



Join a global network of individuals committed to social justice and education for all.

Collective Voices

Community ownership through proactive partnerships

Access to education and nutrition, feeling safe, a community where women and children are valued and heard.... for some these are unattainable necessities without the vital help of Mary Ward International.

Mary Ward International Australia (MWIA) supports the works for education, justice and development undertaken by Loreto Sisters and their colleagues in areas of need in Australia and around the world.



One of the major projects MWIA is currently supporting focuses on empowering the community to take an active part in their community's development and planning. The *"Collective Voices"* project aims to create linkages with the service providers and local government institutions to ensure sustainability of their community. The *Collective Voices* project was launched in Panighatta in the Loreto region of Darjeeling India, on International Women's Day on 8 March 2009.

Community ownership through proactive partnership is key to this project. The goal is to create a model "Woman-Youth-Child Friendly Community" whereby women, youth and children will be helped to find a voice in the planning process in their community and have access to education, health, nutrition and protection. The project aims at bringing the three key stakeholder groups closer together: women, adolescents and children; service providers; and Panchayat representatives (akin to local government council members).



The Mary Ward Development Centre (MWDC) in Darjeeling is collaborating with the Child In Need Institute (CINI) to undertake this project. The MWDC is the Australian equivalent of MWI in Darjeeling and the CINI is a national NGO championing health and nutrition, education and protection, co-founded by Australian Loreto Sister, Sr Pauline Prince.

The MWDC's and CINI's strong belief is that the key to long term and sustainable change to poverty and inequality is to build partnerships that are child and women centred and friendly. The target is that in three to five years the community will be empowered to make their own decisions regarding their development and access the government schemes available to them.

As well as providing appropriate services this also means that children and women are seen as main stakeholders and are empowered through knowing their rights and entitlements; to participate in every aspect of the social development process.

The *Collective Voices* project includes the following key milestones:

- Undertake needs assessment and situational analysis - sample survey (5% of the total population) substantiate with qualitative techniques.
- Develop communication plan by reviewing existing government and non government materials, develop new materials with literacy, age and gender specific integrated messaging.
- Carry out training of community members to strengthen their capacity to participate:
 - Training of Master level trainers (Project Implementation Team members)
 - Training of primary stakeholders - women's group, children and adolescents
 - Training of secondary stakeholders: service providers and Panchayat representatives.
- Implement community activities such as interpersonal communication through home-based visits and information distribution, awareness programmes like fairs, street theatre, help desk at the local market, celebrating one-time events such as World AIDS day, Anti-Child Labour Day and International Women's Day.
- Form community support groups comprising critical service providers, Panchayat members, women and adolescents, as well as children's and youth clubs aiming at peer based support.
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for the project.
- Document the program process and developing an *operational guide or handbook* for the model on women, youth and child friendly communities.
- Hold a conference/workshop at the conclusion of the project to share information, outcomes and evaluation, and possibilities for project replication elsewhere.

We are able to fund this project in partnership with Loreto Family International and generous individuals.

The professionalism in the planning and development of this project is an exemplary example of the well thought out, important and sustainable projects that MWIA funds. To help MWIA continue supporting this worthwhile project, please email Janet Palafox, Executive Officer MWIA mwiaustralia@loreto.org.au or call (03) 9813 4023.

When you support MWIA you join a global network of like minded individuals, families, groups and businesses, who value social justice, health access and education for all. Join us and make a difference. www.loreto.org.au

