

Meeting of the Development Network within the Congregatio Jesu



From February 2 to 6 2026, representatives of Mary Ward International as well as sisters and staff from development focused projects within the Congregatio Jesu met in Rome. The 30 participants discussed how the various missions involved in development cooperation could network (even) more effectively and how they could exchange and collaborate to create a sustainable network.

The background and reason for this meeting was a study commissioned by the Loreto Sisters for their six offices of Mary Ward International (MWI) – all centered on supporting development focus projects of the Mary Ward family worldwide. The study revealed a strong desire for more intensive cooperation and communication among the offices. It also highlighted the need for greater unity and regular exchange.

The study was conducted before the merger of IBVM and CJ. Now that the two branches of Mary Ward's foundation have become one, the composition of the development network has also been expanded.

What made this meeting special was that it was the first time that different roles and functions within the development ministries had come together. This enabled sisters involved in program planning and project management, lay employees who manage projects, and the managing directors of MWI offices to exchange ideas directly and get to know each other.

The second specialty was the General Leadership Team who actively participated in the meeting and thus showed their support for this important ministry and the structures that help to implement them according to the Mary Ward values.



Active exchange and learning experience

Thus, the meeting focused on the exchange of information about the work of the various Provinces, Regions, and MWI offices. It became clear that there are numerous issues that connect all participants and their areas of activity.

Mary Ward's charism still continues to influence our work in various parts of the world today and has a significant positive impact on the people we work with.



Whether the projects were initiated by 'Courage to Move' (an initiative of the Loreto Sisters) or at the invitation of bishops, institutions or networks, whether they have been in existence since the 19th century or only started in this millennium – all projects are based on the same values and the firm conviction that our

commitment to strengthen women really makes a difference and leads to strong communities, stabilized families and better living conditions for all.

The participants opened up about best practices, but also communicated challenges and restrictions due to political, geographical or economical environments.

Impact of our common spirituality

When evaluating our common ground, the participants were also reflecting on the "spiritual DNA" of the development network - especially considering that commitment to development is one of the most important missions and that the various projects represent an important part of the ministries of the Congregatio Jesu.



They agreed that all projects within the network are underpinned by special values. These enable us to work with our partners and those affected in a way that sets us apart from other aid organisations.

What makes Mary Ward development ministries special:

- Professional, high-quality commitment to people on the margins of society, especially women and children
- Commitment to changing unjust structures for a world where people can live with dignity

- Active assistance against hunger, disease, and exploitation; commitment to education and training, good hygiene conditions, psychosocial support, and training of multipliers
- Cooperation on eye level and on an equal footing with people who need help. Building genuine partnerships without dependency between donors and recipients
- Supporting the needs of local communities, and cooperating with local initiatives and cooperatives



On this basis, an initial draft of a strategic foundation for future cooperation was developed. The participants spoke about their common vision, the purpose of the development network, the call to action to which all committed to development focused ministries answer.

They also discussed what the Mary Ward values (sincerity, justice, freedom and joy) mean for all who are committing themselves to this ministry.

Intensified communications

The participants of the meeting agreed that they would like to see stronger and more regular communication between them. To this end, they will check the feasibility of a joint internal exchange platform to be set up in the future, through which not only reports but also

infographics, photos, and questions and answers could be shared with each other.

In a first step, they will share more detailed information about their programmes and projects as well as the structures of their missions. Therefore, it is important to take enough time to involve all levels of responsibility in the process in order to enable a strong network and sustainable cooperation.

Next steps suggested by the participants:

- Share stories and experiences with each other
- Communicate with and engage Provincial and Regional leaders
 - Share the outcome of the workshop across the congregation.
 - Use the ELM to engage General, Provincial and Regional leaders and seek alignment.
- Create a representative working group
 - Establish a working group or mission committee with global representation to continue this work with a clear Terms of Reference.

- Listen widely and map/assess the current reality
 - Hear the voices of all those involved in development work across Provinces and Regions.
 - Honour past experience while looking to future needs.
 - Map projects, ministries and development structures across the congregation.
 - Provincials to assess the need of/for development structures in the Provinces.
- Discern and agree a shared global approach
 - Research and propose suitable operating models.
 - Develop a strategic approach.
 - Seek feedback and confirmation from leadership and provinces.
 - Move towards a shared, congregation-wide approach.

Follow us on the social media platforms to discover videos and posts from the development network meeting: www.facebook.com/congregatiojesuworldwide and www.instagram.com/congregatiojesu

We will also make the development ministry more visible in our common website. Please check back on during the coming weeks: www.congregatiojesu.org

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