



Empowering through Justice, Freedom and Sincerity

2015 ANNUAL REPORT



Mary Ward Loreto Annual Report 2015

MARY WARD LORETO is planting hope with a human rights approach to combating modern day slavery. This challenging mission is implemented through works of justice, education, grass roots action and systemic change. The aim is to eradicate poverty, the prime cause for human trafficking.

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■ Executive summary

The work undertaken by NGOs is wide-ranging but their roles have three main components: implementer, catalyst, and partner (Lewis, 2007). The implementer is concerned with the mobilization of resources to provide goods and services to people who need them. The catalyst can be defined as an NGO's ability to inspire, facilitate or contribute to improved thinking and action to promote social transformation. The role of partner reflects the growing trend for NGOs to work with the government, donors and private sector on joint activities, within a broader multiagency program or project, or socially responsible business initiatives. It includes activities such as "capacity building" work which seeks to develop and strengthen capabilities (David Lewis, London School of Economics 2014). This year MWL's engagement in all three roles as an NGO is clearly illustrated in the following report which is an attempt to show how we have faced the mission of combating modern day slavery during these difficult times in our present world history.

Although the Log Frame¹ has remained a dominant tool to design and plan interventions, new approaches that claim a less mechanistic approach have emerged in recent times. One that has recently been attracting attention is the Theories of Change (ToC). This approach addresses the need for NGO's to conceptualize more fully how envisaged change will take place, and to consider the evidence that makes such change plausible. Rather than focusing on what is being done (outputs), proponents of ToC argue that the approach encourages a stronger focus on what is to be changed (outcomes). Both tools could be considered as excellent in the on-going assessment and planning. The key issue is that these processes open up new ways of thinking about change in the light of politics, culture and social need. These tools are used to check and monitor progress for the greater good and for effective change. This annual report hopes to keep these tools and ideals in mind as the work of the MWL Foundation over the last months is gathered and assessed.

During these last 10 months, MWL has emerged, after two years' establishment, as an NGO in Albania, within the newly changed framework of the financial and written reporting year from October to September. During this period solid roots have been laid in the Foundation. The roots of a tree are an interesting image for MWL. There has been a need for MWL to **anchor** the tree in the soil. Penetrating the soil in search of water and mineral nutrients, the tree is further secured in the soil or the charism and philosophy of Mary Ward Loreto. Equally MWL has **stored** large amounts of energy reserves below ground for the plant. Some trees have reserves stored underground which enables them to re-sprout when they are cut down or in some cases burned down.

The dedicated work in establishing MWL ethical and statutory documents was achieved at the corporate level, enabling the staff and all those with whom we work to have a clear way forward in the implementation of the goals through measured best practice and training. This gave MWL the nourishment needed for the rest of the tree to develop new shoots for effective mission. Challenging and innovative new shoots are springing up to enhance the work of MWL and to bring it clearly into the 21st century in the light of the UN sustainability goals. When the Foundation is thoroughly rooted there is a clarity regarding the values which will underpin the new shoots and how we see the Foundation flourish into the future.

1) A log frame is a tool for improving the planning, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of a project/foundation. The log frame is a way of structuring the main elements in a project and highlighting the logical links between them.

The roots of a tree are a primary source for life. This year we have made many efforts to ensure these roots are strong, well-founded and nourished. In many respects the life of a Foundation is dependent firstly on those people who lie at the centre of the work: the victims, the poor, the beneficiaries, and partners with whom we create such passion in the work together *for Justice, Empowerment, Freedom and Truth.*



The ability to develop a leadership philosophy, which embraces all those with whom we work with or alongside, with professionally developed and focused staff, partners, stakeholders, Boards and Networks, is crucial to the whole enterprise.

In this report we will begin by examining the scope of work carried out in 2015, work which has strengthened the Foundation into the future. We begin with the beneficiaries. Through professional development, education, counselling, medical care, economic empowerment, vocational training, employment opportunities, awareness raising, capacity building in every sphere needed, and other empowerment work, over 10,000 people have benefitted from the work of MWL during the course of the year. These numbers are significantly augmented when the impact of the renovated website and Facebook page are examined and assessed. A major effort is on-going to ensure that the charism of Mary Ward, with the goal that every person reach the fullness of their potential, is at the centre of all the work. Excellence and the achievement of freedom through these means is the primary goal for all.

Structures have been put into place to ensure that this work bears fruit. MWL has three major Boards. One of these is the statutory MWL Board of Directors for the Foundation, which now has five members. The members of this Board are Dr Tom Preku, the Executive Director of Euro Partners Development and Honorary Consul for Malta, Professor Marina Ndrico, Professor of Social Sciences at the University of Tirana, Mr William Morrell OBE, Consultant for ICITAP, an American Foundation which acts as a consultant to the Police in Albania and Mr Fatmir Gjoni, Chief Executive Director of Mirness, a Communications and Business Consultancy in the Balkans. Mrs Ana Stakaj is a co-opted member of this Board as the elected staff representative.

This Board enables the Foundation to have a strong consultative body which is at the service of the foundation throughout the year. It also ensures that the networks are extended and that the accountability within Albania is guaranteed. Both the MWL Women project and the MWL Youth project have working boards which meet regularly throughout the year. These are an important source of support to the project workers for advice and for stretching their boundaries. Each of these Boards includes experts who are consultants in the core aspects of the project work with MWL beneficiaries.

In this context the MWL projects and the action of the Foundation, during this reporting period, has expanded and deepened its focus and is now more clearly aiming at the elimination of Trafficking in Human Persons. This work is in the fields of prevention, awareness raising, direct action and in campaigning and advocacy. The following report highlights the many ways in which this mission is unfolding.

■ Networking and Partnerships

Working in networks and partnerships, across boundaries and systems, and not in isolation, has always been the underlying philosophy that has guided MWL. This, we believe, is the best way to effect change both at the local, statutory, national and international level.

MWL has strong working partnerships with four NGOs:

- **Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation (RENATE).** The President of MWL is also the President of RENATE and many MWL staff are members.
- **Different and Equal (D&E),** an education centre and shelter for trafficked victims.
- **The CCLA centre called Little Angels,** an Initiative managed by the NGO Education for Life (SHKEJ) serving the Roma community.
- **The Medaille Trust (UK),** which manages shelters in the UK for trafficked victims and in association with whom we work directly with Albanian victims rescued in the UK.

MWL is proactive in raising funds for the first three of these partnerships. The funding is given, and is mentored by MWL, for an Education Centre for Trafficked Victims managed by the NGO Different and Equal (D&E). It also mentors the MWL funding given through money raised for The Little Angels Roma Project. RENATE employs for one day a week, the finance manager of MWL and the President of MWL is also the President of RENATE. The RENATE office is based at the MWL offices in Tirana. For all further information for these close partnerships see www.albaniahope.com

The latter partnership, the Medaille Trust, based in the UK, donates funding to MWL for the needs of a migrant community in a village in the south of Albania. This village called Shendelli suffers from extreme poverty and is, furthermore, in an area which has become plagued by the drug market and human trafficking. Gangsters, led by officially appointed so-called dignitaries, have held the village to ransom and, for many, in a form of debt bondage leading to much criminal activity. Some of this crime has been penalised but much has gone unnoticed. The MWL Women's project works hard to empower the women to stand up for their human rights and to be heard in situations of grave injustice. The Medaille Trust chose this particular area to fund because of the vulnerability of the young village girls to being trafficked.



Participation in various other networks in Albania and abroad is essential in gaining sufficient strength corporately to address many issues. Locally the URAT Network, which was originally founded by the Religious in Albania, has now embraced a much wider circle including members of the Peace Corps, the leaders of the Roma community in Albania, Different and Equal, the Little Angels Roma Project (SHKEJ), Religious sisters and Mary Ward Loreto. This network is now called 'The United Response Against Trafficking (URAT)'.

Already, with its new identity, the network has re-written its core documents. As a network amongst networks we have visited the first Albanian refugee centre in Babrru, near Tirana and met with many refugees from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Kosova. MWL responded in September to a request to carry cosmetics and food to this camp. More of the network will be involved in a follow-up visit before Christmas, bringing many clothes, food and cosmetics for the refugees in the camp.

It has been heart-rending to hear the stories being told by these refugees, many of whom have been on the move for years escaping one form of conflict after another. Some have experienced the death of the men in the family and others have been separated from their children in the mayhem at various borders. The stories were all permeated with pain.



Another important network in which Mary Ward Loreto is pro-active, is ***The European civil Society Platform against Trafficking***. We have now attended this for two years and participated in the many dialogues in an attempt to achieve change at a systemic level. By sharing the grass roots experience of the problems confronting trafficked victims, including poverty and the dysfunctionality of families of both victim and trafficker, it is hoped that legislation and national referral mechanisms in Europe will become stronger. It is important that this legislation is made

with an emphasis on the protection of the victim and the criminalisation of the traffickers.

Gazmir Memaj represented MWL. He is the manager of the MWL Youth project which now has the portfolio for raising awareness about trafficking in persons. In the picture opposite you see Gazmir speaking about the situation in Albania at the gathering in Brussels. We feel that this is a very important contribution which we can make for systemic change in Europe. Other networks are equally important at different levels.

Including the Caritas Coalition of networks working against trafficking (COATNET). Gazmir Memaj also represented us at this bi-annual meeting held in Paris in the autumn. Ana Stakaj, the manager of MWL Women's project, represents us as an observer at a ***Government anti-trafficking round table for Shelter leaders***, the government and interested stake holders. Ana Stakaj also represented MWL and RENATE as an active member of the European coalition of Women's Christian networks, called ***ANDANTE***. This year ANDANTE is focusing on Trafficking in Human Persons, Poverty and Bio-Ethics. The manager of the Little Angels Project (SHKEJ), is an active member of the ***coalition network, BKTF, in Albania***, which addresses the issues surrounding child trafficking in Albania and the Balkans.



One of our younger staff members, Irena Kraja, the assistant manager of the MWL women's project, has now represented us twice at the ***Vatican Youth Network Against Trafficking*** coordinated by the Vatican Academy of Sciences and Social Sciences for including the youth voice internationally in the work of combating trafficking in persons. At the gathering in autumn, a strategy was devised for working together, from a distance, in order to support each other in this challenging mission. A most important experience at this gathering was the opportunity to learn from the

witnesses present at the meeting who spoke of their experience of being trafficked. They challenged everyone to listen and learn from their experiences. Irena is a psychologist and counsels on-line victims of trafficking from Albania who have been rescued in the UK and are in the shelters of the Medaille Trust with whom we have a partnership. Throughout this year she has continued this work and has also been requested to write detailed reports supporting the requests for asylum of some of these victims. So far all have been successful in this request and Irena Kraja has been thanked by all for enabling this work to reach such a happy conclusion.

■ Raising Awareness against Trafficking in Albania and Abroad



During this reporting period the President of MWL has devoted time to raising awareness of the issue of trafficking both in Albania and abroad. In the last week of February, 2015, she was invited to teach in two webinars for The Tony Blair Faith Foundation. This was the third time in Albania that she had been invited to do this. Over two days she led webinars with 6 schools. The topic was 'Human Trafficking: Issues and Prevention.' The first webinar included Northern Ireland, and two schools from Mexico. The second webinar included schools from India, Indonesia, Jordan and Pakistan. In both webinars

the session was for two hours. The students were well prepared, asking relevant and reflective questions, and over the time we delved deeper and deeper into the topic. Some of the schools were specifically Islamic and because of this there were certain boundaries to the areas of this issue which we were allowed to address. We all kept to topics within these boundaries. The main areas of general concern were the lack of will by global leadership, especially the government level, to combat this terrible crime and also the lack of a global coordinated approach. It was particularly noted that in their experience many victims were not being heard. The questions also browsed around issues relating to the internet and the deep net. The young participators led the way and were very shrewd.

As President of RENATE, the MWL president was invited to ***The Press Release for the first International day of prayer against trafficking in human persons***, held in Rome on February 4th and 5th. Sister Gabrielle, Director of Talitha Kum, and many dignitaries from the church were on the panel. It was an opportunity to speak with over 30 journalists about this horrific crime. The following is one of the reports from the press conference.

First International Prayer Day & Reflection on Human Trafficking.

Vatican City, 26 November 2014 (VIS)

The Pontifical Councils for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples and for Justice and Peace, in collaboration with the international male and female Unions of Superior Generals (UISG and USG) have convoked an international conference for prayer and reflection on human trafficking, to be held on 8 February 2015, feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita, the Sudanese slave canonised in 2000.

According to a press release, "human trafficking is one of the worst examples of slavery in the XXI Century. This concerns the whole world. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) roughly 21 million people, often very poor and vulnerable, are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced labour and begging, illegal organ removal, domestic servitude and forced marriages, illegal adoption and other forms of exploitation. Each year around 2.5 million people are victims of trafficking and slavery: 60 are women and children. They often suffer abuse and unspeakable violence. On the other hand, for traffickers and pimps, this is one of the most lucrative illegal activities in the world, generating a total of 32 billion dollars a year. It is the third most profitable 'business' after drugs and arms trafficking".

“The primary objective of the International Day is to create greater awareness on this phenomenon and to reflect on the overall situation of violence and injustice that affect so many people, who have no voice, do not count, and are no one: they are simply slaves. Another goal is to attempt to provide solutions to counter this modern form of slavery by taking concrete actions. For this, it is necessary to stress the need to ensure rights, freedom and dignity to all trafficked persons, reduced to slavery. On the other hand, we must denounce both the criminal organisations and those who use and abuse the poverty and vulnerability of victims to transform them into goods for pleasure and gain”. (Source—Osservatorio Romano). See www.renate-europe.com for more information.



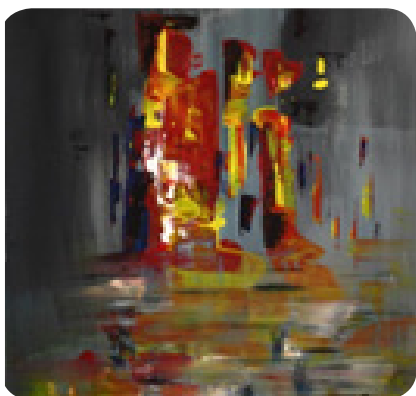
In Albania, MWL staff, in collaboration with URAT (the network against trafficking), organized an event at the Cathedral in Tirana for this **First International Day of Prayer Against Trafficking**. The service was supported and led by Bishop George Frendo, OP, Auxiliary Bishop of Tiranë-Durrës. The film of the life of St. Bakhita was shown and this was followed by a prayer service against trafficking. It was a profound experience for everybody as we remembered the victims of sex trafficking, labour trafficking, child trafficking and organ trafficking. It will be an

important event every year. Many of the staff and beneficiaries of the MWL projects were present. MWL staff were the leaders in the planning and the presentation of this event, which took place in the early evening on February 8th. We were grateful to see how strong this team is as they worked quietly together to ensure success on this important day.

On March 26th, The MWL President was invited to present RENATE and MWL at the **AGM of UCESM**, the Major Religious Superiors Conference in Europe. 30 European conferences were represented by about 70 religious. She was warmly welcomed and received good feedback after her presentation. One of the excellent fruits of this presentation has been on-going conversation with a priest and religious from the Ukraine who were looking for help to initiate anti trafficking work in their country. After that meeting, a religious present at the meeting donated, on behalf of her congregation, 5,000 euro for the work of RENATE. For this we are very grateful. The following day some of the MWL staff came on pilgrimage to Shkodra with 50 members of UCESM. It was towards the end of Lent and we made a most moving Stations of the Cross, following in the footsteps of the many martyrs, priests and nuns who had died for their faith during the communist regime in Albania.



We finished the day with Mass at the Cathedral in Shkodra. Since this meeting a commitment has been made to the needs of the church in the Ukraine. The Slovakian member of the RENATE Board, Sister Bohdana Bezakova, CJ, has visited the Ukraine and made many contacts. Now we have members of RENATE from the Ukraine. An on-going active collaboration is taking place to support the work of anti-trafficking in this country. One of these new members will represent Ukraine at the next Board meeting of RENATE. We thank UCESM for opening the door to this work.



A new and rather different venture emerged by the second week of April. A group of psychologists, all of whom work either in prevention against trafficking with vulnerable groups such as the Roma, or in direct action with the victims of trafficking in Albania, asked for help to raise funds to cover the cost of their fees to study Cognitive Behavioural Psychology. This is a four year course and led by a team of specialists from Israel. Three of the group are artists, so the first idea to raise these funds was to paint 50 pictures. MWL offered to host the exhibition. A few pictures were sold at the exhibition and others were sold through contacts in the UK. An event followed at one of the hotels, courtesy of the International group in Tirana, at which another two pictures were

sold. Once again the MWL President had the opportunity to speak about the mission of MWL and the work in anti-trafficking, so it had an extra benefit for all.

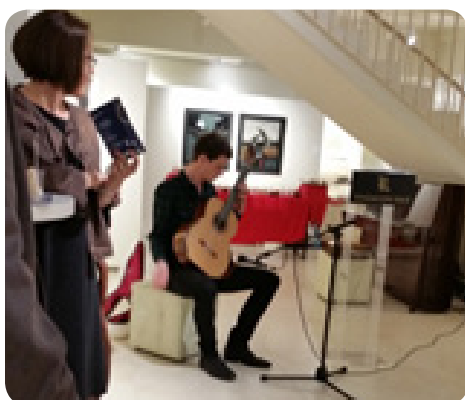
During the summer months many opportunities were taken to respond to invitations to speak on the work of anti-trafficking and the issues surrounding this modern day slavery. Two such events included speaking to the international gathering of the **Salvatorian Congregation** gathered in Rome to address their commitment to work in the field of anti-trafficking. Four inputs were given during this event covering a wide approach to the subject from a European and, more specifically, Albanian perspective. The anti-trafficking International Meeting took place to provide the Sisters an opportunity to learn more about how to work together to continue their pastoral activity in favour of life and to take action against any form of exploitation.



Much fundraising for the mission in Albania is being carried out in the Manchester area and we are daily grateful to the commitment of so many to this work. One of the schools involved in this work is in Heywood, Manchester. In October there was an invitation to speak in the parish and in **The Secondary School in Heywood** about the work

of Mary Ward Loreto and the mission to tackle the crime of human trafficking. Two days were spent in this very poor part of Manchester in which families have themselves suffered the impact of human trafficking.

The sessions were very dynamic both in the parish and the school. There was an obvious dedication to be co-workers in the field and the questions came quick and fast especially from the parishioners. Fr. Paul Daly, the parish priest, and Mr. Brian Bennion, the fund-raising coordinator, along with a governor and former teacher at the school, have shown much commitment and dedication to support the mission in Albania. It was particularly moving when one of the senior girls spoke, at one of the sessions, about her cousin who had been trafficked and was now in a mental hospital suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. It brought the subject very close to home.



In July, ***The Australian Embassy in Rome*** showed interest in the work of Mary Ward Loreto and invited us to a cocktail party and concert, which was followed-up with a meeting at Mary Ward Loreto. The staff, as always, presented their projects and the Foundation in a very dynamic way. After these events we were invited to put in an application for funding from the Australian Embassy. Recently we had the good news that we had won this bid for the youth of Puke, where we are developing specific work involving economic empowerment. Puke is a particularly difficult and expensive region to work in because so many of the youth are isolated in mountainous regions and up to this time have been given few

opportunities for vocational training, work experience and job opportunities. This Australian Embassy funding will make a big difference.

The staff has also been proactive in raising awareness against trafficking. In July the MWL Youth Manager represented MWL Foundation at the ***GRETA*** meeting in Albania (The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings). This meeting was with the representatives of the Albanian Civil Society in order to gather information for the new report of the Council of Europe on the Human Trafficking situation in our country. GRETA had made a report four years before and now they were measuring the levels of improvement in the situation. This would include the work of prevention, identification of victims, assistance to victims, compensation of victims, child victims and so many more topics related to this issue. Gazmir Memaj spoke about the MWL Foundation work in the field of Human Anti-Trafficking along with the work in partnership with Albanian (Different and Equal) and British (Medaille Trust) NGOs and our link with RENATE. The experts present were given reports and presentations from MWL which would be useful for building their draft report on the manner in which Albania is implementing the Anti-Trafficking Convention, made by Albania with Europe, over the past years.

The staff has also been proactive in giving input at the ***GLOW camps run by The Peace Corps***. We were invited to raise awareness against trafficking at three of these camps. The first GLOW Camp was undertaken in collaboration with the Peace Corps volunteer service in Lezhe. Several meetings were organised to address the needs of girls in these rural areas. The aim of Glow Camp was not only to get the young girls involved, but also to ensure that their involvement was meaningful. The camp aimed at building up the girls' self-esteem, to help them appreciate themselves, their skills and everything that they are able to do. Through activities and games, the Mary Ward Loreto Women project aimed at increasing the young girl's awareness of the fact that they are leaders with human rights that are of value in the community. The hope is that they will learn that they will become the future leaders of society. In the south another meeting of the Glow camp with other young girls took place in August. This time the manager of MWL Youth led a meeting on raising awareness against trafficking. Both camps were very successful.

MWL was also invited to participate in a training session related to the ***Albanian State Police initiative to enable mid-ranking policewomen to take on operational command roles*** for the first time. PAMECA IV, together with ICITAP, supported this initiative under component 1 of the project. They recruited an agency which designed and delivered a 5 day training course on leadership skills designed to contribute to strengthening the policewomen's leadership skills and advocacy. This training week was part of a broader training and mentoring learning program that will be developed in the coming months.



The training covered Leadership and Motivation explored in the context of operational command. This included a recognition of the different leadership styles adopted by men and women in different circumstances, in particular with reference to the Albanian culture. The training course was attended by six police women with the ranks of Commissar, Chief Commissar and Vice Commissar.



Mary Ward Loreto was invited to host part of an afternoon during this week of training, to share their approach to the work against trafficking. The meeting was held on Tuesday, September 14th, 2015, at the Mary Ward Loreto Offices with the Policewomen and Mr Bill Morrell. Morrell, a consultant for ICITAP and one of MWL Board members, invited MWL to participate in this training. Ana Stakaj, the Manager of MWL Women's project, led this session along with other members of the MWL staff and with

the support of the manager of The Little Angels project (SHKEJ) and a member of staff from D&E. Five women eventually graduated from this year of training and MWL was present at the graduation ceremony held later in the year.

Another event which MWL hosted during this year was ***The Annual General Meeting of RENATE, which took place in March at the Hotel Majestic in Durrës, Albania.*** The following is an extract taken from the RENATE report after the event:

'Delegates appreciated the thorough insight into the local situation in Albania, as conveyed by guest speakers Auxilliary Bishop George Frendo OP; Fr. Giovanni Peragine (President of UCESM), Mrs Elona Gjebrea (Interior Minister in the Albanian Government); Mrs. Edlira Gjoni (Communications and Media Consultant) and Mrs. Marjana Meshi (Director of Different and Equal).

Each shared aspects of the following specific to their own individual responsibilities:

- The rich Religions and Faith Traditions of Albania.
- An overview of the Conference of Religious in Albania.
- The cultural reality of Albania.
- An overview of the human trafficking situation in Albania and Government policies to try to combat this.
- The work of anti-trafficking at grass-roots level in Albania."

The highlight of the week was undoubtedly the Field Trips to witness first-hand the mission of anti-trafficking in Albania through Mary Ward Loreto and the Roma Projects, the Different and Equal Project, and sharing time with members of the local women's group at MWL women's project in Shkoder/Hot i Ri. Significant work was undertaken by the President of RENATE and her team at Mary Ward Loreto, Albania. No request seemed too much to ask. The team were ambassadors for Albania, as they worked conscientiously to ensure the success of the Board meeting in their country.

The Mapping Exercise conducted by RENATE across Europe focused also on Albania. The final document was printed in this reporting time and we were all delighted with the results and felt that it would be of great value for the work against trafficking in Albania and in Europe in general. This document is being sent to all the stakeholders who were engaged in the work including all those who participated in this exercise in Albania. The picture above is showing the presentation of this booklet to the Board of RENATE.



■ MWL Staff Training and Staff Care Program

In May all the staff gathered at the same venue, the Majestic Hotel in Durrës, for a week of staff training and care. The first three days consisted in a structured training in the methodology of CAPACITAR led by an expert in the field from Ireland. CAPACITAR responds to invitations based on needs identified by communities. MWL specifically requested to become skilled in relaxation and de-stressing exercises both for ourselves and to pass on to those of our beneficiaries.

Capacitar:

- Collaborates with established groups and with other economic and social development efforts.
- Models alternative uses of power, as well as sensitivity to culture and traditions.
- Develops programs in collaboration with local people, recognizing that an idea conceived and born within a group has the energy to move that group.
- Learns from local people's experience in adapting practices to the needs and culture of their communities.
- Trains and empowers people to be the popular educators and multipliers in their own communities.
- Connects grassroots people through an international network of solidarity building relationships of cultural and personal understanding.



As a staff team we learnt all of the following techniques:

- Tai Chi meditation, Pal Dan Gum and body movement;
- Visualization and breath work;
- Active Listening and simple psychotherapeutic skills;
- Acupressure for alleviating pain and stress;
- Finger holds for managing emotions;
- Energy Tapping modalities;
- Hand massage, seated massage and Polarity;
- Work with the energy system and chakras;
- And other wellness modalities.



Besides the work of learning all of these exercises, we also had a great deal of fun. The last two days, facilitated by Edlira and Fatmir Gjoni from the Foundation Mirness, were more focused on desk work and were ones in which we were led through an intensive process with the aim of writing our internal documents. These included some which were already written but needed sharpening and other newly created guidelines for our internal rules. The following documents were finally

accomplished, and agreed upon during this time and during the on-going month. In June, after the MWL staff meeting, all policy documents were signed.

The following documents are now part of our official way of proceeding:

- The Philosophy of MWL;
- MWL Code of Conduct;
- MWL Organisational manual;
- MWL Child Protection Policy;
- MWL Volunteering Policy;
- Labour Code and Ethics According to the Government Regulations and MWL Internal Rules.

We feel very pleased to have achieved these goals at this time. More solid roots have been built for the growing tree. During these months MWL staff has received further training in time management and training of trainers coaching. All the staff in management or psycho-social work has on-going supervision and many staff has had opportunities for further professional development. This is a commitment which MWL has given to all staff. The ideals of the philosophy of Mary Ward Loreto are equally open to staff as well as to the beneficiaries of the projects. Enabling each to reach his or her potential is at the heart of the work of MWL.

■ Outreach Abroad



Travel abroad and building up expertise, networks and influence is a commitment to the staff. Besides the work already mentioned—representing MWL at the meetings of ANDANTE, COATNET and the Youth Symposium at the Vatican—three of the staff from the MWL women’s project have participated in a week’s training in Slovenia in collaboration with the Medaille Trust. Mary Ward Loreto was also invited by the Medaille Trust to send three members of staff to be present at three weeks’ training at a conference in Slovenia titled “Working

with law enforcement – anti trafficking partnerships.” The MWL Women Assistant Manager, Irena Kraja, the Social Worker of Shendelli, Zana Guri, and the Social Worker of Fier, Artemsa Aliaj, attended the conference. Together with 3 members from the Different & Equal NGO, they were part of an Albanian Team, who are active in the field for combating Human Trafficking.

Thirty delegates attended the conference:

- Medaille Trust Staff
- Metropolitan Police Service – Human Trafficking and Kidnap Unit
- Hampshire Police Service – Serious Crime & Specialist Support
- Polish National Police Headquarters – Head of Human Trafficking Department
- Mary Ward Loreto Foundation – Albania
- Different & Equal (D&E) Anti People Trafficking Project – Albania
- Congregation of Notre Dame Sisters – Zagreb.

The aim of the conference was, first, to train personnel to work at combating human trafficking through successful collaboration with partners who have a key role in the process. A secondary aim was to encourage mutual support between police forces and other organizations that help in the rescue of victims of trafficking. Third and last, the aim was to discuss the necessary processes for the rehabilitation of trafficked victims. Evaluation of the progress of existing partnerships and the integration of new partners, was a major focus of the event in order to encourage this on-going development. An important aspect of the conference was team building, for bonding as well as for therapeutic effects.

The multicultural group of delegates demonstrated an amazing team spirit during the team building and group exercises. This reflected their desire to be partners and to achieve their main goal of combating and preventing human trafficking. At the end a commitment was given to accomplish these goals and this was seen as the most important outcome of the conference. Every delegate was committed to establish and improve partnerships with other NGOs and Police Structures, according to their situation in their respective countries. Each was committed to raising awareness with Partners and local Communities regarding the combating of Modern Day Slavery.

The president of MWL was also asked by the Church in Albania to represent them at the 'International Symposium at the Vatican on Migrant Street Women and Children' held in September, 2015. This symposium was held at the Vatican and led by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. The message from Pope Francis and the teachings of the Church has always been strong and clear in relation to those in need. We need to stand by the refugees and migrants, protect their rights, protest against evil, give shelter, love and compassion and provide the opportunity for them to live a life of dignity. The planet and all that is in it is the common heritage of all. The bounty of the earth is not just for the powerful few to the exclusion of the rest of humanity, but for all.

Some of the ideas presented to the group included street theatre, women and child parliaments and national and international networks to safeguard women's rights. The treatment of women across the world in patriarchal societies was discussed at length, along with the question: 'Where is the Church Today?' Is it on the streets? The outskirts of these cities are the challenge for the Church of the future. Programmes of prevention were seen as the key to protect the most vulnerable. There was a call for the Church to be stronger and to heed the story of the Good Samaritan.

A significant part of the two days was spent deliberating and formulating a plan of action. The plan included many important subjects such as education processes at every level of the church, policy- and statement-making by the church on sensitive issues to do with the protection of migrants, victims of trafficking and issues relating to labour on the street as it affects women and children. We think the plan will have an impact on everybody, particularly the future safety of all people living on the street. This has now been presented to Pope Francis as a policy to be presented to the church today.



The final day was memorable when we met Pope Francis in the Vatican audience hall. He is a Pope like no other in his simplicity of life. He spoke movingly to us about our need for continued dedication to our work. We are called to speak and not to be silent. In his address to us, he said:

“No child chooses to live on the streets. Sadly, even in our modern, globalised world, any number of children continues to be robbed of their childhood, their rights and their future. Lack of legal protection and adequate structures only aggravates their state of deprivation: they have no real family or access to education or health care. Every child abandoned or forced to live on the streets, at the mercy of criminal organizations, is a cry rising up to God, who created man and woman in his own image. It is an indictment of a social system which we have criticized for decades, but which we find hard to change in conformity with criteria of justice... I ask you, please: do not be disheartened by the difficulties and the challenges which you encounter in your dedicated work, nourished as it is by your faith in Christ, who showed, even to death on the cross, the preferential love of God our Father for the weak and the outcast. The Church cannot remain silent, nor can her institutions turn a blind eye to the painful reality of street children and street women.” (Pope Francis Address, Thursday, 18 September, 2015)

MWL Staff members also participated in two trainings led by RENATE, one in Spain on the rescue and reintegration of victims and the other in Romania on Labour Trafficking. These were important trainings for raising awareness on the modern forms of trafficking because of national crisis and war. Traffickers are wherever people are poor and vulnerable and where easy money can be made.

■ The MWL Projects

1. MWL URAT Project for Raising Awareness against Trafficking

The poor and vulnerable in Albania with whom we work on many projects are the people at the centre of all of our work. They are the reason for our Foundation being constituted and it is they who give life and hope to the MWL Foundation. They are the ones targeted by the traffickers and they also are the ones who are the potential traffickers. MWL does all that is within our means to prevent this crime among boys, girls and women. Until April, MWL was also working in 40 regions of Albania raising awareness against trafficking. This project finished its task and presented its success stories at a conference held in May, 2015.

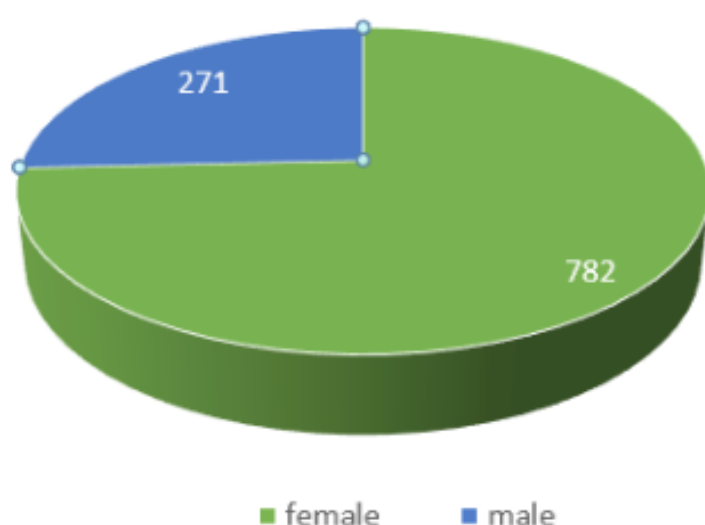
The aim of this MWL URAT project was to help erase human trafficking through an awareness-raising programme. The work was conducted with the support of seconded workers from the NGO ‘Different and Equal’, the MWL Women’s project, and Peace Corps who mobilized state and non-state actors to reduce human trafficking in Albania. The work was achieved not only with “Different and Equal”, MWL Women, URAT Network and Peace Corps, but also the organizations IRCA (Institute of Romani culture in Albania), and Ne Dobi Te Gruas Shqiptare, and the religious orders called Shoqata e Marise and Franziskanerinnen von Thuine. All of these groups supported the project by bringing together groups of local people to receive the training.

The Peace Corps provided the *PowerPoint* and D&E provided the *Photonovelo* which formed part of the training tool kit. An objective was to reduce both the vulnerability of potential victims and the demand for exploitation in all its forms. Information was prepared which included a postcard with helplines and basic information for detecting a trafficking situation and a brochure with guidelines regarding the trafficking phenomena. These were all presented to the group leaders, as an aid to help and advise the participants when needed. To reduce demand, explanations were given of the after-effects and trauma which were experienced by so many former victims of trafficking.

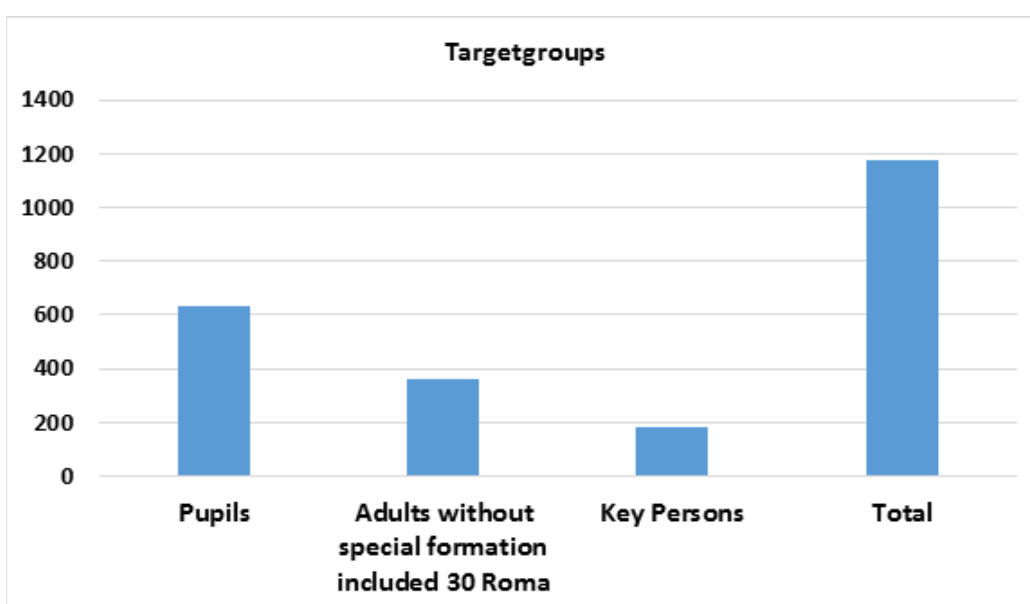
The tool kit for presentation and dialogue were a *Photonovelo*, *PowerPoint*, and questionnaires. The methodology chosen for each of the trainings led to great interactivity with the participants which exposed twenty real stories of trafficking experienced in Albania during the time of this project. Forty most vulnerable regions were chosen as the Target groups. The social worker from D&E, who participated in all of these trainings, is following up the after care of all those who shared stories and were carrying in the local community the impact of the devastation of the trafficking experience.

An effective rights-based response was promoted to foster partnerships for joint action against human trafficking. Other awareness raising programs are to be followed up by Mary Ward Loreto through the work of the Mary Ward Loreto Youth Project.

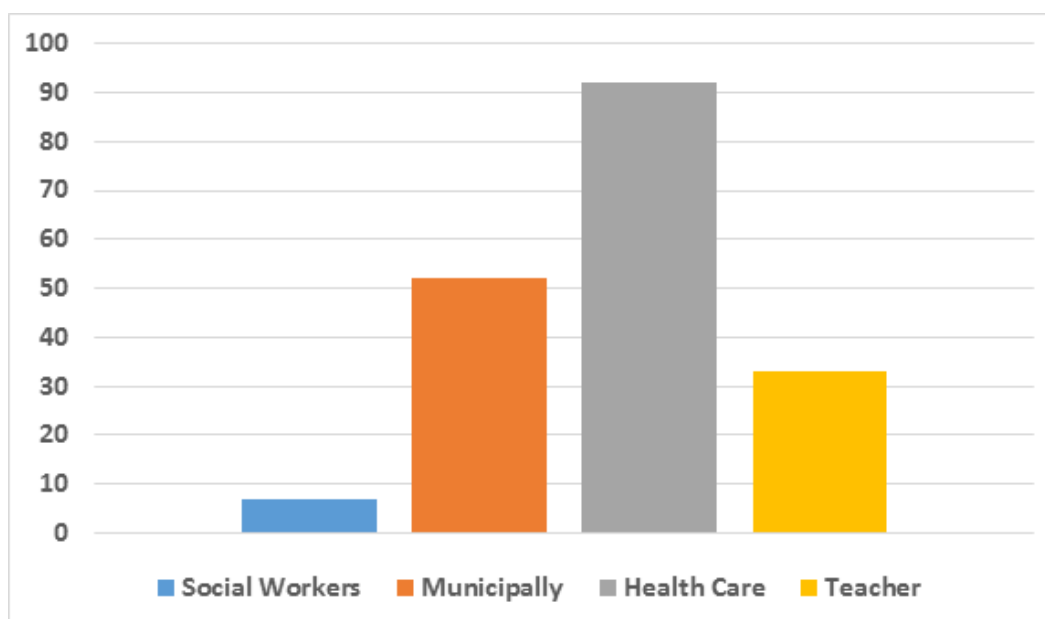
Gender of Participants



Targetgroups



Key Stakeholders targeted in the Trainings



The following are some of the challenges faced in the fulfilment of this project:

Cultural obstacles to addressing problems and specific cases:

According to the Albanian culture, Albanians don't speak in front of other persons about problems concerning their families. Trafficked girls are often stigmatized in the same way as a prostitute and not as an innocent victim. There is a high level of shame and guilt in the family. Mainly the mothers are blamed if their daughter does something that is not accepted in the society, so she is also blamed if the girl is trafficked. These are the reasons why, in the beginning, all participants told us that there were no cases known in the area and that they had only heard of the problem of trafficking on the television.

Illiteracy of participants:

To fight the shame, a time was given where the participants were able to describe their feelings by way of writing a request for help, individually and quietly. This enabled them to see that there is no need to do it in front of the whole group. This style of training naturally has limits for those participants who cannot read and write. In the poor regions of the mountains we had some of these illiterate women in our trainings. For them we had to collect their ideas on a flipchart and write for them. That makes it very difficult to get their stories or to help them with their requests in such a public forum. It was explained very clearly that help will be given by the organization Different and Equal, and that one of the co-workers was present and could be contacted for a confidential conversation about what they may want to tell us.

Lack of electricity:

In some areas they often have power cuts. Printed versions of the Photonovela were taken as an alternative to showing the Photonovela. It was also essential to announce before the meeting, that we needed electricity. Sometimes they have generators there to produce electricity.

Strategy to reach men and boys:

Until March there were only two men out of 195 participants. To make more contact with boys and men, the team went to schools or asked directly for a men's meeting in certain places. As a result of this planning and follow-up requests there were sessions in three schools and a student's group. We were also invited to speak at a university in the autumn. For these reasons, out of 587 participants by July as many as 250 men had eventually participated in the trainings.

Mixed age groups:

We found out that young people are corrected very harshly by adults when they are trained in a group together. As a result of this, separate age groups were favoured. However, according to the culture and circumstances in the regions this was not always successful. To answer this problem, we produced an information leaflet for young people so that, if they were in danger, they would be able to contact help and establish lines of communication.

Small places to meet:

As we try to meet target groups in environments they know and use, we often have to work in very poor and small rooms. These are often overcrowded with people, who want to participate in the training. It is also a challenge to find a good place for the Photonovela. For this we need a wall that is not too dark and where we can effectively present pictures and slides.



The following are the main recommendations made at the end of this project:

- Preventive programs need to involve all relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society actors, NGOs, the private/corporate sector, religious institutions and the media, in the fight against human trafficking.
- Because Albania is a source and destination for human trafficking, campaigns aim to change the consumers' behavior by better informing the public of the demand that drives trafficking in persons.
- Reducing the demand for trafficking in persons—and thus taking away its profitable aspects—has the potential to minimize the problem in a more durable fashion.

The main recommendations offered at the end of this project are being heeded by the new awareness-raising trainings being led by the MWL Youth project. The Conference celebrating the success of this great work was very well attended. All copies of the original research and the report following the training programmes was offered to all participants.



2. Mary Ward Loreto Youth Project

MWL youth project aims to achieve the prosperity of youth through education and it has the main aim to empower young people to function fully in their communities, to be employed, to become responsible citizens and to promote change in Albania. This project began in March 2014. During the year, research took place with over a thousand young people and 25 key workers. The point of the research was to understand the needs and issues of youth with a view to implementing a new project as a response to these issues and needs. The research: "Needs and issues of youth in Albania" was launched in January 27th 2015. Young people, collaborators, teachers, police workers, health workers, church representatives and colleagues from other NGO-s were invited to the event.



The research identified the multi-faceted nature of young people's needs and problems. In addition, shortages and gaps in current policies and legislation relating to employment and education were identified. Gaps and shortages reflect a lack of vision and insight from local government in responding to the real needs of youth in specific communities and of communities in general. These problems relate to youth empowerment and training which would enable them to enter into the labor market and so avoid their exclusion from participating in civil society.

An action plan has been built based on the findings of the research and we are now implementing a pilot strategy with three focus groups located in Lushnja (South Albania), Tirana (the Capital, Central Albania) and Puka (North Albania). For each group we are working with 15 young people and aiming to achieve employment for all of them by September 2016. To achieve this, the young people will follow vocational courses according to their interest and skills.

They are going to build and reinforce their skills by participating in a training programme which includes several training sessions on Human Development and Economic Empowerment. After successfully finishing their vocational training course they will do work experience, at the end of which they will receive a tool kit according to the profession for which they have been prepared.



from the town. Each of the three groups organized a similar day in their region.

Recently we have had two social activities with the groups in Tirana and Puka and a third took place on July 3rd with the group in Lushnja. These activities had the goal of socialising the group members by helping them get to know each other better. These days included activities and a group session centred around the voluntary action which each group organized over the following summer months. The above picture illustrates the great day organized by the group in Puke with the disabled people

The MWL Youth Project will go forward with the work on human anti-trafficking following in the steps of the URAT project. Over the next eight months three training programs will be covered in ten regions of Albania according to the research findings. The first will be in anti-trafficking, the second in human identity and the third in conflict resolution.

Results:

- 1 - Advisory Board meeting held.
 - 16 - Interviews held with young people from Lushnja, Puka and Tirana.
 - 36 - Group sessions held in the 3 areas.
 - 5 - Vocational Training Centres contacted, 4 of them statutory ones and another private one (Murialdo Social Centre).
 - 2 - Awareness-raising trainings on human anti-trafficking held in collaboration with the Peace Corps in Durrës and Kucove where there were 52 young girls present.
 - 3 - Social and recreational activities were held with 3 focus groups.
 - 1- Human development training on Job Instruments was conducted in each of the 3 areas of the focus groups.
 - 1- Voluntary activity was organised in Tirana for youth with special needs and another 2 were organized and were launched in October 2015.
 - 39- young people are registered in 4 vocational training centres according to their choice.
 - 1- collaboration contract was signed with the Employment Office of Puka and another with the Vocational Training Centre in Shkodra.
 - 10 - young people from Lushnja are registered in Murialdo Social Centre to follow a course on learning about Entrepreneurships skills: "Mëso të ndërmarrësh."
 - 10 - sessions of guitar class accomplished in the Educational Centre of D&E NGO.
 - 2 - URAT Network meetings were organized.
- MWL Youth Manager represented MWL Foundation at the GRETA meeting,

MWL Youth Manager was present at 2 important meetings:

- "Presentation of the National Action Plan of Youth" - organized by the Ministry of Welfare and Youth
- "National Conference on Radicalism and Violent Extremism" - sponsored by SOROS.

Steps and future progress:

- To find for each young person a place where they can have work experience and hopefully get employed.
- To equip each young person with tool kits according to the profession for which they have been preparing through vocational training and work experience.
- To continue with the Human and Economic Development Training program in the three areas of the focus groups for youth in Puke, Lushnje and Tirana.
- To develop the training program in 10 areas, starting with the Human Anti-Trafficking training followed by Self Awareness and Conflict Resolution.
- To plan and co-ordinate with the URAT Network, Awareness Raising Against Trafficking events, in a combined activities and initiatives framework.

Challenges:

The major challenge was to succeed in the organization of vocational training according to the individual young person's need and the complications involved with specific local issues. This was particularly difficult in Puke where the provisions and facilities were so poor. The young people had to travel far to attend the trainings either in Shkodra or Tirana. This project is slowly achieving its goal. As a pilot project it has much to commend it. There is a need to motivate the national government, which is clearly not addressing the issues of youth needs and high level unemployment in Albania. We continue to do our best to alleviate some of these burdens put on to the backs of youth in Albania.

3. Mary Ward Loreto Women

What does it mean to be a woman in Albania?



If you could read the questions in the eyes of a woman in Albania it would reveal great suffering. Battered women have forgotten to smile, but manage to survive. Women enhance their children with the spirit of a mother, full of life, but they themselves have never lived. Women have asked for a hand from the state and the state does not make any effort even to look at them. The laws on the rights of women are perfect on paper; they are probably copy-pasted from the best laws taken from Nordic countries, where the woman is the basis of everything worthy of being protected. In Albania

laws are not applied, because here the life of a woman does not count. “There are more than enough women” is an expression that you hear often. In Albania the state considers the woman as a mathematical number, neither relative nor absolute—just a number.

Despite the many sacrifices that women make today, she must also bear the burdens of prejudice, discrimination, and violence. The abuse of women in Albania is a complex and multidimensional problem. It includes various forms of abuse ranging from humiliation, threats and social isolation to coercive sex and battering. Even though the MWL Women’s project is identifying the cases and state structures have strengthened the law related to this phenomenon, it is still considered a taboo subject especially in the rural communities. This makes it difficult for women to denounce violence. They lack freedom and they need to ask permission to go out. Even when their husbands emigrate for economic purposes, the women have to get permission from them at a distance.

This real lack of knowledge and information about their rights as human beings is confused with their obligations according to cultural law. What are the roots of this unfortunate reality for women? Is it patriarchal-based education? Is it a cultural historical heritage? Or does the State simply not care? According to Albanian Law, the woman has the same equal rights that a man has, but does she really? According to a report on gender gap issues published by the BBC, Albania is ranked 108, near to Arab countries, Nigeria and North Korea. We are the only country in Europe which is marked with an orange sign, which indicates the high percentage of gender inequality.

The women of Albania have nothing except dreams, and even dreams, in such conditions, are a privilege and a painful reminder of the sacrifice they have to endure. Empowering, sustainability, social justice, equality, are the key words that are being used quite often nowadays. But when it comes to facing the harsh reality of living and working in Albania then you see the enormous gap between words and action. Our philosophy at MWL is to “seek for gold” but with a different strategy: by “doing ordinary things well” (Mary Ward 1585-1645). During the last year, the MWL project called Mary Ward Loreto Women, opened 5 MWL centres for the support of women living in rural and mostly marginalized areas of Albania. These centres are located in the heart of the communities in Hot i Ri (Shkoder), Bajram i (Tropoja), Fier, Shendelli (Saranda) and Lezhe. The services are based on the ethic of the Foundation and the values of Freedom, Justice and Sincerity.

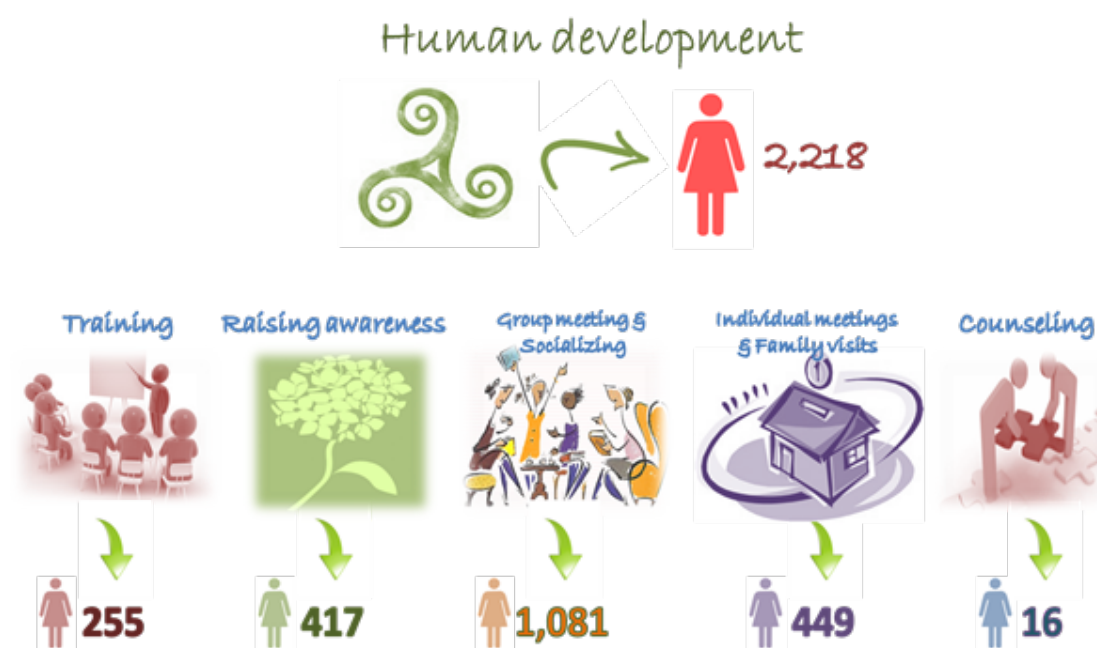
The focus is:

- To provide an environment of emotional, psychological and physical safety, fostering a sense of empowerment.
- Listen, understand and validate women in a non-judgmental, safe and supportive environment.
- Encourage women to have a voice through providing opportunity, knowledge and support.
- Give women equal opportunity to attain their full potential.
- Partner with other organizations to meet the needs of women in the local community.
- Support the creation of social businesses and entrepreneurship initiatives.



Research will be conducted in Tirana to assess the need for a women's support centre in the city. We are keenly awaiting the outcomes of this research. The dedicated work of the key workers in these centres makes a positive difference in the lives of women who are in transition, crisis or distress. The women consider these centres as an Oasis of Hope, where every woman is made to feel important and worthwhile. They are not just a number in a case file, or a statistic in the census.

The work being covered by the key staff in all of the regions is related to human development, health care and economic empowerment. Below is a summary of the measured results of this work over the last year.



- The women are eager to share their problems in the group and have accepted the need to have counselling from the key workers. Most important they are more open to change and entrust their daughters to us for developing activities outside the village.
- Their amazing communication of ideas for eliminating violence against women have been inspiring, showing that they are strong and willing to look at ways of preventing and dealing with social problems even under severe living conditions.

- The women emphasize their need for personal development and family relationships management. They want to know how to deal with conflicting feelings and provide positive parenting for their children. Besides the issues that they have to face in their everyday life, they are strong and vital. One can read the joy and hope in their eyes when they express their desire for a better life for their children.
- The women demonstrate eagerness and interest during the activities developed for life skills training, including lessons in health awareness, decision-making, negotiation, and civic participation. Women also have learned business and vocational skills and have gained access to income-generating activities which has enabled them to move towards economic self-sufficiency.
- In decision-making meetings with leaders and potential entrepreneurs, they were able to come up with ideas which would involve women and their children in future community development.
- The engagement in economic activities and earning for profit reflected a growth in self-esteem and it was encouraging to see how they desired to be involved in the process for improving their lives. The husbands seem to be more open to allow their women to seek jobs and develop activities outside the village.
- The women have accepted our methodology for being decision-makers and for having civic participation in bringing about change to their situation. They seem more responsible and willing to undertake projects that will enable them to work for change.
- Women have learned the importance of working together. By working in groups, they are also benefiting from a support system and social networks.



Health care programme for women:

Access to affordable and accessible healthcare—as well as training in disease prevention—significantly reduces preventable deaths. Women continue to apply improved knowledge about how to protect their health and well-being after the trainings from the project. Twenty-nine percent of women report practicing health care, compared to ninety-five percent two years before the start of the project.



During this period the following activities were developed in the MWL Women Centres in 6 areas of Albania:

The lack of a clean, quality water supply

Adequate supply of fresh and clean drinking water is a basic need for all human beings on earth. Indeed, it is absolutely essential for healthy living. Yet millions of people worldwide are deprived of this. Unfortunately, this situation remains a problem in the village of Shendelli. In May, 2015, a water analysis was done at the Institute of Public Health in Saranda. The reported results of the analysis were that the water was drinkable—clean to an adequate standard level. When poor quality water persisted in the village, especially related to health issues, further investigation was done. The result of this further investigation revealed that the Institution had given a fake result due to elections in June. Bad publicity would damage the image of the mayor in charge, who was a candidate for the renewal of his mandate.

A meeting was called by the project manager with specialists of water biotechnology from the Aquaporin, Denmark. Their comments on the situation were that many areas of groundwater and surface water were contaminated with heavy metals, persistent organic pollutants, and nutrients that were likely to have an adverse effect on health. A large number of chemicals, that either exist naturally in the land or are added due to human activity, were dissolved in the water, thereby contaminating it and leading to various diseases. Heavy metals cause damage to the nervous system, liver and the kidney, and other metabolic disruptions.

In this village, along with the extreme poverty in which they are living, there is an exceptional level of health issues for the population, health issues such as liver, kidney, and hormonal diseases, mental illness and epilepsy. Water contamination would explain the source of many of these diseases.

MWL WOMEN has been encouraging the women of Tropoja (Cernica) to raise their “voice” for justice. These women lack a clean and adequate water supply, which adversely affects agriculture, which is the main source of income for their families. To help them deal with it, a meeting was held with the Mayor, who explained that the reason why it has not been invested in yet is because it is too expensive and the commune cannot afford it. Later, in the ensuing months, the Mayor, motivated by the insistence of a MWLW key worker in the region, decided to invite donors to support a very expensive project of the commune to provide water supply in the area. Due to this, one of the candidates for Mayor in the upcoming elections in June 2015 sponsored a part of the project and the community’s work force is now engaged in building the water channel. This development will promote the whole village’s economic growth.

Together with the women’s group leaders, they addressed these issues to the Municipality, which blamed its inaction on the lack of funds and minimal budgets. The residents of Shendelli village are hoping that new initiatives will be taken from the Head of Konispol Municipality, starting on January 2016, when the Mayor takes full responsibility for his mandate. Future steps are going to be taken by the MWL WOMEN key workers at the local level and the manager at the national level, to resolve this basic injustice and deprivation of human rights.

Access to State public services

No of women	Referral	The Addressed Matter	Reason
19	State's Vocational Formation Centres	Vocational training	Vocational skills for employment or self employment
49	Regional Employment Office and Relevant Institutions	Unemployment and lack of information on services offered by REO	Inform the women on the services offered by REO and job opportunities
4	Local Social Support Offices	Economic Aid Application	Husband in Prison; children to feed; extreme poverty; single mother
22	State Public Health services	Application for documents necessary to access health services and health insurance	Invalid economic aid; free access to health services; Lack of income
2	Lawyers and Court	Domestic abuse, divorce process, property rights	Addressing their issues and being advised as to how to proceed
2	State Police	Domestic violence	Denounce domestic violence; deal with a false denunciation against one woman and her husband
4	Aluizmi Office	Application for legalization of living buildings	Buildings are not legalised
2	OSSHE (Electric energy provider)	Complaint	Wrong details on electric bill; informing on bills and paying
104	Women supported individually		

Economic Empowerment

The approach taken for economic empowerment by the MWL WOMEN project aims to increase awareness and encourage women in poor communities to engage and participate in the creation of income generating activities for poverty eradication through:

- Vocational training
- Events of interest
- Training in group dynamics and decision-making
- Facilitation – Business start up
- Small grants – Sponsoring business ideas coming from women with entrepreneurship skills

During this period the women, supported by the project, enjoyed their first achievements and upgraded their initiatives in developing small businesses.

Agriculture

- A successful achievement in the field of agriculture was the initiative of planting beans. A group of 4 women worked during the summer and made 780 EUR from the total production of beans (300 kg).

Motivated by this success, 6 women decided to plant the beans again in Kallmet and have been involved in the planning process. At the moment they are enriching the land by planting grain which is going to be sold directly to the established client. They are preparing to plant the beans for the next season.

- 2 women in the greenhouse, cultivating flowers in Fier, have been very active during this period.
- They have been successful in this Flower Nursery, pruning and producing healthy plants. In the summer season they have sold many flowers in the market now established in Tirana, Fier and Vlora.
- The project of attempting to grow and market sage and alfalfa was not successful during this period because of poor weather which damaged the crops. There was no harvest. Production for this season mostly involved replacing the damaged sage plants.
- 4 women from Tropoje collected red junipers in the nearby forests, which turned out to be a productive activity. They sold 362 kg in the local market.



Handicraft

- A group of girls supported by MWL WOMEN worked on the production of bracelets at many of the centres. The profit was 132 EUR and the raw material expenses covered by MWL WOMEN was 26 euro.
- With the support of MWL WOMEN staff, 20 women are engaged in producing handicraft products in Shendelli. This realized an income for the local women of 1,500,000 (10,070 EUR) during the last season in Butrint.
- The production and the sale of stitching cards by 14 women and girls in Hot i Ri has significantly increased. Up until September 2015 the income from the sales of the stitching cards is 2,890 EUR.
- Two women from the Kallmet team have been producing bags, purses and bible/tablet covers. Sales of these products has been very successful and of financial benefit for the women. They sold 33 bible covers and 65 purses out of 75 produced. They also sold 40 bags. Their earnings were a total of 592 EUR.
- The women of Raja (Tropoja) produced and sold 330 wedding favors.

Vocational trainings

- The production and sale of stitching cards made by 19 women of Hot i Ri has significantly increased. Taking a professional approach, they are offering their customers more quality and variety of design. The amount of stitching cards for this period has significantly increased to 1,432 stitching cards, all of which were sold and earning an income of 3,500 EUR. The women are engaged in expanding their market both inside and outside Albania.
- Training in the making of jewellery handicrafts was developed during this phase with 8 girls from Shendelli.
- 2 women of Fier have finished the tailoring course.
- 6 women from Hot i Ri have finished the basic vocational training for tailoring. During the following three months this group will be offered a practical training to raise their skills in this field.
- 6 women from Tirana informal areas have started a cooking course at the State's Vocational Training Centre. They will be granted a certificate and possibilities to work as soon as they finish the course.
- Supporting the development of economic initiatives, MWL WOMEN has been confronted with the necessity to offer professional trainings, develop business/economic initiatives, develop management tools adequate for this target group and to address how they can understand more effectively the economic impact on their lives, their families and the whole community.

In the upcoming season, two vocational trainings will be starting in Shendelli. At least 6 entrepreneurs will be trained and supported to start their own business, which it is hoped will have a social impact on their community.

Measured results

- 2,218 women have participated in human development activities during the period October 2014 – September 2015.
- 131 women in total participated in the health care and prevention trainings and among them 7 women at risk of life were medically supported by MWL WOMEN.
- 94 women's issues were addressed and referred to the statutory services.
- 234 women were involved in the campaign of UNWOMEN against gender-based violence and 52 men joined the awareness campaign by signing against violence and writing awareness messages to other men.
- 132 women have filled in the questionnaires prepared by MWL regarding men's needs seen from the perspective of women.
- The water issue in Tropoja (Cernica) and Shendelli was addressed at the statutory services.
- Collaboration was established with statutory services in the areas of Shkoder, Tropoja, Kallmet Tirana, Shendelli and Fier.
- At least 15,000 EUR was made as income from the women's products.
- Collaboration with businesses and institutions for the economic development of women was established.
- 63 women were supported through economic empowerment activities for income generation.
- 8 women from Hot i Ri and Fier concluded a 6-month tailoring course.
- 8 girls from Shendelli were trained in crafting jewellerys for selling during the tourist season.
- One member of staff participated in the Vatican symposium against trafficking.
- One member participated in the RENATE network training on labour trafficking and migration.
- Participation in the exchange of experiences workshop, between Albania, Slovenia and the UK.



Challenges faced during the implementation of the work

- The group of Kallmet is a compact one and regularly attends the activities but the concern is that they are not open to welcome other women into the group. The social worker and the North assistant manager are working on strategies to train the women and motivate them to be supportive of other women in the community.

- Lack of working culture and commitment of the women in economic activities has been a challenge for the continuity of the group initiatives. Women engage in the activities but they tend to give up when they face their first difficulties in relation to the market or any adverse dynamic in the group. The group has been constantly supported by the social worker and social facilitator to build self-esteem and motivation.
- A challenge has also been the achievement of concrete results from the collaboration with statutory services. They have been invited to our meetings, but the meetings needed to be postponed because it was difficult to find a day when they could be present. Further attempts are going to be made in the next 3 months.
- The organization and structure of local government are often an obstacle for women and their families' welfare. The areas which do not belong to large administrative counties have a poorly functioning system without a well-developed organization. Coordinated plans between segments of the statutory local services and relationships with other organizations are not clearly established. In addition to this, the staff in these services is appointed according to the influence of the winning party after the elections, not on merit. These statutory workers are rarely to be found in their working places and they do not schedule meetings. This costs the MWLW key workers many working hours trying to organise a meeting or to access information.
- Bribery is a problem in most of the statutory services especially for those women who are about to gain early retirement due to disability. An example was in Saranda when a woman was asked to give the Commission's officer 50,000 Lek, just to allow her to obtain the required disability document. She had to travel back and forth from Tirana to Saranda for two months to prepare the application for the commission procedure.

Conclusions:

- The eradication of poverty makes women and girls less at risk of being trafficked and exploited and more willing to be more active in society.
- Job skills alone are not enough to empower women. They must know their rights, be able to speak out about them, and have resources to help them make decisions before they can use vocational skills to create long-term economic stability in their lives.
- When women earn an income, they reinvest a much higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities, compared to men.
- Women demonstrate the ability to increase their daily income even after two years participating in the program, earning an average of 0.46 EUR per day, compared to 0.02 EUR at the beginning of our project.
- The women and their community feel more confident and secure by having a service that cares for their situation.
- It is important to develop a health and well-being programme for the women in rural areas of Albania. Women continue to apply improved health and well-being knowledge as a result of this programme.
- Women exercise greater decision-making power within their families when they are educated, earn a stable income, and have access to resources such as land and credit.

All these indicators show how it is still important to continue this work for at least two more years to give root to the good work already achieved and to turn this community around in a sustainable way. Termination of the project at this decisive stage would leave the community fragile and with feelings of abandonment. Access to clean water, the repair or construction of the sewage system, the improvement of statutory services toward this community is still crucial for its development. Businesses established need to be made strong and sustainable. We believe that the eradication of poverty and the building of strong and healthy families is essential to ensure that the community becomes fearless in facing the risk of human trafficking and exploitation.

■ Friends of Mary Ward



The Friends of Mary Ward meet every month for prayer and reflection and during this time the group went on a pilgrimage and mini retreat to Kallmet. Here they could take time to reflect in the beautiful Eufemia church and surrounding area. The theme for the retreat was 'Trust in God.' We reflected on some of the stages in Mary Ward's life where she was most challenged. We prayed together, had silence for contemplation and shared our reflections after pondering on some of the pictures of the Painted Life of Mary Ward. We reflected on how her struggles and her faith in overcoming these difficulties could be applied in our own lives. After a morning of

prayer we went to a beautiful setting where an organic restaurant had been established. The meal was delicious. We ended the day drinking coffee near the sea at Shengjin. We were a very happy group on our return home.

The group meeting monthly reflects on the life and spirituality of Mary Ward and Ignatius of Loyola. Some of the themes covered recently have been Mary, Mother of Jesus, the Trinity and Trust. There are now about thirteen members in the group which include some of the staff of MWL and they have formed a supportive network amongst each other. In some ways they underpin with prayer the daily life of the MWL Foundation.

■ Sustainability of MWL

MWL has embarked on two major projects this year to achieve greater sustainability. The first was to re-build the website to bring it into the 21st century and to ensure that it expressed the dynamism of the work of the Foundation. We also needed to renew the donate page so that it included a euro and dollar page in accordance with our donors and our desire to extend our donor possibilities.

Annie Bannister, the Director of WSI Internet Marketing Consultancy coordinated all of this work and we are very happy with the results. Each member of staff has made their contribution to the building of the website and has been part of the on-going work. Now they are ensuring that the website is constantly updated with news as it happens. We are fortunate to have a computer and website specialist on the staff, Manushaqe Cypi, who ensures the website is functioning well. She works closely with Annie Bannister using SKYPE.



**Albania Mission Against
Human Trafficking**





Another great opportunity has allowed us to gain funding for a car for the daily work of the youth project and another for the work, all over Albania, for the MWL Women's projects. We feel sure that these cars are roadworthy and will keep all staff and beneficiaries who travel in safety and in the hands of two excellent MWL drivers. Pjeter Tanushaj, the logistics manager for MWL, travelled to Germany with a car merchant from Albania to buy two excellent second hand 7 seater cars for this work.

The work of sustainability is a very challenging task for many of the staff. Funding applications are regularly presented and we have been blessed so far to receive most of the funding we need to sustain the work. Any emergency needs which occur each year for one or other of the projects, or for one of our partners, is sustained through constant fund-raising in the UK, where Sister Jacinta Davenport IBVM manages the bank account from afar. We are grateful to her and so many others for their constant support of us throughout each year.

Over the last months we have reached out to Global Impact as our fiscal agent in the USA. Over these months nine of the MWL staff have been trained by Global Impact, online, in fund raising and in the use of NEON as an addition to the donate page for the development of a data base of donors. We have received video training programs and have been given the A-Z of filling in application forms in the USA. The donate Dollar page has been designed by Global Impact and links in with a MWL Global Impact bank account in USA. As our fiscal agent we are also able to use the Global Impact identity number as a guarantee of our credentials to apply for funding in the USA. We are at the very beginning of this adventure and we are hoping and praying that this hugely hard work over the last year will have dividends. We will wait and see.

To aid our communication in fund-raising and to keep our donors, partners, networking stakeholders and friends in touch with the work of the Foundation, we now regularly produce an e-bulletin and newsletter. We are trying in every way to firmly ground the roots for sustainability into the future. Our Finance manager, Artan Toska, is brilliantly steering us through the finance accountability as the Foundation continues to grow and we feel very safe and confident knowing that the audit assures us all is very well.

■ Recommendations

MWL foundation is very much aware that there is still work to be done on staff training and, more especially, in the field of Health and Safety. This will be addressed in the upcoming year. We are also aware that there is a growing need to be more skilled in the use of YouTube and in the opening and on-going development of a YouTube channel. We are committed to addressing this need. In 2016, during the staff care week, a film maker has been employed to train all staff in the making of YouTube videos and in the use of the YouTube channel. We are fortunate in having as a member of staff someone who is skilled in computers and who will be able to manage this tool once it is set up and the films are ready for uploading.

During the past year the MWL Women's project has successfully completed research on the needs of men in their communities. This has formed the basis for an application for funding to open a MWL Men's project, which has been part of the business plan since its first beginnings. This application has been successful. The project will open in the New Year and will focus on transformation for change. This will fulfill the goal for a holistic approach to change in the vulnerable and isolated regions of Albania.

MWL continues to support the prison chaplain in his work in nine prisons in the Tirana/Durrës diocese. He has requested that when the men's project is launched the key worker spends one session a week with a men's group, in one of the prisons, to work at human development and effective means for change. This will be included in the project plan.

It has always been conceived that the work for systemic change in the Education system in Albania would be continued once the pilot research was completed last year. Funding has been achieved to develop this project at a national level throughout Albania, from Nursery education to University education.

The Minister of Education, Nora Malaj, was present at the launching of the pilot research which revealed so much corruption and lack of ethics in the Education system. She encouraged us to make this a national project and to work at advocacy and change. With her blessing this can be realized.

It has been decided that for this new development MWL will work in partnership with Mirness, a Foundation which has, as one of its directors, a professor at the University of Tirana. She is a specialist in communications and media. MWL feels confident that together we can have a stronger force for conducting this research and for effecting ultimate change in the Education System in Albania. The future of Albania depends on this successful process.

■ Conclusion

Mary Ward Loreto Foundation is now well rooted and our task is to go forward in mission with confidence knowing that change is vital and that, with a united team and strong partners and networks, we can effect this change even if only little by little. The philosophy of Mary Ward Loreto shows us the way and gives us a clear focus. We are committed to keeping this at the heart of the work.

The values of MWL have been written with this in mind:

“We are ambitious for our beneficiaries not just in the context of vocational excellence but also in the context of human possibilities, and as supporters of this ethic we will stretch hearts as well as minds. We have an unrelenting focus on excellence and set the highest standards of academic and personal achievement.”

Truth

Mindful of our Ignatian heritage, we introduce our beneficiaries to a reflective way of thinking and living and encourage seekers of truth who will also search critically for answers to the great questions of life.

Justice

We encourage doers of justice who will stand with those on the margins of life and become responsible global citizens and agents of social change, committed to building a better world. We invite our beneficiaries to use their gifts and talents to make a difference both globally and locally and to be men and women of courage who will challenge those accepted notions and modes of society which are opposed to the values for which we stand.

Freedom

We allow all the freedom to become their best selves and to take charge of their own lives and futures within a learning environment that celebrates diversity and nurtures independence of spirit.”

With Pope Francis we remain committed to the mission with the poor and against all evils which treat the vulnerable as commodities to be used and sold. He speaks strongly against the crime of human trafficking which is the mission of MWL.

‘Alongside this deeper cause – the rejection of another person’s humanity – there are other causes which help to explain contemporary forms of slavery. Among these, I think in the first place of poverty, underdevelopment and exclusion, especially when combined with a lack of access to education or scarce, even non-existent, employment opportunities. Not infrequently, the victims of human trafficking and slavery are people who look for a way out of a situation of extreme poverty; taken in by false promises of employment, they often end up in the hands of criminal networks which organize human trafficking. These networks are skilled in using modern means of communication as a way of luring young men and women in various parts of the world.’ All human beings need to be acknowledged as

‘No Longer Slaves but Brothers and Sisters’ (New Year Message 2015)

■ Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our generous donors who have enabled Mary Ward Loreto to implement their plan of action during the year 2015.

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We would also like to thank our many collaborators and volunteers. Also the proof reader of so many documents, Professor Bernard Poole MSIS, PGCE. All have worked tirelessly on our behalf during this year.

Imelda Poole, President - Mary Ward Loreto



Empowering through Justice, Freedom and Sincerity

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