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Loreto alumni Stephanie Lorenzo nominated for Young Australian of the Year

ROHAN SMITH • HORNSBY ADVOCATE • AUGUST 09, 2013 3:57PM

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Stephanie Lorenzo has been nominated for Young Australian of the Year for work to help women sold into sex trafficking industry in Cambodia. Pictured in Wynyard Park, Sydney. Source: News Limited

A former Loreto Normanhurst student is changing the lives of women and children who have been sold into prostitution in Cambodia.

For her tireless work with sex trade survivors, Stephanie Lorenzo has been nominated for the Young Australian of the Year award.

The 28-year-old who grew up in Castle Hill was first introduced to the problem as a 21-year-old, when reading the inspirational story of Somaly Mam.

Seven years later, Ms Lorenzo has established a charity of her own, visited Ms Mam at a refuge in Cambodia and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to rescue, rehabilitate and

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reintegrate victims of the horrific trade.

"I was reading Somaly Mam's book about how she was sold into prostitution at a young age," Ms Lorenzo said.

"I wanted to do something to help people like her and thankfully I've had a lot of success in doing that."

Project Futures, which Ms Lorenzo established in 2009, brought Somaly Mam to the north shore in 2011 to speak with local students.

The organisation has branched out to include outreach programs at brothels in Cambodia.

"We've been able to raise money to get people into brothels and make themselves known to women and children," Ms Lorenzo said.

"We offer help in the form of sexual health checks and provide condoms and soap but it's really about increasing our presence and making sure people know help is out there."

Ms Lorenzo has organised eight charity rides through Cambodia since 2009 and in July led a group of five year 10 students from Loreto Normanhurst on a 400km ride through the Cambodian countryside.

Student Sarah Parker, 16, said the experience was life changing.

"We went to a centre for girls who had been saved and most of them are our age," Sarah said.

"Some of them were crying and telling us how their lives had changed.

"It's amazing what they do there because they are literally training girls to restart their lives."

She said she was inspired to follow the path Ms Lorenzo had blazed for Loreto students.

"We all decided we wanted to be like her," Sarah said.

"Her career is amazing and she's really making a difference."

Sarah was joined on the trip by Imogen McKay, Victoria Boys, Olivia Dressler-Smith and Annabelle Gray.

## SOMALY MAM

■ Ms Mam was born into a tribal family in Cambodia and sold at the age of 12. She was forced to work in a brothel for nearly a decade

■ After managing to escape, she has dedicated her life to saving other victims and in 2007 established the Somaly Mam Foundation. It runs shelters for survivors, providing medical care and training

■ Named as one of Time Magazine's 100 most influential people in 2009, Ms Mam has saved more than 7000 women and children

## HELP OUT

■ To sponsor Sarah's ride visit



Somaly Mam, the Cambodian woman who set up the Somaly Mam Foundation to rescue sex slaves with Stephanie Lorenzo. Source: Supplied

<http://makingadifference.gotundraise.com.au/page/ParkerSarah>

■ To sponsor Project Futures directly visit [www.projectfutures.com](http://www.projectfutures.com)

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