

## Volunteering with Mary Ward International Australia

The MWIA Volunteer Program is aimed at Loreto students, past-pupils, staff, parents and friends of the wider Loreto network wishing to become more involved with Loreto works for justice and development in Australia and overseas.

Volunteering with MWIA provides an opportunity to gain a rich insight into the work of Loreto Sisters in Australia and abroad. Both long and short term placements are fully self-funded and involve working with a specific project in a Loreto program in Australia or overseas.

Why volunteer with MWIA?

- Gain a greater understanding of the work of Loreto Sisters locally and overseas.
- Stand in solidarity with the most marginalised people and learn from them.
- Use your skills and abilities to provide technical assistance in Loreto works for justice and development.
- Have an important cross-cultural experience.

What qualities can I offer as an MWIA volunteer?

- Motivation.
- Openness to cross-cultural experience.
- Willingness to learn from others.
- Cultural sensitivity.
- Realistic self-assessment: strengths, limitations.
- Ability to reflect on self, others and situation.
- Demonstrated experience of conflict resolution or problem solving.
- Capacity for team work.

For how long can I volunteer?

- Placements vary depending on the need of each ministry or program.

Where can I volunteer?

- MWIA supports Loreto ministries and programs in Australia, Timor Leste, India, Kenya, Zambia and Vietnam. Volunteer placement depends on the need of the project partners.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about MWIA, projects, how you can support us through volunteering or donations, please visit [www.loreto.org.au](http://www.loreto.org.au) or email [mwiaustralia@loreto.org.au](mailto:mwiaustralia@loreto.org.au)

## Volunteer Preparation

*By Caitlin Leahy, MWIA Assistant*

Throughout March, April and May 2009, a group of young women have been meeting to prepare for their roles as MWIA volunteers.

Sr Janet Palafox is the host of fortnightly MWIA volunteer preparation sessions at her community house. The sessions begin with a home-cooked culinary feast whipped up by the sisters-in-residence. The young women are then guided by Sr Mercia Richards through important aspects of Ignatian spirituality.

These methods of reflection encourage us to think deeply about everyday events, our personal attributes, challenges we face and the way we make sense of our experiences. Reflection is central to volunteering. We will be in an unfamiliar place and facing challenging situations which will call on our strength and courage.



The sessions are then followed by a preparation day. On our preparation day we talked about Catholic social teaching, Mary Ward values, charity and development, crossing culture, coming home and the practicalities of volunteering. Ten young women attended, seven of whom are leaving for placements in June and July. Five of the women are going to India (Kolkata or Darjeeling) and two to Peru. Sisters Libby Rogerson, Angela Slattery and Janet Palafox led discussion activities and I gave an account of volunteering with the Jesuit Refugee Service in Cambodia in 2005 (organised by Sr Margaret Burchell, previous MWIA Executive Officer).

We shared our ideas about what it means to volunteer, different models of development, how the values of Mary Ward relate to our world and how they are threatened. It was a chance to raise fears and concerns about living and working in another culture and assisting with complex and confronting issues. It was an opportunity to talk about how to make sense of our experiences on return to Australia, and how we can continue to work with MWIA to support Loreto projects around the world.