



Empowering through Freedom, Justice and Sincerity

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**MARY WARD LORETO FOUNDATION
IN ALBANIA**
www.albaniahope.com

Background

Mary Ward Loreto Foundation (MWL) is a non-profit organization providing development programmes for vulnerable communities in Albania. This organization has as its inspiration the charism of Mary Ward. The core values of Mary Ward Loreto are FREEDOM, JUSTICE and SINCERITY and are derived from the philosophy of Mary Ward a 16th century English woman who was the Foundress of an international religious congregation. The focus of all of the work of Mary Ward Loreto is related to the work against human trafficking. The organization forms partnerships and networks, working with 10 main groups; women in rural and informal regions of Albania, direct action with victims

of trafficking, groups from all over Albania raising awareness with those who are vulnerable to being trafficked, Roma children, vulnerable youth, men in poverty, European Network Against Trafficking, pastoral support in prisons and the education project. The board is comprised of highly professional members of the community serving to steer the activities of the organization towards the fulfilment of the mission of the organization. The staff is mostly young, remarkably enthusiastic and constantly learning in order to complete the complex and demanding tasks of each and every activity in the highest possible standards.

Mary Ward Loreto Mission, Vision and Values

Mission:

Mary Ward Loreto Foundation is planting hope with a human rights approach to combat modern day slavery. This challenging mission is implemented through works of justice, education, grassroots action and systemic change. The call is to eradicate poverty, the prime cause of human trafficking.

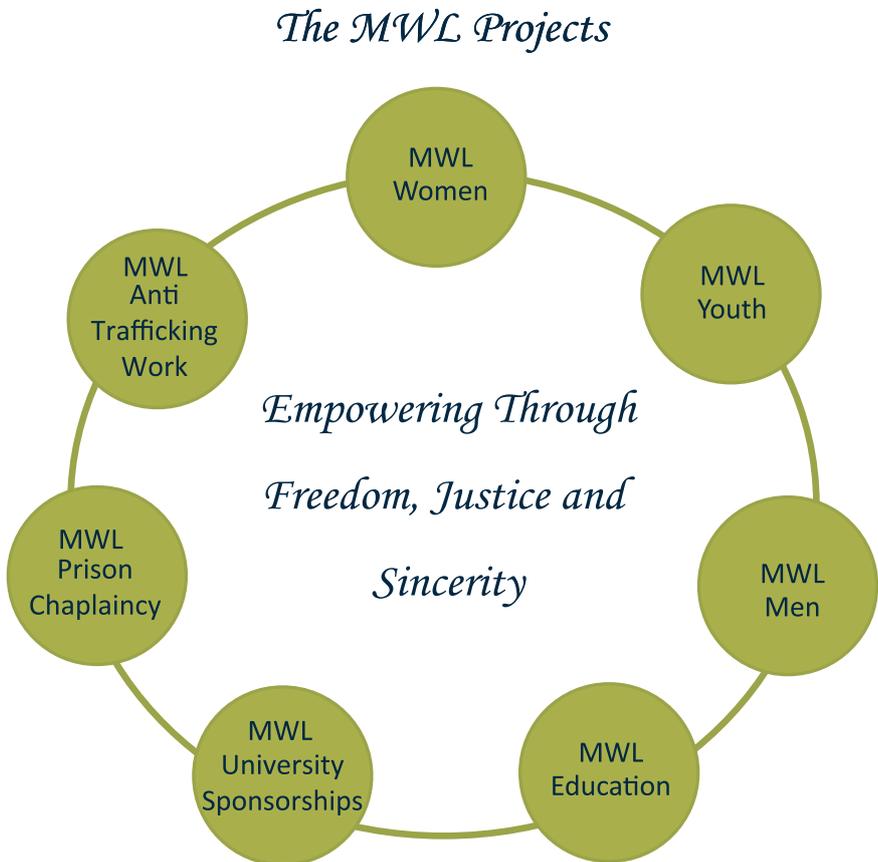


Vision:

The vision of Mary Ward Loreto Foundation is based on the charism of Mary Ward which inspires people to reach their full potential. Mary Ward Loreto will be known, in the local situation, for strong advocacy, operational excellence and will take the initiative to enable vulnerable populations to discover their value through human and economic empowerment. Networking, collaboration and partnerships in Albania and across borders is the key to the accomplishment of the MWL mission. This will end human trafficking, a modern day slavery.

Values:

Freedom, Justice, Truth, Hope and Joy



Mary Ward Loreto Women project

Every day women and girls in Albania face discrimination, poverty and violence just because they are female. We believe that if we empower women, we empower a nation.

With more than 4 years of experience working in rural and isolated areas of Albania, MWL understands that a comprehensive programme addressing the social and economic empowerment of women and girls is the most effective approach. Women and girls in Albania struggle for economic and social equality in a patriarchal society that offers limited job opportunities and are a continuous potential risk of being trafficked.

The core of Mary Ward Loreto Women project is the prevention against trafficking in persons through providing another alternative: Empowerment for social transformation. The work is developed at the grass roots level with the poorest of the poor, and at the same time working at systemic change through networking, advocacy and lobbying. This work is to make sure that the women have the necessary resources, rights and opportunities to ensure their development and that of the communities around them.

Our methodology of work is based on the values of Mary Ward's spirituality, Freedom, Justice and Sincerity. Within this context is the added value of social transformation for change.

Through the MWL Women Centres in 6 regions of Albania, we bring women together in a safe space in order that they can learn about themselves, life in general, business skills, and other opportunities which seed hope for a brighter future.

The impact for the women is that they:

- *Reduce their vulnerability through increased access to statutory and non-statutory services.*
- *Women, as key community members are active and involved in problem solving.*
- *The community, the school and CSOs are working together to create a sustainable approach for youth empowerment.*
- *Improvement of health information for women related to their health issues and reduction of cases of women in risk of their lives.*
- *Improve women's self esteem*
- *To ensure the employment and self-employment opportunities of women and reduce their vulnerability.*
- *The women living in vulnerable areas are able to generate incomes to reduce their poverty and to provide for their children. This will lead to a protected future without the risk of human trafficking*



- *Through working in networks in different aspects of anti-trafficking work: prevention, against demand, direct support for the victims, there is a reduction of human trafficking in Europe and within Albania*

Changing the social and cultural norms which deny a woman the right to become

whom they are meant to be, is a challenge and a mission for all of us. Once the system begins to shift, the chain reaction will be unstoppable. It will affect every aspect of their lives: education, economic opportunities, health and representation in society. The result: stronger women, stronger families, stronger communities and finally, a stronger nation.



Mary Ward Loreto Youth Project

MWL Foundation via MWL Youth project is committed to working with vulnerable people in Albania, especially youth, to empower them by building their capacities as human beings in the Albanian society, by developing their awareness of their human rights and enabling them to claim these rights and by developing their skills to ensure economic empowerment.



The work is focused on empowering young people to function fully in their own communities, to be employed, and to become freed for citizenship, and able to animate change in Albania. We aim to enhance personal development of youth, notably vulnerable populations, enabling them to claim their right to human dignity and a right to work.

Goal: To empower young people to function fully in their own communities, to be employed, and to become freed for citizenship and animate change in Albania.

The impact will be:

- *To provide a safe and stable environment for young people where they are not*

concerned by gang activity, violence or fear of crime.

- *To support disadvantaged young people into employment and training, and to provide access to opportunities of which they may not be aware, or may not understand to be open to them*
- *To re-establish the confidence of young people in themselves and their communities so they can play a full part in the life and activities going on around them*

The Leadership Program for Youth is a new initiative by Mary Ward Loreto Youth Project. This programme will tackle social issues that have been neglected so far. The aim of this program is to make the youngsters aware of the fact that they can be part of an action, leading to systemic change, in their communities

We will sustain our operations by working in partnership with all organizations, projects and working boards that will be part of this enterprise, thus these youth will become icons of leadership into the future.



Mary Ward Loreto Education Project

Mary Ward Loreto Education aims to expose the weaknesses, the corruption and the strengths of the education system in Albania and then to define the priorities and challenges in the future for the Mary Ward Loreto Education Project in Albania. It aims to research the reality of the education system from Kindergarten to university level and to note any good qualities which might emerge in the research. It will raise awareness of the findings of this research and the reality it exposes of the ethics and standards controlling the education system in Albania.



“Albania, as an official EU candidate country, has much progress to make toward the EU’s education benchmarks before its accession. While education improvement in Albania is supported by its government and growing economy, the country still faces many obstacles to matching the educational outputs of its neighbors in Western Europe...” (Albania Progress Report, European Commission 2014)

The research on ethics in education is a unique undertaking ever to be tackled in

Albania. The issue of ethics has not been in the spotlight of policymakers and duty bearers alike. This, combined with the social and cultural deviations happening in the last quarter of a century, has brought about unacceptable norms in society such as an alarming low level of ethics, behavior such as physical punishment, bribery, and using of favors to have a privileged treatment for the child. This research has taken into analysis all levels of the education system in Albania, starting from preschool up to the university level, and has also taken into account an analysis of all the three main actors in the education system: children, parents and teachers.

The research followed a complex methodological design, opting for a mixed method, so that the phenomena could be brought into light through the quantitative research, and the exploration of the factors that drive such behavior to be analyzed through the qualitative research.

Based on the randomization of the population, more than 2,000 participants nationwide participated in the research. The finalization of the research was held at a conference where all actors could listen to each-other in order to start a necessary change process for a fair, just and more ethical Albania.

The Study Report “ETHICS IN THE ALBANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM”:

<http://www.albaniahope.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Study-Report-%E2%80%9CEthics-in-the-Education-System-in-Albania%E2%80%9D.pdf>

Mary Ward Loreto Men's Project (MWLM)

*The Goal of the Project:
Strengthening the role of men in gender equality issues, abuse and violence, and in the promotion of development towards economic and human empowerment of men. This in itself contributes to the development of a better society in Albania.*



“ A Good start is half of the work”,(a proverb in Albania). MWLM in the first year of implementation of this project has made big strides to accomplish the goal of the project. Human Development programmes, launched in January 2017, have broken many barriers which have been controlling the mentality created so far in the Albanian society. Hundreds of men, in different areas of Albania, have become actively engaged in the training, topics have been covered such as: Gender equality and gender based violence, addiction to alcohol and gambling, use of property and efficient use of

agricultural land. presently and into the future other topics are being covered such as: Good parenting and training against human trafficking. Besides this essential human development process for the men's project, the development of economic empowerment of men has continued, in communities with less development opportunities, and in parallel to the human development training. In this context, dozens of men are enrolled in vocational training courses with the support of MWL. In the north of Albania training is being organised to facilitate collection treatment of medicinal plants, that are found in abundance in these areas and can be a very good self-employment opportunity for local residents. The MWLM project has also started work to organize local forums, forums

where men and women will be able to discuss and address the specific problems of their community and join forces and voices to implement concrete and systemic changes in their lives.... This is just the start....



The Scholarship Program for Central and Eastern Europe has been developed to participate in a constructive, professional and committed manner in the efforts of individuals and institutions to realize objectives for the common good.

The program is aiming to support highly skilled marginalised students in their academic and professional training and also to assist them in their intellectual and human growth.

*Goals of the program are:
To develop skills of leadership, to strengthen trans-disciplinary exchange and to intensify international cooperation and cross-cultural dialogue.*

Four Albanian students have been sponsored to study a Masters degree abroad since this programme was offered by MWL who ensured that the application and the fulfillment of the requirements from the donors was fulfilled. We are pleased to say that the first four sponsorships have been a great success. Currently two students are being sponsored, one in Albania and another abroad.



Analysis and observations of the situation in prisons:

The country has made significant progress in relation to detention centers but there are still many problems to be solved. The Council of Europe has considered how to improve the situation of prisons in some areas but has also identified many problems that require solutions. According to the observations, prisons in Albania are considered to be insufficient in services and in relationship to prisoner's human rights and behavioural change.



Activities of negotiation with families.

One of the most difficult and most necessary works is the reconciliation with families, especially for those who have committed a crime within the family. The important work is also to establish contacts with the family who visit prison to meet those who are convicted of blood feuds. In both cases, the negotiation is difficult, because it requires a lot of time but also a lot of movement and accrues heavy financial costs.

Who is Mary Ward?

In 1609, a young Yorkshire woman left England to follow God's call. She broke new ground in her service to those who would otherwise lack sufficient care and nurture, especially in the education of women.

She gathered a growing number of young women who shared her vision and commitment for a ministry "in the world". They took the same constitutions as The Society of Jesus, supported by a spirituality that sought freedom, justice and sincerity in all things.

This way of life emphasises both reflection and action to serve "wherever the need is greatest". Her journey to this end was difficult and painful. She died seeing little fruit for her toil. Referring all to God she encouraged everyone to be of good cheer.



Her gravestone reads:

"To love the poor, persevere in the same, live, die, and rise with them, was all the aim of Mary Ward..." Her example and writings have much to teach us.

Friends of Mary Ward

The Friends of Mary Ward meet regularly to deepen their spiritual lives. This group has been the catalyst for ensuring that the Mary Ward charism remains alive in Albania.

400 years ago Mary Ward Said:

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



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

Mary Ward Loreto is a network amongst many networks.

This is how we perceive ourselves and how we know we are able to function for the greatest fruit. The networks are at every level of our work. At grass roots level we are in networks and collaborating with members of local communities, in the vulnerable regions of Albania. We network with families, local leaders of the community, statutory and private NGOs working in the local town and region.

For systemic change we work in collaboration and in networks with all organisations who can help us to effect this change, whether it be water companies,

Ministers at national or at local level.

Health authorities are challenged and collaborated with to ensure that the services are provided for the needs of vulnerable people who lack dignity. This work is on going in the fields of medicine and education where human rights are not been respected and a joined-up approach is needed to effect change.

The Church has been a partner from the inception with MWL and it has been a support for much of the action. MWL is on the Civil Society Platform in Europe Against Trafficking and is a coopted member of the National referral Mechanism Against Trafficking in Albania.

Since its beginnings MWL has worked in partnership with The NGOs Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation (RENATE), Different and Equal (D&E) and The Project Little Angels (SHKEJ).





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Foundation

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***"Be such as you appear and
appear such as you be."
"Do ordinary things well."
Mary Ward***

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