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Sustain

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Strengthening Communities Through
Equitable & Inclusive Education

Reflection

Carolyn Young

Director of Mission & Identity, Loreto Ministries

Recently I had the opportunity to listen to MWIA's Community Engagement Coordinator address students and staff at Loreto College Ballarat's Mission Day. As I listened, I reflected on how fortunate the students were to experience an annual Mission Day as part of their education; to come together safely and comfortably as a community to pray, learn, have fun and raise funds for communities in need.

I was also struck by the looks on the girls' faces as they learnt about the living and working conditions of children in the Brickfields community in India. They were a stark reminder of both the desire of young people to achieve justice for all and the need to educate our young (and, indeed, ourselves) about the injustices in our world.

Such education must be an integral part of our life-long learning. It must also be integral to how we educate those in our Australian schools; to ensure that the leaders of tomorrow are formed as global citizens, determined to practise the gospel value of verity as they work for justice that transforms the world and creates opportunities for all.



COVER*

Child Rights Community Education workshop with students in Huaycán, Peru.

*Consent for all imagery of children and young people used in this publication has been received.

ABOUT US

Mary Ward International Australia (MWIA) is a registered charity and is the Australian and global development organisation of the Loreto Sisters. Our Mission is to support the Loreto Sisters and the broader MWIA network as we work with women and communities to transform unjust structures and reduce poverty and oppression, primarily through formal and non-formal education.



Mary Ward International Australia respectfully

acknowledges all Traditional Custodians of the land and waters of Australia. We pay respect to their Elders, past and present, and young leaders of today and the future. Mary Ward International Australia commits itself to the ongoing work of reconciliation with our First Nations families and communities.



Message from the EO

The Power of an Education

This edition of Sustain focuses on the impact the education of one has not only on the individual but their family, community and nation – well, on all of us.

Here at Mary Ward International Australia, we work toward ensuring children and women receive the education and support they need to reach their full potential and transform the world around them as agents of change and advocates of their own development.

We see education as a great leveller. It is key to having a chance in a very unequal world. Importantly, it results in self-belief.

An education can come in varied forms – formal, non-formal and vocational. As part of MWIA, you support the growth of education in Timor Leste, Vietnam, Zambia, India, Peru and Kenya. This edition aims to give you a taste of this while exploring the fundamentals of what makes a great education – from a great team of teachers driven by purpose and parents that understand the value of education for their children (even if they weren't so fortunate to attend school themselves), to good educational facilities and a midday meal.

As you get ready to turn the page to learn more, I leave you with some words from Peru-based teacher and Loreto Sister Patricia McLaughlin:

“God has given every single [child] the same ability. The only difference is that [the wealthier schools] have more resources than these children have, and I feel my job is to give these children the same education that we would give any child around the world [...] it is not acceptable to say that we’re going to give a poor education to poor children.

We have to believe in these children. Because these children, although they’re poor – they have problems in malnutrition, they have lung problems, they have violence in their families – but these children can do it.

Because if not these children, who?”

Indeed! Enjoy the read.

Hannah George
Executive Officer, MWIA

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ACCOUNTABILITY & ACCREDITATION

MWIA is a full member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). We are committed and fully adhere to the ACFID Code of Conduct, managing our work with transparency, accountability and integrity. MWIA is an approved organisation under the Overseas Aid Gift Deduction Scheme (OAGDS) and endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office as a Deductible Gift Recipient.





Education Gives Back

Good News Story

Kaithlyn McNab

Administration Officer, MWIA

Education continues to give back to the communities in the Lukulu and Mitete districts in Zambia's Western Province.

Since 2010, young people in these districts have been supported by MWIA to complete a three-year diploma in primary education at the Mongu College of Education, a college associated with the University of Zambia. The diploma earned is highly regarded throughout the country. Once qualified, the graduates are motivated to use their skills and knowledge in the communities they grew up in by filling volunteer teaching positions in rural village schools of the Western Province.

Zambia continues to strive towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4: ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

After a two-year hiatus in employing government teachers, the 2021-elected government pledged to increase the number of teachers across Zambia and enhance teacher-student ratios, particularly in regions with significant teacher shortages, including the Lukulu and Mitete districts. The government is

fulfilling its promise and has employed every qualified teacher that applied to receive a government position in the Lukulu and Mitete districts - 361 applicants to the Lukulu district and 411 applicants to the Mitete district.

It is good news not only for students of all ages and graduates of the Mongu College of Education but also for schools that desperately need more qualified teachers. Increased teaching appointments and improved teacher-student ratios will ultimately enhance the quality of education throughout Zambia.

Five MWIA-supported graduates who are currently employed at government schools have continued their studies to complete a degree, enabling them to teach at a secondary school level. Another five have submitted applications for government teaching roles and were awarded positions. Three were appointed to schools in the Lukulu district, and two were assigned to schools in the Mitete district, giving much hope to teachers, students and communities alike.

Since the program began, 28 students have benefited from the support of MWIA.

“Beyond Anything we Could Have Dreamed”

Anna Turkington

Manager, Marketing & Communications, Loreto Ministries

In the past 14 months, an incredible amount has been achieved at the Sancta Maria College of Nursing and Midwifery in Lukulu, Zambia - “way beyond anything we could have dreamed of”, says Sr Pat Hanvey ibvm. “We’ve procured a college bus, constructed two 20-room dormitories with the capacity of 80 people each, renovated three staff houses, and repaired and painted the roofs of the old hospital buildings. There is so much hope and excitement in the air as Lukulu sees such positive change.”

Sr Pat reports that the young female students who moved into the first dormitory in March greatly appreciate their comfort, space and practicality. The once deprived and impoverished students now have access to some of the best accommodation in the country, creating an environment conducive to study and providing a powerful boost to their self-respect and dignity. The College bus has been invaluable in ensuring that students can gain practical experience in the wards of the local district hospital six kilometres from the College. It also ensures first-year students can attend a 10-week practicum session at Mangango Mission Hospital 160 kilometres away and, in their second and third years of study, attend Lewanika General Hospital, approximately 400 kilometres away. According to Sr Pat, the College could simply not operate without it.

The positive outcomes of this project go well beyond those directly benefitting - they reach far and wide. The contractors and local tradespeople engaged in this job are immensely

grateful for the employment and income derived from this project. The women involved in sewing curtains and cleaning the final buildings are also incredibly appreciative. Though somewhat limited, such income is highly valued because of the general impoverishment of the area and the lack of steady employment for most people. The College has provided increased trade for local suppliers, many of whom are small or subsistence farmers. Such trade opportunities provide increased income and greater equity while helping small businesses thrive.

The Loreto Sisters are now about to commence Phase 3 of this initiative - the construction of a third 20-room dormitory and extra classrooms to meet the intake of an additional 60 new first-year students in July 2023. The construction will provide up to 80 more young people with an opportunity for tertiary and professional training otherwise inaccessible to them in this remote and underdeveloped area. Priority will be given to the recruitment of female students to ensure greater equality in terms of opportunities afforded to girls within the local community. Ultimately, this will result in more stable and skilled staff delivering quality health services in these marginalised areas of the country.

Mary Ward International Australia (MWIA) and the Loreto Sisters extend our sincere appreciation to the Noel and Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation and Philippa Cahill for their tremendous support of this project.



A Journey Toward Lasting Change

Dung Ngyuen

Former Executive Director, Loreto Vietnam

Education for Change. These three words are engraved in my head and heart and were always my sole compass guiding me throughout my Loreto Vietnam journey. However, the journey was not always easy, and we were often challenged.

"No, it's impossible to run STEM activities in our school as it sounds abstract and complicated."

"How can Loreto Vietnam support our vulnerable children while they can hardly read or even obey?"

"Why do we need a change?"

Our Loreto Vietnam team members faced such questions and doubts almost daily from our local partners, teachers, students, and parents. However, our passion and commitment to Education for Change were unwavering. We had many heated debates, but luckily, with bubble tea as the peacemaker, we found the best solutions to all the tough questions.

We implemented a fantastic Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program, providing STEM equipment and hands-on learning in An Giang province. 2,000 students and 200 teachers benefitted from this program. Incredibly, two-thirds of the "young scientists" from our STEM clubs are girls. I cannot forget To To, a Year-5 student who demonstrated her excellent solar energy fan project and said, "I'm so proud that our girls can learn science and be great innovators. Living in a land full of sunlight, I dream of being a scientist or inventor creating more solar energy-oriented projects to support local people". Doesn't she sound amazing?

I also cannot forget Lan, a happy Year 5 student who could not hide her surprise and joy at being one of the first visitors to the new toilet blocks exclusively designed for the girls at B An Phu Primary School. For the past five years, Lan, her friends, and her teachers shared a toilet block with no formal separation between boys and girls. It had no door, no ventilation, and sadly no clean water. Loreto Vietnam worked closely with the school and local authorities on a needs assessment and situation analysis.

We decided to build a new, separate toilet block exclusively for girls and renovate the current block for boys. Safe and clean water systems were installed. Furthermore, health promotion and education modules were delivered to the school's teachers and students to help them stay away from hygiene-related diseases and inform the community about new ways to ensure COVID-19 prevention. Under the School Sanitation and Health Education Program, Loreto Vietnam rebuilt and renovated toilet facilities for 71 schools with separate blocks for boys and girls and trained 30,000 students in practical health knowledge and skills.

Further to this, more than 4,000 underprivileged children were supported by Loreto Vietnam to transform their journey to school under the Wheels for Education program. Easy bicycle transportation (and a new helmet!) ensures students attend school regularly and travel safely.

Along the journey, we have been doubted, questioned, challenged, and even rejected. It is so simple to give up and keep doing the traditional activities. We chose a much more difficult route but a much more rewarding one. In the end, our resilience over 25 years has seen equal opportunities for more than 100,000 disadvantaged children striving to go to school, learn and grow each day. We are beyond grateful for the Vietnamese Government's recognition of our committed and long-standing presence in Vietnam and our dedication to working with Vietnamese youth in the areas of education and health. Proudly, we see the footprints of our founder, Sr Trish Franklin, and ours in all the villages and communities we have visited. It is not only the educational projects to be sustained but also the love of all the local people and beloved students when sharing our Loreto story and social impact initiatives.

My four-year journey with Loreto may end today, but I am sure many will continue on this path and make it more beautiful and meaningful for our children and community. And myself? Once a member of the Loreto network, forever a member. I will continue to promote social justice and education opportunities for all in the spirit of Mary Ward and the Loreto Sisters.





Breaking the C

Kirstin DelBeato

Projects & Partnerships Manager, MWIA

The dignity of children and their right to live free from violence and fear remains a key priority on the international development agenda. However, for many children, the threat of violence is still a daily reality, even more so in vulnerable communities such as Huaycán in Peru.

Huaycán is located in the district of Ate, approximately 16 kilometres east of the capital Lima. It is home to thousands of migrant families, many of whom live in slum-like conditions and face daily hunger, economic hardship, and preventable disease.

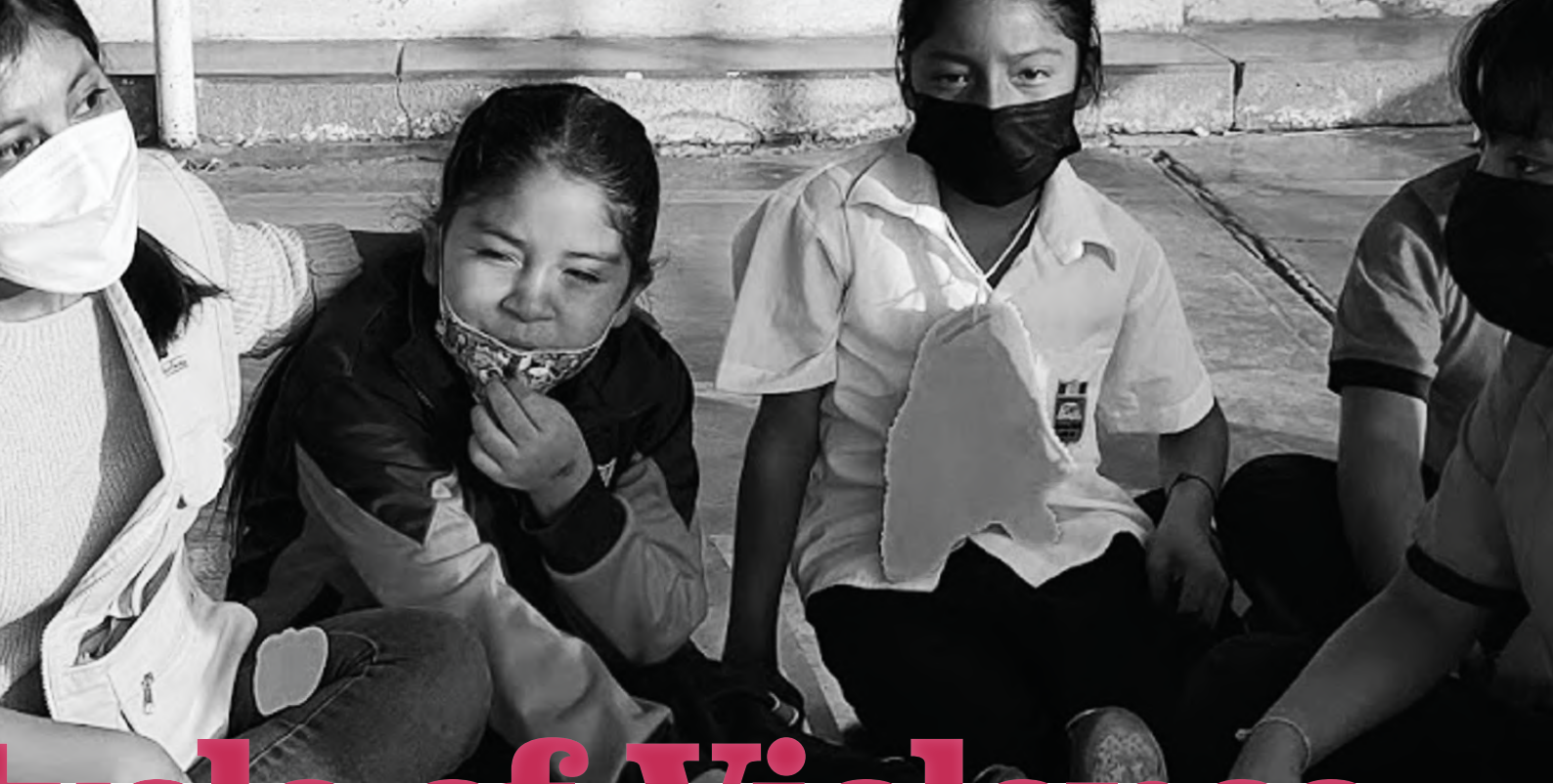
Like many similar communities, Huaycán experiences a high rate of violence against children, with most perpetrators being trusted adults within a child's family, society, or school. Government child protection services acknowledge the issue but are understaffed and unable to guarantee the right to protection for local children.

Designed and managed by the Loreto Sisters in Peru, the Child Rights Community Education project supported by MWIA focuses on two main areas: preventing violence against children through education; and accessing care and recovery services for those who do experience violence.

Staff at the school where the project is being delivered have already taken ownership of the initiative and feel great pride in being part of this vital work. With the project team led by Sr Miroslava Santillan, the teachers have incorporated new educational modules into the school curriculum aimed at strengthening each child's sense of identity and self-worth. Classes are currently being delivered to more than 60 students aged between 9 and 11 and take place during school hours to ensure they are accessible to all.

The new modules were designed by health workers specialising in preventing family and sexual violence against children. The modules use a rights-based and gender approach and consider the participants' age and cultural and socio-emotional needs. Each session focuses on a particular topic: identity, coexistence, communication, decision-making, self-esteem, and emotions. Two final sessions specifically address the prevention of sexual abuse and how to ask for help from trusted adults.

The project team has trained school staff to identify potential cases of violence against children and how to assist those who need protection. At the community level, support networks have been established with government organisations, local health centres and community hubs when access to care and recovery for a child is required.



ycle of Violence

The many parenting workshops already conducted have proved incredibly successful and shown that most want to strengthen their parenting skills, learn about positive discipline, and better understand the rights of all children. It also became evident that many parents were unaware of the developmental impacts of violence. Sadly, in some cases, these sessions identified violence against children and required intervention.

Vital projects such as these fulfil the mission of Mary Ward International Australia and further work towards UN Sustainable Development Goal 16, which calls for the elimination of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and any other forms of violence against children.

We hope that through the work of the Loreto Sisters, this project will continue to protect the lives and well-being of children in Huaycán, reduce social tolerance for violence and promote community-wide awareness of these issues.

"My son's father has two reports of domestic abuse. My son has seen all the abuse that his father used to give me... I know that we have caused a lot of harm to my son, but his father doesn't care, he carries on the same way."

Ana*, mother of a grade 4 student, speaking to the project team after attending a parenting workshop.

BACKGROUND: Ana had previously taken out a court order against her husband and, along with her children, was receiving psychological therapy; however, they stopped attending during the pandemic when many mental health services were restricted.

OUTCOME: Through this project, Ana received personalised guidance and individual counselling about the impact of violence on her children's physical and emotional health and has committed to resuming therapy.

* Name changed to protect the mother's identity.

Paving the Way to a Better, Brighter Future

Fiza Khosla

Community Engagement Coordinator, MWIA

Over the turn of the century, India's rapid economic growth and urban transformation has meant it is fast becoming one of the strongest economies in the world. However, India also battles the parallel realities of extreme poverty, high illiteracy, female infanticide, forced marriage, gender inequality and more. This journey is paved with developmental challenges, including the ever-widening gap between the rich and poor, forcing countless children into child labour. Reports estimate that 10.1 million* children are engaged in unorganised labour work in India.

Presently, one of the largest groups of children engaged in labour and out of school are those of itinerant families that work in open-air factories where clay bricks are made by hand – otherwise known as Brickfields.

The Brickfield industry relies on the manual labour of migrant and itinerant workers, including children, to minimise production costs. They spend up to eight months of the year in dusty fields in temperatures that can reach 40 degrees with no access to basic facilities like clean drinking water or toilets. Despite working arduously for over twelve hours a day, these workers barely earn enough to feed their families due to exploitative practices, unfair compensation, and lack of awareness about their rights. The most disheartening of all things is that children from the age of 10 work alongside their parents in these harsh and inhuman conditions. Our colleagues on the ground are repeatedly told by parents that “if the children don't work, there will be no money to feed them. They work, they eat.”

It is no surprise that for these families struggling to survive daily, children's education is viewed as a distraction from much-needed earnings. This lack of awareness is generational. Due to their own shortage of opportunity, most parents have never gone to school or experienced life beyond the Brickfields.

Since 2008, our colleagues at the Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre (KMWSC), supported by our MWIA donors, have operated open-air schools in the Basirhat area of West Bengal, India. The schools deliver quality education, life-skills training and health awareness programs to the children and broader families of the Brickfields community. The absence of government-aided schools makes the Brickfield schools the only source of education for the children of workers, the only hope for a better, brighter future. Parents incur no financial costs to send their children to school; in fact, to encourage more participation from the community, the children in these schools are incentivised with free study materials and a nutritious meal at the end of each school day.

Since lack of awareness is a prominent challenge in the community, KMWSC's Brickfields initiative has a strong focus on raising awareness amongst the itinerant families on social issues such as child protection, the right to education, child marriage and their right to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic and social development. In 2021, KMWSC held over 30 health awareness camps for more than 2,000 children and their parents, imparting vital health information, vaccinations, hygiene products and more.

With the support of MWIA, the KMWSC operates ten Brickfield schools in which nearly 700 children from 402 families receive quality education from 22 teachers trained in the special educational needs of the Brickfield students. This project also promotes collective community development by training and employing people from within the local community as teachers and other associated roles.

These initiatives empower and educate hundreds of children from the Brickfields. Thanks to your support, we can continue giving each child the best opportunity to break the poverty cycle through education.



Purnima Karmakar

A Message from the Fields

Purnima Karmakar has worked as a teacher in the Brickfield schools for over six years. A resident of the Basirhat area of West Bengal, India, she finds purpose, contentment and joy in educating the children of the Brickfields community and contributing to their growth and development.

When she began her journey as a teacher, she had just graduated from secondary school and had insufficient savings or income to pursue higher education. However, thanks to KMWSC's Teacher Training Program, Purnima had the opportunity to receive hands-on training through teaching the underprivileged children of the Brickfields while simultaneously earning a stipend to cover the cost of her degree.

Purnima says that approximately 90 trainee teachers out of 120 had or were currently utilising their stipends to pursue degrees. Although the schools are situated in remote areas and lack access to public transport and basic amenities like toilets, Purnima cycles daily to the Brickfields to share the gift of education with these children most in need. She says:

"These children are my pride and joy. Their well-being and safety are my topmost priorities. There was once a child who had developed severe breathing problems, it was evident that he wasn't well and needed to see a doctor immediately, but the parents were reluctant to take him to the nearby hospital because they didn't want to spend any money. My colleagues and I tried to explain the gravity of the situation, but they constantly refused all our pleas. Eventually, us teachers gathered and contributed towards the check-up and follow-up medications. The boy is now healthy and regularly attends school. For me seeing all these children progress and to help pave the way for a brighter future is my biggest accomplishment and I will always try to help them to the best of my abilities."



Action for Others

Fiza Khosla

Community Engagement Coordinator, MWIA

Mary Ward International Australia (MWIA) currently supports 21 projects globally. The impact we have working with women, children and communities is possible thanks to the support of the broader Loreto community, of which the Loreto schools are an integral part. By truly embodying Loreto's values, the students in our schools have raised significant funds this year in support of different projects worldwide. Their efforts and contributions have helped MWIA, the Loreto Sisters, and other partners reach more people in need while amplifying and championing the positive difference being made.

This Year...

Students at Loreto Kirribilli and Loreto College Coorparoo raised funds for the 'Bringing Lights to Sundarbans' project, which provides solar lanterns to hundreds of families living without light in the remote Sundarbans region of West Bengal, India. Students reflected on the dire situation and the notable difference their contributions could make in the lives of so many.

Loreto College Ballarat and Loreto Toorak raised funds for the 'Brickfield Schools Project', enabling more children to receive education in the poverty-stricken area of Basirhat, India. The project's objective - "every child's right to education", strongly resonated with the students, who were determined to raise considerable amounts to support the ongoing activities of the Brickfield schools in India.

Loreto Normanhurst raised funds for the 'Educating for the Elimination of Forced Marriage' project in Australia. Students learned about and reflected on the ongoing issue of forced marriage in Australia and their ability to bring about substantial change.

Students from Loreto College Marryatville reflected on the challenge of Period Poverty in India and raised funds for the 'Landing Pad' project in support of vulnerable women and young girls in West Bengal, India. The project seeks to improve reproductive health and hygiene through education and the provision of sanitary products.



Project Updates

2022

ETHICAL ENTERPRISES

India

Spearheaded by the Darjeeling Mary Ward Social Centre, Ethical Enterprises has been very active with lots of community involvement. Despite limited tourists returning to the tea plantations, significant impacts are being made.

The Panighatta sewing project is popular as sewing can provide a good source of family income. Currently, there are 17 students enrolled in the class. Eleven women have purchased sewing machines, enabling them to work and provide for their families.

The Sukna jute products were recently awarded at a government fair, acknowledging the work accomplished. Sixty women are currently involved in jute making, working four days per month. Each product takes approximately one month to complete. The project enables female students to remain enrolled in their formal studies. Four women recently completed high school and have since pursued nursing training. A past project participant is now employed as a jute trainer.





LORETO OSTICO COMMUNITY CENTRE

Timor Leste

The construction of the Loreto Ostico Community Centre, which will bring life-changing benefits to the Timorese village of Ostico and the wider community, is coming along in leaps and bounds. The intricacies of building in a remote area with limited infrastructure can be complex. Uncontrollable setbacks occurred earlier in the year due to severe storms and supply chain delays, slowing construction. With the roof installed, internal works are set to continue despite the upcoming wet season. Once complete, the centre will deliver inclusive and equitable learning opportunities and provide a place for meetings and community events. Investing in education will ensure the people of Ostico reach their full potential and lead to transformative change in the community.

EDUCATING FOR THE ELIMINATION OF FORCED MARRIAGE

Australia

Educating for the Elimination of Forced Marriage is making great strides in the goals set for 2022, despite lingering COVID-19 challenges. Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH) has engaged with over 50 schools across the country, utilising online platforms where in-person school access was restricted. To address forced marriage, they have conducted awareness training with more than 60 community organisations, including State and Federal Police and the Australian Red Cross. ACRATH has also facilitated training with community groups, focusing on family violence to help them recognise and manage forced marriage cases. ACRATH continues to work closely with the women who have been forced to marry against their will and advocate for national schemes for survivors.



In West Bengal, India, we're delivering education and supporting the health, physical growth and mental development of children of Brickfield workers across ten Brickfield schools, giving each child the best opportunity to break the poverty cycle.

In Huaycán, Peru, we're addressing violence – including sexual violence – against children through educating children and adults on self-care, reducing the social tolerance for mistreatment and promoting community-wide awareness of the issues.

In Ostico, Timor -Leste, we're building a community centre that will provide a permanent space to deliver equitable learning opportunities and programs to the local community.

Access to education is a fundamental human right. We must come together to go where the need is greatest and create change on a global scale. We have just eight years to fulfil the promise that every child will be in school and learning by 2030. Help us on our mission to create just and sustainable change with women, children and communities through education.

What your gift could provide



will provide a young woman in Timor Leste with computer skills

\$150



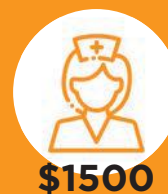
will fund a positive parenting workshop for 37 families in Peru

\$500



will equip
25 children in
India's Brickfields
with study
materials and a
meal a day for a
full school year

\$750



will cover the tuition fees of a Zambian nursing and midwifery student in need for a semester

\$1500

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☐ I wish to receive future correspondence by email. *If selecting this option please remember to add us to your address book!*

I wish to donate ☐ \$150 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$750 ☐ \$1500 ☐ Other: \$ _____

I would like to make a recurring monthly gift of \$ _____ *Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible*

CHEQUE: ☐ My cheque/money is enclosed *Please make payable to MWIA*

CREDIT CARD: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

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☐ I don't require a receipt and would like to receive an Annual Tax Statement instead

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☐ I would like my gift to remain anonymous

☐ I would like to meet with an MWIA representative

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