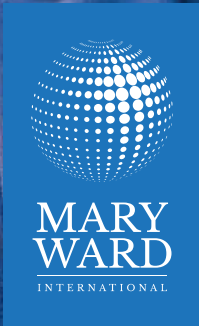
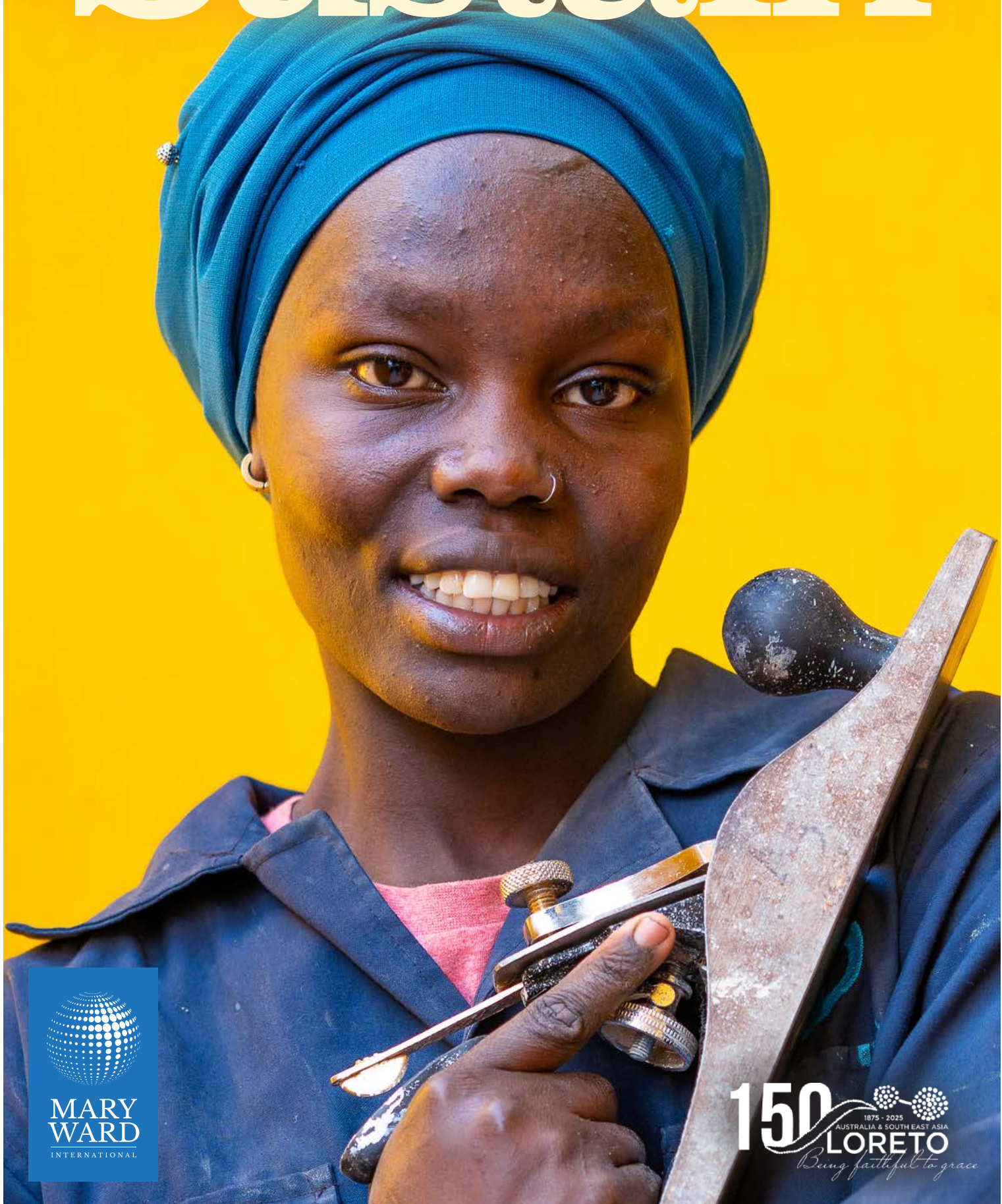


OCTOBER 2025

Sustain



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Faith in Action

This edition of Sustain is a celebration of the gift of resilience. From Mary Ward and her companions, who, four centuries ago, trusted in a vision the world was not yet ready to accept, to Mother Gonzaga Barry, whose pioneering spirit carried that vision to new lands, and to the women today who embody it through our projects across the world, resilience has marked our journey as Mary Ward women.

Resilience is not simply persistence; it is faith in action. It is the grace to continue when obstacles seem insurmountable, the courage to hope when the future is uncertain, and the strength to stand together when hardship arises. Resilience is forged in the struggle to be heard, in claiming education as a right, in standing for women's equality, and in persevering in the face of failure and opposition.

This year, as we celebrate 150 years of Loreto education in Australia, and as our wider Mary Ward family embraces a new chapter of Becoming One, I am reminded that our true legacy lies not in institutions or achievements, but in the spirit that unites us. Across continents and cultures, we share the same call to bring love, justice, and hope into the world.

Sr Wendy Hildebrand ibvm
*Province Leader,
Loreto Australia & South East Asia*



COVER*

Street MBAs,
Kenya.

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



150 YEARS OF LORETO LOGO

The 150 years of Loreto in Australia & South East Asia logo featured on the front cover of this edition of *Sustain* magazine incorporates elements from the artwork designed by Evie Davidson, a talented student at Loreto College Ballarat and proud Dja Dja Wurung woman.



Mary Ward International 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 commits itself to the ongoing work of reconciliation with our First Nations families and communities.



MESSAGE FROM THE EO

Resilience Prevails 400 Years On

Over 400 years ago, Mary Ward imagined a new future for women in the Church, one shaped by active service, courageous leadership, and a deep commitment to justice. She dared to dream of an apostolic life for women equal to that of men. Her vision was met with suspicion, but she persisted, confident that “*women in time to come will do much.*” Her resilience was grounded in faith and her belief in the potential of women.

Two centuries later, Mother Gonzaga Barry carried that same spirit to Australia. In 1875, she and nine companions arrived in Ballarat with little more than determination and a mission: to educate girls in a way that would form not only their minds, but their hearts and consciences. In a male-dominated world, she built schools and nurtured generations of young women to become agents of change committed to justice, compassion, and service.

That same resilience lives on in the women you will meet in this issue of Sustain. In Zambia, they have established a nursing college to open doors for future generations. In Kenya, they are creating jobs in industries where women have long been excluded. In remote parts of Australia, they are

forging new pathways to independence. And in India, they are managing crises with strength and leadership. These women are not waiting for change. They are the changemakers.

This year, we also celebrate a new chapter in our story: the coming together of the Loreto Sisters and the Congregation of Jesus, known as the CJs. It reflects the spirit of unity, courage, and adaptability that defines Mary Ward’s legacy. This journey too is resilience in action, honouring our beginnings while embracing the possibilities ahead. You will see this spirit come to life on page 14 in our first CJ-led project in Romania that puts our shared mission into powerful action.

Thank you for standing with us and with the communities we serve. Your support is part of this enduring legacy. Together, we are building a more just, more resilient world.

Kirstin Del Beato
*Executive Officer,
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ABOUT US

Mary Ward International 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 Mary Ward network as we work with women and communities to transform unjust structures and reduce poverty and oppression, primarily through formal and non-formal education.

ACCOUNTABILITY & ACCREDITATION

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



FROM CHAPATIS TO CABINetry: GRACE'S JOURNEY

At just 20 years old, Grace* was a mother to a three-year-old and facing an uncertain future. Financial hardship forced her to drop out of school, and she spent the days helping her mother run a small chapati stall near their home in Kibera, one of Kenya's largest informal settlements.

"I didn't want to depend on anyone, but I didn't know how to move forward," Grace said. "Life in the informal settlement can make you feel like your dreams are too big for your reality."

Everything changed when Grace heard about a Mary Ward International-funded carpentry and cabinetry training program run by Sr Leonida Kwamboka ibvm. The program aimed to equip women with practical skills in construction and technical trades. She applied without hesitation.

Though it wasn't easy entering a male-dominated field, Grace was determined to build a better life for herself and her daughter. During her internship, she volunteered under a cabinetry supervisor, gaining hands-on experience and mentorship. Twelve months later, the supervisor offered her a paid position.

Today, Grace earns a steady income and takes on side jobs such as door fittings to supplement her earnings. She can buy food and clothes for her daughter and even save for her school needs. *"I now wake up with purpose, knowing that I have skills people value. I'm not just helping out anymore, I'm building something of my own."*

At her graduation, Grace was recognised as the best student in carpentry. *"Holding that certificate in my hands, I felt so proud, not just for myself, but for every young woman who's ever been told she can't. From selling chapatis on the roadside to being recognised for my skills, it felt like I was stepping into a new chapter of my life."*

Grace dreams of one day opening her own workshop and training other women. *"You gave me a chance, and I did not waste it. I believe that with time, hard work, and continued support, anything is possible."*

PAINTING A NEW PATH: JOSEPHINE'S STORY

After losing both parents at the age of five, Josephine's* grandmother raised her. She became a young mother while still in school, but with her grandmother's support, she went on to complete her secondary school exams. With children to

care for and no money for college, she turned to beadwork, crafting traditional Maasai designs to earn an income. But as the market became saturated, her earnings dwindled.

When her mother-in-law introduced her to the women's livelihoods program, Josephine was drawn to the idea of learning construction skills. She enrolled and chose to specialise in painting and decorating.

"The day I graduated from the course was one of the proudest moments of my life," Josephine said. "I never imagined I would wear a graduation gown or receive a certificate with my name on it. I had given up on education after high school, thinking that was the end for me. But there I was, standing tall, smiling, and holding proof that I had made it."

Today, Josephine works as a professional painter, earning a stable income and is proud to be able to pay rent, buy food, and send her three children to school.

"I received a chance I never thought I would," she says, "and now I have the confidence, skills, and strength to build a better life for my children and myself."

Women Building Stories of Strength in Kenya

BUILDING SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE BEYOND CONSTRUCTION

Grace and Josephine's stories are part of a broader initiative, supported by Mary Ward International, to build women's confidence, especially in financial decision-making and future planning.

The program extends beyond construction training, offering a 'Street MBA' course that teaches essential business and entrepreneurship skills, including managing finances, pricing services, and attracting customers.

Many graduates have started small businesses, while others have joined complementary programs in cooking and housekeeping, launching food enterprises or improving their families' nutrition and wellbeing.

By gaining skills in carpentry, painting, and business, Grace, Josephine, and others like them have transformed their lives and are emerging as new leaders in Kibera, demonstrating to their community that with determination and the right support, anything is possible. Their stories remind us that when women have the tools and confidence to succeed, they build brighter futures for all.

Kaithlyn McNab
Mary Ward International



Growing Stronger in Zambia

Sancta Maria College of Nursing & Midwifery in Lukulu has reached an exciting milestone. With the completion of the new kitchen and dining facility and the installation of a solar-powered irrigation system, the College is now better equipped than ever to fulfil its mission: addressing critical healthcare gaps in Western Zambia by training skilled, local nurses.

The newly opened kitchen and dining room have quickly become the heart of campus life. Funded by a grant from the Noel & Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation, along with donations from other generous supporters, the facility was designed to suit the local context. It features handwashing stations, sliding screened windows for ventilation, a fully fitted cooler room, and a serving counter to efficiently deliver nutritious meals to 280 students and staff. Steel trusses support the wide roof span, ensuring long-term durability. The space is already celebrated as one that nourishes both body and spirit.

At the same time, the College's farm is thriving thanks to a new solar-powered pump and drip irrigation system, funded by the Rotary Club of Port Philip, Australia. This innovation ensures a reliable water supply during the dry season, boosts productivity, and reduces manual labour. It enables the College, which houses students on campus, to grow more of its own food and provide each student with three nutritious meals a day.

By reducing its reliance on external food sources and lowering operational costs, the College is enhancing student wellbeing and progressing steadily toward financial sustainability.

This transformation is only possible because of your support. Thank you for helping build a stronger, more self-reliant future for nursing education in rural Zambia.





THE SR ELIZABETH DONNAN IBVM SCHOLARSHIP FUND

A Lasting Commitment to Education

In May 2025, Sr Elizabeth Donnan ibvm, beloved educator, advocate, and friend, passed away after a life devoted to serving others. In her honour, Mary Ward International and the Loreto Sisters have established The Sr Elizabeth Donnan ibvm Scholarship Fund, a tribute to her enduring commitment to dignity and opportunity through education.

For over two decades in Western Zambia, Sr Elizabeth walked alongside remote communities, supporting community-led schools, building classroom furniture, and championing every child's right to learn. Her legacy lives on most powerfully at Sancta Maria College of Nursing and Midwifery in Lukulu, where, along with Sr Pat Hanvey ibvm, she established the College to serve the community and create lasting change.

As manager of the College's student bursary program, Sr Elizabeth worked tirelessly to ensure that no student was turned away due to financial hardship. She understood that education transforms individual lives and, in doing so, strengthens families and communities.

"I am the first girl child in my community to go on to further studies," says current scholarship holder Jacqueline. "I will be a role model to encourage other girls that they can also make it in life."

The Scholarship Fund will continue Sr Elizabeth's life-changing work, providing financial support for students from remote and disadvantaged communities pursuing nursing education. Covering tuition, training costs, travel, and accommodation, the fund enables students to focus wholly on their studies and on becoming the compassionate healthcare professionals their communities need.

In Sr Elizabeth's own words, *"When a student is awarded a scholarship, their demeanour is transformed from one carrying an impossible burden to a person who is free to laugh and enjoy life."*

Sr Wendy Hildebrand ibvm
*Province Leader,
Loreto Australia & South East Asia*

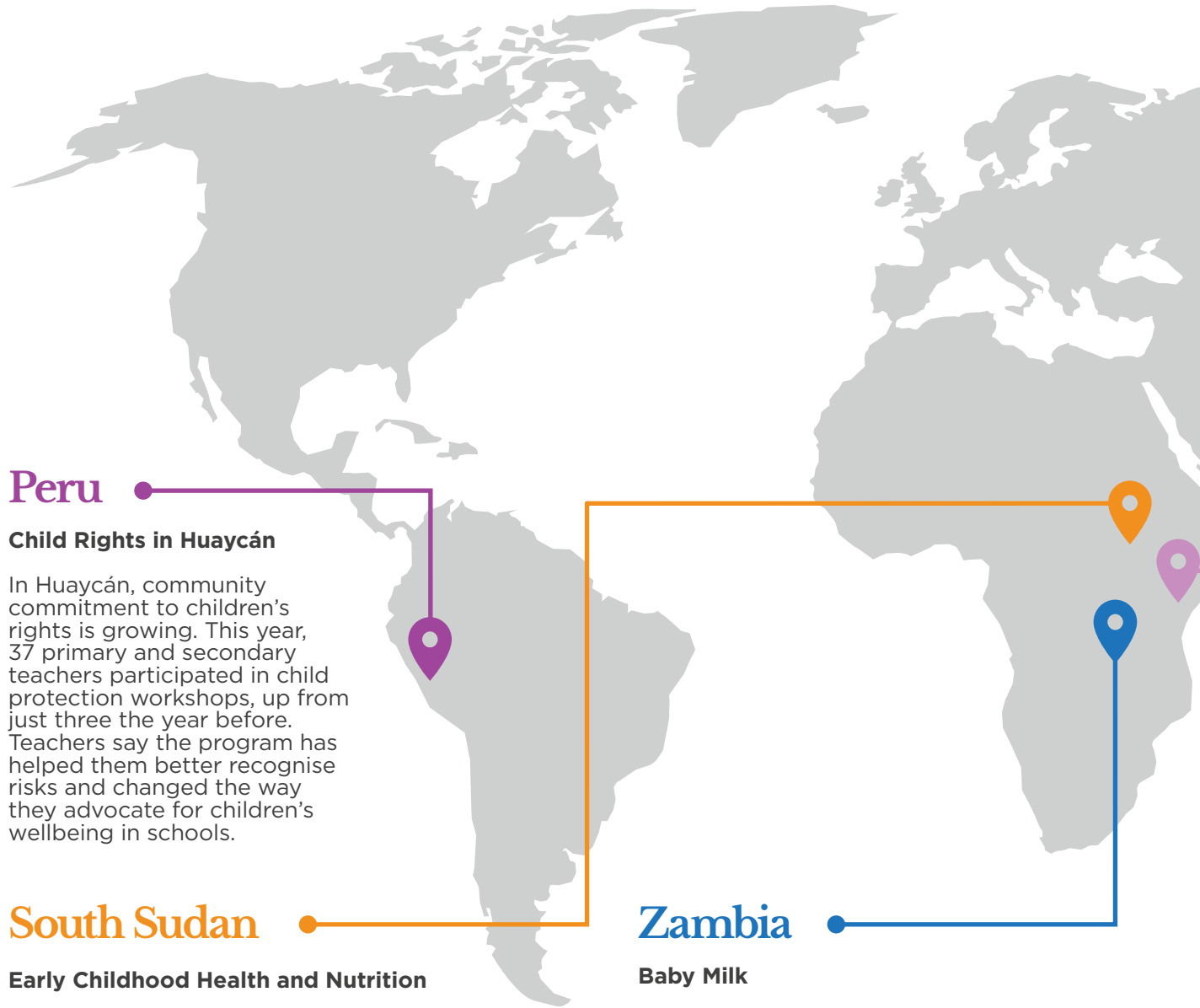
Kirstin Del Beato
Mary Ward International

With your support, we can ensure that Sr Elizabeth's legacy continues to inspire and transform lives.

To donate, please visit mwia.org.au/donate/

For more information contact mwiaustralia@loreto.org.au

A Snapshot: *The Difference You've Made in 2025*



Peru

Child Rights in Huaycán

In Huaycán, community commitment to children's rights is growing. This year, 37 primary and secondary teachers participated in child protection workshops, up from just three the year before. Teachers say the program has helped them better recognise risks and changed the way they advocate for children's wellbeing in schools.

South Sudan

Early Childhood Health and Nutrition

At the Mary Ward Health Clinic, 150 malnourished babies and 140 mothers received baby kits, essential medicines, and practical health education. Caregivers are now reporting fewer childhood illnesses, improved energy, and stronger school readiness. Described as life-changing, this program brings families and clinic staff together to nurture healthy, hopeful futures.

Zambia

Baby Milk

Over the past year, 56 undernourished babies received essential nutritional support, while their mothers and caregivers took part in health education sessions. Volunteers monitor the babies' growth and provide intervention when needed. Some caregivers walk up to nine hours to access the service, showing extraordinary commitment to their children's health and wellbeing.

India

Collective Voices

In Darjeeling, where opportunities beyond working on a tea estate are limited, career guidance sessions are helping young people consider new directions. So far in 2025, over 50 students have explored pathways for further study and employment. Many are now pursuing courses in geography, political science, and tailoring, taking steps toward futures they once thought were out of reach.

Vietnam

Vinh Loc Learning Support Program

The Vinh Loc Learning Support Program is helping families build brighter futures through literacy. In 2025, 51 out-of-school children and three parents or grandparents joined classes to improve their reading, writing, and numeracy. These skills are helping families manage daily life, run small businesses more effectively, and inspire children to continue learning.

Timor-Leste

Mary Ward Sewing Centre

In Ostico, the Mary Ward Sewing Centre is helping women develop income-generating skills in sewing and tailoring. Participants are now learning how to produce clothes, bags, and uniforms - skills they can use to earn an income, support their families, and take an active role in shaping their community's future.

Australia

Women's Supported Accommodation

The Women's Supported Accommodation project is helping vulnerable women regain control over their lives. In 2025, ten women and two single-parent families accessed safe housing, case management, and pathways to employment. Tailored support is helping them build confidence, develop independence, and take steps toward long-term stability.

Kenya

Combatting Human Trafficking

In Kangemi, an informal settlement in Nairobi, poverty creates conditions for exploitation. In 2025, over 26,000 people, including students, police, local leaders, and motorbike taxi drivers, took part in human trafficking awareness sessions. The community is now better equipped to prevent exploitation, with 35 people rescued and now accessing wraparound support services.

Walking With Resilience: *First Nations Women at KAFTA*

Across Australia's remote communities, First Nations women are the custodians of culture, language, and tradition. In Balgo, the women of the Piriwa Enterprise Hub embody this responsibility, demonstrating remarkable strength and grace in the face of hardship, loss, and grief.

With a focus on supporting female entrepreneurship in Balgo, the Piriwa Enterprise Hub helps women see self-employment as a viable and achievable option. By combining cultural knowledge with business skills, Piriwa enables women to turn ideas into income while strengthening the resilience of their community.

Piriwa's latest initiative, made possible by Mary Ward International, brought the women from Balgo to the Kimberley Aboriginal Fashion and Textile Art (KAFTA) event in Broome. This was the first time Piriwa participated in the annual gathering, which showcases Indigenous fashion, textiles, and art from across the Kimberley region.

KAFTA gave the Piriwa women a platform to share their stories, present their designs, and

create a space where culture, creativity, and connection could flourish, despite the challenges often faced by First Nations women.

"KAFTA was a lovely day for our families, and it was the first time we had gone; we are so proud for doing this fashion event." Monica Njamme

Nadine Miller added, *"Everybody was so proud seeing us on social media, it was really good and exciting, and we were so proud of our ladies walking the catwalk and seeing all the Indigenous fashion. Everybody was so excited telling us that 'it was amazing what you did that modelling'. Some people were crying with happiness."*

"We hope some young women and men join us next time for KAFTA."

This project was a collaborative effort involving artists from the Piriwa Enterprise Hub, mentored by Bianca Long from Jaru Girl, with partners Camera Story and Enterprise Partnerships WA. Bianca worked closely with the women, offering guidance on design, upcycling techniques, and runway presentation. For these remotely based



entrepreneurs, KAFTA was a rare opportunity to share stories and take centre stage. Family and supporters from Balgo joined the celebration virtually, live-streaming the catwalk on TikTok and bringing the excitement home to the community.

Kukatja and Ngardi woman and Piriwa co-leader, Kathryn Njamme, explained the inspiration: *“The designs are created on upcycled garments and represent bushtucker, flowers and animals from the desert. We named it Piriwa after the flowers that we used to collect, they’ve got honey. As a kid, we used to eat them, suck on the flowers with honey in it, and it’s very sweet,”* she said.

Beyond the art and fashion, this project reflects the determination of remote First Nations women to maintain their language and traditions amid social, economic, and emotional challenges. The act of coming together to create, mentor, and share knowledge is a powerful form of cultural preservation and healing.

Image: Monica Njamme, Kathryn Njamme, Judy Gill, Cindy Gibson, Maxine Gill, Mary Njamme by Camera Story



Bianca Long's mentorship nurtured the skills and confidence of these emerging artists while encouraging cultural knowledge-sharing. The pride and wellbeing generated by these opportunities extend far beyond the event, reinforcing identity within families and communities.

The Piriwa women's participation at KAFTA stands as a testament to how culture, creativity, and collaboration offer meaningful pathways for remote First Nations women to preserve their language and traditions.

Clare Wood

Enterprise Partnerships WA

Bianca Long is reshaping what leadership looks like in remote Australia. Through her business Jaru Girl, she mentors the women of Piriwa in leadership, enterprise, and cultural business development, playing a key role in their remarkable success at KAFTA.

In August, with support from the Mary Ward International Women's Leadership Fund, Bianca took her own vision to the national stage at the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair (DAAF), showcasing her new fashion and textile line, The Milky Water Collection.

Each year, DAAF brings together dozens of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and connects them with international audiences. The opportunity allowed Bianca to broaden her connections with industry leaders, galleries, and buyers, while shining a spotlight on the extraordinary talent of remote First Nations women.

Her success at DAAF drew strong interest and, most significantly, has resulted in Bianca being invited to present The Milky Water Collection at the 2025 ganbu marra Runway event at Melbourne Fashion Week this October.

It is our hope that this exposure will amplify Bianca's leadership profile and inspire other First Nations women to combine cultural knowledge with business skills, grow their economic participation, and create benefits that extend far beyond Bianca herself.

Leading Through Adversity *in West Bengal*

In the border region of Basirhat, India, where hardship and vulnerability run deep, a quiet revolution is unfolding. Amidst economic uncertainty and social stigma, a leadership and empowerment program is transforming survivors of trafficking, sexual assault, and domestic violence into courageous leaders. These are women rising above their pasts to protect and support others in similar situations.

In many communities across India, survivors of abuse face isolation and shame, trapped by cultural norms that silence them. But the Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre program breaks those chains. It offers survivors healing, a chance to reclaim their dignity, build resilience, and grow into powerful advocates.

Through counselling, mental health support, and legal aid, survivors find safe spaces to share their stories and realise they are not alone. Supported over a period of three years, these women develop leadership skills and become peer mentors, guiding others through trauma toward recovery.

Many participants train as nursing assistants and healthcare workers. These new roles allow them to support fellow survivors, provide compassionate care, and earn a steady income, turning

their personal struggles into sources of strength and opportunity. Others cultivate organic produce or learn tailoring, while some return to school, opening new doors for themselves and their families.

The program also trains survivors to lead awareness campaigns in schools and communities, breaking the silence and reducing abuse. Partnerships with local authorities have helped rescue victims and offer timely support, showing that empowered survivors are a vital force for change.

One participant shared, *“Before joining the group, I thought it only happened to me. Now we fight back together as a team.”*

What began as a small initiative in a remote border region has grown into a powerful model of survivor-led transformation. By centring healing, skill-building, and leadership, the program helps women reclaim their lives while reshaping their communities. Survivors are showing that with proper support, trauma can lead to leadership, and resilience can become a collective movement for justice.

Kaithlyn McNab

Mary Ward International

Against All Odds

At just 14, Prisha* left home to marry, hoping for a better life, only to endure years of abuse from her husband and his family. When financial pressures mounted, she was lured with the promise of work in Mumbai but was trafficked and severely exploited. With the help of her brother, she managed to escape and return home.

Initially, her family, burdened by shame, refused to let her join the Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre's program. Persistent outreach from staff and fellow survivors eventually won their trust. Through the program, Prisha received training in organic farming, enabling her to contribute to her family's income, reduce household costs, and sell surplus produce. Today, she is one of the group's most active leaders, raising awareness about domestic abuse and trafficking, guiding peers, and identifying women at risk.



Return to Hope

At 16, schoolgirl Anitha* faced a heartbreaking ordeal after running away with a boy she met online, only to be locked up and abused. Rescued by police with the help of the Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre, she returned home deeply traumatised, withdrawn, and unable to continue school.

With the guidance of staff and support from fellow survivors, Anitha gradually rebuilt her confidence and sense of self, receiving counselling, legal aid, and encouragement to resume her studies.

Today, Anitha is back in school, an active leader of the program that helped her reclaim her life, and a strong voice against trafficking and online exploitation. She speaks in schools and communities about the dangers of social media grooming, helping other girls recognise and resist manipulation.

Fighting for Freedom

Munna* grew up in a remote village near the India-Bangladesh border, where poverty was constant and girls were often pressured into early marriage. Despite threats from a boy who tried to intimidate her into marrying him, Munna refused to surrender her dreams. After a terrifying attempt to kidnap her, she found refuge and support through the leadership and empowerment program.

With regular counselling, legal support, and emotional care, Munna rebuilt her confidence. She completed a certified nursing assistant course and now works in a nearby hospital. Today, Munna not only earns a steady income but also provides compassionate care to others, proving that safety and dignity are possible, even after deep trauma.



* All names changed for privacy.

Mary Ward's Vision in Action:

Transforming Lives in Rădăuți, Romania

In preparation for Becoming One this November, Mary Ward International is working with the Congregation of Jesus (CJ Sisters) to advance their mission in Rădăuți, Romania. Grounded in the shared charism of Mary Ward, this new partnership reflects a joint commitment to providing vulnerable children with education and opportunity.

In the town of Rădăuți, near Romania's northern border with Ukraine, the CJ Sisters are leading an after-school program that brings long-term opportunity and care to some of the most vulnerable children and families in the region. While the Sisters have played an important humanitarian role in the Ukrainian refugee crisis, their central mission remains focused on building a future of dignity and independence for local children, especially girls, who face the daily realities of poverty, exclusion, and limited access to education.



A SAFE PLACE TO LEARN

In Rădăuți, the Sisters run Centrul Maria Ward, a social centre that provides daily care for seventy children aged four to fifteen, most of them girls. These children come from families experiencing extreme hardship, often affected by the long-term impacts of poverty. The Centre provides a structured environment that helps children stay in school and achieve academic success.

Each afternoon, the children arrive at the Centre to receive a hot lunch and homework assistance, a vital lifeline, as many parents are unable to provide academic support at home. Later in the day, the children are served a home-cooked dinner before returning to their families.

BUILDING SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE

The program places a strong emphasis on educational development, with after-school tutoring, career guidance, and school supplies helping children to feel prepared and confident in the classroom. Cultural and educational activities reinforce learning while nurturing creativity and critical thinking. The Centre emphasises personal care and emotional wellbeing. Individual psychological counselling, speech therapy, and emotional care are available for those experiencing trauma or instability, and many children use the Centre's washing and laundry facilities.

EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Alongside academic and practical assistance, social development is a key part of the Centre's work. Children are encouraged to grow in confidence, learn healthy interpersonal skills, and build resilience through recreation and structured peer interactions. The Centre's staff and volunteers work closely with each child to ensure they feel seen, supported, and capable of shaping their own future. Life-skills education equips older children with the tools to live independently and with dignity.

FAMILY OUTREACH

Recognising that children thrive when their families are strong, the project includes services for parents, especially mothers, through counselling and material assistance. These services include food assistance, help with accessing medication, and guidance in parenting, mental health, and crisis management. These wraparound efforts strengthen family relationships, reduce the risk of child-family separation, and help create more stable home environments.

A BRIGHT FUTURE

While challenges remain, the Sisters continue their steadfast commitment to education and long-term development. In a region where early school leaving is common and poverty can shape a child's future before they even begin, this after-school program is making a real difference.

With Mary Ward International's support, the Sisters are helping children stay in school, grow in confidence, and discover their full potential. Most importantly, this investment ensures children in Rădăuți are not left behind. Instead of a future limited by poverty, they are offered the tools to build a life shaped by possibility.

Responding in Times of Crisis

Although the war in Ukraine has brought additional pressure to the region, it has also shown the adaptability of the Sisters. In early 2022, the Centre became an active part of the refugee response, distributing warm clothing, food, and hygiene supplies to families fleeing Ukraine, many of whom were accompanied by young children and students.

The Sisters also opened their laundry facilities to wash bedding from refugee shelters and provided temporary accommodation for displaced families and humanitarian workers when no other space was available.

Kirstin Del Beato
Mary Ward International



