

# Mary's World

February 2017



Bringing the gift of education to rural parents  
Creating a dignified life for children with disabilities  
Empowering women to earn a living



# Dear friends and supporters of MMI

Welcome to the February 2017 edition of Mary's World. Last year Pope Francis called all people of goodwill to "live fully, to choose to leave a mark." He said that "history today calls us to defend our dignity and not to let others decide our future. The Lord wants to work one of the greatest miracles we can experience; he wants to turn your hands, my hands, our hands, into signs of reconciliation, of communion, of creation. He wants your hands to continue building the world of today."

Our challenge, every day, is to continue to open our hearts and engage our hands in this very work of building a more dignified world. We thank you for accompanying us in empowering others through the power of education,

health and the opportunity to learn new skills and create a livelihood. Following in the footsteps of the Josephites, we look forward to developing strong partnerships in Papua New Guinea and continuing our long-standing relationships in Timor-Leste and Peru.

I hope you enjoy reading the stories you are helping to create and also invite you to take a few moments to visit our new website at [www.mmi.org.au](http://www.mmi.org.au) to learn more.

With gratitude,

*K. Robertson*

Kirsty Robertson - CEO



## Education ... the opportunity of a lifetime

Education has power; it's more than learning to read and write, it has the ability to transform lives by giving individuals the opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute positively to society.



**In Papua New Guinea**, only one in three children currently completes their basic education. In partnership with Buk Bilong Pikinini, MMI aims to increase school readiness and early literacy skills for young children aged between four and six in remote communities. Your support of MMI enables families to gain access to high quality and effective early childhood education and resources, increasing the chances of children completing their education and ultimately transforming their lives.

**In Timor-Leste**, with literacy rates of only 58%, the challenge continues to use quality education in both schools and homes. Access to education early in life is vital for children's long-term development. Thanks to your ongoing support, MMI's Parents Education Program not only empowers but provides parents from remote areas with the skills and knowledge to positively contribute and engage in their children's learning in the home from a young age.

Working hard in the fields in rural Bairo Wekiar, Maria Pereira did not have access to support materials or the basic education on how to encourage her children's learning before and after school. After accessing MMI's Parents Education Program, Maria expressed that she learnt invaluable skills and gained essential understanding of child development and her role as a parent. With this new knowledge and confidence, Maria can now help her children achieve the best possible start to their education.

*"I am happy because I can learn how to read, write, sing a song, number counting, art and craft and after the training I go home and teach those lessons to my children at home."*

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ACFID  
MEMBER

Mary MacKillop International is a signatory of the Australian Council for International Development Code of Conduct reflecting MMI's Compliance with industry Standards of good practice, transparency and accountability.

*Inspired by Australia's first saint, MMI empowers communities overseas to realise their dignity through education, health and livelihoods. MMI's approach to development is shaped by the principles of our organisation. These principles are Human Dignity, Common Good, Participation and Subsidiarity and Option for the Poor.*

Mary MacKillop International acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land, past and present, on which all our offices are located.

Andrea & Daniel

*All that we do depends on the generosity and kindness of friends like you. A small gift can have a huge impact, ensuring that MMI's vital education, health and livelihoods programs can continue to provide a brighter future for all.*

## Health... treating all equally

One of the most basic human rights is the right to health. Having poor health severely limits access to education, work, food and shelter, making it difficult to live purposeful lives of dignity.

**In Peru**, MMI's Community Health program provides access to allied health services for children with a disability living in poor and underserved communities on the outskirts of Lima. Andrea Diaz and her son, Daniel, who has Down Syndrome, are able access therapies that would normally be out of reach due to costs.

Andrea's wish, like any mother of a child with a disability, is for Daniel to be independent.

*"All that is needed for him is to speak... so that he will be independent so that he can be free to do things by himself in his life. That's all I hope."*

Andrea is already seeing improvement, with Daniel slowly starting and wanting to speak. Being able to utilise previously unattainable therapies has given Andrea hope for Daniel's future and has given hope to many families, who are now, due to your generosity, able to access essential services for their children.

Ethel Wahlen



*"I would like to see more hearing impaired children attend school like any other children... I very much appreciate your support."*

**In Papua New Guinea** it is estimated that 15% of the population have a disability and face significant physical and social barriers, with only 2% receiving adequate services. In partnership with Callan Services Vanimo, MMI aims to increase access to education and health services in remote villages and to raise awareness of the rights of people with disabilities.

Ethel Wahlen is 19 years old and is hearing impaired. She lives with her three sisters and two brothers in Waromo and enjoys cooking. Recently Ethel participated in the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Volunteer program. Being engaged as a Volunteer by Callan Services, Ethel's self-esteem has risen, empowering her to become a disability advocate in her community, helping her break down barriers not only for herself but for others too.



## Livelihoods... a dignified life for all

There are many barriers which prevent individuals from accessing safe and fair livelihoods. Research has shown that sustainable, fair and meaningful livelihoods, for women in particular, results in benefits for entire communities, greatly reducing household poverty, improving health, access to education and providing opportunities for financial independence.

**In Peru**, MMI's Livelihoods Project, in partnership with local NGO, Centro de Promocion Social Solidaridad para el Desarrollo, supports two women's associations that produce handmade Fair Trade products for sale. Every time you purchase a Fair Trade product in Australia through [www.ethica.org.au](http://www.ethica.org.au) you directly contribute to the lives of women like Veronica Alvarez, allowing them to access regular skills development in areas such as business mentoring, conflict resolution, leadership training, marketing, design and financial management. All fundamental tools that can help Veronica generate an independent and sustainable income to actively support, empower and meet the needs of her family with dignity.

*"We have also learned to market and sell our products. I have seen changes in my way of being, [in the way I] express my thoughts and feelings, to lose the fear."*



Veronica Alvarez

*"We must teach more by example than by word"*

Mary MacKillop

## Connecting... compassion in action



Once again the students and staff of **Mount St Joseph in Milperra** have demonstrated their passion and drive for social justice, working tirelessly throughout 2016 to change the lives of women, men and children in Peru. Their hard work resulted in a very successful Peru Day in December, uniting the whole school in their purpose to create a more just world. There was a Peruvian feel throughout the day with delicious Peruvian food as well as goods from Ethica Accessories for sale.

The Year 10 students, motivated by the stories of change and empowerment from the field, engaged competitively to top the spectacular fundraising achievement of the year before, with one goal in mind – dignity for all. And this they did, raising \$15,700 to go towards MMI projects in Peru. We are so thankful to the whole school community at Mount Saint Joseph. With their support we can continue to provide quality education and healthcare, support sustainable livelihoods and enrich whole communities.



Thank you for your ongoing generous support of MMI. If you'd like to join us by becoming a Parish Ambassador, speaking for MMI, organising a prayer group or running an Ethica stall please contact MMI:

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### Staying Connected

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Photos by Katie Moore & MMI Staff

\*where required, names have been changed for privacy