ward's Women grows from strength to strength having now established five Mary Ward Loreto Centres to service the work in the north, central and south of Albania. Many small businesses have been developed including those related to agriculture, flower growing, jewelry making and hand-made embroidered cards. Issues such as depression, domestic violence, poor health and economic independence are being confronted with up to 900 women from all over Albania.

Mary Ward Loreto has as its main focus to address the ever growing and horrific crime of trafficking in human persons. All the work has this objective at grass roots level, in the most marginalized, isolated and vulnerable parts of Albania where Mary Ward Loreto chooses to operate and where we have been invited to work. A new awareness raising project against trafficking was launched at the beginning of the year and has successfully addressed this topic in 40 regions of Albania and in partnership with Peace Corps and Different and Equal. Direct action has been taken to rescue and support the rehabilitation of victims by responding to calls for help from other parts of Europe where Albanians have been trafficked and which have come to us through our website, www.albaniahope.com and through the RENATE website, www.renate-europe.net. Involvement with the growing Philipino community in Tirana has also led to work in direct action against trafficking and particularly in the field of labour trafficking. Through the new partnership made between Mary Ward Loreto and The Medaille Trust in the UK, cross culture experiences have taken place and trust has been built up amongst the workers across borders. Consequent to this, one of the Mary Ward Women psychologists has been requested to counsel online victims of trafficking in the UK who have no English and who have been rescued and are in trauma. This work has proved to be extremely successful and many victims have found new life through this innovative practice.

Following on from the success of the initial steps taken by Mary Ward Loreto in 2013, as mapped out in the first Annual Report published on www.albaniahope.com website, this year's success in the field has led to an extension of our cooperation with the ministries in the government and a closer networking with many other statutory systems and NGOs all around Albania. The increase in staff has led to a change in premises for the central offices of Mary Ward Loreto. Now we are based near to many of the embassies who have become our colleagues and supporters. Visitors from the UK government, Swiss, German, Dutch, Italian and French NGOs have come to deliberate on issues working towards a closer cooperation. It is thanks to the indomitable work of the staff that so much has been accomplished in such a short time and with such high professionalism and expertise. They are to be congratulated for their success in every aspect of the work.

We continue to have a close collaboration with the NGO SHKEJ, and in particular with the project Little Angels, which is funded through Mary Ward Loreto and which now support the on-going education of 50 ethnic minority Roma children and their families. We also continue to support the Education Centre for the rehabilitation of trafficked victims managed by Different and Equal and funded through Mary Ward Loreto. In 2014 two of the staff taught the survivors of trafficking, pro gratis, english and music and in particular the guitar. This is a gesture of collaboration between Mary Ward Loreto and Different and Equal. Through the partnership between The Medaille Trust in the UK and Mary Ward Loreto, Different and Equal have partnered with Mary Ward Loreto to realize a cross border exchange in Slovenia between the three NGOs. This proved to be a very successful enterprise. Finally we rejoice at the continuing development of Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation (RENATE). As President of this NGO and because the Finance officer is also based in Albania and is an employee of Mary Ward Loreto, this work impacts the day to day life of the Foundation and is a source of great hope as more and more countries in Europe become involved in the network. The cross border collaboration has become stronger and more effective as new ways are learnt. Mary Ward Loreto and RENATE, during this reporting period have been invited to collaborate with a wider network of NGOs and organizations such as TRUST Women, TRUST LAW, The European Civil Society Platform, PAYOKE, the Global Women's Network, ANDANTE, The Vatican Academy for Social Sciences and many others who tirelessly work together to combat the trafficking and exploitation of so many modern day slaves.

Results of the work

- 1,000+ women are being trained in human development, health and business
- Youth Education for Prosperity (YEP) has been established in 2014 and has conducted a research with 1,000 youth and has led focus groups and worked with Youth leaders to understand the needs of youth in Albania. This will lead to the plan of action and the implementation of the project in 2015
- An awareness raising project (URAT) works against trafficking in 40 regions of Albania.
- An education centre continues to work with the victims of human trafficking in Tirana.
- The Roma Project, 'Little Angels' educates and pastorally cares for 50 children and their families.
- RENATE works across border in 19 European countries in anti-trafficking. www.renate-europe.net
- Think Tank Education in Albania (TTEA), has conducted a pilot research in Tirana, to highlight corruption and lack of ethic in the schools.
- Mary Ward Loreto supports the pastoral work of the Prison Chaplain to 9 prisons in Tirana.
- The Friends of Mary Ward meet regularly to deepen their spiritual lives and to act as advisors and participators in the development of the new NGO.

400 years ago Mary Ward Said: “This is verity, to do what we do well. Many think it is nothing to do ordinary things. But for us it is: to do ordinary things well.. all things that are ordinary in every office and employment whatsoever it be, to do it well, this is for us...” (1617 to the community in St Omer).

Maybe we are heeding these words with a response that is bearing much fruit.

Background

Albania is a small, mountainous country in the Balkan peninsula, with a long Adriatic and Ionian coastline. Along with neighbouring and mainly Albanian-inhabited Kosovo, it has a Muslim majority - a legacy of its centuries of Ottoman rule. Approaching twenty per cent of the population are Christians, divided mainly between the Orthodox and smaller Catholic denominations

While there have been signs of economic progress with inflation under tighter control and some growth, the country remains one of the poorest in Europe outside the former Soviet Union. By 2013, public debt stood at 60% of GDP. Albania is transforming into a market economy, but is poor by Western European standards. Agriculture is a key sector and a major employer

Unemployment remains stubbornly high, and the infrastructure and corruption continue to deter much foreign investment. According to a report published by graft watchdog Transparency International in 2012, Albania is currently the most corrupt country in Europe.

Albania made a formal application for membership of the European Union in 2009, on the basis of a 2006 Stabilisation and Association agreement. It was granted EU candidate status in June 2014.

The EU is keen to encourage further reform, particularly as regards stamping out organised crime and corruption and developing media freedom and property and minority rights.

Edi Rama, the Socialist Party leader who took over the reins of government in 2013, has vowed that Albania will achieve full EU membership within the next ten years.

This is the canvas on which we work day by day. The challenges are enormous but we are not daunted. The commitment is to see our work through until we know the empowerment has taken place and we know that those with whom we work are integrated into the society with full human rights and a dignity which brings freedom and hope.

The Mission, Vision and Value statements of Mary Ward Loreto are:

Mission

The mission of Mary Ward Loreto is to enhance personal development and a better quality of life for members of local communities, notably vulnerable populations, to be empowered to claim their right to human dignity. The aspiration of MWL is to significantly reduce the vulnerability for exploitation and the crime of modern day slavery. There is also the call to enable the victims of human trafficking to develop new lives with greater security, hope and love. The main strategic goal of the project is to join forces

with many partners, and to increase local impact under common ethical and quality standards of governance. MWL is poised to provide a prophetic and indispensable future, full of hope, for the most vulnerable in the context of exploitation and modern day slavery in Albania.

Vision

Mary Ward Loreto will be nationally recognized as the main organization in support of freedom, justice and hope in Albania. It will be known for strong advocacy, operational excellence and will take the initiative to add value to vulnerable populations through customized products produced by the local population and services. The mission of Mary Ward Loreto is forwarded by professional Albanian men and women. All will be helped to understand the charism of Mary Ward and will be trained in leadership according to modern methodology. There will be an understanding of the philosophy of respect for each one and the need for leadership/managerial qualities in all staff. MWL will sustain its operations through working partnerships with all organizations, projects and working Boards who will be part of this loose structure or synergy. Funding will be achieved through partnerships and Mary Ward Loreto will have a working Board who will ensure the sustainability of the Foundation.

Values

As an organization, Mary Ward Loreto will achieve its vision through steadfast adherence to its core values of **FREEDOM, JUSTICE and SINCERITY**.

Critical Success Factors

- Maintaining and building strong relationships with all partners, including a strong working board and extended network.
- Continued support and participation with vulnerable communities
- Continued delivery of services and programs according to the plan of action
- Engaging broad community support to forward the Mary Ward Loreto objectives.

Development of Mary Ward's Women(MWW) 2014:

The core of the work of MWW is the prevention against trafficking in persons through the development of ethical and human values, economic opportunities and creativity.

The MWW project in its strategy intends to support the provision of services for the integration of women living in the most marginalised and excluded regions of Albania. These women and girls are survivors of violence, trafficking and the suffering consequent to living in a patriarchal culture. The work of MWW is focused on increasing their knowledge and awareness of human values, of providing income opportunities, and in developing their skills to become self-employed and providing limited support to start-up businesses.

The implementation of these goals is very practical. A well-trained team consisting of the MWW staff, collaborate with consultants and experts hired ad hoc. Together they analyse and find generative

themes to develop programmes which aim to train the women in critical consciousness and to lead them into action.

Through the positive facilitation of the MWW staff in the group, the women decide the themes and the action and they are stimulated to become active and responsible members in the group and community. The leaders are in on-going training offered by the project and the women are in constant support for human development. Four sessions of trainings were organized in leadership skills for group animation and dynamics, advocacy, lobbying and campaigning for human rights. 17 women leaders were trained to improve their capacities through formation and through an exchange of experiences amongst the leaders of the different groups. The fourth training was on Social Business and this is leading to many and varied economic businesses being set up. The women engaged in business are also trained in business management and finance management. They become the controllers of their own destiny and regain their human dignity and self-esteem.

During this year the activities were focused on human development activities economic empowerment, health care, psychological support, empowerment and strengthening of new groups, and establishing new partnerships. As a result of this excellent work 1095 women have attended human development activities and 162 women are engaged in economic activities.

Psychological support is given to 12 women who are suffering from depression, traumas and problems with self-esteem. This work has been successful as gradually the women become stronger and take action to overcome their issues.

Five new workers have been employed to work in Shendelli, Kallmet, Tirana, Dusaj and Fier. A business development officer is employed to develop social businesses with the women's groups. A week of induction was organised in March for the MWW staff and new MWW workers. They were helped to understand the vision, mission and methodology of MWL in supporting those in need towards personal empowerment. The training was based on the methodology of human development and the understanding of basic concepts in social business for empowering the women.

Consequent to a partnership formed between Mary Ward Loreto and Medaille Trust the two staffs are sharing experiences working in the field of anti-trafficking with Albanian women both in England and in Albania. This partnership is previewed long term. The northern coordinator supports Albanian survivors of trafficking, who were beneficiaries of M.Trust services. The MWW worker helped these girls to overcome their traumas through online counseling. Due to this, she had a second visit to M.Trust in the UK to meet other Albanian girls and offer psychological support.

A documentary film has been produced and will be presented in a launching event in Albania. This film presents the harsh reality of women living in difficult situations but also the hope for change. Albanian women are the key speakers of this film. The MWW staff have seen this film and after a good discussion it is seen that this film needs to be developed in a second part which includes the successes of the women as well as their issues and their harsh reality.

Four MWW counselling and training centres have been created in Hot i Ri, Shendelli, Fier and Breglumas and a multidisciplinary team has been established with psychologists, social workers, business development officer, experts and trainers.

Networking is one of the important processes for MWW. Contacts and collaborative relationships have been established with NGOs, Institutions and local businesses.

MWW: CHALLENGES

- The women's group of Hot iRi who are engaged in agriculture, met some difficulties with the organized work. To motivate women to finish the processes needed on time, a calendar has been prepared with relevant days when work needs to be done. In the case that some of them are not available in that period of time another woman from the group will take that role. Training on group stages and dynamics is required, to help them be more positive about these dynamics
- The women are isolated in the community from their husbands or the husband's family. So it is difficult to organize an activity or training outside the village, because only a few will participate. The MWW workers challenge will be to overcome these cultural boundaries in order to change this situation.
- The culture itself and the aim to become counter-cultural is the biggest challenge with these women and the community. Their main focus is "easy money, fast money". They have become very passive, even though they are very dynamic women in their spirit and temperament. They have become passive because of their isolation, poverty and the lack of opportunities.
- Some of the women give up in working. The Lack of freedom, lack of employment and working group culture, and the tendency to want immediate economic benefit, puts pressure on the women who are urged by their husbands to give up if there is no immediate big profit.
- A challenge is working in the marginalized inner city areas such as in Breglumas. The women are dispersed and there is no sense of community. They hardly show interest to make steps to overcome poverty as they are very passive and not strong.
- Challenges are related even to networking and establishing collaboration with other NGOs or institutions working in the areas where the women's groups are set. It is related to uncoordinated intervention of other NGOs which lead to a duplication of services who want to interfere with the progress of the women's groups.
- Health issues presented by the women are another challenge faced by the workers. As a poor person in Albania you do not get health benefits from the state, especially if you are younger than 60 years old. As they do not have money to pay for the treatment, they often die through lack of care or commit suicide to prevent themselves from being a burden on the family. The situation is getting very serious especially in the area of Shendelli. The latest results show that the drinking water is contaminated and a source of many diseases, i.e kidney and liver diseases. There is little hope that measures are going to be taken by the state's services to change the situation.

MWW: MEASURED RESULTS

On the grass root level the impact of our strategy is evident. The women groups are consolidating and the women are at the centre of decision making. They are starting to make profit from their economic activities and their role in the family is becoming recognised. Our presence in the communities has brought a positive impact also for the Catholic Church in Albania as MWW is a foundation with Catholic roots. Because of the positive impact the husbands have started to allow their women to become part of the groups and to attend human development and economic empowerment activities.

- 1095 women have benefitted from the human development activities
- 162 women are working in agriculture and handicraft and they are able to launch and sell their products in the market.
- 3 women of Fier have finished the tailoring course and 8 women from Hot I Ri have started a tailoring course
- 1,000+ handmade cards have been produced and sold by the women of Hot iRi
- 500 wedding favours have been produced and sold by the women of Raja (Tropoje)
- 500 bracelets have been prepared by the girls groups and 203 have been sold
- 50 sachets were produced by the group of Tropoja and sent to Italy for sale
- Workshop with NGO-s in Northern Albania organized
- Collaboration with NGO-s who work in the same or similar foci have been established
- Counselling sessions for 10 women have been realized, and a couple counselling took place
- The MWW workers are trained with the necessary skills to develop the work with women in outreach areas
- 4 MWW counselling and training centres in Kallmet, Fier, Shendelli and Breglumas are rented, renovated and refurbished as a resource for developing the MWW strategy with vulnerable women in Albania.
- 53 women participated in the training on Business basic concepts and marketing.
- Three other new MWL centres for the women have been chosen in Shkoder, and Dushaj and a new centre has been found in Kallmet. The refurbishment has started in these places.
- 4 social workers/psychologists were employed to work in the areas of Shendelli, Breglumas and Fier.
- A Business Development officer employed by MWL for MWW is developing social business with the women's groups
- - A new group of young women from Cernica has been established
- - MWL/MWW participated in the 3rd session of NGO-s Fair in Shkodra
- 45 cases of women were accompanied to the statutory services in Tirana and Saranda

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS for 2015

- a) Human development activities have been very important during this year, especially in raising self-esteem, personal motivation and consolidation of the groups. Women received the necessary information for their personal growth and it helped them to change their vision into the future and to accept the challenges which this would bring.
- b) Women need to have continuous support in human development, as they are making big steps in their lives; attending group meetings, initiating economic activities, attending counseling, seeking for freedom. These are things that they have never experienced in the past. Ongoing trainings would help them receive more information to improve their lives, to strengthen family relationships, to improve health conditions, and to motivate them for new initiatives.
- c) It is necessary to continue to further support the groups and to develop group dynamics. It is also important to develop more training on business setup to help the women to face all issues arising and to share them within the group activities.
- d) The strategy for the action and methodology of MWW enables the women to reach economic empowerment and social inclusion through human capacity building. Now the women are beginning to feel free and have grown in a certain social awareness and perhaps more importantly they are gaining a higher self-esteem.
- e) It is seen that there is also a need for psychological counselling to help them to overcome their issues or traumas. Women are more aware of their psychological and emotional state and the importance of

psychological support. Emotional stresses, depression, traumatic events, anxiety, couple relationships problems, are referred to as issues for counselling sessions.

- f) The empowerment of the women's leaders is an ongoing intention of MWW project. There will be new trainings, individual development programmes, and the implementation of current role responsibilities.
- g) Orientation of the women to the services offered in the area is very important to help them to have access to these services and to improve life conditions.
- h) There is an immediate need to improve the marginalized women's access to health support services, especially those who are in risk of life.
- i) The women need to raise their voice toward the injustices and their human rights. Local raising awareness activities need to be developed for problem solving in the communities.

The success of this project lies in the energy of the women animated by such an excellent team of staff.

MWL STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND PROCESSES

MWL in its strategy for developing the human resources applies a methodology for building values for empowerment. The basis of this methodology is the charism of Mary Ward, Freedom, Justice and Truth. This process for staff development supports these objectives:

- Encouraging a culture of truth and based in good communication and harmony;
- Applying the principles of growth, feedback and accountability to the way that we work;
- Demonstrating the MWL's commitment to developing and retaining the talents of academic staff;
- Enabling people to reach their full potential through training, mentoring, supervision and care.

Trainings and workshops were provided and monthly coordination meetings were developed.

A week of MWL staff training and team building was developed during the first week of July. This time served to bond and to create an atmosphere of belonging and development.

The outreach workers were supported with presenting the MWL vision, mission and values. This followed with an induction into the belonging work areas by their line manager.

Because of the represented difficulties to fulfill the required aims, mentoring one to one was developed and did succeed. The work now it is establish and the groups are more and more consolidated