

# JPIC – SOUTH AFRICA



## MARY WARD WOMEN IN THE FIELD Connie Gilbert



Connie Gilbert



### IBVM Corporate Stance on Human Trafficking

**‘As members of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, an international and multicultural congregation of women religious, we pledge to work for the eradication of all forms of human trafficking and its causes, particularly among women and children, wherever we live and minister’**

The above statement was adopted at the General Congregation held in September 2014 at Loyola, Spain.



*Lending a helping hand at ‘Under His Wings’. See page 2*

My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

My story is one of celebration, the celebration of a long and wonderful relationship with the Loreto Sisters.

When I was baptized at St Peters Church in the Strand on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1961, six weeks after my birth, on the day the Church celebrates that lovely feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Loreto Sisters were already residing at their then Strand Convent.

My brothers and I met them in the convent school, on Sundays for Catechism with Sister Cecilia and Sister Deirdre Mellett, who could say funny things with a strict face and a no-nonsense look that made you sit up and listen to her lessons (taught in Afrikaans!) But she was interesting and I loved what they taught me. We slipped onto the school grounds only to pick the sweet fleshy red berries from trees which still blossom in the same places today. We always tried to pick just enough before Sister Conception and her dog, Goldie would come round the corner. Goldie we were never scared of, but Conception pointed at us with a stick!

We attended the Afrikaans classes on Sundays. Always only coloured children! White (and black) girls who could afford to, attended the Loreto School. I don’t think these things mattered much to me. I loved the small government school I went to. Packed to the brim with children, I started my school education on the floor. But our storybooks told the loveliest fairytales and I had no problem with sums, so I lacked nothing.

After I matriculated I was at home, alone. All my classmates seemed to have moved on. So with my name on the nursing hospitals’ waiting lists, I went to the Church and found ...company.

I don’t know if silence or the Blessed Sacrament was my first companion. I slipped into the Church every day long before the day’s Mass was celebrated (the doors were always open!) and drank in the beauty and the silence, my eyes always on the tabernacle and the light that signified the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. I envied the sisters for living so close to the Church when I had to walk so far to get there and back home every

day. But Sister Mary, who was the sacristan then, noticed me as I noticed her, and she became my first Loreto companion. She invited me to the convent, we had a cup of tea and talked. Things moved quickly after that. I joined the sisters for Mass early every morning in the chapel, spent my afternoons reading the stories of the saints in the convent library, while eating Conception’s best apple tart – she was now a friend!

Many other things happened impossible to share – the youth group that started in our small house with Sister Frances Bedingfield (never did I know how her surname fitted into Mary Ward’s history!), how she accompanied us into places of miserable poverty to visit the old and the sick, equipped with our rosaries; bringing to an end my nursing studies to train as a teacher. Then Sister Eileen who opened up to me qualities of ‘verity’ and ‘felicity’ during our vocation weekends; staying at Sea Point while studying, drinking milo with Sister Cecilia in front of Sister Lelia’s warm stove, the foghorn lulling me to sleep and waking me up in the mornings for Mass. And Sisters Deirdre Harman and Monica and Scholastica at the Novitiate in Plumstead, swimming at Muizenberg beach (remember!) and teaching at the school for the deaf (14 years!) with the Dominican Sisters... It feels as though I am sharing a celebration of my childhood years with the sisters, in a home rich with the qualities only women of great love could foster.

The Loreto Sisters didn’t ‘do’ things for me, or ‘give’ me things; never patronized me. All of them treated me with great equality, respect and utter sincerity, and befriended me when I was a young girl. Now, all grown up and in my 53<sup>rd</sup> year! I work in the very same place where this deep relationship took shape. The entire convent and chapel now inhabited by the learners and staff of Loreto Primary School Strand. Here I teach and coordinate the Religious Education and Life Skills Programme with the help of

the Principal and staff and everyone else concerned. I have now also become an 'official' associate of the IBVM when I joined the group of women (sisters and associates) belonging to the Mary Ward Open Circle in Strand-Somerset West.

My own home, still simple, has become as richly blessed. Because of my mother, 84 years old and sick, the Eucharist now comes to our home every Sunday. I am still foster mother to my sister's children: Amy, 19, who keeps me connected to the difficult world in which young women are growing up, and Peter, 12, who very happily is now able to attend the Loreto school and serves in the same church where I still proclaim the Word during some of the Masses. And Dunes – a young man from Congo Brazzaville who stays with us and has helped to resurrect my deceased father's prized vegetable garden with fingers full of the green fertility of Africa – has recently been instituted as an Extraordinary Minister at St Peters Parish.

So the Blessed Sacrament is still central here, and with our vegetable garden, six fruit trees, one vine and eleven chickens, we are working towards joining those who are striving for a sustainable future!

Finally, having known something of the plight of people struggling with poverty and discrimination, the connection and involvement with people working so closely with the UN has become another absolute gift in my life. I therefore pray that the vision, ethics and actions for a sustainable and peaceful future and world will reflect Mary Ward's hope that these great things will be done for the glory of God, and that we will strive to do this with her 'Just Soul' qualities of sincerity (truthfulness/integrity), justice and freedom.

Connie Gilbert



Mary Ward International Australia Volunteers



Harriet Murphy and Ed McMahon photographed at Kankwilimba C. S.

My name is Harriet and along with Ed, we are the first volunteers to be sent to Lukulu by Mary Ward International. We are from Melbourne, Australia. We have spent the last nine weeks teaching English, Maths and Integrated Science to grade four and five students. We were posted to Kankwilimba Community School, a beautiful school that began in 2006 and now has over 200 pupils.....

Teaching was, at first, very daunting and challenging. The grade five class I was teaching had quite limited English, despite most of the curriculum being taught in English, and it took them a while to get used to my accent. But the staff at Kankwilimba were very welcoming and helpful, and both Ed and I were teaching our classes alongside local teachers, which helped to overcome the language barrier.

Over the nine weeks I got to know the grade fives really well; they were a wonderful class, always eager to learn. Sometimes I asked them to teach me Silozi, and although my pronunciation was probably awful, I started to include Silozi words in my lessons and the students seemed to really enjoy it. One thing that really struck me was how much they wanted to be at school; there was a few grade fives whose parents actively didn't want them to attend school, and yet they still came to class regularly.....

Extract from 14 December 'Letter from Lukulu' written by Harriet Murphy. 'Letters from Lukulu' can be found in [www.loretosisters.org.za](http://www.loretosisters.org.za)



UNDER HIS WINGS

'Under His Wings', situated in the poverty-stricken area of Sir Lowry's Pass village, is a feeding scheme outreach run by Pearl Stryders. Pearl feeds 400 children daily breakfast and lunch. Pearl lives by faith and relies entirely on donations.

Debbie van der Westhuizen, a Mary Ward Open Circle Associate, introduced Loreto Primary School, Strand, to 'Under His Wings' approximately two years ago. Loreto children donate maize meal, sugar and milk. The children are also encouraged to donate second-hand clothing and to contribute to the Christmas party held each year.

On Thursday 16 October, together with Fr. Martin Pender and Debbie, 12 Grade 6 Loreto children visited 'Under His Wings' during breakfast feeding-time of the toddlers and younger children. Pearl has an efficient routine and the 40-50 children present were fed in an orderly manner. The school-going children had been fed earlier.

A huge concern was the lack of sound and joy among the children. They lack the vocabulary to be able to converse, and after expressing our concern to Pearl, she explained that the children are a 'nuisance' to their parents. They are shown little or no love and are harshly treated by them.

Another concern is that the children don't attend nursery school, but after being fed they play in the street unsupervised.

'Under His Wings' gives me a sense of hope and also one of hopelessness. Hope because angels like Pearl who see to the very basic human need of food, and hopelessness because the problem of poverty coupled with alcohol and drug abuse is so complex. A huge effort needs to be made by many to uplift and break the cycle of poverty of a few.

Contributed by Delmence Prevost  
A MWOC Associate



During 2014, MWOC Associates, St. Peter's parishioners and Grade 7 learners from Loreto Strand made 80 sleeping bags for the Street People's Centre in Somerset West.

# STRATEGIC

Based on the UN survey ‘MY WORLD’ and to encourage global participation in the Post-2015 Agenda, IBVM/Loret(t)o UN NGO in New York together with The Mary Ward Centre and Cardinal Carter Academy, both in Toronto Canada, invited participation from all countries where Loreto are present, to further encourage discussion and action around this important deliberation of where to next? The Community of Southern Africa enthusiastically committed to this project of global collaboration through the Arts. Only one submission is permitted from each country. The three Loreto schools worked collaboratively in South Africa towards their submission, while Loreto in Lukulu Zambia worked with the secondary school girls who we support in dormitory accommodation.

### THROUGH THE ARTS - LUKULU

In Lukulu, the early stages of the process engaged the girls in awareness about the ‘World We Want’ UN survey, watching a video compiled by the UN HQ in Zambia about development needs in Zambia, and then encouraging them to identify their own prioritised needs as the voice of young women living in a very impoverished and marginalised area of Zambia. Each group of girls enthusiastically came up with their top six needs which generally covered the areas of education, health care, water and sanitation, transport, good governance, jobs, poverty reduction and human rights especially of women and girls. Subsequent sessions took place where the girls refined these priorities and agreed on the final theme of Education. They themselves became very aware that education is the foundation of development and thus came up with the slogan ‘Education: the most powerful source of development’. This became the caption of their final presentation (back page). Identifying with where they live, the map of Zambia became the centre piece of their art work around which they put bold statements of what was needed in terms of education from their own experience in Lukulu – the basic essentials of schools, books and teachers! The girls’ enjoyment in designing the banner was surpassed only by the fun of doing the final painting. Painting was a new experience for most of them and they really enjoyed it. But even more importantly, the girls themselves became very learned about the UN, development needs of Zambia, and perhaps most beneficial was the fact that they reflected upon and were able to express their very own experiences and critical needs. *Pat Hanvey IBVM*

### THROUGH THE ARTS - STRAND

The three Loreto schools in South Africa decided on the topic ‘A Good Education’. With the topic determined we decided on a photographic representation of our school, our education through the ages. A large amount of research was required for the task – including clothing worn, genders enrolled, curriculum taught, types of technology used during the different eras, as well as types of resources and posters that would have decorated the classroom walls.... Different groups of Grade 6 and 7 learners became involved in researching the era and the making of the props for the photographs. The props included suitcases, rulers, books, classroom equipment, posters and so forth for the various eras....

Finally it was time to put everything together! The selected learners were dressed appropriately, as well as the teacher, Stacey Galloway. Once the necessary photographs were taken, they were carefully edited to create the effects of photographs taken during the specific era. After the editing was completed, all it took was the click of an email ‘send’ button and our part of this amazing project was over. *Stacey Galloway*

### INTER- LORETO DAY - PRETORIA

14 August 2014  
Groups comprising a mixture of Grade 6 learners from Loreto Convent School and Loreto Queenswood went to a variety of venues for their outreach and some reflect on their experiences.

*Torha Molaka:-*  
We went to the Mercy Centre at Winterveldt. We separated into groups. Some went to the old age centre. Some went the crèche and I went to the crèche. We were asked to pick two or more children. We asked them their names. We played with them and gave them the toys that we brought. It was time to eat so we helped them to sit down and wash their hands. After eating we sang happy songs and gave them cupcakes. I will never forget that day!

*Kirnisha, Mbaliyethu and Michelle:-*  
We went to Paul Jungnickel Home in Swavelpoort. It was a very touching experience. We met both young and old who are mentally and physically disabled. We helped them decorate for their children’s day the following day. Their social worker said they are the only people who help children with special needs. Before we left we sang Stay, Joy, Giddy and Gloria

Sancta Maria Girls Dormitory – Lukulu, Zambia



Loreto Convent School, Nana Sita St, Pretoria, South Africa

The school created the following tryptic.

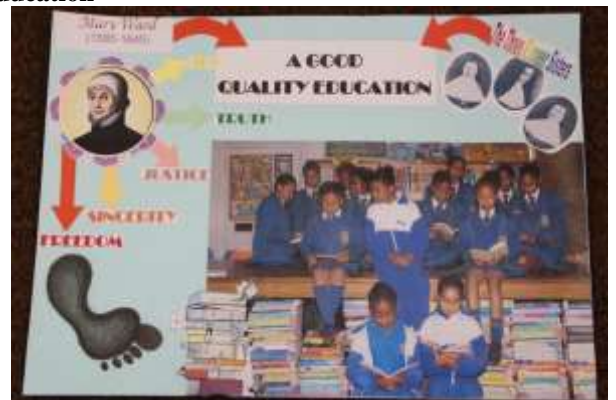
1. This image depicts the voting process, whereby the school chose 'a good quality education' as the most important goal in post 2015 development agenda.



2. This image depicts the various faces of education in South Africa.



3. This image depicts the hoped for values in future education



Loreto Primary School, Strand, South Africa

The school used a photographic representation of education at Loreto Strand through the ages. Here are 3 of the 6 photos.



80 years ago



20 years ago



The future