

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2019 AND JANUARY 2020 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1



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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:
ANGELA REED RSM, AMANDA
CARRIER RSM, AND COLLEEN
SWAIN



MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEW YEARS GREETINGS!

The MIA Mercy Global Action office would like to wish you all a happy, healthy, and holy New Year as we kick off this new decade: the roaring 20s! In these challenging times, we invite you to join us in solidarity as we hope and pray for our world; especially for all displaced persons, and the Earth.

As the Christmas season comes to a close with the celebration of Epiphany, the words of David Whyte come to mind. Whyte writes, "The presence of the star does not excuse us from the difficult territory through which it is guiding us." Looking ahead to the work on our MGA horizon, we cannot help but feel like the wise travelers setting out in hope on a journey to an unknown destination. The road before us is long, and the territory is challenging. We keep traveling towards a more just reality for all. As a Mercy World we trust

the star that guides us, and we vision the just world waiting at journey's end. The wise women and men of Mercy keep bringing their gifts and skills to bear, and we keep our hope alive through the support and prayers of our sisters, coworkers, and partners in ministry around the world.





THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

• *Mercy Global Action at COP25*

Colleen Swain of MIA Mercy Global Action attended week two of the 25th Session of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), otherwise known as COP 25 in Madrid, Spain.

With strong continued actions, most significantly ‘Friday’s for the Future’ marches across the globe, as well as alarming updates from science, Mercy Global Action had high hopes for COP 25. The theme for this year was “Time for Action” and throughout 2019 Member States spoke of their increase ambition towards tackling climate change. The year 2019 brought more pollution, sea level rise, extreme fires, drought, deforestation, storms, increased impacts from extractive industries and more.

COP 25 was to be the COP where the countries were expected to submit stronger National Climate Plans and strengthen international cooperation before the realization of the Paris Agreement. Instead, Member States fell into the trap of prioritizing profits over people, blocking ambition, and using convenient loopholes during negotiations.

Mercy Global Action’s main concerns were: ensuring care for the Earth through the protection of human rights, strengthening ambitious commitments across the globe, advocating on behalf of local and indigenous communities, opposing the misuse of resources including extractivism, encouraging ecosystem based approaches and addressing the loss and damage of biodiversity.

Civil Society Action and Exhibits

COP 25 was filled with a myriad of ministerial dialogues, press conferences, technology showcases, events, and more.

With over 26,000 participants in attendance, one of the most empowered and empowering groups at COP 25 was civil society. Many civil society groups shared their concerns in striking ways, bringing forth the voices of the people who were far removed from the negotiations and urging delegates to increase ambition and take action. Powerful skits, press conferences, demonstrations and a climate march marked some of the most impactful ways people came together.

The ‘Pollution Pods’ created by Michael Pinsky was an incredibly moving exhibit highlighting the interconnectedness of the world and the damaging effects of pollution and consumerism. Within six domes, “the air quality of five global cities [was] recreated. A carefully mixed recipe emulate[ed] the relative presence of ozone, particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide which pollute these cities. Starting from the hosting city, the visitor pass[ed] through increasingly polluted cells, from dry and cold locations to hot and humid.” Read more about the ‘Pollution Pods’ here: <https://www.climart.info/pollutionpods>

continued on page 4...



Photos: Colleen Swain



Photos: Colleen Swain



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

- *MGA Commemorates International Migrants Day*

On December 18th, the United Nations commemorated International Migrants Day. This day offers us an opportunity to reflect on the struggles of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

Once people reach their new homes, social cohesion and integration are key to their and their host's success. For this reason, #WeTogether was the theme for December's commemoration of International Migrants Day. People migrate for many reasons including: hunger, persecution, conflict, and climate change. A significant number move for work and seek to contribute to their new communities. Media and political figures often focus on negative issues in relation to global migration. To show a holistic and hopeful view, the International Organization for Migration created a series of videos highlighting success stories of the contributions of migrants in their new communities.

Last year the United Nations estimated there were about 272 million migrants that relocated across international borders; that is 3.5% of the world's population [1]. Most migrants move to find better work, to study, or for the sake of their families. Our focus, however, must be on the people who frequently need assistance in their migration. Migrants who move because of disasters, wars, and other tragedies.

Permanent migration usually occurs within the context of several aggravating factors. One of these key issues has become environmental degradation, which is a complicated since climate change can be both a motivation for migration and a hindrance. "Sudden-onset disasters" (i.e. storms, floods, mudslides, earthquakes, etc) cause temporary migration which does not force people to move internationally.[2] Sudden disasters and weather events cause homelessness and damage but do not strip people of the livelihood permanently, also the damage may prevent people from leaving. "Slow-onset events" cause permanent international migration through the loss of land and livelihood.[3] Rising sea levels, global warming, ocean acidification, salination, land degradation, and desertification are just some examples of factors that cause migration. Not included under either category is food insecurity, which is commonly a result of environmental degradation.

The World Food Programme at the U.N. has studied the close link between food insecurity and migration. Hunger increases the probability of both migration and conflict (a common cause of migration). Once on the move food insecurity often forces migrants to keep moving. Food will continue to be scarce for migrants due to the cost and risk of moving, conflict, and a lack of resources available to them in a host country.

Mercy Global Action, along with Mercy ministries across the globe, continue to advocate, empower, give voice and walk with migrants and refugees. The social cohesion and integration of migrants and refugees gives us the opportunity to learn, share, and grow. Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, President of Caritas Internationalis said, "If we bond with refugees and migrants, we will break down the barriers with which some are trying to separate us."

[1] IOM, "World Migration Report 2020." IOM, Geneva Switzerland, 2019. P19

[2] UNHCR, "Key Concepts on Climate Change and Disaster Displacement."

[3] Ibid



At the United Nations

THROUGH OUR

ECOSOC EYES...

COP 25 Continued...

What were the Outcomes?

In a [statement](#) on the Outcomes of COP 25 by the Executive Secretary of the UN Climate Change, Patricia Espinosa stated, "We need to be clear that the conference did not result in agreement on the guidelines for a much-needed carbon market... Developed countries have yet to fully address the calls from developing countries for enhanced support in finance, technology and capacity building... [and] high-emitting countries did not send a clear enough signal that they are ready to improve their climate strategies and ramp up ambition through the Nationally Determined Contributions they will submit next year."



Observations

- While the Paris Agreement refers to several Human Rights Principles in its Preamble, it is not yet in its operational text. In many instances throughout COP 25, human rights, along with accountability for loss and damage, and violations of the human rights of impacted communities were put on the sidelines. However, the 'Work Plan of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform was adopted with efforts to strengthen indigenous and traditional knowledge sharing in climate action policies. In addition, the 'Gender Action Plan' was adopted with reference to the Preamble of the Paris Agreement, just transition, decent work and participation.
- It was discouraging to see a lack of commitment towards ambition on climate change. Countries did not agree on a time-frame for submission in the [final draft decision text of COP 25](#). Only a few countries took the opportunity for more ambitious plans which can be seen in the 'High Ambition Alliance'.
- Upon arriving at COP 25, Article 6 of the Paris Agreement on carbon markets was an area of contention. At the conclusion of COP 25, countries did not reach a negotiation and Article 6 will be negotiated further during the UNFCCC subsidiary body meeting this coming June 2020. Groups such as [CIDSE](#) "considered that an effective Article 6 would only work if it had all these elements: robust accounting rules, gender responsiveness, human rights safeguards, environmental integrity, no carryover of projects from earlier schemes, mandatory inclusive stakeholder consultation and an independent grievance mechanism."
- Finance, while a contentious theme at COP 24 in Poland, was again a contentious theme for COP 25. Wealthier Member States have not been stepping up to help those that are suffering the most impacts of climate change. Finances for quality and sufficient resources for adaptation, as well as loss and damage remain a challenge.
- Greta Thunberg delivered a strong statement to the Member States pressing "What we need is real drastic emission cuts at the source but of course, just reducing emissions is not enough. Our greenhouse gas emissions has to stop. To stay below 1.5 degrees. We need to keep the carbon in the ground. Only setting up distant dates and saying things which give the impression of the action is underway will most likely do more harm than good because the changes required are still nowhere in sight... Well, I'm telling you, there is hope. I have seen it but it does not come from the governments or corporations. It comes from the people." Watch her full speech [here](#).

What lies ahead for COP 26...

MIA Mercy Global Action is committed to increased action and urgency as we prepare for the Paris Agreement to come into force later this year at COP 26 in Glasgow. The year 2020 and this next decade provides various opportunities for increased action as we approach major milestones such as the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'* and the Paris Agreement, as well as the 50th celebration of Earth Day.

As Greta Thunberg stated, "there is hope...It comes from the people". It can be seen in small local steps or through large global movements. We continue to advocate and stand in solidarity with all those who share our concerns and values when it comes to responding to the displacement of peoples and degradation of the earth. We must empower others to respond with moral integrity as we continue to hold governments accountable for addressing the climate emergency.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP (MELF)

BY JULIA MORISI (MELF 2019-2020)

The Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship (MELF) has provided an important opportunity for me to develop my interests and perspectives through a global and multidimensional platform. The women in this fellowship hail from the United States, Papua New Guinea, Ireland, Peru, and Australia. They also come from a wide variety of professional and educational backgrounds and span a range of ages. This is truly a diverse group of women who each bring their unique experiences, opinions, and outlooks. The Mercy Fellowship has helped me expand my views, deepen my thinking, and has caused me to think more globally.



Photo: Colleen Swain/MIA MGA

Following our first meeting in Cambodia, our cohort has continued to explore— but instead of by airplane and tuk tuk, it has been through readings, webinars, podcasts, and discussions. Each month, there are new topics of study, some of which are mostly new to me and others with which I am more familiar. I have been a feminist since my childhood, and I have always been keenly interested in the experiences of women and girls. However, it has actually been the MELF topics related to gender which I have found the most illuminating and informative. Our readings on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action all focus on the experiences of women around the world. The stories and perspectives that my colleagues share bring life and substance to these readings and initiatives. Our conversation and dialogue allows for a complex look at how women from different contexts strive for Mercy and justice. Engaging with my colleagues has caused me to think



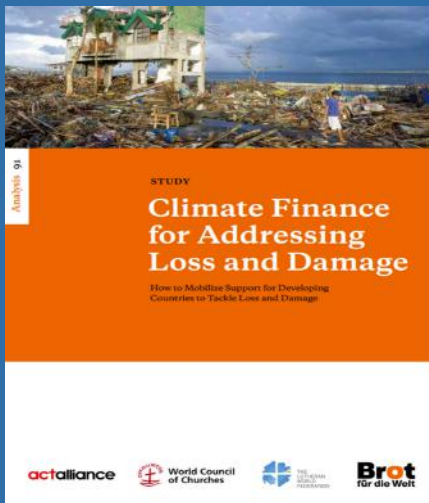
Photo: Colleen Swain/MIA MGA

more deeply at my own beliefs, opinions, and context. I am grateful to have this opportunity to develop friendships with women from countries I have never before visited, to engage in dialogue with women from cultures different from my own, and to share new experiences with women who teach and inspire me. It has truly been the women in the fellowship with whom I have found wisdom and achieved new progress, while still encountering the familiar face of Mercy.

“ USEFUL RESOURCES



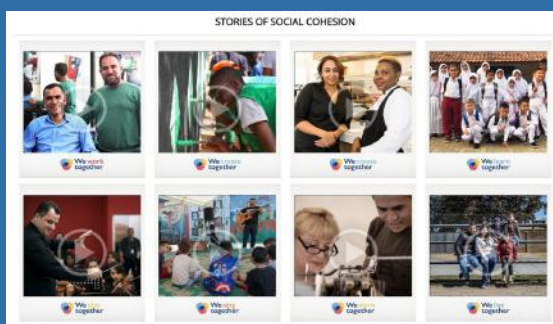
Climate Finance for Addressing Loss and Damage



Asia-Europe Environment Forum: Implementation Guide for the Sustainable Development Goals



Stories of Social Cohesion (Video Collection)



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- January 1st- New Years Day
- January 4th- World Braille Day
- January 6th- Epiphany
- January 20th- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- January 24th- International Day of Education
- January 25th- Lunar New Year
- January 27th- International Day of the Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust
- January 28th - UN@75 and Beijing+25: 2020 - A Defining Year for Multilateralism and Gender - 6th Symposium for Faith-Based Organizations
- January 31st - MELF 2020-2021 Application Deadline
- February 10th - 19th - Commission on Social Development

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

Subscribe to our e-newsletter to learn about our vision in action and the ministries carried out by our member congregations: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 2



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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

This year one of the core focuses of MGA will be on homelessness. During 10-19 February, 2020, the 58th session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSocD) will meet to address "Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness". This is very significant, as homelessness has never been a priority theme at any of the United Nations Commissions. The Mercy Global Action Office along with other NGO's and allies, will be advocating for housing to be recognised as a human right. Along with other issues, we will argue that affordable housing must be on country agendas. Throughout the Mercy World many sisters and associates minister to those rendered homeless, especially women and children.

MIA through the Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP), identified homelessness as a key issue of concern for the Mercy World. MGA will co-sponsor numerous side events at this gathering and hopes to have the opportunity to deliver an oral statement on housing to this UN Commission. Further information about the oral statement can be found later in this publication. Throughout 2020, the MGA Office will feature resources, information and actions to help all of us act to prevent and ultimately, eliminate homelessness.





THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

- *Mercy Global Action Addressing Links Between Homelessness and Extractivism*

MGA, along with partner organisations, will deliver an oral statement on homelessness and the link to extractivism to the UN 2020 Commission for Social Development. In this statement, MGA affirms the intentionally inclusive and universally applicable definition of homelessness proposed by the UN Expert Working Group in Nairobi. The Expert Working Group defined homelessness as “a condition where a person or household lacks habitable space with security of tenure, rights and ability to enjoy social relations, including safety. Homelessness is a manifestation of extreme poverty and a failure of multiple systems and human rights.”

Today, in the absence of a globally applicable definition, very little data exists on people experiencing homelessness and the causes of this crisis. Without data, it is difficult to engage United Nations Member States and call upon international law because there is a lack of effective tools needed to measure and track homelessness. Establishing a universal definition for homelessness is imperative, as it will promote effective research internationally and provide the framework appropriate for holding States accountable for human rights obligations.

MGA’s statement highlights one particular cause of homelessness: the link between extractive industries and homelessness. Extractivism is a key contributor to the destruction of land and communities as well as pollution that drives people away and destroys their livelihoods. This link can often be an overlooked factor in violations of the human right to adequate housing. Mining and other extractive industries, such as oil and gas drilling, pipelines, large scale corporate agriculture, lumber, dams, and more can contribute to homelessness. Many businesses often operate internationally and evade legal ramifications and taxes that could support and restore communities and homes.

In our oral statement, we call upon Members States to address homelessness in four ways:

- Adopt the universal and inclusive definition of homelessness proposed by the Expert Working Group.
- Implement and design policies that ensure the meaningful engagement of local communities including: free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous peoples, due diligence on human rights- including the right to housing- especially regarding the impact of extractive industries.
- Implement social protections, including floors to ensure no one is left behind.
- Hold corporations accountable for the damage they cause and require appropriate remediation to rebuild vibrant communities.

Mercy Global Action will continue to shift the housing paradigm from one where housing is viewed as a commodity towards accepting housing as a human right and holding both States and extractive industries accountable for degradation and displacement.



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

- *Hate Speech: Holocaust Era Antisemitism Parallels Current Discrimination Crisis*

The year 2020 “marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the ending of the Second World War, and the ending of the Holocaust.” On January 27th, the United Nations hosted its annual memorial on the International Day for the Remembrance of the Holocaust. The theme for the memorial this year was “75 years after Auschwitz - Holocaust Education and Remembrance for Global Justice” gathering survivors to share their stories and, with ambassadors and experts, implore people to remember the lessons of the Holocaust so we can truly say, “never again.”

Opening the memorial ceremony, António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, highlighted the importance of standing together against hate in our world today. He pointed to the recent rise of antisemitism, xenophobia, homophobia, and discrimination (of migrants, minorities, races, and sexual orientation) as warning signs. The same signs preceded the Holocaust, which Guterres stated began with social exclusion, not unlike the current political climate of our world.

There were various events throughout the week with similar warnings. At the Civil Society Briefing, “Hate Speech, Holocaust Denial and Distortion,” the historian Dr. Rozet also drew parallels between the atrocities of the Holocaust and present-day attitudes regarding diversity and migration. In our remembrance of the Holocaust, we highlight the stories of

resistance and rescuers while we diminish the complicity and cooperation of citizens and police. “Stories of individuals who bravely stood up for, and hid, Jewish neighbors are presented in museums as mainstream sentiment,” stated Dr. Rozet. However, this was not frequently the case during WWII and, in forgetting this, we lose an important lesson that can illuminate our current work towards an inclusive society. As antisemitism makes a resurgence the connection between WWII era discrimination and current sentiments around issues of race, immigration status, and more are painfully apparent. Tad Stahnke, director of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, pointed to the political turmoil surrounding migration, Islamophobia, and xenophobia across the globe as proof that people are forgetting the horrors of WWII. “Never again means teaching history again and again,” says Stahnke. Unlike the struggles of our past, technology, especially social media, can complicate our fight against hate. Now, it is far easier for individuals to share discriminatory attitudes and gather digitally both online and on the dark web.

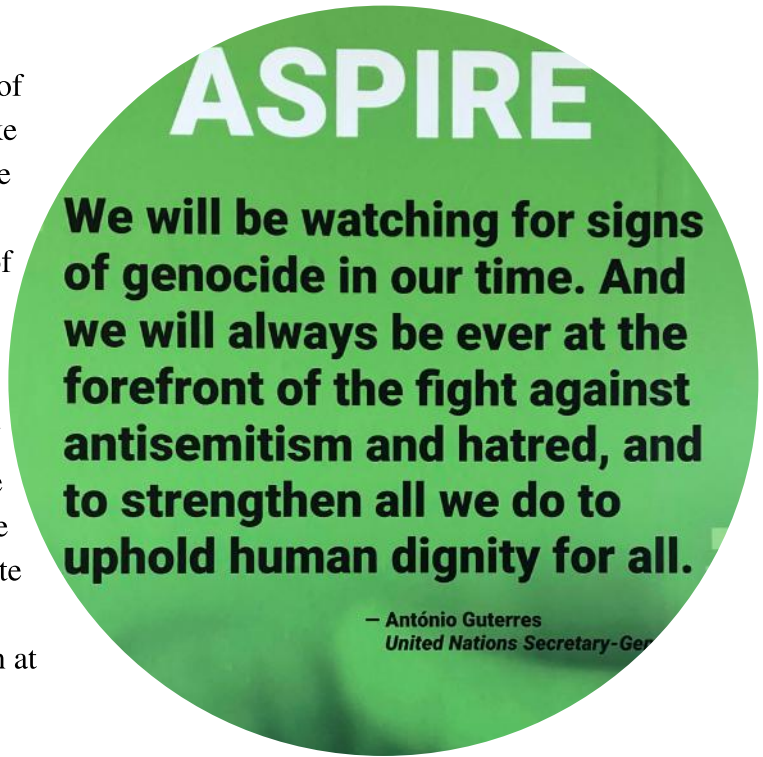


From the United Nations Exhibition on 'Onlookers'

• *Hate Speech, Continued*

The campaign of propaganda coupled with the indifference of onlookers was a key factor that allowed the Holocaust to take place. The complicit action and silence of onlookers was the theme of the exhibit, “Some Were Neighbors,” that was launched in honor of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The exhibit examined the records of programs against Jews during WWII in various regions of Europe to show how the indifference of ordinary people enabled genocide. Antisemitism played a large part in the silence of onlookers, but greed, career advancement, and peer pressure were also important factors. To prevent another atrocity like the Holocaust, we must put values in our society that promote action and undermine indifference. Cherith Norman, Acting Deputy Ambassador for the United States, closed her speech at the art exhibit by reminding all gathered there that “silence speaks volumes.” As we continue our struggle to protect inclusion, and mercy, the lessons of the past can guide our words and our actions.

For the Mercy World, it is more important than ever to not be onlookers. We must contrast the growing attitudes of indifference and hate with the accounts and experiences of people who lived through WWII and the Holocaust. This will be one way to combat the growth of exclusion and hate. We are the last generation who will hear the firsthand account of survivors. Firsthand accounts and evidence saved at the end of WWII will continue to be foundational for the education that is as relevant today as it has been for the past seventy-five years. Education is key to preventing discrimination and hate but must also go beyond accurate historical facts and include compassion and human dignity. This is Mercy; and this is Mercy Global Justice. Without these heroic human values, education alone will not prevent future generations from repeating history. In January 2020, the Mercy Global Action Fellows were privileged to hear Sr Mary O'Sullivan RSM speak about her experience of being in ministry at Auschwitz. It was a very challenging and moving webinar.



From the United Nations Exhibition on 'Onlookers'

At the United Nations

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

- *Hopes for Restoring Ocean Health*

Mercy Global Action attended the Preparatory Meeting for the second UN Ocean Conference held on February 4th and 5th 2020. This two-day meeting was a time for United Nations Member States and stakeholders to gather and discuss the goals and concerns most in need of a global focus at the upcoming Ocean Conference, which will be held this June in Lisbon Portugal. Issues including plastics, economics, and ocean management emerged during the meeting, and will continue to be influential elements in upcoming deliberations.



The Secretary General named eight 'dialogues' that will be the center of the upcoming Ocean Conference: Pollution, conserving biodiversity, minimizing ocean acidification, making fisheries sustainable, promoting sustainable ocean economies, scientific advancement, enhancing conservation and sustainable use through international law, and leveraging the inter-linkage between Goal 14 (life below water) and other Sustainable Development Goals. It is in the hopes that naming these specific challenges looming over the health and survival of our oceans, that fruitful conversations and actions will emerge from the Ocean Conference in June.

The human impact on the ocean has already caused a great deal of damage, and the need for restoration projects is apparent. The ocean, our life support system, is intrinsically linked with social justice and economics around the world and we rely on it in a variety of ways. Many coastal communities and countries, including those around the Mercy World, depend on the resources of the ocean for their livelihoods and for food. Dependency upon the ocean is as true for coastal communities as it is for major world economies. Economically, countless jobs from fishing to tourism depend on healthy oceans. Ecologically, we need a healthy ocean to slow global warming; and the ocean provides about half of the world's oxygen. Without healthy oceans, it is hard to see how humans could continue meeting our basic needs; yet, oceans remain a dumping ground for trash and sewage, and suffers from the effects of climate change (deoxygenation, acidification, and biodiversity loss).

No real action can take place without a fundamental cultural shift. Our culture must move towards one concerned for the health of our oceans and climate change, and demand the necessary changes from industries and governments around the world.

Mercy Global Action, Mercy International Association has signed onto the 'RISE UP -Blue Call to Action'; a joint call by civil society, fisherfolk, Indigenous peoples and philanthropic organisations, calling upon governments and corporations to raise ambition and create bold actions to safeguard the ocean.



Read the call to action [here!](#)

REFLECTIONS ON THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP (MELF)

BY TYLIA BARNES (MELF 2019-2020)

As a little girl, I never imagined becoming a part of a program like the Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship. My life was full of oppression racially, systemically and socially. That environment created doubt and uncertainty about who I could grow up and become as a black woman in our world. Luckily for me, I had a mother, though not educated, instill in me a phrase that kept me in the race to be my best self. She always told me, “Go for great”! My Mom fostered a spirit to do and be more than what the world expected of me.



When the fellowship opportunity came to my attention, I was intimidated by the requirements for application. With encouragement from loved ones and colleagues, I decided to “Go for great” and was accepted as a member of the program. Thus far, the experience has been nothing short of amazing. MELF has cultivated my confidence in ways that are life changing. It provides educational resources that empower me to lead amongst leaders. MELF cultivates the heart of Mercy charism by affirming and encouraging female leadership. As we ponder who Mercy is to our suffering world, this platform offers many possibilities for the charism to broaden Christ love through out the world.

Today, because of this program, I partner with nine brilliant women from around the world who want to champion for justice through a lens of Mercy. After meeting them in Siam Reap, Cambodia, I knew that these women would become lifelong friends and professional collaborators. International immersion is a teacher that can’t be learned through books or documentaries. Being with and hearing the stories of the people of Cambodia was the best instructor of the generational impact of oppression. It was my first-time understanding oppression systemically from an international perspective. The immersion also helped me dig deeper for greater understanding of how to be an agent of change with a broader world view. As a spoiled American, I saw world affairs through a singular lens. Being engrossed in this program has created a desire to learn more about world view perspectives and how they connect with local realities.

Believe it or not, my experience thus far is only 1/3 of the fellowship offering. Next month, participants are preparing to spend two weeks in New York to attend the United Nations 2020 Commission on the Status of Women. I have a feeling that being surrounded by 9,000 women at the conference will cultivate my confidence, establish more connections and promulgate grassroots justice engagement.

This opportunity has been a blessing in my life, upholding my desire to be more than society expected of me by extending my sphere of influence as a young woman in Mercy.



“USEFUL RESOURCES

Faith Climate Action Toolkit

Faith Climate Action Week

Order a Kit!

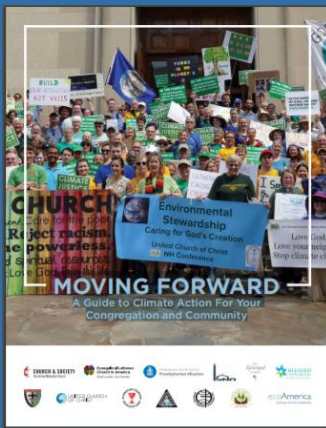
April 17 - 26, 2020

UN Ocean Action Website




MOVING FORWARD

A Guide to Climate Action For Your
Congregation and Community



Day of Prayer and Awareness against
Human Trafficking

 *The International Day of Prayer and
Awareness Against Human Trafficking
A light against Trafficking*



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 10-19 February - Commission on Social Development
- 11 February - MGA Co-Sponsored Event "The Hidden Faces of Family Homelessness" with Former President of Ireland Mary McAleese
- 11 February - International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- 20 February - World Day of Social Justice
- 21 February - International Mother Language Day
- 1 March - Zero Discrimination Day
- 3 March - World Wildlife Day

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

Subscribe to our e-newsletter to learn about our vision in action and the ministries carried out by our member congregations: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 3



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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

Announcing the Recipients of the MIA-Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship 2020-2021

To mark International Women's Day (March 8th), Mercy Global Action is pleased to announce the recipients of the MIA-Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship 2020-2021. Congratulations are extended to each woman who participated fully and with enthusiasm throughout the extensive selection process.

The ten selected Fellows come from across the Mercy World, reflect different professional and educational backgrounds, and life experiences. This diverse group of women will seek to explore Mercy and Justice over the next twelve months through intensive dialogue, deep listening, personal and communal reflection, and critical analysis. Through their unique contributions and shared experiences, Fellows will have the opportunity to build on and further develop their capacities as Mercy leaders.

We wish each one blessings over the next twelve months as, together and individually, they endeavor to explore and respond to the displacement of Persons and degradation of Earth.

[Visit the Fellowship section of our website to meet each of the recipients.](#)



THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

• *World Water Day: From Contemplation to Action*

In honor of World Water Day, MGA invite you to engage in a theological reflection around the human right to water.

1 Experience

Think back on your own experience. Can you recall a time when you were unable to access water or sanitation? Have you ever carried your own water? Or take a moment to reflect on a time when you were grateful for water.

What do you feel when you enter these memories? Can you see a connection between your experience and Isaac's?

2 Word

Begin by centering yourself in prayer and reflection on Genesis 26:17-22.

What touches you in the reading? What can we learn about our right to access water?

3 Analyze

Research current concerns about water. Consider access to clean drinking water, the affect on women, pollution, energy, or any other water related topic to which you feel drawn.

We have prepared the infographic (right) to help you get started. Each data point is a link that will lead you to more information.

4 Action

As a result of this reflection, what can you change in your own life concerning water?

What can you address in your local area, community, or country?

Do any of the advocacy suggestions listed on the infographic inspire you to action? Share what you have learned through research and prayer.



- Review recommendations the [Special Rapporteur](#) has made to your country.
- Review guidelines and asses your government's SDG efforts.
- Communicate with experts to denounce systemic violations or deprivations.
- Contact your representatives.
- Share this infographic across your social media!



ADVOCATE FOR THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER TODAY!

[Interactive PDF version of Infographic](#)
[Shareable JPEG version of Infographic](#)



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

- [Mercy Global Action calls for Inclusive Housing Policies](#)

During 10-19 February, 2020, the 58th session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSocD) met to discuss and respond to the theme "Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness". Mercy International Association- Mercy Global Action contributed two oral statements to the Commission (read [first](#) and [second](#) here) and co-sponsored and participated in several key events and meetings. This marked the first time homelessness has ever been a priority theme at the United Nations.

The Call for Recognition

Key to MGA's justice advocacy approach is listening to the experiences of the people and planet. Listening to the stories of people experiencing homelessness, and simply asking what they need, were a common best practice response shared by agencies during the Commission. The inclusion of those currently experiencing homelessness, as well as survivors, is an important step towards more informed, and thus more effective, policy. Recognizing that those experiencing homelessness as experts was a key learning of the commission and is an important step towards more informed and effective policy. As in Catherine McAuley's experience, "the patient hearing of their sorrows" is more valuable than any service agencies could contrive to provide without consulting the people who are experiencing homelessness. Listening is a place anyone can start when addressing the issue of homelessness. At one event, 'Street Homelessness and Catholic Theological Ethics', Fr. James Keenan SJ reminded everyone that, "our job is the job of recognition, to give face" and voice to people pushed to the margins of society. Our everyday interactions with those rendered homeless can humanize society narrative, ease the stigma, and combat discrimination of the only people who are truly experts on homelessness.

MGA Advocates For A Human-Rights Approach to Homelessness

At CSocD, Mercy Global Action advocated for the human right to housing and against the inherent injustices, especially towards women and girls, in housing systems across the world. It was our hope that UN Member States would adopt [the universally inclusive definition](#), as proposed by the Expert Group that met in Nairobi; however, delegates were unable to agree on a definition which would have provided the necessary framework to promote concrete policy and accountability. However, it does not end there; [housing intrinsically relates to all of the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). Adequate housing links directly to the wellbeing, development, and education of children, and a home is critical for all areas of growth over a lifetime. Mercy Global Action will continue to advocate with the use of the Sustainable Development Goals on issues related to housing and homelessness. In a Mercy Global Action co-sponsored side event "The Hidden Faces of Family Homelessness from the Perspective of Women and Children/Girls", Mary MacAleese, former President of Ireland, highlighted an often-overlooked factor in the housing debate. "It is not houseless-ness, its homelessness," she stated while pointing out that a home is not just the physical structure, it is a place of self-identity. Homes also provide a sense of emotional and physical safety, which are key concerns for women and families living in unstable housing situations. For many women, housing insecurity is coupled with domestic violence. The realities of personal crisis, such as violence, often forces women to choose between abusive situations and the dangers of living on the street or in shelters. If women and families choose to seek help, it is important that agencies focus on a trauma informed model of care by integrating the lived experience of each individual into a holistic approach.



CSocD Presents Best Practice Examples in Addressing Homelessness

At the same event, Sophia Housing, founded by Jean Quinn of UNANIMA International, shared how their practices are informed by survivors of homelessness while also working within the paradigm of holistic housing in Ireland. Tony O’ Riordan, the CEO of Sophia Housing, shared their ‘housing first’ model, which provides those rendered homeless with a home of their own as quickly as possible. While the government and many other NGOs do the necessary work of providing shelters and emergency responses to homelessness, Sophia Housing has focused their resources on long-term solutions. In their work, they also encountered the need for ongoing support after people moved into their own home. To meet that need, O’ Riordan explained that Sophia began providing community oriented support, rather than clinical support, delivered with “warmth and comprehensive understanding and empathy for what people have experienced.” Asking survivors what they need is the only way to understand and value the complexity of their dynamic and evolving situation, and yet so many social systems are static and rigid. Unyielding social systems cannot fully address the issues of homelessness and often add new trauma to the lives of people experiencing this crisis.



Domestic Violence and its Connection to Homelessness

The failure of multiple social systems of protection is indicative of the intersectionality inherent in the complex experience of survivors. Dr. Nkiru Nnawulezi, speaking on the panel ‘Women’s Rights to Affordable Housing’, explained the intersecting layers of trauma as experienced by women. Dr. Nnawulezi shared the example of a woman trapped in an abusive relationship with her husband. The woman could not legally divorce her husband because his signature was needed for the court to recognize the divorce. She was unable to break the lease on their apartment, so he was still able to find her by waiting where they had lived together. Without other affordable housing options near her job, she was unable to move and the police could not evict her husband because his name was still on the lease. The woman found the

police were unwilling to work with her because she was unwilling to move to a shelter, which would statistically raise her risk of being assaulted by others and make it more difficult for her to keep her job. Failures of court, police, housing, and social systems is a common experience for survivors experiencing multiple issues. The same is true for people struggling with homelessness who are also discriminated against for their age, sexual orientation, race, gender, or disability. Mercy Global Action supports Dr. Nnawulezi in calling for agencies and governments to address this reality with housing policies that also dismantle instability created by power systems. Dr. Nnawulezi also reminded us that within our society a “crisis response that only speaks to one need excludes people.” Working towards inclusive housing policies has a better chance of helping survivors today while also working to reduce homelessness in the future through the support of families and children surviving homelessness.

Every situation of homelessness is unique and intersects with other crises. The increase in extreme weather, the acceleration of climate change, the degradation of the earth -especially in the extractive sector- and displacement of peoples all lead to increased vulnerability, poverty, and homelessness. For many years, Sisters of Mercy and Associates throughout the world have been working with those who have experienced homelessness. A Mercy response has included direct service including providing shelter, vocational training and education, providing companionship and recognition, and contributing to policy debates on homelessness. Throughout 2020 and beyond, MGA will continue to listen to and bring the voices and experiences of those rendered homeless, to the global table. In addition to this grassroots experience, we will call on Mercy ministries’ expertise in order to inform and enhance policy at the global, national and local level.

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

- *World Water Day: Continuing our Work for Justice*

The United Nations will commemorate World Water Day and celebrate freshwater on March 22. Amidst the celebration of water, we recognize the ongoing struggle of many people around the world who cannot easily access clean water and sanitation. The continued degradation of Earth and gender inequality create complications on the path to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6, access to water for all. The privatization of water, and corporate impunity, further complicates the work towards an equitable achievement of SDG 6. The intersection of these issues continues to create a barrier to the full enjoyment of the right to water, which is necessary for all other goals and rights.

Our world's climate continues to change as pollution and greenhouse gases build. Weather patterns, especially rainfall, have already shifted because of global warming. Scientists do not expect climate change to reverse and many believe it will get worse. The diminished rainfall resulting from climate change makes it harder to grow the crops needed to feed our growing global population. The effects of rain and food shortfall is already noticeable in vulnerable communities, and especially by children. UNICEF projects climate change will continue to cause food, water, and sanitation scarcity and lead to a diminished child survival rate for approximately one in four children by 2040 [1].

The worsening water shortage intersects with the reality of gender inequality experienced around the world. For example, in eight out of ten households without access to clean water, women and girls travel, carrying the water their families will need that day [2]. In a climate of inequality, carrying water exposes women and girls to additional harassment and violence. Additionally, school attendance rates are typically lower for girls responsible for carrying water because of the time involved and the lack of menstrual hygiene that results from inaccessible water. Enhancing access to water will minimize gender discrimination and improves the lives of women and girls through access to education.

Reducing water scarcity in some areas may require new or improved infrastructure, but it will also mean lifestyle changes for all. UN Water, an organization that coordinates water efforts, encourages better daily water practices like shorter



a little showers, and lesser-known actions like conserving power.

With 75% of industrial water usage going towards energy production, reducing the amount of electricity we use will keep water in our already stressed ecosystems [3]. Smarter use of water, coupled with better protections for our watersheds, will help preserve our climate's water system and improve our ability to preserve important carbon sinks like wetlands and oceans as we work for climate justice.

In the effort to promote climate justice, we must also contend with the disturbing trend of privatization. The privatization of water may seem like an efficient approach to ensuring everyone's access to water. However, it has become evident that this profit based approach causes further degradation of the Earth, displacement, and human rights violations [4]. The pollution and depletion of watersheds by agribusiness, mining operations, and beverage

- *World Water Day: Continued*

companies shows the negative effects of privatization in pursuit of profit. We must work towards a new paradigm that recognizes the public right to, and responsibility for, water. Any meaningful achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 must include promoting a commons-based approach to water management that will “empower local communities to protect watersheds and ensure an equitable and sustainable distribution of water resources.” The lack of international law makes upholding the public right to water difficult since many corporations profiting from water resources operate globally. Working towards a just legal framework that closes the gaps exploited by global corporations would be a meaningful step towards achieving SDG 6.



Just as Catherine McAuley clothed and fed her students because she knew their lives could not improve without first meeting basic needs, we understand the importance of Mercy World’s continued commitment to the realization of the right to water. In our work today, we face the same reality as Catherine; without clean water and sanitation, people cannot fully enjoy all of their human rights. It is essential for us, as a community of Mercy, to work for the conservation of water and the restoration of the environment not only in our personal lives but also as an entity that circles the globe. Through advocacy and action, locally and internationally, Mercy World can address people’s need for water and promote a more just and equitable reality for all.

For a more in-depth study of SDG 6 please see [Water & Sanitation: A People’s Guide to SDG 6, a Rights-Based Approach to Implementation.](#)



- [1] “Water and Climate Change.” UN Water. <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/climate-change/>
- [2] “Water and Gender.” UN Water. <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/gender/>
- [3] “Water, Food and Energy.” UN Water. <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-food-and-energy/>
- [4] Lyons, Amanda, NGO MWG. *Water & Sanitation: A People’s Guide to SDG 6, a Rights-Based Approach to Implementation.* 2016. p5.
- [5] *ibid.* p4.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP (MELF)

BY ANASTASIA FREEMAN

Some say the world is built from the stories we tell, and one such story for our times is that of the great turning. This story is the essential adventure of our times. “It involves the transition of a doomed economy of industrial growth, to a life sustaining society committed to the recovery of our world.” [1] As one of the recipients of the Mercy emerging leadership fellowship, I feel a calling to participate in the healing of my own community here in the small regional town of Bathurst. A place strangely obsessed with car racing and Elton John.

To be honest, I never thought of myself as a leader. I have always been passionate about issues around sustainability, education, community and the arts and have always volunteered my time to causes I thought worthy on top of trying to do meaningful work as an artist and art teacher. But for my entire adult life, I have struggled with quite serious mental health problems. As far as I was concerned with my diagnosis, holding down a job and maintaining a home has been an achievement. So, it has been an unexpected honour and a blessing to be given a place in this truly incredible Mercy Emerging Leadership Program (MELF).

The program is helping me to value my experience, knowledge and passions to become a woman of Mercy in the world responding to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor in a way that meets the needs of my local community. The most valuable part of the program for me has been the reflection process and meeting the most inspiring fellows who have already become steadfast friends and allies in our search for ecological and social justice. We are the great turning.

Being able to take these past 6 months to reflect on the climate emergency, social justice issues and leadership has allowed me to realign with my core values and to work out a more measured, less frantic way of responding to the environmental and social crises I see unfolding. I have a tendency to see a problem and jump in headfirst and volunteer my time and money to try to work on that issue but struggle to keep focused, as there are so many problems in the world and so much work to be done. The MELF program is helping me address what my strengths are and how I can be more effective in finding solutions to social and environmental problems, as well as developing my capabilities as an effective leader for ecological and social change.



Our recent immersion in Siem Reap, Cambodia last year was an incredible whirlwind of 10 days. Meeting like-minded social and ecological justice warriors and being able to spend time with them, brainstorming, creating and learning alongside them about the history of social justice in Cambodia, was a beautiful way to start the fellowship. The team at Metta Karuna, who were so hospitable and welcoming taught us much about dedicated commitment to making change happen. Their achievements have led to a commitment from over 100 countries in ending the use of landmines and their story of hope is one that needs to be told and heard.

The monthly readings and webinars have been transformative in helping me to understand a more global perspective to social and environmental justice. I have learnt lots from the other fellows about situations in Peru, Ireland, USA and PNG and it has been wonderful to hear their perspectives on different social issues.

The research project has also been a fascinating experience and I have used this time to study art therapy, eco-arts and how to help communities become more ecologically sustainable through creative projects. This study has culminated in a project that brings art workshops to Bathurst women and helps them connect to ecological issues through visual art and it has been running with the assistance of the Bathurst Women's Health Centre. Reflecting on this process and working with these women, I have made considerable adjustments to my original plans for the project and feel grateful for the materials that the fellowship leaders have provided. As they have been a fantastic resource to keep returning to. I have had positive feedback from the participants who love the art-making process and it seems artmaking is therapeutic in and of itself.



Us fellows are very soon headed to New York and Mercy Global Action headquarters. We are all very much looking forward to this amazing opportunity and are sure that it will help us in our journeys as women of Mercy in this exciting time of the great turning.

[1] Joanna Macy & Chris Johnstone in [Active Hope: How to face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy.](#)



“USEFUL RESOURCES

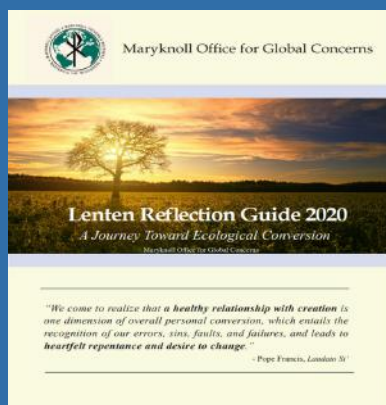
[Political Declaration Commemorating 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women](#)



[UN Water World Water Day Resources for action and social media](#)



[Lenten Reflection Guide 2020 A Journey Toward Ecological Conversion](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 1 March Zero Discrimination Day
- 3 March World Wildlife Day
- 8 March International Women's Day
- 13-21 March Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship
New York Immersion
- 20 March International Day of Happiness
- 21 March International Day for the Elimination of Racial
Discrimination
- 21 March World Poetry Day
- 21 March International Day of Forests
- 22 March World Water Day
- 24 March International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning
Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims
- 25 March International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of
Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

Subscribe to our e-newsletter to learn about our vision in action and the ministries carried out by our member congregations: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

MARCH/APRIL 2020 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 4



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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:
ANGELA REED RSM, AMANDA
CARRIER RSM, AND COLLEEN
SWAIN

GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

An Update on the Work of Mercy Global Action

It is often stated that critical junctures or interruptions create opportunities for organisations, communities and other configurations to look at things with new eyes. The COVID-19 has certainly provided an interruption for Mercy Global Action (MGA) to look at its work in new ways. Located in New York City, where COVID-19 has caused the city to lockdown, the MGA office is closed, since the building in which we are housed is no longer accessible. This does not mean however, that the work of MGA has ceased. Instead, we find ourselves called to adapt and adopt new ways of working and perhaps even new ways of seeing.

Whilst working from home, Colleen Swain continues to work in her capacity as the Leadership Development and Advocacy Associate, as does Sr Mandy Carrier in her internship. For personal reasons I needed to travel home to Australia and so find myself working now from Melbourne, until travel restrictions are lifted. This is not a scenario that our office had envisaged when planning for 2020, however like many organisations we are required to adapt. There are many dimensions of our work that have required creative thinking and adaptation, often with very little notice.

[Click here to read further on the MercyWorld Website....](#)





THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

- *Emissions Decreasing Amid COVID-19 Pandemic*

There has been one small ray of light during this COVID-19 pandemic. As people practice healthy habits of social distancing and limiting travel, there has been a reduction in CO₂ and NO₂-- two pollutants that contribute to global warming. Amid the emerging concerns for a post-pandemic economic downturn, we also have a unique opportunity to plan for a greener future. If States take smart steps while rebuilding their economies, the current reduction in pollution can become the first step towards turning the tide in the climate crisis.

According to the Carbon Brief's analysis of China's emissions for the month of February 2020, CO₂ emissions were 18% lower and NO₂ emissions were 36% lower than previous years (emissions in China typically drop for a week as the country celebrates the Lunar New year). [1] The rate of emissions has been slow to rebound as the country recovers from COVID-19 due mostly to reduced demand for power (consumed by factories), aviation, and car use. The reduction in demand for power is an important contributing factor due to many plants running on fossil fuels. [2]



The positive turn to a more sustainable future may not last long after the quarantine lifts, despite the positive effects of lower emissions on our environment. Many States are already enacting a variety of stimulus plans to bolster their economies. We do not yet know how governments will use relief funds. Many could go towards bailing out industries such as aviation, steel, and construction. Or we could reach out to our governments and insist that this time of lowered interest rates is the perfect opportunity to invest in sustainable technology and green-job training. [3]

United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, alluded to the global opportunity at hand as he addressed the looming economic troubles we can expect in COVID-19's aftermath. In his opening remarks to the G20 meeting, Guterres stated that it is critical to, "work together now to set the stage for a recovery that builds a more sustainable, inclusive and equitable economy, guided by our shared promise — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." [4] We will have to rebuild our structures just as we would if COVID-19 had been an extreme weather event. It will be a challenge for States, and for our global community, but now is the time to set clear intentions for the green future we envision.

While the United Nations COP26 in Glasgow has been postponed to 2021, the global community has more time to raise ambitions and action plans for the Paris Agreement to come into force. Mercy Global Action will continue to ensure care for the Earth through the protection of human rights, advocate on behalf of local and indigenous communities, oppose the misuse of resources including extractivism, encourage ecosystem based approaches and address the loss and damage of biodiversity.



Easter Reflection Guide

Amid our global quarantine, Lent draws to a close and we will pass through Holy Week into the Easter season; our time of resurrection and rejoicing. Resurrection does not simply mean a return to the way things have been, but rather a dramatic entrance into a new life.

Preparing for this movement, the Inter-religious Working Group on Extractive Industries prepared an [Easter reflection guide](#) focusing on our personal response to the Amazonian Synod and our global environmental crisis.

[5] We must examine the part we play in both the degradation of Earth and Earth's restoration. Sr. Roselei Bertoldo IHM wrote that the victims of our current economic systems are the crucified of our world today. Through our lifestyle and our purchases, have we contributed to this ongoing crucifixion? We are Mercy and we have been "founded on Calvary there to serve a crucified redeemer." We serve the crucified of our day and can work towards our personal and global resurrection, even during quarantine, by:

- Examining the carbon and justice impact of the goods we buy.
- Switching our households and transportation needs to sustainable energy.
- Advocating for sustainable uses of our local and national stimulus packages.
- Take part in citizen science projects such as [Earth Challenge](#) to "monitor and mitigate threats to our environment."
- Take a look at [Mercy Service Now](#) and the [Colors Challenge](#) to help build a culture of love.
- Sign up here to take part in [Mercy Earth Challenge](#).

Footnotes Page 2 & 3:

[1] Myllyvirta, Lauri. "Analysis: Coronavirus Temporarily Reduced China's CO2 Emissions by a Quarter." Carbon Brief: Clear on Climate. 19 February - 30 March 2020. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-coronavirus-has-temporarily-reduced-chinas-co2-emissions-by-a-quarter>

[2] Ibid

[3] Florizone, Richard. "Three Ways the Coronavirus is Shaping Sustainable Development." IISD. <https://www.iisd.org/library/coronavirus-shaping-sustainable-development>

[4] Guterres, António. "Secretary-General Urges G20 Countries to Suppress COVID-19 Transmission, Keep Households Afloat, amid Pandemic's 'Human Crisis'." 26 March 2020. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20024.doc.htm>

[5] "Easter with an Amazonian Face." The Inter-religious Working Group on Extractive Industries. 2020 <https://justresponse.faith/easter-amazonian-face-pdf>



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

• Human Right to Adequate Housing: Contemplation to Action

1

Experience

Think back on your own experience. Have you, or anyone you know, ever lacked adequate housing? Is there a time where you spoke or worked with someone experiencing homelessness? Or take a moment to reflect on a time when you were grateful for your shelter.

What do you feel when you enter these memories?

2

Word

Begin by centering yourself in prayer as you reflect on Isaiah 58:6-8.

What touches you in the reading?

What can we learn from scripture about the universal right to adequate housing?

3

Analyze

Research current concerns about homelessness, especially in light of the Corona pandemic. What is your community doing to address social distancing and hygiene needs for people experiencing homelessness? Consider how access to adequate housing affects women, cities, health, or any other housing related topic to which you feel drawn.

4

Action

As a result of this reflection, what actions can you take? What can you address in your local area, community, or country? Do any of the advocacy suggestions listed on the infographic inspire you to action?

Share what you have learned through research and prayer.

MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Mercy Global Action Affirms the **UNIVERSAL RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING**

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 11

11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

1 in 4 urban residents live in slum like conditions.

\$1.90/DAY

More than 200 million people, or 10% of the world population, live in extreme poverty (less than \$1.90/day) and struggle to fulfil the most basic needs.

A house must include:
Security of tenure, availability of services, affordability, habitability, accessibility, proper location, and cultural adequacy.

HOUSING INEQUALITY

Inequality is a big concern for meeting Sustainable Development Goals linked to the right to adequate housing. Over 1 billion people live in slums and this number keeps rising.

23% of the global population lacks adequate housing.

ACCESS TO WATER

2 billion people do not have access to clean water and sanitation.

A HUMAN RIGHT

The right to adequate housing must be interpreted broadly and include:

- protections against evictions, destruction and demolition of one's homes
- free to choose one's residence, or to move
- Security of tenure
- housing, land and property restitution
- equal and non-discriminatory access to housing.

1.8 BILLION

The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing estimates that 1.8 billion people across the globe lack adequate housing.

ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

- Review recommendations that the United Nations Special Rapporteur has made to your country.
- Review guidelines and assess your government's SDG efforts.
- Communicate with experts to denounce systemic violations or deprivations.
- Contact your representatives.
- Share this infographic across your social media!

Download and share the [interactive PDF here](#).

Download and share the [PNG version here](#).

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

- *Mercy Global Action Advocates for Right to Adequate Housing and Clean Water and Sanitation During COVID-19 Pandemic*

The preventative measures for the COVID-19 pandemic recommended by the World Health Organization are simple and easy to remember. Cough and sneeze into your elbow, wash your hands with soapy water for twenty seconds, practice social distancing and stay home. These simple precautions can help slow the spread of the virus and keep individuals and communities healthy, but they are not simple for many people around the world who live without adequate housing and access to water and sanitation.

About 1.8 billion people around the world lack adequate housing.[1] The right to adequate housing is fundamental for the enjoyment of other human rights. In this time of COVID-19 and social distancing, adequate housing is a matter of life and death. It is important to realize that protecting the health and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness, or living in informal settlements and shelters, will also help flatten the curve of COVID-19. [2] We must ensure that no one gets left behind in this crisis. Social inequalities lead to a disproportionate impact. Low-income workers cannot take time off from work and are often engaged in jobs that are more likely to expose them to the virus: cleaners, care givers, grocery store employees and others. Essential household items are now difficult to purchase. Some people have stockpiled basic goods, while many live paycheck to paycheck and cannot buy more than a few days' supplies at a time. The financial crisis developing as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis will greatly impact people without savings.



One in five adults have reported being laid off during the pandemic.[3] The evolving economic reality has led to a call for social protections from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Leilani Farha. She has stated:

“I am urging States to take extraordinary measures to secure the right to housing for all to protect against the pandemic. Good practices are emerging in a few States, including: Moratoriums on evictions due to rental and mortgage arrears; deferrals of mortgage payments for those affected by the virus; extension of winter moratoriums on forced evictions of informal settlements; and increased access to sanitation and emergency shelter spaces for homeless people.” [4]

While UN Member States adopt measures to protect their economies, Farha also warns about the consequences of stimulus packages. She warns against creating an environment that favors corporations to control the housing markets and further financialize housing, as was the case after the 2008 global financial crisis. [5] In solidarity, Mercy Global Action must advocate for policies and best practices that are accessible to all, including equal access to the right to adequate housing and the right to water and sanitation.



Hand washing is a key step to preventing the spread of the virus, yet all do not enjoy that human right. Today, 2.2 billion people lack access to water and sanitation. [6] More people experience water inaccessibility as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19 as many no longer have the funds to pay for their utilities; we also must keep in mind those in indigenous communities, those experiencing homelessness, those in aged-care facilities, migrants and refugees who do not have access to clean water and sanitation. In response to the need for sanitation best practices, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation, Leo Heller, called for protections against the shut off of water and for free water to be provided to those lacking access to sanitation during this crisis. [7]

There are many examples of the services provided by Catherine McAuley and our Global Mercy community during times of struggle: the cholera epidemic, the Crimean War, the stories of sisters going on their knees from one hospital bed to the next. COVID-19 is not like the diseases and health crises faced by Mercy World in the past. Our first sisters worked tirelessly in poor conditions, tending to the sick, injured, and abandoned. As a result, many became ill themselves. Catherine wrote with deep sadness of the numbers of Sisters lost in the early years and even contracted an illness herself- a cough she said had taken up “permanent residence” and eventually led to her own death. We may not be the ones to respond to the physical needs today in the face of such a highly communicable virus. Though, Catherine’s words and example can guide our response to the call of our time. She wrote in the Original Rule of the Community:

Mercy, the principal path pointed out by Jesus Christ to those who are desirous of following Him, has in all ages of the Church excited the faithful in a particular manner to instruct and comfort the sick and dying poor, as in them they regarded the person of our divine Master... [8]

Quarantine and self-isolation has affected everyone across the world. In our current isolation, people are seeking each other for support in many forms. Many are reaching out to form communities across the world through prayer, shared resources, education and much more. Some have launched charitable projects to feed and shelter those in need, and provide life saving sanitation where access to water is limited. The virus provides a critical juncture. A time for critical thinking, analysis, and re-envisioning the global systems that have been in place. While we must do everything we can to flatten the curve, the Mercy World can join in the global response with our own unique gifts and voice as we advocate for those living on the margins and do all we can to make hope and justice a reality.



Footnotes Pages 5 & 6:

[1]"Housing, the front line defence against the COVID-19 outbreak,' says UN expert." United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. 18, March 2020. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25727&LangID=E>

[2] Ibid

[3] Babic, Mary. "COVID-19: We Need Strong Social Protections for Families on the Edge." OXFAM: The Politics of Poverty. 19, March 2020. <https://politicsofpoverty.oxfamamerica.org/2020/03/covid-19-we-need-strong-social-protections-for-families-on-the-edge/>

[4]"Housing, the front line defence against the COVID-19 outbreak,' says UN expert." United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. 18, March 2020. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25727&LangID=E>

[5] Ibid

[6]"COVID-19 will not be stopped without providing safe water to people living in vulnerability – UN experts." United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. 23, March 2020. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25738&LangID=E>

[7] Ibid

[8] Sullivan rsm, Mary. "Original Rule," Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy. University of Notre Dame Press. August 15, 1995. p. 297

REFLECTIONS ON THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP (MELF)

BY AMY THOMAS



In these very uncertain times, one thing is certain- The Mercy community is flexible and finding ways to stay in communication during this time of social distancing.

About a month ago, Mercy Fellows from around the globe agreed that things really looked “Alright” and that it would be safe to meet in New York to discuss leadership strategies, as well as focus on social justice concerns that are related to our individual projects. I am so thankful that we arrived and were able to connect, especially as we are now spending so much time apart from so many loved ones.

Obviously, with many things closed in New York, this became a great lesson in flexibility. It was also a great reminder that this visit to New York wasn’t just about seeing sights, it was about reconnecting with our global Mercy community. My spirit is thankful for the team that brought us together to reconnect after so many months apart. While our 10 day journey was condensed into about 2 days, and we will be doing more online learning formats in the coming months, those 2 days were full of laughter, tears, elbow bumps, and enlightenment.

The truth is, our connection as a group is almost like a “Sisterhood”. The connections we formed in Cambodia keep getting stronger with each webinar we join, and each email we share. While we are now back in our respective towns, adjusting to life while social distancing, and finding more time to meet online in the coming months. I’m so appreciative of everyone's flexibility- getting up at 7am in Papua New Guinea for a Zoom meeting, or at 10pm in Ireland. While we live in different time zones, we have drawn closer to each other during this unique time in our world's history.

And that is the lesson I am taking with me, as I have now learned I will be working from home for “at least” the next two months- possibly even more. While we obviously know to keep our social distancing (This will be the word of the year, I guarantee it), it does not have to negatively affect our connections. If anything, I’m talking to these women more now than I did in previous months! And I’m hopeful that as months continue, and our world settles into a “New Normal” that what we have learned from this time will carry with us into our physical connections with people. We will communicate more effectively, give the best hugs, and truly be able to share with others how much we love and appreciate their place in our lives.

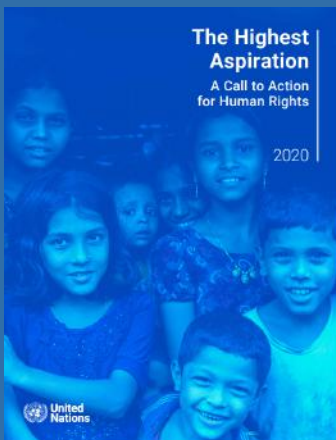


“USEFUL RESOURCES

‘Aqua fons vitae. Orientations on Water, symbol of the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth’



The Highest Aspiration: A Call To Action for Human Rights



Global Humanitarian Response Plan: COVID-19



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 4 April - International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action
- 6 April - International Day of Sport for Development and Peace
- 7 April - World Health Day
- 21 April- World Creativity and Innovation Day
- 22 April - International Mother Earth Day
- 24 April - International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace
- 28 April - World Day for Safety and Health at Work
- 2 May - World Tuna Day
- 3 May - World Press Freedom Day
- 9 May (second Saturday of May) World Migratory Bird Day [UNEP]

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

Subscribe to our e-newsletter to learn about our vision in action and the ministries carried out by our member congregations: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

APRIL/MAY 2020 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 5



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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:
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SWAIN



GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

Responding to the Global Pandemic through MGA COVID-19 Taskforce

United Nations, Secretary General, Antonio Guterres recently released a policy brief entitled “We are all in this Together.” The policy brief insists that a response to the COVID -19 pandemic must derive from a Human Rights Framework. Recognising that the Virus does not discriminate but its impacts do, a human rights approach ‘ puts everyone in the picture and ensures that no-one is left behind’.

Much of what is proposed in this policy briefing can provide a blue print for a collective Mercy response.

From a Mercy Global Perspective, we are indeed in a position to observe and respond to how it is affecting earth and people, particularly the most vulnerable. Sisters of Mercy and Associates have unique insights into the impact this virus is having on local, regional and global communities. This impact is not only in terms of health, but also has economic and social consequences.

As a way of standing in solidarity with those most vulnerable, Mercy Global Action has set up a Mercy CoVid 19 Taskforce to explore a Mercy response to this Pandemic. Drawing on our Mercy Tradition, Catholic Social Teaching and utilizing a Human Rights Framework, It is hoped that this taskforce will provide opportunities for reflection, information sharing and action.

For more information and to read the full article, see mercyworld.org



THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

• *Mercy Global Action Celebrates the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day*

On April 22nd, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day with the theme “Climate Action” amid the complex reality of a global pandemic. Our global efforts in social distancing have reduced emissions leading to reports of clearer air, cleaner water, and a healing ozone. While these observations show that we can turn the tide and prevent catastrophic climate change the lesson comes at the high price of human life, isolation, and increased hazardous medical waste. A global ‘war-time’ response is necessary to protect humanity from COVID-19, and any ‘war-time’ effort must include recovery and rebuilding after the crisis. The question that remains is how we can build a healthier, greener future post-COVID-19. There have been environmental benefits as a side effect of social distancing, but we must realize they are only as permanent as our life-style changes.

Our planet has already warmed up by 1.1°C and the international goal is to limit that warming to 1.5°C, which would mitigate global warming’s impact (limiting extreme weather, desertification, ocean acidification, food insecurity, etc.). At our current rate of pollution, we can expect the temperature to rise to 3.2°C, resulting in exponentially worse climate change for every fraction of a degree over 1.5°C. [1] The scientific community agrees that to meet our goal of 1.5°C the global community must quickly drop emissions to 25 gigatons (Gt) by 2030; however, current commitments in the Paris Agreement have steered us on a path towards emitting 56 Gts of carbon by 2030. [2]

We can only meet the necessary reductions in emissions through systemic change and broad lifestyle changes. Buying disposable items, plastics, inefficient cars and appliances, and transportation are all key areas to examine in each of our lives. Additionally, we must advocate for the sweeping policy changes that will stop corporations from destroying our planet for profit.

Mercy Global Action recognizes that we have an opportunity now as COVID-19 stimulus plans come into effect around the world. We must use the economic revitalization effort to build environmental protections into the ‘new normal’ that will emerge after the pandemic. All efforts to recover economically and socially after COVID-19 must include “an ambitious, measurable and inclusive framework, because keeping nature rich, diverse and flourishing is part and parcel of our life’s support system.” [3] The health of earth intertwines with the health of humanity. As the health of earth declines the probability of contracting zoonotic disease like Corona will continue to grow.[4] We can no longer afford to miss any opportunities to protect the health and stability of earth.

Mercy Global Action
advocates for:
EARTH DAY

Emissions are heading towards 56 Gt CO₂e by 2030; over twice the amount of what they should be.

1.5°C
Scientists say that every fraction above 1.5°C will compound the impact of climate change.

TEMPERATURES have already INCREASED by 1.1°C. We can expect them to rise up to 3.2°C by the end of this century.

Category	Value
Current	1.1°C
Paris Goal	1.5°C
Projected	3.2°C

PRESERVING OUR FUTURE

7.6% Globally, if commitments, policies and action can deliver a 7.6% emissions reduction every year between 2020 and 2030, we CAN limit global warming to 1.5°C.

To limit global warming to 1.5°C, global carbon emissions need to fall to 55% of 2010 levels by 2030 and continue a steep decline to zero net emissions by 2050.

Ways you can help:
How big is your carbon footprint? Discover it here!
Find ways to shrink your impact on the planet.
Join others across the globe to gather important scientific data near you!
Get the app!

ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

- Review recommendations the Special Rapporteur has made to your country.
- Review guidelines and assess your government's SDG efforts.
- Join Earth Day Live and take action!
- Contact your representatives.
- Share this infographic across your social media!

Continued...

We will not survive if earth dies at the hands of our own economic systems. We are intertwined with the ecosystem, and the intricacies of our human dependency on earth have become increasingly clear. As a result, there is an emerging legal movement recognizing “the inherent rights of Nature to exist, thrive and evolve.” [5] The legal framework moves from our modern ideas of property and dominion over the earth to the understanding that earth is a “rights-bearing partner with which humanity has co-evolved.” [6] Laws that recognize our fundamentally symbiotic relationship as necessary for both human and planet survival are emerging at the local and national levels.

With our voice and collective will, Mercy Global Action will continue to advocate for laws to protect the rights of earth and the human right to a safe environment. Advocacy for earth and for our right to life on this planet rests with each one of us and what we say and the petitions we sign matter just as much as what we buy and how we choose to live our lives. This Earth Day remember that “whatever you are not changing, you are choosing.” [7] Make a choice for the future survival and health of humanity and earth today.

[1] Emissions Gap Report 2019: Global progress report on climate action. UN Environment Programme. 2019. <https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/emissions-gap-report/2019/>

[2] Ibid

[3] Andersen, Inger. “First Person: COVID-19 is not a silver lining for the climate, says UN Environment chief.” UN News: Climate Change. 5 April, 2020. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061082>

[4] Ibid

[5] “Rights of Nature Law, Policy and Education.” United Nations: Harmony with Nature. <http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/rightsOfNature/>

[6] Ibid

[7] Buchanan PhD, Laurie. “Note to Self: A Seven-Step Path to Gratitude and Growth.” She Writes Press. November 1, 2016.



Celebrate Laudato Si Week!

As we commemorate the 5th anniversary of Laudato Si', please join Mercy Global Action in celebrating Laudato Si' Week with workshops to pray, reflect, and prepare for action together. All workshops are interactive hands-on opportunities to grow and learn together. Click **here** for more information!



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

• A Theological Reflection on the Issue of Migration



Experience

Think of a time when you relocated. How did you feel? Were you afraid? Think of a time when you met or heard about a person who migrated. What do you remember? How does this memory make you feel now?



Word

Begin by centering yourself in prayer as you reflect on **1 kings 19:1-9**.

What touches you in the reading?

Enter the story in your imagination. Who are you? What does it feel like to be in this encounter?



Analyze

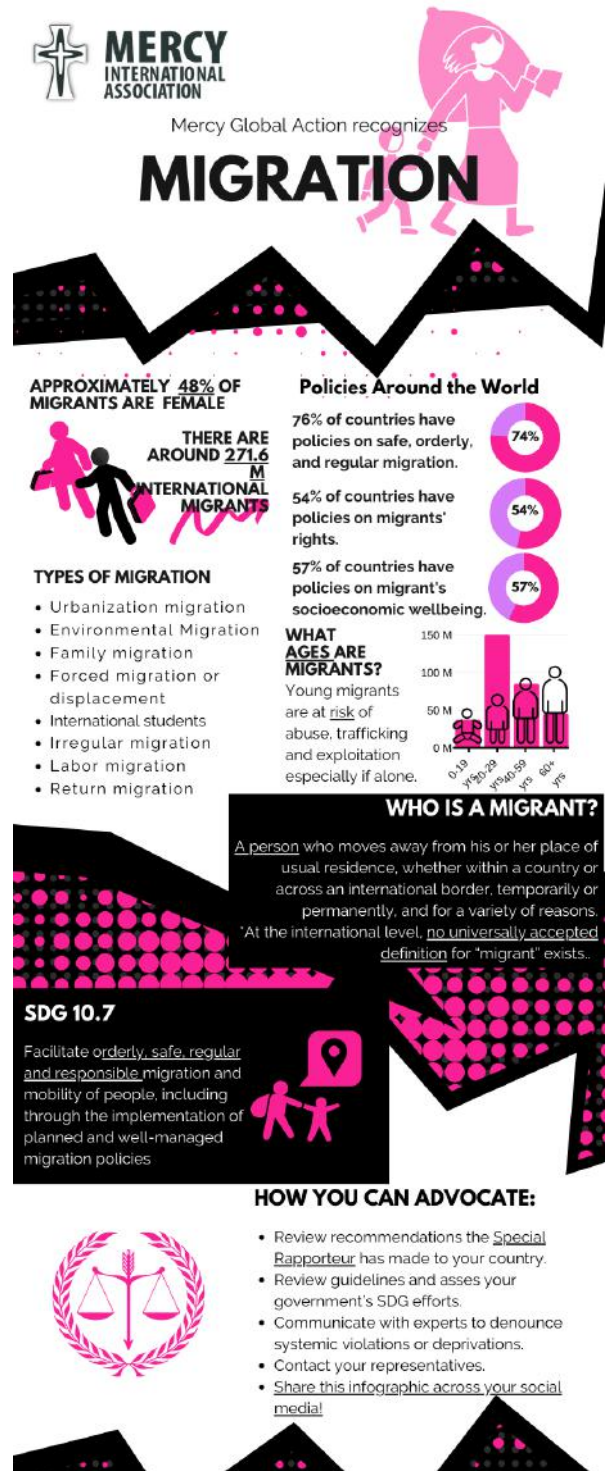
Research current concerns about migration, especially considering the Corona pandemic. What is your community doing to address the needs of migrants and refugees? Consider how migration intersects with other areas of concern: women, the environment, homelessness, health. Are there other intersections you can see?



Action

As a result of this reflection, what actions can you take? What can you address in your local area, community, or country? Do any of the advocacy suggestions listed on the infographic inspire you to action?

Share what you have learned through research and prayer.



[Download and share the interactive PDF and the PNG version here.](#)

At the United Nations

THROUGH OUR

ECOSOC EYES...

• *The Pandemic Sheds Light on Gender Based Violence*

Since the beginning of Catherine McAuley's ministry in Dublin, the Mercy community has maintained a special concern for women. The coronavirus quarantine shows us just how much work is left undone as the rate of gender-based violence (GBV) increases and women and girls are at risk of being left behind without adequate social protections. Now more than ever, Mercy International Association- Mercy Global Action calls for an end to GBV and gender inequality by addressing the lack of access to essential services, stereotypes that lead to violence, and the lack of social protections.

For some women and families, the quarantine is more painful and deadly than the virus itself. Last year, 243 million women and girls experienced sexual abuse or violence at the hands of an intimate partner; this violence is increasing in our new reality. [1] The quarantine keeps women experiencing violence, isolated with their abusers and limits access to support systems, medical care, and shelters. As a direct result of quarantine rules, agencies around the world have reported a 30% increase on average in calls to domestic violence hotlines. [2] The lack of access to necessary resources makes the isolation worse for women experiencing GBV. Many have no way of escaping the escalating violence in quarantine as authorities have deemed some services unessential and converted some shelters into Corona treatment overflow spaces. [3] Services for women and families experiencing GBV are imperative, States must recognize them as essential and keep them operational during the pandemic.

In recognition of the intersectional impacts? of the pandemic António Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations, called for economic protections stating that Covid-19 is "deepening existing inequalities." [4] He states that, "measures to protect and stimulate the economy, from cash transfers to credits and loans, must be targeted at women. Social safety nets must be expanded." [5] Social protections, and the safety net they provide, are often not available to women given that social norms and stereotypes frequently limit job opportunities. Around the world, 60% of women work in the informal economy (e.g domestic work), which is characterized by decreased opportunity, low wages, and a lack of social protections (i.e. guaranteed vacation, maternity leave, social security, health insurance, or unemployment benefits). [6] Working without social protections leaves women vulnerable to discrimination, poverty, and violence. Social protections are necessary to prevent women from being left behind, especially as States work towards recovering from the coronavirus by stimulating their economies. A safety net provided by social protections will free women from dependency and increase economic opportunities, which will prevent further abuse.

MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Mercy Global Action Focuses On:
GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

MURDERS
Globally 87,000 women were murdered in 2017. Most of the killings were committed by an intimate partner.

\$1.5 TRILLION
The cost of domestic violence adds up. Lost salary from sick days taken to recover, diminished employment opportunities, and health care costs add up to \$1.5 Trillion.

1 IN 3
1 in 3 (35%) women and girls have experienced sexual and/or physical violence.

PREVENTION
Preventing gender-based violence and inequality must begin with a human rights-based approach. Seeking to empower women and strengthen their capacities to claim their rights.

SOCIAL PROTECTIONS
Ensured access to health and maternity care, financial guaranteed income, and service prevent GBV and empower women.

TRANSFORMATION
Communities need support transforming stereotypes and values that allow GBV. Community mobilization, workshops, marketing and entertainment can reshape these norms.

VALUING UNPAID WORK
Globally, women spend an average of 4.1 hours a day on unpaid domestic and care work. It would cost about \$11 Trillion to pay for that work.

Advocacy Opportunities
Assess your government's SDG efforts. Download the Voices against Violence handbook for educational materials (ages 5-25). Contact your representatives. Share this infographic across your social media!

"Sometimes, I think about not going to work anymore because of this [sexual harassment]. But then I think about my family condition and I know I cannot quit."

Female garment worker, Iran, Corbisio (CARE Australia, 2017, p.4)

[Download and share the interactive PDF and the PNG version here.](#)

Gender Based Violence, Continued...

We must address the underlying issues of gender inequality if we hope to eradicate GBV. At its roots, GBV stems from the stereotypes and social norms that promote discrimination and subordination.. In line with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recommendation, we call on States to name and confront social norms and stereotypes that lead to violence against women and girls as a necessary step towards greater respect for women, and gender equality for all. [7] It is crucial to educate communities and children to stop GBV from perpetuating in generations to come. Education, such as the UNWomen’s “Voices against Violence,” will prevent future abuse before it begins.

Education and safety were some of Catherine McAuley’s goals for women seeking shelter at the first House of Mercy. The women she encountered struggled to find safe employment where they would be free from sexual abuse.

Before Catherine opened the House of Mercy, she found herself unable to help a woman in need; this experience roots Mercy’s call to serve women in vulnerable situations.

Catherine never knew what became of that woman, just as we do not know the many faces of women and girls who survive abuse today.

Echoes of the untold stories of women around the world reach us through the stark statistics illustrating our current culture of gender inequality. As we carry on Catherine’s mission, the Mercy Family continues to work for equality for the women and girls we may never meet.



[1] “Policy Brief: The Impact of Covid-19 on Women.” United Nations. April 9, 2020.

<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>

[2] Ibid

[3] Mlambo-Ngcuka, Phumzile. “Violence Against Women and Girls: the Shadow Pandemic.” UNWomen. April 6, 2020.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>

[4] Guterres, António. “Put women and girls at the centre of efforts to recover from COVID-19.” United Nations Covid-19 Response. <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/put-women-and-girls-centre-efforts-recover-covid-19>

[5] Ibid

[6] Ibid

[7] “Launch of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating General Recommendation No. 19.” OHCHR. 2017.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/GR35.aspx>

REFLECTIONS ON THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP (MELF)

BY ANNEKE KAT

As the only Jewish fellow in the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship, I think it is important to share a bit about my journey that led me to this moment. In 2017 I was invited to participate in a gathering called, “Nuns & Nones,” where I spent two days at Cranaleith Spiritual Center with a group of women religious and millennials sharing stories and discussing our commitment to social justice. Coming from the field of interfaith community education, I was curious to spend time with women religious, a group of people I hadn't encountered much before that moment. My friends playfully teased me, a queer Jewish atheist, spending her birthday weekend with a bunch of nuns. Little did they know, I credit the two days I spent with Nuns & Nones with radically influencing my outlook on social justice, inter-generational learning, and the valuable, often underappreciated role women religious play in the fabric of the city I call home. Among many of those women were Sisters of Mercy. During these two days, and through interfaith programming I lead in Philadelphia, I was able to deepen my relationship with the local community of the Sisters of Mercy.



Two years later, I am now part of the inaugural group of Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship. Without the support of the local Sisters of Mercy I developed relationships with, I most likely would have not become such a unique candidate for a catholic women's leadership program. Nor would I have been as inclined to devote a year of my life to being deeply connected with women religious. The MELF program has continued to offer such a layered and deeply meaningful experience. The combination of local Mercy mentorship, monthly webinars and readings on important social justice topics, the experiential learning opportunities with an international group of fellows, and the freedom to explore and execute a personal project have all created a very important space in my life. I am able to devote more focused time to increasing my awareness of important issues and explore my own personal growth as a leader.

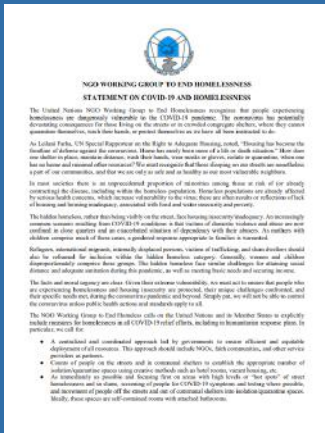


One aspect of the program I have valued is the access we have been granted to Sisters of Mercy and other female experts who are embedded in policy and grassroots work within the topics we are exploring each month. I believe there is something quite unique and special in learning about this issues solely from a woman-centered perspective. Adding to that nuance, I have appreciated hearing how each woman has connected her work to the Mercy charism and their catholic identity.

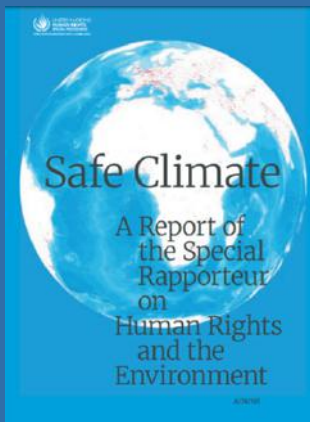
A huge gift of the MELF program has been simply becoming connected to the fellows around the world and the Sisters who are all engaged in incredible work. I was struck by the vulnerability and openness of all of the participants. During our time in Cambodia, the program leadership were able to create an open and supportive space for us. I often facilitate dialogue but rarely do I get to participate in or benefit from such an intimate space where everyone went deep quite quickly. I deeply value the mini community and the special liminal space of vulnerability between our lived realities that our group was able to create. I have learned so much from the other fellows so far and I greatly look forward to how we can grow this special community.

“USEFUL RESOURCES

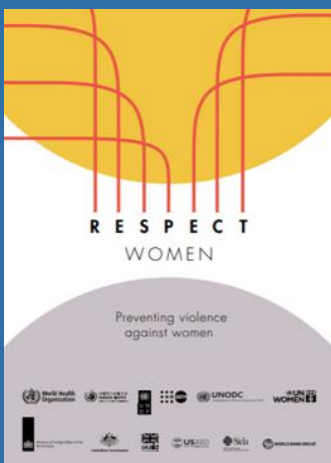
NGO Working Group to End Homelessness Statement on COVID-19 and Homelessness



Safe Climate: A Report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment



Respect Women: Preventing Violence Against Women



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 15 May International Day of Families
- 16 May International Day of Living Together in Peace
- 16 May International Day of Light [UNESCO]
- 20 May World Bee Day
- 21 May International Tea Day
- 21 May World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development
- 22 May International Day for Biological Diversity
- 29 May International Day of UN Peacekeepers
- 1 June Global Day of Parents
- 3 June World Bicycle Day
- 4 June International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
- 5 June World Environment Day
- 7 June World Food Safety Day
- 8 June World Oceans Day

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MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

MAY/JUNE 2020 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 6



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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:
ANGELA REED RSM, AMANDA
CARRIER RSM, AND COLLEEN
SWAIN



GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

*“Listen to the wind, it talks. Listen to the
silence, it speaks. Listen to your heart, it
knows.”*

— Native American Proverb

The above Native American Proverb touched me deeply as I pondered the current world circumstances. The world has been facing the greatest health pandemic since the time of the Spanish flu and we know that whilst the COVID-19 virus does not discriminate, its impact is greater on those who have been rendered poor. We remember and pray for all who have died as a result of COVID-19, and we pray for a regeneration of life as we move forward.

These past weeks have also brought about a heightened awareness of racism, exposing deeply entrenched discrimination and marginalisation that exists not only in the United States but globally. Witnessing the video footage of the death...
(Continued on page 2)





THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

- *Listen to the wind, continued*

...of George Floyd leaves one feeling weak, in disbelief and horror. We pray in particular, for African Americans, and for all people of colour who are feeling the pain deeply. May all of humankind stand in solidarity and bring about change, so that all will be recognised for their inherent value and dignity.

As 'business as usual' has come to a grinding halt and we are called to look deeply into the state of our world and our own values, I find myself called to 'listen to the heart'. This week, I experienced a movement of the heart in two meetings that I attended. The first was during the meeting of the Mercy Global Action COVID-19 response taskforce. In this meeting we listened to many stories from around the world, reflecting on the impact that this pandemic has had on people and earth. As a group 'our hearts were moved', articulating that a mercy response evokes compassion, empathy and action.

Likewise, in a meeting with the Mercy Global Action Fellows, we found ourselves moved to tears by the personal sharing of one member of this unique community who, as an African American woman fears for the futures of her children and grandchildren. Many of us were speechless, recognising that no words of consolation would be adequate. Instead we listened to our hearts and in a unique way were able to offer empathy and a sense of solidarity.

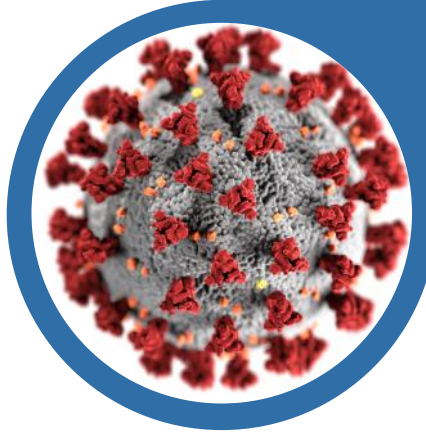
As people of Mercy, we continue to grapple with injustices throughout the world and know deep in our hearts that the only way forward is to work for the liberation of all, so that earth and every human may truly flourish.

-Angela Reed rsm, Head of Mercy Global Action -Mercy International Association

- *Angela Reed rsm Presents on Human Trafficking During COVID-19*

On May 29th, Angela Reed rsm presented on ACRATH's webinar "Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery – what are the facts especially in this time of Pandemic and what would Catherine McAuley be Saying?".

To access this webinar and learn more about the global implications see: <https://vimeo.com/423041576>





THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

- Do You Hear the Cry of the Poor?: Mercy Global Action's Participation in Laudato Si Week*

The world joined in prayer on the 24th of May on the fifth anniversary of Laudato Si. As we prayed, “open our minds and touch our hearts, so we may be attentive to Your gift of creation” we came to the end of a week of prayer, reflection, and education.

[1] Since Pope Francis published Laudato Si, we have been living into the call to care for our common home. By integrating spirituality, science, and social justice we seek to engage in a holistic and integral approach to caring for creation.



Catherine McAuley said, “The poor need help today, not next week.” Catherine’s sense of urgency stemmed from the harm she witnessed because of the lack of education, healthcare, and job opportunities. Today, we can see how the care of our common home is closely linked with the care of “the poor, sick, and ignorant.” We now count Earth among the poor and sick. Furthermore, Laudato Si connects the cry of the poor with the cry of earth, and the degradation of Earth affects the poor and most vulnerable among us first. Global temperatures rose 1.1°C due to pollution and is expected to rise to a catastrophic 3.2°C.[2] Already, we bear witness to increasingly devastating extreme weather events, rising sea levels, the loss of biodiversity, and an increased risk of zoonotic diseases like the coronavirus. Individuals and families who are forced from their homes due to the devastation from extractive industries, pollution, drought, and the loss of crops and livestock are already part of our global reality. This is the cry of the poor. This is the cry of Earth.

Laudato Si week held this cry in prayer and reflection, beginning with a two-day online retreat and a workshop on eco-spirituality with the Global Catholic Climate Movement. Prayer and spirituality root us in our advocacy and strengthen us all for the work ahead, as does our biblical call to stewardship. In a subsequent Laudato Si Week webinar on Advocacy, Cardinal Turkson discussed Pope Francis’ use of the term the gospel of creation. Creation, like the four written gospels, draw us into the story of God’s wondrous acts of love and salvation. Creation, the ever-evolving work of God, not only supports our human family, it also connects us to all living things.

The importance of understanding and integrating eco-spirituality and the science of climate change forms the base for our long-term conversion. Prayer and reflection alone are not enough to move people to action. “While we place our confidence in God, we must act as if success depended on our own exertions” (Catherine McAuley). The ...



Do You Hear the Cry of the Poor? Continued...

Laudato Si Week webinar on Sustainability highlighted the actions needed to preserve creation for the good of all now, and for future generations. Catholics, united by the call of Laudato Si, can create a more sustainable world. Dan Misleh, from Catholic Energies, shared success stories of converting churches to sustainable power. The sustainable projects not only save thousands of dollars in energy costs but work to protect our planet. Another story of hope came from Father Dario's work in Brazil with local communities facing displacement and pollution from mining companies.

Through uniting local communities and empowering the people, the grass-roots level made progress in their struggle to protect their towns, livelihoods, and seek greater corporate accountability. Last, in the Advocacy webinar, Anja Appel shared her work with the Austrian Bishop's Conference to divest from fossil fuel investments. She stated, "the investing of money is not ethically neutral... purchasing is always a moral act."

Everything from everyday acts, to corporate investing, and international advocacy matters in our ministry to save our common home and all life. God's call to be good stewards of creation takes on new life within our charism of Mercy and in the context of Laudato Si. Now more than ever, the call of the gospel of creation must not be ignored. "The way in which [we] relate to the earth is a test of the way we relate with God, just as it is when [we] respond to the poor, the hungry, the lonely, or the imprisoned." [3] The people, creatures, and resources of Earth are all integrally connected. We live only because we are cradled by the web of life God wove out of creation. Seeking to continue the work of Mercy begun by Catherine, we must now hold creation among the poor and sick whom we seek to serve.

Footnotes:

[1] "Common Prayer for the 5th Anniversary of Laudato Si'." Laudato Si' Week 2020.

<https://laudatosiweek.org/prayer/>

[2] "Emissions Gap Report 2019: Global Progress Report on Climate Action." UN Environment Programme. 26 November, 2019.

<https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/emissions-gap-report/2019/>

[3] Grey, Carmody. "Theological Imaginings: Mercy and the Degradation of Earth." Mercy International Association. <https://www.mercyworld.org/about/our-initiatives/mgp-themes/segment-2/theological-imaginings-degradation-of-earth/>



THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

- *Working Group to End Homelessness COVID-19 Statement*

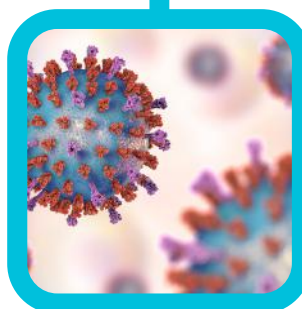
In response to the current coronavirus pandemic, Mercy Global Action has co-signed a [statement with the Working Group to End Homelessness](#). The statement highlights the needs of people experiencing street homelessness during this health crisis and the invisible homeless who survive in inadequate housing. As we continue advocacy for the human right to adequate housing, we must elevate the voices and concerns of people who are being left behind by States' coronavirus response and recovery plans.

Everyone is familiar with the precautions necessary to stay safe during the pandemic. We must stay home, use PPE, practice social distancing, and isolate if exposed. For people experiencing street homelessness or inadequate housing these life saving precautions are not possible. Many people do not have a home to stay in, others rely on shelters where social distancing and isolation are impossible. Additional health concerns often affect people experiencing homelessness and that will raise their risk of contracting the virus.

As we continue to examine the impact of the coronavirus, we must also look at this through a gendered lens. Inadequate housing includes women and children living in violent and abusive situations. Violence has escalated during the quarantine as women and children are isolated with their abusers and cut off from support systems. Resources, such as domestic violence shelters, must be recognized as essential and be made available during the pandemic.

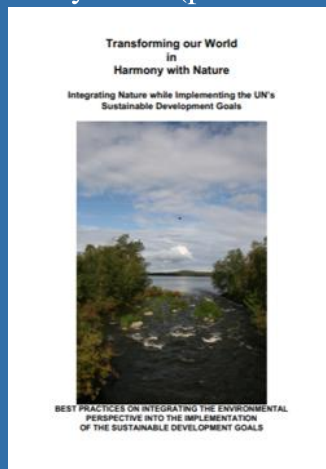
Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, stated “housing has become the frontline of defense against the coronavirus. Home has rarely been more of a life or death situation.” In response to this crisis the WGEH calls for:

- A centralized and coordinated approach led by governments to ensure efficient and equitable deployment of all resources. This approach should include NGOs, faith communities, and other service providers as partners.
- Counts of people on the streets and in communal shelters to establish the appropriate number of isolation/quarantine spaces using creative methods such as hotel rooms, vacant housing, etc.
- As immediately as possible and focusing first on areas with high levels or “hot spots” of street homelessness and in slums, screening of people for COVID-19 symptoms and testing where possible, and movement of people off the streets and out of communal shelters into isolation/quarantine spaces. Ideally, these spaces are self-contained rooms with attached bathrooms.



“USEFUL RESOURCES

Transforming our World in Harmony with Nature: SDG 15 Terrestrial Ecosystems (p.103-117)



Faith, Life and Ministry Education (FLAME) Webinar for 2020



Video: UN-Habitat Executive Director, Maimunah Mohd Sharif on the COVID-19 Response Plan and Campaign



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 5 June World Environment Day
- 7 June World Food Safety Day
- 8 June World Oceans Day
- 12 June World Day Against Child Labour
- 15 June World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
- 17 June World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
- 18 June Sustainable Gastronomy Day
- 19 June International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict
- 20 June World Refugee Day
- 21 June Solstice
- 23 June International Widows' Day
- 26 June International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
- 26 June United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
- 11 July World Population Day
- 18 July Nelson Mandela International Day
- 28 July World Hepatitis Day
- 30 July World Day against Trafficking in Persons

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

Subscribe to our e-newsletter to learn about our vision in action and the ministries carried out by our member congregations: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

JUNE/JULY 2020 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 7



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UPCOMING EVENTS

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:
ANGELA REED RSM, AMANDA
CARRIER RSM, AND COLLEEN
SWAIN

GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

Thank You and Farewell Mandy!

“Thank you Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues, and friends.” Adrenaline rushed through me as I read the opening words to the oral statement on mining and homelessness last February.

The moment my microphone lit up green in the conference hall of the Commission on Social Development felt like a climax, even though CSocD 58 was just five months into my internship with Mercy International Association-Mercy Global Action. Ministry at MGA was a whirlwind of collaboration, meetings, and research. The massive amount of reading and study helped catch me up to the world existing in and around the United Nations, but only a little. I depended heavily on Angela and Colleen, and the many other organizations advocating at the UN, for constant explanations, definitions, and histories.



When I gratefully accepted the opportunity to join the team as an intern I stepped into a world of justice ministry unlike any other I knew. After a decade of direct service in culinary arts, I had a lot of catching up to do in the unique field of advocacy. I spent many meetings jotting down acronyms to be deciphered later and leaning over to whisper a question or two. I found refuge in the support of the MGA team who guided me through every unusual day at the office.

I never felt too lost or overwhelmed in the MGA office with the picture of Catherine McAuley gazing over my shoulder. The charisma of Mercy and the spirit of Catherine touched every aspect of my work. Her words guided me to the connections between far-reaching corners of the world and seemingly mysterious aspects of international law. Catherine's spirit of service spoke to me with a fresh voice through my experiences in New York.

Catherine often used her voice to encourage the gifts of her sisters and the women she serves. She helped them grow, learn, and engage in new ministries just as Colleen and Angela helped me; I learned so much with them over the past nine months. Now, I leave this ministry with a greater understanding of international advocacy, our global reality, and the slow but steady workings of the UN. I also grew through the many wonderful relationships and encounters with Mercy through MGA's connections with the Mercy World. The way Mercy now encircles the globe, through sisters and coworkers, would delight Catherine.



Meeting voices of Mercy from around the world enriched my experience of ministry. It has been an honor to be a small part of the ongoing work of Mercy at MGA. I take with me many gifts from my time here, and I know the gift of my writing voice, nurtured so carefully over the past nine months, will be a significant asset to my future ministry as I continue to serve wherever God calls me.

I am truly grateful to God for calling me to a wonderful ministry at MGA and to all who helped make these past nine months exciting and edifying. Thank you especially to Angela and Colleen, who welcomed me into their ministry. My intern experience is a true blessing that will bear fruit for years to come.

-Amanda Carrier rsm

God of our life's journeys, we celebrate the goodness of Amanda and ask your blessing as she continues on the road of life. May the warm bonds which we have forged here in the MGA Office, unite us wherever we may be. May the power of your presence bless this moment of our leave taking.



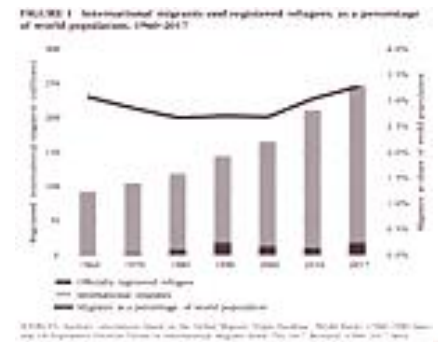
THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

- *A Crisis within a Crisis: Understanding Migration*

Marianne Loughry rsm PhD from Boston College joined the Mercy Emerging Leadership Fellows in June to share her wisdom in a webinar on migration. Her presentation, “A Crisis within a Crisis,” framed the current circumstances of refugees and forcibly displaced people within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The facts surrounding migration are difficult to grasp given the highly politicized narrative concerning refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people (IDPs).

Politicians and news outlets frequently sensationalize the stories of migrants and asylum seekers. Images of marching migrants, boats full of refugees, and tent cities on borders depict a crisis, but it is not a crisis of unimaginable numbers as they often lead us to believe. Migrants account for less than 3.5% of the global population, and this figure has only increased slightly over the past few decades (see graph right). Sr. Marianne attributes the increased rate of migration to improved access to transportation. Transportation by boat, train, and plane was a luxury decades ago.



Despite better access to transportation, most people still stay within their country of origin. Recognition as a refugee requires a person to cross an international border seeking the protection of their human rights. Today there are only 25.9 million refugees, including 5.5 million Palestinian refugees. People who are displaced within their country of origin are recognized as IDPs; currently, there are 41.3 million IDPs. People who flee their country of origin, but are not yet recognized by their host country, are asylum seekers and there are just 3.5 million.

Becoming recognized as a refugee is difficult. Host countries turn away many people or force asylum seekers to wait at the border. If States don't turn them away, they hold migrants and asylees in prison-like detention centers. Like refugees and asylum seekers, IDPs live in refugee-like settings such as camps where food, education, and health care are scarce. Other migrants live in fear as undocumented immigrants, migrant workers, or survivors of human trafficking. Waiting, constant moving, scarcity, and trauma marks the reality of all migrants regardless of status.

The plight of migrants is now worse due to the pandemic. States and politicians stopped or slowed migration citing health concerns. However, the longer people are forced to wait before they can reach safety the worse the post-pandemic migration will be, stated Sr. Maryann. Once States lift travel restrictions, all those who have waited in violent or abusive situations will need to move and host countries must be ready.

These statistics and political policies represent real people and families struggling to survive. They do not choose to move; they are forced to flee violence and poverty to save themselves. We must hold up their stories, contributions, and lives so we do not lose them amid the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic.

• *Fleeing Like Jesus: A Theological Reflection*



Experience

Think back on your own experience. Can you recall a time when you met a refugee in your community? Have you ever ministered to refugees? Have you, or any of your ancestors, fled their home country? What would scare you so much you felt the need to flee for your life?



Word

Begin by centering yourself in prayer as you reflect on Mathew 2:13-18.

As you read about Jesus' refugee experience and the Slaughter of the Innocents what touches you? What might Mary and Joseph thought or felt as they fled? In Egypt, what might life have been like for Jesus and his family?



Analyze

Research current concerns about refugees.

Consider what the refugee process is like: what documents are needed, what can families carry when fleeing, will refugees be detained in camps or detention center, what will happen to children? What other concerns can you research?

We have prepared the infographic (right) to help you get started. Each data point is a link that will lead you to more information.



Action

As a result of this reflection, what can you change in your own community concerning refugees? What can you address in your country?

Do any of the advocacy suggestions listed on the [infographic](#) inspire you to action? Share the [infographic](#) and what you have learned through research and prayer.

MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION



Mercy Global Action affirms the rights of REFUGEES



The United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone crossing international borders to flee "a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."

The main principle of the convention is **non-refoulement**, which means that a refugee should not be returned to an unsafe environment.



EVERY MINUTE

25 people flee their homes. They are escaping terror, war, and persecution.



70.8 M

By the end of 2018 there were about **70.8 Million** refugees around the world.



80% OF REFUGEES

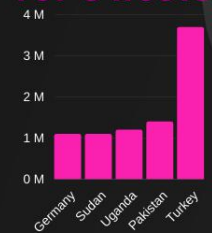
When people must flee, about **80%** of refugees stay in countries neighboring their own.

67% OF REFUGEES

67% of refugees come from just **5 countries**: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, & Somalia



TOP 5 HOSTS



RIGHTS OF REFUGEES

- The right not to be expelled, except under certain, strictly defined conditions;
- The right not to be punished for illegal entry into the territory of a contracting State;
- The right to work;
- The right to housing;
- The right to education;
- The right to public relief and assistance;
- The right to freedom of religion;
- The right to access the courts;
- The right to freedom of movement within the territory;
- The right to be issued identity and travel documents.



Advocate:

- Review recommendations the **Special Rapporteur** has made to your country.
- Learn about refugees contributing to your community.
- Share this [infographic](#) across your social media!



THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

• *Bringing Grassroots Voices to the United Nations*

Getting data is fundamental for guiding advocacy and policy at the United Nations. Often statistical and scientific data is used, but these sources do not show the whole story. Grassroots voices are a key source of information since the people on the ground are experts in their own lives. As advocates we must work to bring the expertise of people experiencing violations of their human rights to the UN. The work of grassroots engagement is more important than ever in the Amazon region, which is experiencing intersecting human rights violations due to Covid-19, discrimination against indigenous peoples, and extractive industries. Recently, the Mining Working Group gathered several expert voices to inform our work advocating for the Pan-Amazonian region.



REPAM, a Catholic Church movement promoting human rights and dignity in the Pan-Amazonia region, reported on the issues of each State's Covid-19 response. The report, "REPAM Calls for Urgent and Unified Action to Avoid a Humanitarian and Environmental Tragedy," highlighted the lack of transparency, concern for our common home, and the governments' response to the indigenous communities.

Motivated by Quierda Amazonia and Pope Francis' call for unified action, REPAM urged all people of good will, from politicians to artists, to work together for the good of the Pan-Amazonian region.



The Mining Working Group at the UN submitted a report at the request of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous people. Based on the reports from grassroots partners the MWG explained that the indigenous peoples of the Amazon are being disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The indigenous peoples are far from hospitals resulting in poor health care and a lack of access to lifesaving equipment. As a result, several tribes have reported high numbers of apparent Covid-19 cases as well as deaths among their elders and shaman.



Reaching out to grassroots contacts throughout the Amazon, MWG shared the stories of the indigenous peoples hard hit by Covid-19. Ana Jeaneth Andino Granja, from the congregation of Hermanas Dominican Missionaries of

• *Bringing Grassroots Voices to the United Nations, Continued*

Rosario, shared her story of the degradation caused by extractive industries in the Peruvian Amazon. Citing the greed of corporations exploiting the area she described the destruction of the land, the pollution of the water, and the violence against the indigenous peoples resulting from mining in the region. Granja writes, “Companies go deeper into the jungle polluting everything in their path and human groups are forced to go deeper, which brings danger to their lives due to the danger and the great distance to the populated center for emergency cases. In fact, many natives die before they can reach a health center.”

Granja and REPAM’s call to action both name a second viral pandemic, the virus of violence. Consumerism, alcoholism, conflict, and murders increased in areas affected by extractive industries as the indigenous people try to survive. As Quierda Amazonia stated, “The care of people and the care of ecosystems are inseparable... To abuse nature is to abuse our ancestors, our brothers and sisters, creation and the Creator, and to mortgage the future.” (QA 42) We must respond with Mercy to the overlapping crisis of Covid-19, the cry of indigenous peoples, and the cry of Earth.



THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

- **MIA-MGA Signs on to World Refugee Statement**

The United Nations annually commemorates World Refugee Day on the 20th of June. This year we are called to focus on knowing the people who undertake dangerous journeys, fleeing their homes in search of safety. In “To Know in Order to Understand,” a joint statement from Faith-Based Organizations (FBO’s) across the world, Mercy International Association-Mercy Global Action joins the voices of many others advocating for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, FBOs at the UN choose to respond to Pope Francis’ call to “know in order to understand.”[1] We must come to know the people who have become displaced within their own countries (IDPs) as well as refugees who crossed international borders to reach safety. An already perilous journey became even more difficult and dangerous during the pandemic as it forced people to travel and live in camps or detention centers despite the need to quarantine, wear personal protective equipment, and access sanitation. The ongoing refugee crisis is now less visible to the world as individuals and States focus on the health and economic impact of COVID-19.

In response to the invisible reality IDPs and Refugees face, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs called on States to honor the protections named in the Guiding Principles presented to the Commission of Human Rights in 1998. The statement from FBOs at the UN further calls for renewing international attention to the situation of IDPs and refugees, to whom we have become blind during the competing concerns of the global pandemic.

To that end, Pope Francis calls for the transformation of our hearts by opening our eyes and seeing, contemplating, and sharing the lives of people experiencing displacement. In a video message, the Pope reminds us that refugees and IDPs are fleeing their homes just as Jesus and his family did. As faith-filled followers, we must look beyond statistics and reports to see the real faces of people asking for our help. Like Catherine, we can see the face of Jesus in everyone we minister to or meet. To commemorate World Refugee Day, get to know the stories of refugees and IDPs through the articles offered below, or by meeting refugees living in your own community. See the face of Jesus in the faces of people who, like Jesus, had to flee to save their lives.



Get to know refugees contributing to their new communities:

[In the Time of Covid-19 WRD Video](#)

["Restoring Sudan’s Forest Cover, One Tree at a Time."](#)

["Syrian Electrician Gets Back on Track at German Rail Network."](#)

[1] “New Pope Video towards WDMR2020: “To know in order to understand.” Migrants and Refugees, The Vatican. May 15, 2020. <https://migrants-refugees.va/2020/05/15/new-pope-video-towards-wdmr2020/>

Reflections on the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship (MELF)

by Carmen Rosa Ccallomamani rsm

Hello, I am Carmen from Peru, and I want to share with you about a wonderful program that Mercy Global Action is developing with 10 women; emerging leaders from different countries, cultures, ages and languages. This program has five areas: a) Experience of being accompanied by a Mentor throughout the year; b) Immersion experience that allows us to meet face-to-face on three occasions; c) Virtual classroom available to interact with other Fellows and program facilitators; d) Resources for reading and videos with very valuable content on various topics that have broadened and deepened our commitment to the defense of Mother Earth, the topic of non-violence, the topic of reconciliation, leadership, anti-racism, etc. and e) Finally, the presentation of a research project, which has the purpose of making a valuable contribution to the actions of MGA. This program throughout this year has allowed us to strengthen our leadership skills.

In this program something that touched me deeply is THE EXPERIENCE OF IMMERSION IN CAMBODIA, I consider it as one of the foundational experiences. Because it led us to a deep coexistence, full of learning and challenges. Experiences that allowed us to recognize the value of team leadership. That Sr. Denise with her team from the Spirituality and Reconciliation center; who as a team have been recognized and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The recognition is not to a person, the recognition went TO THE TEAM for promoting reconciliation and developing a culture of peace. We have celebrated life and deep connection with nature, from its circular dances, dances for peace, community celebrations, tasting delicious food full of fresh vegetables and fruits.

Cambodia led us to revere stories of pain, sadness, and death. But at the same time stories of struggle, perseverance, hope, organization and reconciliation. Above all, learning so that so much violence and genocide that this country experienced is not repeated.

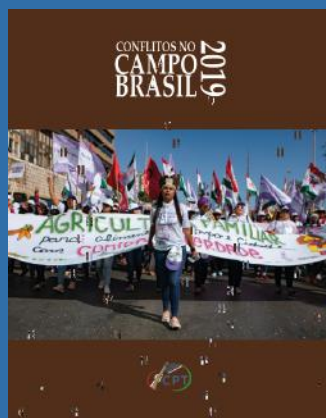
Here I want to revere the capacity of RESILIENCE that Cambodians have, many had lost an arm, a leg or both legs, but they are "happy", their faces radiate a lot of light, a lot of peace and dignity. They are proud of who they are, such as Mr. Ret, leader and member of the spirituality center team, who had lost both legs in the minefields. I remember very well the day we went to a town to build toilets for some families and he had no difficulty building. On the other hand, once again we revere Catherine McAuley, founder of the Sisters of Mercy, who left us as a legacy the ability to create bridges between rich and poor, to turn difficult situations into learning opportunities to promote a dignified life.

Today, Cambodia holds a special place in my heart. And this program is like having a comforting cup of tea, my Sisters of Mercy would say, or it is like sharing sacred stories around the well or around a campfire as the women of our indigenous peoples do... THANK YOU, ANGELA AND COLLEEN FOR MAKING IT REAL. DREAM THAT ONE DAY THEY STARTED TO DREAM.



“USEFUL RESOURCES

Conflicts no Camp Brasil (English)



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 11 July World Population Day
- 18 July Nelson Mandela International Day
- 28 July World Hepatitis Day
- 30 July World Day against Trafficking in Persons
- 9 August International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
- 19 August World Humanitarian Day
- 21 August International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism
- 22 August International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief
- 23 August International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition
- 29 August International Day against Nuclear Tests
- 30 August International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018 Report



2020 World Refugee Day Emojis Designed by Award-winning Ivorian artist (Article and Video)



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MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

JULY/AUGUST 2020 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 8



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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:
ANGELA REED RSM, CECILIE
KERN, SIOBHAN GOLDEN AND
COLLEEN SWAIN



GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

Welcome Cecilie and Siobhan to the MGA Team!

I am from Westport, Ireland. It brings me great joy to take on the Intern position with Mercy Global Action this year. I want to sincerely thank Sr Angela Reed and Colleen Swain for this opportunity. I am excited to further my commitment to justice and advocacy work, while offering a unique perspective to the Mercy Global Action team. I graduated from the University of Limerick in 2018, with an honours degree in Psychology and Spanish. During the course of my study, I had the opportunity to teach English in Patagonia, Argentina. This experience opened my eyes to the many diversities, injustices and inequalities in the world. Although, I have always had a passion for justice and social change, it was this opportunity which encouraged me to learn more about human rights and global justice issues.

I am currently participating in the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship. This has been a valuable experience for me and has guided me to view the world through the lens of Mercy-- reminding me that poverty is not a fate and to always respond to issues of justice with kindness and compassion. I am excited to continue to build on the leadership skills I have gained and further empower other women and girls to be leaders. The Fellowship has highlighted the importance of fostering women's leadership and drives me to continuously confront and expand my own learnings and way of life. Additionally, I am

Welcome Cecilie and Siobhan

conducting a research project on Women's Homelessness in Ireland. I feel strongly about the need to call on UN Member States to provide housing and support to their people, as a basic Human Right. I look forward to being part of the MGA team, bringing experiences of those in grassroots ministries to an international level and challenging oppressive systems.

I am excited to further connect and interact with the Mercy World and expand my knowledge and experience of international human rights advocacy. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, I am initially beginning the internship based at the Mercy International Centre in Dublin, Ireland.'

-Siobhan Golden



'I am so excited to join Mercy Global Action as the Global Policy and Research Advocate. Since 2014, I have represented other communities of women religious at the United Nations, and engaged in advocacy related to gender equality, human rights, human mobility, poverty eradication and water and sanitation. Through the collaborative work of civil society organizations at the UN, I have worked in partnership with the Mercy Global Action team, beginning with Sr. Áine O'Connor, and then with Sr. Angela Reed and Colleen Swain. Over the years, I have valued the hospitality of the Mercy team, and seen first-hand how Mercy Global Action translates a deep commitment to social justice and human rights into advocacy, particularly on behalf of marginalized populations. I believe in the vital role of religious congregations to bring the perspectives of local advocates to the UN, to voice issues of moral urgency, and to ensure that policies are based on human rights and the dignity of each person. I also believe that it is important to share the work of the UN with local constituencies, raise public awareness of global justice issues, and enhance the accountability of Member States to their people.

I have dedicated my work and studies to exploring issues regarding human mobility, especially policies related to protection and assistance for refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations across the migration cycle, and the gendered aspects of migration. At the UN, I advocated for strong rights-based and gender-responsive human mobility policies in the processes to elaborate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Prior to working at the UN, I worked as an immigration paralegal at a Washington DC non-profit, advocating for compassionate and comprehensive immigration reform, and accompanying migrants, refugees and their families through the US immigration system. I am originally from Palo Alto, California, and I have a BA in Diplomacy & World Affairs and Spanish Literary Studies from Occidental College and a Masters of International Affairs concentrating in Human Rights and Humanitarian Policy, Gender and Public Policy, and UN Studies from Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs.'

-Cecilie Kern



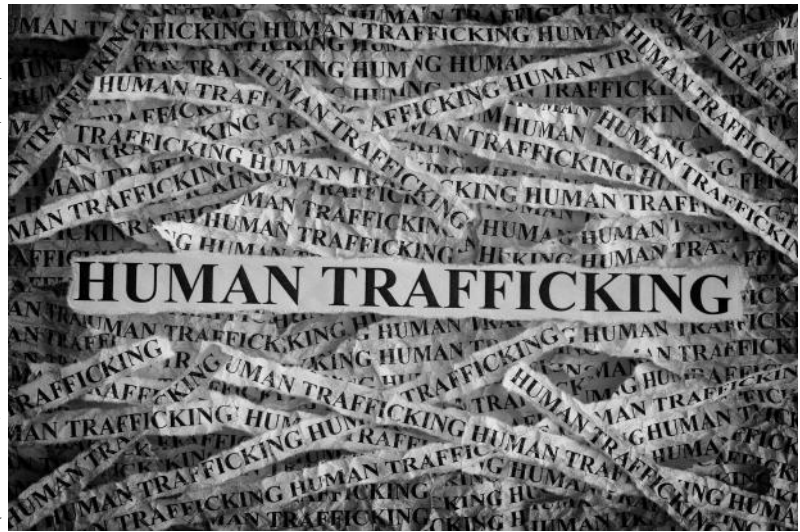
THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

- *Mercy Global Action observes World Day against Trafficking in Persons - 30 July 2020*

World Day against Trafficking in Persons is commemorated annually on 30 July to raise awareness of the situation of human trafficking around the world, and to call on governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, and all societies to redouble their efforts to prevent people from being exploited, protect those who have been trafficked, and seek justice and prosecution of perpetrators.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The Protocol was the first international agreement on trafficking in persons. It provided a broad definition of trafficking, recognized multiple facets of trafficking, and promoted the full respect of the victims' human rights. Despite the adoption of the Protocol, and despite progress over the last 20 years, impunity persists. Human trafficking remains a widespread human rights violation, involving more than 20 million people worldwide, of which only a few hundreds are recognised as victims and supported in their process of social inclusion. Women and girls are disproportionately impacted, making up 72% of all trafficked persons, and 98% of people trafficked for sexual exploitation.



COVID-19 has amplified the inequalities within our societies, and exacerbated the risks of exploitation for people in vulnerable situations. Loss of employment, increased poverty and socioeconomic stress, lockdowns and travel restrictions, school closures, a lack of access to social protection, and a rise in online interactions are increasing vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation and forced labor, creating opportunities for traffickers, and making it increasingly difficult to identify victims. The crisis has also overwhelmed social and public services and impacted the work of criminal justice systems, hindering access to assistance and protection and delaying access to justice for victims and survivors.

And yet despite the challenges, we see the best of humanity: frontline workers overcoming the barriers posed by restrictions, risking their lives, and going above and beyond to provide essential support for people who have been trafficked. The 2020 theme for the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons shines a light on the first responders to human trafficking - those who identify, support, counsel and seek justice for victims of trafficking, and challenge the impunity of traffickers. Sisters of Mercy, Associates and Partners are among the first responders who provide a lifeline to those at risk of trafficking, trafficking victims and survivors. By reaffirming the rights and inherent dignity of all people, we can end human trafficking, and build more inclusive and sustainable societies.

Spread the word across your own social media platforms by sharing the MIA-MGA World Day against Trafficking in Persons infographic and using the hashtag #EndHumanTrafficking.

Learn more about human trafficking, especially in the context of COVID-19, and what you can do to prevent trafficking, uphold the dignity of survivors, and advocate for policy change:

- Mercy International Association - Inherent Dignity: An advocacy guidebook to preventing trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and realizing the human rights of women and girls throughout their lives
- ACRATH - Webinar: Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery – what are the facts especially in this time of Pandemic and what would Catherine McAuley be Saying?
- MECPATH - Webinar: Human Trafficking amidst Covid-19
- UN Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons - Call to Action and list of resources to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- UN Office on Drugs and Crime - Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons
- UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children - COVID-19 Position paper on The impact and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on trafficked and exploited persons
- US Department of State - 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report

WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
30 JULY 2020

THE PANDEMIC'S HIDDEN CRISIS: HUMAN TRAFFICKING 

PEOPLE ARE TRAFFICKED FOR MANY EXPLOITATIVE PURPOSES:

- FORCED LABOUR
- CHILD SOLDIERS
- FORCED BEGGING
- SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
- VIRTUAL EXPLOITATION
- FORCED MARRIAGE
- SELLING CHILDREN
- REMOVAL OF ORGANS

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS A VIOLATION OF DIGNITY AND INTEGRITY


1 IN 3 VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ARE CHILDREN


58% OF VICTIMS TRAFFICKED FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION ARE WOMEN AND GIRLS

COVID-19 AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING 

COVID-19 PROTECTION MEASURES INTENDED TO STOP THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS FURTHER HIDE THE CRIMES OF TRAFFICKING:

- ENFORCED QUARANTINE
- CURFEWS & LOCKDOWNS
- TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS & BORDER CLOSURES
- LIMITATIONS ON ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES
- PUBLIC LIFE LIMITATIONS
- INCREASED POLICE CONTROL

 **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INSTABILITY INCREASE THE RISK OF BEING TRAFFICKED.**

TRAFFICKING VICTIMS HAVE BECOME LESS VISIBLE AND MORE VULNERABLE

CHALLENGES TO: IDENTIFY | PROTECT | PROSECUTE

WE STAND WITH THOSE ON THE FRONT LINES WORKING TO STRENGTHEN ANTI-TRAFFICKING MEASURES AND ASSIST AND PROTECT THE RIGHTS AND DIGNITY OF TRAFFICKED PERSONS DURING THE PANDEMIC.

ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES:

- READ THE REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS, ON THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON TRAFFICKING
- DOWNLOAD MIA'S INHERENT DIGNITY ADVOCACY GUIDEBOOK TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS CAN DO TO PREVENT TRAFFICKING
- USE THE HASHTAG #ENDHUMANTRAFFICKING AND SHARE THIS INFOGRAPHIC ACROSS YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA!

STUCK IN LIMBO AMID COVID-19



THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

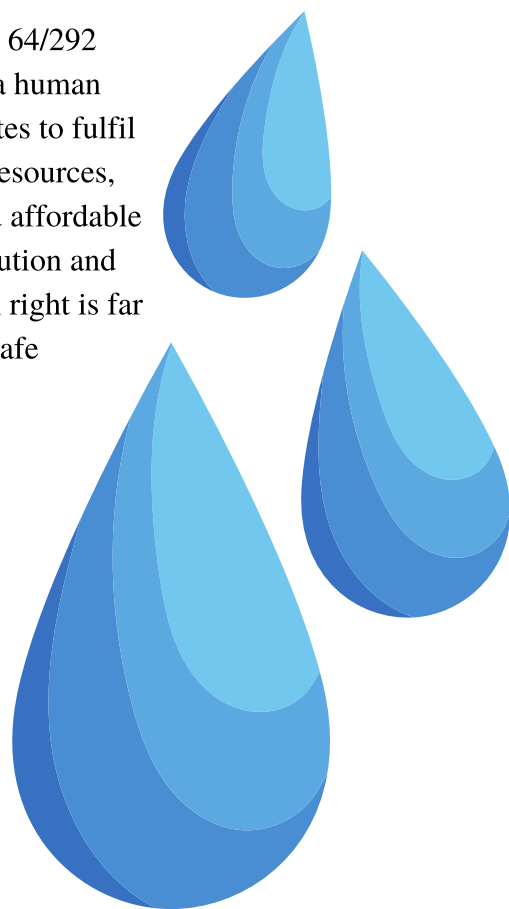
- *Mercy Global Action recalls the 2010 UN Resolution on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation and calls on UN Member States worldwide to reaffirm the human right to water and sanitation at all levels of society*

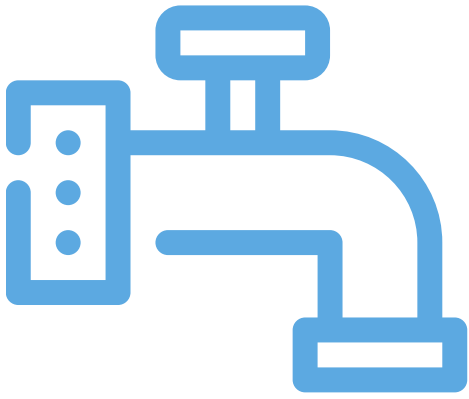
On the 28 July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 64/292 which “recognizes the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life”. The resolution calls on states to fulfil their duties to their people and provide the necessary assistance, cooperation, resources, and infrastructure which are essential to make water clean, safe, accessible and affordable for all. The year 2020 commemorates ten years since the adoption of this resolution and yet, the full achievement of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) as a human right is far from being a reality for many, as 1 in 3 people globally do not have access to safe drinking water.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the need for adequate water and sanitation facilities even more urgent worldwide. The World Health Organisation has encouraged good hand hygiene as the single most important practice to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and improve public safety. A report by the UN Economic and Social Council in 2016, states that 47 per cent of schools and 40 per cent of health-care facilities worldwide were not equipped to practise good hand hygiene. In order to overcome the current health pandemic, we must demand the realisation of the human right to water and sanitation, and increase the provision of sufficient, safe, accessible, affordable and acceptable WASH programmes worldwide.

Water is essential to all life and the survival of ecosystems. The adverse effects of climate change, biodiversity loss and natural disasters are putting increased unsustainable pressure on global water resources. Water has become a scarce commodity and levels of water pollution and contamination are continuing to rise. Water is essential for poverty reduction and other development achievements including promotion of health, food security, gender equality, sustainable agriculture and growth in industries. UNICEF and the WHO have published a recent report highlighting the stark reality of our Global Water Crisis, revealing that approximately 4.2 billion people do not have safely managed sanitation services and 3 billion lack basic hand washing facilities.

Across the Mercy World, there are many countries struggling to realise the human right to water and sanitation due to socio-economic, political and environmental pressures which sustain poverty and hunger. The role of governments is essential to end water poverty and invest in infrastructure to provide water at the national and local levels.





At the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2020, Panama affirmed the great challenges they are facing to improve health care and provide WASH facilities to the most vulnerable communities. Their new plan to Improve the Health Systems and decrease the infant mortality rate and gender inequality gap, includes guaranteeing safe and clean water and sanitation services and improving environmental policies, which expand to rural and indigenous areas.

Access to clean water and sanitation is a core concern of the Mercy World. We stand against the growing tendency to privatise water which puts the lives of many at risk and promotes inequality, conflict and greed. Mercy Global Action calls on UN member states worldwide to reaffirm the human right to water and sanitation at all levels of society.

GET INVOLVED -

- If tap water is safe and clean in your area, reduce your bottled water consumption and persuade others to refill an eco-friendly water bottle instead.
- Communicate directly with your community and raise awareness about the Global Water Crisis and ways to conserve water.
- Review recommendations the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation has made to your country on a past visit and advocate for full implementation of the human right to water and sanitation.

LEARN MORE

- **NGO Mining Working Group: A rights-based approach to water and sanitation -**
<https://miningwg.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/water-guide-final-pdf.pdf>
- **WASH and COVID-19 -** https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/news-events/wash-and-covid-19/en/
- **UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to water and sanitation: Tools for transformation: Gender equality and the human right to water and sanitation -**
https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Water/Pamphlet_GenderEquality.pdf

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

- *Mercy Global Action reflects on the 2020 High-Level Political Forum – From the Decade of Action to a Decade of Recovery*

The annual meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is the main United Nations platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In a year when most other multilateral meetings and processes have been cancelled or postponed, the 2020 HLPF took place during its originally-scheduled dates from 7-16 July, albeit in a much different format than previous years due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 HLPF was originally intended to begin a new four-year cycle to review the implementation of the SDGs, assess progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, and begin “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.” The meetings took place in a virtual format, and the agenda was reoriented to focus on the pandemic, featuring an official agenda as well as over 240 side events, special events, Voluntary National Review (VNR) “Labs” and other online discussions to address key challenges and actions towards post-pandemic recovery.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted the importance of the HLPF and the SDGs at this unprecedented time:

“The COVID-19 crisis is having devastating impacts because of our past and present failures. Because we have yet to take the SDGs seriously. Because we have put up with inequalities within and between countries that have left billions of people just one crisis away from poverty and financial ruin. Because we haven’t invested adequately in resilience – in universal health coverage, quality education, social protection, safe water and sanitation. Because we have yet to right the power imbalances that leave women and girls to constantly bear the brunt of any crisis. Because we haven’t heeded warnings about the damage that we are inflicting on our natural environment. Because of the shocking risks we are taking with climate disruption. And because we have undervalued effective international cooperation and solidarity.”

HLPF IN NUMBERS

HLPF 2020 -- The FIRST Virtual HLPF



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



DAYS



MEETINGS



HEADS AND
DEPUTY HEADS
OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT,
MINISTERIAL
LEVEL OFFICIALS



SPEAKERS
IN PANELS



VOLUNTARY
NATIONAL
REVIEWS



REGISTERED
PARTICIPANTS



VNR LABS



SIDE EVENTS



SPECIAL EVENTS



EXHIBITIONS



VIEWS ON UN WEBTV

Similarly, the President of the General Assembly Tijjani Muhammad-Bande stated that “The reality is our Decade of Action and Delivery has become the Decade of Recovery. The SDGs must be at the forefront of government strategies for recovery to safeguard our communities against future shocks by building resilient systems.”

The common refrain that echoed throughout the 8-day event was that the Sustainable Development Goals are a vital roadmap for the world to “Build Back Better” from the COVID-19 pandemic, a phrase that was first defined and used with the 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Speakers voiced strong calls for solidarity, inclusion and multilateralism, and urged governments to transition their efforts to implement the SDGs from a focus on individual goals to systemic responses. One speaker referenced John Maynard Keynes in her remarks, cautioning that “The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas, as in escaping old ones.” There was a strong emphasis on the call of the 2030 Agenda to “Leave No One Behind,” with a large focus on social protection. There was also a lot of discussion of the economic consequences of the pandemic, and what this will mean for resourcing implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with speakers discussing associated debt relief and finance implications. Despite the challenging virtual setting, civil society made their voices heard throughout the meeting, especially women and youth.

Unlike other HLPF sessions, this meeting did not conclude with the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration. A draft had been developed, but agreement had not been reached by the close of the meeting on 16 July. The President of the UN Economic and Social Council, Mona Juul, reported that “an ambitious declaration was emerging, but some issues required further discussion.” On Friday, 17 July, she circulated a revised draft, but still the Ministerial Declaration has not been adopted. Civil society representatives have circulated a press release expressing deep disappointment and calling for governments to demonstrate real ambition and commitment to the 2030 Agenda and to dismantling injustice in all its forms.

A central focus of the HLPF each year is the presentation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). This year, 47 countries presented VNRs, with 26 presenting for the first time, 20 for the second time, and 1 for the third time. Countries were given the option of livestreaming their presentation, sending pre-recorded presentations, or a combination of the two. The following countries with a Mercy presence presented VNRs this year:

- **Argentina** - Victoria Tolosa Paz, National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies, said the current government prioritizes the fight against hunger and multi-dimensional poverty, which goes beyond income and includes access to drinking water and public health. She highlighted: measures to “flatten the curve” of COVID-19 and strengthen the public health system; resource transfers to the most vulnerable groups; and support to companies to preserve jobs. She said that her country’s commitment to the SDGs comes from the suffering that her country has experienced, including hyperinflation, unsustainable debt, and now COVID-19. [View Argentina’s 2020 VNR \(ES\)](#).
- **Honduras** - The VNR highlighted the holistic framework established for the implementation of the SDGs in the country, but also discussed continued challenges to providing decent work despite significant economic growth. Honduras is making efforts to tackle extreme poverty through programmes such as the Better Life subsidy that provides conditional cash transfers to improve access to health, education, and housing. They also are in the process of reallocating public expenditures due to the pandemic. [View Honduras 2020 VNR \(ES\)](#).
- **Kenya** - Ukur Yatani Kanacho, Cabinet Secretary for National Treasury and Planning, highlighted the country’s “Big 4 Agenda” prioritizing food and nutrition security, healthcare, manufacturing, and affordable housing. He noted advancements in renewable energy installed per capita, infrastructure, domestic resource mobilization, public awareness-raising of the SDGs, and stakeholder engagement. He also mentioned the policy gap analysis that was conducted in 2018, highlighting the need to continuously enhance implementation plans. [View Kenya’s 2020 VNR \(EN\)](#).

- **Nigeria** - Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire, Senior Special Assistant to the President on the SDGs, said priority SDGs have been integrated into the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan for 2017-2020. She noted efforts to build a more inclusive economy and identified the need to invest more in education. Among challenges, she listed: high unemployment rates; maternal mortality; out-of-school children; and regional inequalities. [View Nigeria's 2020 VNR \(EN\)](#).
- **Panama** - The VNR highlighted a national focus on: creating inclusion; fighting poverty and inequality; investing in education and health; addressing social equality among vulnerable communities; and combatting climate change and protecting biodiversity. While recognizing the urgency of international cooperation, Panama highlighted national intersectoral public health actions in response to the pandemic. [View Panama's 2020 VNR \(ES\)](#).
- **Papua New Guinea** - James Marape, Prime Minister, reported that PNG has made modest progress, but that they were doing the best they could. He noted progress across many SDGs, including on improving transport connectivity, health, education, community development, life expectancy, maternal and infant mortality, literacy, reducing extreme poverty, and maintaining a robust democracy. He noted the challenge of reducing widening inequalities. [View Papua New Guinea's 2020 VNR \(EN\)](#).
- **Peru** - Javier Abugattás, National Centre for Strategic Planning, reported deeper integration of SDGs in long-term development plans, and said key priorities include the protection of life and risk management, including through improved decision-making processes, coordination, and research. He also highlighted government measures to support indigenous peoples in the Peruvian Amazon in the fight against COVID-19. [View Peru's 2020 VNR \(ES\)](#).
- **Samoa** - Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment, noted that Samoans take collective responsibility for one another and respect individual human rights, but that her country was increasingly challenged by external shocks, including natural disasters and health crises. She highlighted progress in: literacy and numeracy; engaging stakeholders; integrating the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway into national development planning; women's representation in Parliament; and strengthening disaster risk response. [View Samoa's 2020 VNR \(EN\)](#).
- **Uganda** - Mary Karoro Okurut, Cabinet Minister in Charge of General Duties, highlighted improved access to electricity and telecommunications, reduced unemployment, and increased manufacturing capabilities. She attributed the progress to social protection programmes, gender equality and women's empowerment, a robust refugee policy, climate action interventions, rural electrification projects, and a sound economic growth rate. Immaculate Akello, representative of Uganda's Youth Coalition for the SDGs, highlighted achievements in "go back to school" interventions for children who had dropped out, and the need for further efforts to raise SDG awareness in remote areas. [View Uganda's 2020 VNR \(EN\)](#).
- **Zambia** - Alexander Chiteme, Minister of National Development Planning, and Chola Chabala, Ministry of National Development Planning, highlighted institutional arrangements for SDG implementation; a reduction of multi-dimensional poverty to 44%; investments in infrastructure and energy production; and improvements in health and gender equality. Precious Mulenga, a child civil society representative, called for a more inclusive process for civil society organizations to participate in SDG implementation. [View Zambia's 2020 VNR \(EN\)](#).

Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Present on Panel Highlighting Fellowship Components



On March 18th, the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellows (MELF) were due to present on a panel at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) entitled “Empowering Women as Changemakers Across the Globe”. Due to COVID-19, both the Commission on the Status of Women and the panel event was cancelled. This year’s Commission on the Status of Women marked the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference for Women with a

priority theme of Beijing +25 “Realizing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls”.

Twenty-five years ago the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action flagged twelve key areas where urgent action was needed to ensure gender equality and women’s empowerment across the globe. One of these areas was ‘Women in Power and Decision Making’. This indicator gave rise to the creation of the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship. The MELF is building upon Mercy women’s leadership potential and influence in both the global and local arena; and provides access to global political forums in order that Mercy voices are heard and make meaningful contributions to Global Justice.

In lieu of an in-person event in New York to mark Beijing+25 during the CSW, Fellows presented their experiences as Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders to UN-based colleagues of MGA last month via Zoom. Through the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship builds upon the capacities of women and provides effective tools to empower them to be agents of change in their own Mercy communities and in the greater society through immersion programs, activism, mentorship, webinars, regional conferences and more. During the event, each Fellow explored one of these respective components. This event has been recorded and is available at the link below.

Congratulations to each of the MELF Fellows on their presentations. They are truly women of wisdom, compassion, creativity and critical thinking - women who will continue to grow and challenge unjust systems. It is evident they promote collaborative leadership, paving the way to compassionate and communal responses to current concerns of our world.

Thank you to Marietta Latonio for facilitating and moderating the panel event and Angela Reed rsm, Head of Mercy Global Action, for overseeing the Fellowship.

[To watch the event, click here.](#)

“USEFUL RESOURCES

Towards a joint action agenda on women’s rights to water and sanitation



Human Right to water and Sanitation Webinar Series - Blue Planet Project



Race & Justice in World Affairs World Denver Speaker Series



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 11 July World Population Day
- 18 July Nelson Mandela International Day
- 28 July World Hepatitis Day
- 30 July World Day against Trafficking in Persons
- 9 August International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
- 19 August World Humanitarian Day
- 21 August International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism
- 22 August International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief
- 23 August International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition
- 29 August International Day against Nuclear Tests
- 30 August International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

Subscribe to our e-newsletter to learn about our vision in action and the ministries carried out by our member congregations: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2020 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 9



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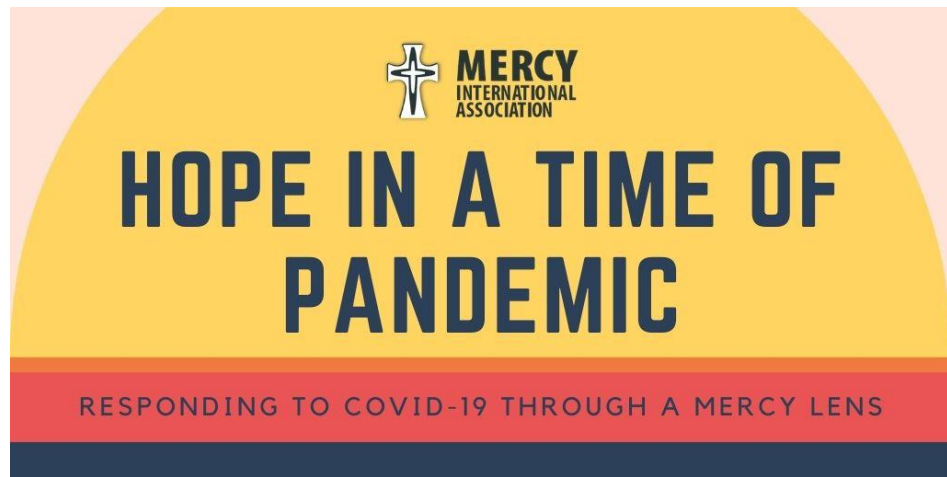
GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens'

Mercy Global Action COVID-19 Response Task Force is pleased to launch a new report, 'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens'. The MGA COVID-19 Response Task Force is made up of Mercy Global Action staff, Sisters, and Partners in ministry from Mercy Congregations and Institutes around the world. This document is the culmination of a process of reflection undertaken by the Task Force since May 2020. The process included collecting stories and reflecting on them in the light of our Mercy Tradition and Catholic Social Teaching. The Task Force also engaged with commentary and analysis from academia, civil society, faith-based organizations, the United Nations, and other international stakeholders.

The report offers insights into the Mercy World during this time of pandemic, linking grassroot experiences, theological reflection, and critical analysis. It reveals systemic inequalities in social, economic, political and environmental areas. It also reveals the interconnectedness of people and planet and highlights stories of extraordinary kindness and resilience throughout the Mercy World. The document invites collaboration and recommends actions to individuals, Church communities, civil society partners and governments for more just and inclusive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MGA COVID-19 Response Task Force envisages that this report will provide inspiration and hope to the Mercy World and beyond. The report offers opportunities to engage in the text and acts as a tool for further action and advocacy. We invite you to be guided by our reflection process to bring the report to life, and to contribute to the ongoing dialogue and response to this global pandemic through webinars, workshops, reading groups and other forums.



'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens' - Issue Spotlight - Physical and Mental Health

The first of many issue spotlight articles from MGA's new report focuses on Physical and Mental health.

What has been revealed in terms of physical and mental health:

- **Unjust, weak healthcare systems** - MGA's report exposes the weaknesses and lack of resilience in healthcare systems across the Mercy World. The capacities to cope with the alarming scale of infection in low- and middle- income countries are frighteningly poor and do not expand to those in marginalised groups. Globally, those in disadvantaged communities have less access to clean water, sanitation, and quality healthcare due to pre-existing systemic health inequalities. We are being presented with the opportunity to learn from the lessons of our weak health systems and change the way we provide healthcare to underserved and vulnerable populations.
- **A mental health crisis** - MGA's new report highlights that it is not only the health care facilities which are becoming overwhelmed but those working on the frontlines too. The Mercy World will continue to value the leadership, hard work and efforts of those on the frontline and to urge for improvements in monitoring their well-being going forward. The pandemic has "exacerbated the failures of the status quo in mental health care". People around the Mercy World continue to respond with compassion and kindness to this crisis, and to advocate for health systems that care for people's mental and physical health.

Click [here](#) to access the complete article and learn more about our call to action.

Spread the Word across your own social media platforms by sharing our [infographic](#).

HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC
RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

'HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC' ISSUE SPOTLIGHT: PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

COVID-19 KEY FACTS:

- OVER 22 MILLION CONFIRMED CASES
- 792,456 TOTAL DEATHS WORLDWIDE
- 213 COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES AFFECTED

PHYSICAL HEALTH
KEEP YOURSELF AND OTHERS SAFE

- WASH YOUR HANDS REGULARLY WITH SOAP AND WATER
- PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING - KEEP 2 METERS APART FROM OTHER PEOPLE
- COVER YOUR MOUTH AND NOSE WITH A TISSUE OR YOUR SLEEVE WHEN YOU COUGH OR SNEEZE
- AVOID TOUCHING MOUTH, NOSE AND EYES
- WORK FROM HOME IF POSSIBLE
- WEAR A FACE COVERING WHEN IN PUBLIC
- AVOID PUBLIC TRANSPORT IF POSSIBLE
- CLEAN AND DISINFECT FREQUENTLY TOUCHED OBJECTS AND SURFACES

LET'S REDUCE THE RATE OF TRANSMISSION TO CONTROL THE SPREAD AND PREVENT HEALTHCARE FACILITIES BECOMING OVERWHELMED

MENTAL HEALTH
INCREASED REPORTS OF ANXIETY | DEPRESSION | GRIEF | FEAR | SADNESS | LONELINESS

TIPS FOR MANAGING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH:

- KEEP A GRATITUDE DIARY
- GET ENOUGH SLEEP
- MAKE SURE YOU HAVE TIME FOR THINGS YOU ENJOY
- EAT A WELL BALANCED DIET
- TALK TO PEOPLE YOU TRUST ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS
- CLICK [HERE](#) TO LEARN TECHNIQUES TO REDUCE SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

FRONTLINE WORKERS
WE STAND WITH THOSE WORKING ON THE FRONTLINES COMBATING COVID-19; HELPING THE SICK; STRENGTHENING OUR FRAGILE HEALTH SYSTEMS

THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THOSE ON THE FRONTLINE MUST NOT BE DISREGARDED

1 OUT OF 3 EMERGENCY MEDICINE PHYSICIANS DEMONSTRATE SUBCLINICAL ANXIETY LEVELS

CALL TO ACTION

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

CALL ON GOVERNMENTS

- TO STRENGTHEN HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS
- TO PRIORITISE SUPPORT AND IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS OF FRONTLINE WORKERS
- TO PROMOTE UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE
- TO IMPLEMENT THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ADDITIONAL URGENCY TO ACHIEVE SDG 3

THE MERCY WORLD CONTINUES TO RESPOND WITH COMPASSION AND KINDNESS TO THIS CRISIS, AND TO ADVOCATE FOR HEALTH SYSTEMS THAT CARE FOR PEOPLE'S MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH.



THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

‘Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens’ Issue Spotlight - The Sacredness of Earth

The ‘Season of Creation,’ as declared by the World Council of Churches, provides an opportunity for us as Christians to ‘renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together...and to join in prayer and action for our common home’. Since the beginning of this pandemic, the Mercy World has expressed a renewed focus on Creation and the Sacredness of Earth. We have opened our minds and hearts to new relationships with nature that favour mutuality and sustainability over exploitation. Earth can regenerate itself. The Mercy World is recognising the value of stepping back from the many activities that so often distract us from the sacred.

What has been revealed in terms of the Sacredness of Earth?

1. A stillness and openness to the Sacredness of Creation.

In MIA’s recent publication, ‘Hope in a Time of Pandemic – Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens’, we hear that one impact of the ‘stay at home’ orders and social distancing, has been a stillness and openness to the Sacredness of Creation. A Mercy sister from Ireland reflects:

“This is a Kairos moment when we need more than ever to trust in the gracious love present throughout the Universe. Perhaps this is best experienced through the natural world, now liberated from carbon emissions, vehicular noise; hustle and bustle.”

Likewise, a Mercy partner and Indigenous Activist from Peru states: “This pandemic is an opportunity, a challenge, and a warning – to stop what we have been doing...to find real answers...It is causing us to slow down in many ways in order to listen to the inner, not the outer voice. This Pandemic is causing us to slow down to Mother Earth based pace, so that we can hear what she is saying.”

2. Human Actions have disturbed the balance of Earth’s eco-systems.

COVID-19 is a zoonotic disease, which means that the virus was transferred from animals to humans. Another zoonotic disease is bird flu. Scientists have suggested that the increase in this type of disease can be attributed in part to climate change and environmental changes due to human action. This is a startling reality - that we as humans have contributed to the emergence of this pandemic due to our actions, which have disturbed the balance of our ecosystems. Such actions can be witnessed through the activities of extractive industries who “remove a natural resource from its natural surroundings for industrial purposes without provision for their renewal in a social, economically, or environmentally viable timeframe.”

[A/HRC/21/48.(2012)]

Over the years, the Mercy World has tried to raise awareness and influence public policy in relation to extractive industries. We recognise that it is better to leave fossil fuels in the ground.

(continued on page 4)

An earlier report produced by the UN NGO Mining Working Group, of which MGA is a member, highlights a rights based approach to resource extraction in the pursuit of sustainable development. This report, along with a Water Justice Guide have sought to advocate for the rights of water and of Earth.

3. The need for Global Contemplation and an Integral Ecology

In addition to these advocacy steps for a sustainable future, COVID-19 has provided the opportunity for the Mercy World to step back from the many activities that so often distract us. A Mercy Sister from Guyana makes the following call:

“A global pandemic can only be countered by a response that is grounded in global contemplation. Among the fruits of our global contemplation are wisdom, energy, new directions, new language, courage and new hope.”

This speaks of an integral ecology, one in which we recognise our interdependence with all of creation. We are all called to ecological conversion as articulated by Pope Francis in his social encyclical Laudato Si’. In his address for the celebration of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in 2016, Pope Francis states;

“As a spiritual work of mercy, care for our Common Home calls for a ‘grateful contemplation of God’s world (LS 214) which ‘allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us’ (LS 85). As a corporal work of mercy, care for our common home requires ‘simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness and ‘makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. (LS 230-31)”

What are we being called to?

- **Advocate for the integrity and unity of all earth systems and the reduction of fossil fuel consumption** in light of the lessons learned during lockdown.
- **Commit to an Integral Ecology** in which we care for our Common Home
- **Recognise** this time as an opportunity for regeneration.
- **Promote resilience** and a resolve not to return to ‘normal’.
- **Spread the word** across your own social media platforms by sharing 'Hope in A time of Pandemic' and MIA Global Action’s infographic on COVID-19 and the Sacredness of Earth.

HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC
RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

ISSUE SPOTLIGHT: SACREDNESS OF EARTH

COVID-19 presents us with the opportunity to recognise our vital relationship with Earth; prioritise the health and stability of Earth; promote sustainability and green economic transformation; and prevent the emergence of new infectious diseases

A STILLNESS AND OPENNESS TO THE SACREDNESS OF CREATION

The pandemic has offered us a chance to:

- Stop and appreciate the presence of God;
- Revise our lifestyle;
- Reflect on the importance of our relationships with one another and with the planet;
- Be reminded of traditional knowledge and wisdom about the land and water, and our relationship with them.

HUMAN ACTIONS HAVE DISTURBED THE BALANCE OF EARTH'S ECOSYSTEMS

- Unsustainable Agriculture Practices
- Extractive Industries
- Urbanisation and Overcrowding
- Land Degradation
- Pollution
- War
- Industrialisation of animal production

INCREASE HEALTH RISKS FOR HUMANS AND ECOSYSTEMS

"WE BELONG TO ONE ANOTHER... WE ARE DISCOVERING THAT OUR INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS DO HAVE CONSEQUENCES OF GLOBAL PROPORTION"

THE NEED FOR GLOBAL CONTEMPLATION AND AN INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

- People, creatures and resources are all integrally connected - the way in which we relate to the Earth is a test of the way we relate with one another and with God

"AS A CORPORAL WORK OF MERCY, CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME REQUIRES 'SIMPLE DAILY GESTURES WHICH BREAK WITH THE LOGIC OF VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND SELFISHNESS AND MAKES ITSELF FELT IN EVERY ACTION THAT SEEKS TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD.'" - POPE FRANCIS

CALL TO ACTION

- Advocate for the integrity and unity of all Earth systems and the reduction of fossil fuel consumption in light of the lessons learned during lockdown.
- Commit to an Integral Ecology in which we care for our Common Home
- Recognise this time as an opportunity for regeneration.
- Promote resilience and a resolve not to return to 'normal'.



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens '
Issue Spotlight - Human Mobility

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought most of the world to a stand-still and has fundamentally changed global human mobility. Governments around the world have introduced measures to “flatten the curve” of infections including travel restrictions, border closures, the suspension of labor migration and the slowing of migration processing and assistance to asylum seekers.

While the COVID-19 virus knows no borders or immigration status, the impacts of the pandemic have highlighted the systemic inequalities that persist in our society. This is particularly true for many people on the move: migrants in irregular situations; migrant workers; victims of trafficking in persons; internally-displaced persons; refugees and asylum-seekers.

What has been revealed in terms of human mobility:

1. Exclusion from social protection systems and vulnerability to socio-economic shocks

Around the Mercy World, exclusion from social protection systems has negatively impacted many migrants' ability to take preventive measures against COVID-19 and to receive medical care if they contract the virus. Undocumented migrants are particularly affected because they may be reluctant to enter medical facilities or other public services for fear of being reported to immigration authorities.

Migrants are among the hardest hit by reduced incomes, increasing unemployment, increasing expenses and price hikes for basic commodities. The pandemic's socio-economic consequences are affecting, in particular, those migrant workers and refugees in the low-wage, informal economy who are excluded from decent work and social protection measures. Migrant workers were among the first to be affected by lay-offs and lockdowns that closed businesses. In many countries, migrants are ineligible for government-provided unemployment benefits, welfare or stimulus programs. Layoffs could also trigger the expiration of visa or work permits, forcing migrants into undocumented or irregular status or to return to their home countries.

A Mercy Sister from Peru shared in the report: *“Migrants are the most vulnerable population during this pandemic. What a paradox life is. They left fleeing hunger and misery and now a virus, minuscule in size... The most painful thing is to see families with their small children, walking for days without access to a hot meal, eating only soft drinks, water and cookies. Frequently they tell us, ‘We haven’t had hot food in over a week.’ A nine-year old little girl said, ‘I haven’t had a shower for a month.’”*

2. Migrant workers are the backbone of our economies

Migrant workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic run many critical sectors, including our healthcare systems, our food production and distribution, and our care economies. Loss of livelihoods for migrant workers not only weakens these sectors and negatively impacts the lives of migrant families in their countries of destination, but also their families in their countries of origin. The World Bank estimates that in 2020, remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries are expected to drop by around 20 percent, crippling the economic lifeline to migrant families and communities.

(Continued on page 6)



HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

ISSUE SPOTLIGHT: HUMAN MOBILITY



EXCLUSION FROM SOCIAL PROTECTION & VULNERABILITY TO SHOCKS

Migrants and refugees often face barriers to healthcare and other public services. The pandemic's socio-economic consequences are disproportionately affecting migrants and refugees, especially those in the low-wage, informal economy who are excluded from decent work and social protection measures.

MIGRANT WORKERS ARE THE BACKBONE OF OUR ECONOMIES

Migrant workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic run many critical sectors, including our healthcare systems, our food production and distribution, and our care economies. Frontline workers have been celebrated as heroes during the pandemic, but their work has always been essential.



MIGRANT RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO SHAPE MIGRATION POLICY

The pandemic offers governments an opportunity to regularize the status of irregular migrants and expand regular pathways for migrants in low-wage and informal employment, acknowledging the contributions of migrants and refugees to economic prosperity and ensuring they are included in public health strategies and social protection systems.



CALL TO ACTION

- Advocate for human rights-based migration policies and for inclusive, non-discriminatory policies for COVID-19 response and recovery, ensuring migrants and refugees are protected, and that their contributions are valued
- Share gratitude for essential workers now and beyond the pandemic
- Combat xenophobia and misinformation about the spread of COVID-19



While many have lost their employment and their livelihoods, other migrant workers have been deemed “essential workers,” putting their health at risk. Because of their vital work, these workers, especially informal and undocumented workers who lack basic labor protections, are exposed to higher risks of contracting the virus. Frontline workers have been celebrated as heroes during the pandemic, but their work has always been essential - they are the backbone of our societies and economies. The COVID-19 pandemic offers opportunities to evaluate the positive contributions of people in these essential jobs and to adequately value their work.

3. A new opportunity to shape migration policy

Across the world, people on the move and their families have experienced policies and public discourse, including rhetoric from politicians, that seek to keep the virus—and especially the people who carry it—away from “us.” We can expect even more of an “us first” approach in politics: “our” vaccines, “our” PPE, “our” health, “our” borders, “our” people first. This betrays the fact that the COVID-19 virus does not discriminate based on nationality and does not care about political borders. The report calls on governments to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Migration. The pandemic offers governments an opportunity to regularize the status of irregular migrants and expand regular pathways for migrants in low-wage and informal employment, acknowledging the contributions of migrants and refugees to economic prosperity and ensuring they are included in public health strategies and social protection systems.

In the face of the pandemic, rhetoric must change from discrimination to solidarity. Around the Mercy World we need a conversation about the future of our economies and societies so that care workers, fruit pickers, nurses and all people on the move are recognized and valued for the contribution they make regardless of their country of origin or ethnicity. Together we can advocate for policies that actively counter xenophobia and discrimination and measures that facilitate migrants’ access to labor markets, social protection and basic services.

What are we being called to?

- Advocate for human rights-based migration policies and for inclusive, non-discriminatory policies for COVID-19 response and recovery, ensuring migrants and refugees are protected, and that their contributions are valued.
- Share gratitude for essential workers now and beyond the pandemic.
- Combat xenophobia and misinformation about the spread of COVID-19 online and in conversations with family and friends.
- Spread the word across your own social media platforms by sharing ‘[Hope in a Time of Pandemic](#)’ and MIA Global Action’s [infographic](#) on COVID-19 and Human Mobility on social media. Please engage with us on Twitter @MIAGlobalAction and @MercyWorldwide.

At the United Nations **THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...**

As the United Nations turns 75, the global community reflects, recommits and looks for revitalization

The United Nations will be commemorating its 75th anniversary on 21 September, the International Day of Peace. Official ceremonies will take place mostly online and include remarks by UN officials and world leaders from UN Member States. Amid the ongoing global pandemic, governments agreed not to plan international travel for Heads of State or organize large events at UN Headquarters. The one-day, high-level meeting and the general debate of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), which begins on 22 September, will center around the theme 'The Future We Want, the UN We Need: Reaffirming our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism - confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action.' Leaders will adopt a "Declaration on the Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations" negotiated in advance and agreed in July 2020. The text contains 12 commitments, stating "we will":

- Leave no one behind;
- Protect our planet;
- Promote peace and prevent conflicts;
- Abide by international law and ensure justice;
- Place women and girls at the center;
- Build trust;
- Improve digital cooperation;
- Upgrade the United Nations;
- Ensure sustainable financing;
- Boost partnerships;
- Listen to and work with youth;
- Be prepared.



The UN is marking its 75th anniversary at a time of great disruption and inequalities, with profound health, economic and social impacts for people around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic is an urgent reminder of the need for international cooperation. The global response will determine how fast the world recovers, whether we achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and how well we handle pressing challenges: from the climate crisis to inequalities, new forms of violence, and rapid changes in technology and demographics. These global challenges require global solutions, but just when we need collective action more than ever, support for international cooperation has been weakening. In many countries, public trust in traditional institutions is in decline and relations between countries have been under strain.

This commemoration invites Member States, civil society, and people around the world to reflect on the progress the international community has made since World War II in areas such as human rights, conflict prevention, climate action and sustainable development, as well as the future of multilateralism and what needs to change in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Will we emerge stronger and better equipped to work together? Or will distrust and isolation grow further? What are our priorities as a human family, and how we can build a better future for all?



You can participate in this process of reflection and help inform the UN’s global priorities by taking the United Nations’ UN75 One Minute Survey.

Over the past year, civil society organizations have come together to generate support for a process of stocktaking and strengthening of the UN system. Civil society dialogues and consultations around the world have emphasized people-centred multilateralism and advocated for opportunities to revitalize the UN. Civil society representatives from 75 countries around the world joined the 14-15 May People’s Forum, which launched the UN75 People’s Declaration and Plan for Global Action, entitled “Humanity at a Crossroads: Global Solutions for Global Challenges.” This document reflects the principles and values of stronger international cooperation, human solidarity and global citizenship. The Declaration also proposes a ‘Call for Global Action’ and an annex of proposed reform proposals.

Individuals and organizations are invited to endorse the UN75 People’s Declaration and Plan for Global Action between now and 21 September.

At the UN’s 75th anniversary, it is clear that we must start shaping our post-COVID-19 world now, and must accelerate action towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Attempts at meaningful reform have not failed due to an absence of good ideas, rather, these ideas are never allowed to succeed due to an absence of political will and implementation. We must work towards a more effective global system, by giving “we the peoples” a more meaningful role in decision-making and helping to create the conditions required for the transformation we need, including strengthened participation of civil society, increased accountability, and bold and committed leadership. Together we can make the future of the UN more inclusive, open, fair and responsive to the needs of people and planet.

HAVE YOUR SAY. SHAPE YOUR FUTURE.

International Literacy Day

By Amy Thomas (MELF 2019-2020)

Are you able to estimate how much reading you did today? For me, I read and responded to over 120 emails at work today. I then read my calendar and wrote out my to-do list for the week. I looked up about 20 phone numbers that I needed to reach out to- so I called all of those groups and made follow-up notes about how to respond to them in the coming weeks as well. This was just one day in my life at work. Some days I may do a little more, or possibly a little less. But the reality is, none of the work I did today would have been able to be accomplished very well without the education I received over many years of schooling. I was fortunate to take classes at a young age to help me learn to not only read- but to enjoy it. I even had the chance to take a class to learn “Accelerated Reading”, which means that I can look at a paragraph and typically understand the main point without having to even read the whole thing. It is a privilege that I have, that I often don’t dwell on all that much. But in reality, it is an incredible gift that I have been given- and it is extremely important that I have had this opportunity to learn to read and also to enjoy it.



On September 8th, we will be celebrating International Literacy Day. According to UNESCO, “Globally, 773 million adults and young people lack basic literacy skills, and more than 617 million children and adolescents are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading.” As someone who has worked with youth for over 10 years now, I have been seeing students go through “Summer Slide” every single year. This means that the gains that were made during a school year, fall back during those summer months when students are on a break. As could be expected, the recent Covid-19 crisis has exacerbated this problem even more. With schools shutting down in more than 190 countries during this crisis, this has disrupted the education of 91% of the world’s student population. Students that were already falling behind in their reading proficiency are continuing to fall back further again.



The question I have been asking is, what can be done about this? Part of my work involves matching students with volunteers in the community that can assist in their academic development. Each day I receive more names of students who need a tutor or someone to read with. I would urge you, if you have an hour each week, to reach out to local organizations in your community. There is bound to be an organization that is looking for volunteers to instill in students a love of reading. However, the reality is, this need is not only based in time, it is also heavily tied to financial realities. So many organizations would love to bring on volunteers, and the people are there ready to assist. However, our non-profits and school systems often require that volunteers undergo thorough background checks for the safety of each student. This is critical, and unfortunately due to many of the financial pitfalls that the coronavirus has brought, many organizations cannot afford to pay for the background checks of each person that would like to volunteer. For example, where I work, a thorough background check may cost \$75 USD, and that is not money that is readily available at most organizations.

So here is our call to action- there are so many ways to be of support during this time:

- **Reach out to a group in your area that may need volunteers to read with students over virtual platforms such as Zoom or Skype.** Recognize however, that there may be a financial cost involved with your time, as the organization may not be able to afford to do background checks on volunteers at this time. If you are able to cover that cost, assume that it is needed.
- **Reach out to people in your neighborhood.** There may be families nearby that could use help with reading to their children for an hour or two each week. With families returning to work, and many students completing school-work online, the need for online tutors is high. And parents want someone they can trust to really assist in this time. If you are a trusted neighbor, you are likely needed.
- **Look for books that you can donate to organizations that work with youth.** I remember growing up reading “Amelia Bedelia”, “Nancy Drew”, and “Twilight”- but it is important to note that the books I read focused on female characters that matched my personal reality. Many non-profits would love to have books that are written by people of color, as young students deserve to read and see characters that look like them. If you are looking for help finding books that would be beneficial in this area, reach out to a local bookstore- they absolutely need your business more than ever at this time.

The key word here is need. You are absolutely needed. The fact that you can read this very small section of your email, shows that you have a capacity that many do not have. And that is what I come back to- I finished my day at work with all those emails. I came home to respond to emails on my personal account, and to read the physical mail that came through the post. I read the recipe for my dinner, to ensure that I made it correctly. And I read the texts that came through my phone. To end my night, I read a few chapters of a book that will help me decompress.

What are you reading?

How are you reading?

Why are you reading?

Who are you reaching?

Resources:

- <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ild2020-concept-note-en.pdf>
- <https://www.epicreads.com/blog/ya-books-poc-writers/>
- https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/124900.2020_YA_MG_Books_With_PO_C_Leads



“USEFUL RESOURCES

'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens'



HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

Webinars with Season of Creation



SEASON OF CREATION

Pax Christi International - 'Between COVID-19 and Extractivist Policies: Impacts, challenges and alternatives to resisting communities in Latin America and the Caribbean'



UN Environment Programme and The Ocean Agency - #GlowingGone Campaign



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 8 September - International Literacy Day
- 9 September - International Day to Protect Education from Attack
- 16 September - International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer
- 17 September - World Patient Safety Day
- 18 September - International Equal Pay Day
- 21 September - International Day of Peace
- 24 September - Mercy Day
- 26 September - International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons
- 29 September - International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste
- 2 October - International Day of Non-Violence
- 5 October - World Habitat Day
- 10 October - World Mental Health Day

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

Subscribe to our e-newsletter to learn about our vision in action and the ministries carried out by our member congregations: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2020 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 10



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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

Thank you to the Mercy Global Action COVID-19 Response Task Force!

We are pleased to be able to share that we now have “Hope In a Time of Pandemic’ translated into Spanish. We have received wonderful feedback on this publication and are delighted Mercy Sisters and Associates around the Mercy World are reflecting on this resource.

It is timely to thank the Mercy Global Action COVID 19 Response Task Force. The task force met fortnightly for several months and during that time worked intensely to collect stories from the Mercy World, reflect on the impact of COVID-19 around the Mercy World and significantly, make recommendations for action. The team worked with great passion and energy and we are most grateful for their unique contribution to Global Action for Mercy International Association.

Special thanks to the following members of the Task Force:

Bridget Crisp rsm	Aotearoa New Zealand	Angela Reed rsm	Mercy Global Action
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'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens' Issue Spotlight - The Pandemic of Kindness

As we celebrate Mercy Day 2020, we appreciate the love and kindness that has been so evident throughout the Mercy World and beyond during this time of pandemic. Amidst the grief and loss, the illnesses and anxieties, the lockdowns and uncertainties, the Mercy World has remained steadfast in its commitment to strengthening relationships and to standing in solidarity with Earth and people, especially those most marginalised.

The Inspiration of Catherine McAuley

MGA's recent publication, 'Hope in a Time of Pandemic,' has illustrated that amidst pain and suffering, there is human capacity for transformation, resilience, kindness and creativity. Through the inspiration of our foundress Catherine McAuley, the Mercy World has responded to this global crisis with compassion, hope and resilience. This has been part of the Mercy story since Catherine first responded to the struggles in her own life.

Catherine experienced the death of her parents and siblings at a young age and despite the hardships, lovingly cared for her sister's children. She was faithful regardless of the efforts to convert her from Catholicism and she opened the House of Mercy despite opposition. We recall the works of Mercy undertaken by Catherine and her companions during the Cholera Epidemic and are motivated by Catherine's spirit of Mercy. In 'Hope in a Time of Pandemic', a Sister from Newfoundland reflects:

'Catherine McAuley's spirit of mercy and compassion and her great courage were sources of my deep desire to continue my hospital ministry during the COVID-19 pandemic...Sometimes, besides the nurses and doctors, I am the only face the patients see.'

Renewing and Strengthening Relationships

At the heart of the Mercy World has been a renewing and strengthening of relationships. Amidst the severe health crisis and huge disruption to our lives, the value of connecting and caring for others has been paramount. Even though we are forced to socially distance, the Mercy World has embraced technology in a new way, engaging in phone calls, zoom meetings and webinars across the world.

Mercy Sister from the United Kingdom states:

'The future seems so much more uncertain and, as an aging community, we sometimes feel there is very little we can physically contribute, but technology has given us a window that is enabling us to communicate, share with and accompany others in a way that we have never thought of before'

Gratitude for Essential Workers

One way in which the Mercy World has accompanied others is through showing gratitude to essential workers. People around the Mercy World have given tribute to essential workers in many ways, including sending flowers, forming a guard of honour and applauding key workers in praise of their service. Images of Mercy communities thanking essential workers are symbolic of the value placed on indispensable work. A Mercy Sister from Guyana states:

'A global pandemic can only be countered by a response that is grounded in global contemplation. Among the fruits of our contemplation are wisdom, energy, new directions, new language, courage and new hope.'

Through kindness, prayer and contemplation the Mercy World makes a stand amidst and in response to this global pandemic.

HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC
RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

WE STAND...

1. For ensuring that no one is left behind:
"We are all in this together."
2. For human and Earth rights, and for systems which uphold the dignity and protection of our common home.
3. For an inclusive response to the impacts of the pandemic that builds a sustainable future benefiting all.
4. With all who face discrimination and violence.
5. For the rights of women and girls, and for gender-responsive approaches to a transformative future.
6. For the well-being of families in all their forms.
7. For safeguarding the dignity of all those who are dying and have died during the pandemic.
8. With all those grieving the loss of loved ones.
9. With those who have lost their livelihoods and all who feel vulnerable during these uncertain times.
10. For the integrity and unity of all earth systems and the reduction of fossil fuel consumption in light of the lessons learned during lockdown.
11. For human rights and the values of the Common Good which enable all individuals to have the food, water, shelter, clothing and health care required to live with dignity.
12. For the development of collaborative relationships between central government, local governments and civil society that secures the social protection needs of ALL people within jurisdictions.
13. For just and merciful leadership at all levels.

WHAT ARE YOU BEING CALLED TO, AND WHERE DO YOU STAND?

'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens' Issue Spotlight - Political Institutions

COVID-19 has accelerated unprecedented change. The need for just and merciful leadership has never been more urgent than in the midst of this unfolding crisis. The stories and experiences featured in the Mercy Global Action COVID-19 Response Task Force report have revealed the importance of leaders and political institutions that are grounded in the realities of people and Earth and are responsive to the range of health, economic and social distress caused by COVID-19.

What has been revealed in terms of political institutions?

- **An expansion of political power, and a risk of rising authoritarianism**

To tackle the COVID-19 crisis, and given the magnitude of its human, social and economic impacts, governments around the world have taken on extraordinary powers which limit people's ability to move freely or to assemble in large groups. People around the world have sacrificed their individual freedoms to benefit collective public health outcomes.

Indeed, international human rights law permits restrictions on liberty in times of national emergency that are necessary and proportionate.

The health crisis will eventually recede but autocratic governments' dangerous expansion of power may be one of the pandemic's most enduring legacies. It is now paramount for people around the world to care not only about the health of the individuals around us but for the health of our government institutions as well. In order to achieve the structural transformation necessary to address inequalities, to reach excluded and marginalized people and to protect the environment, we will need strong and inclusive democratic institutions that are responsive to the needs of all people and the planet.

HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC
RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

**ISSUE SPOTLIGHT:
POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS**

<p>THE PANDEMIC HAS LED TO AN EXPANSION OF POLITICAL POWER AND EMBOLDENED AUTHORITARIANS</p>	<p>COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY REQUIRES GLOBAL COOPERATION AND COMPASSIONATE, BOLD POLICIES</p>
<p>Censorship, misinformation and hate speech have led to the spread of COVID-19, violence, and public distrust of scientific expertise</p>	<p>In the short-term, government policies will have immediate impacts on public health, social inclusion and peoples' wellbeing</p>
<p>Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put racial and ethnic minority groups at higher risk of contracting and dying from COVID-19</p>	<p>In the long-term, governments need to show leadership by investing in people and planet to reduce inequalities and to be more resilient and sustainable</p>
<p>We need to protect and promote strong and inclusive democratic institutions that are responsive to the needs of all people and the planet</p>	<p>We must encourage our governments to seize this unique opportunity to take bold steps to steer the world towards a profound systemic transformation</p>

- **A need for international cooperation and bold, compassionate response and recovery**

International cooperation is, and will continue to be, vital for sharing expertise, medicine, equipment, research and development particularly in the provision of treatment and assistance to affected people and in the search for a vaccine. Cooperation will also be essential to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic. Countries that accelerate their efforts to implement their existing human rights and sustainable development commitments will be better placed to recover from the human and economic devastation caused by COVID-19.

In the short-term, government interventions will have immediate impacts on public health, social inclusion and the wellbeing of people experiencing socio-economic stress and uncertainty. In the long-term, governments need to show leadership and political will by investing in universal health, social protection, and environmental policies, not only in times of crisis, but also in order to be more resilient to future disasters. Governments must make these policies inclusive and non-discriminatory in ways that give special attention to protecting the lives and livelihoods of at-risk and marginalized groups. It is up to governments to lead with strong political will and to mobilize resources to invest in policies and institutions that can turn the tide on inequality.

Click [here](#) to access the complete article and learn more about our call to action.

Spread the Word across your own social media platforms by [sharing](#) our infographic.



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2020 - In Solidarity with Internally Displaced Persons

On 27 September, 2020, the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR), Pope Francis called on the faithful to understand more deeply the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The theme this year, “Forced like Jesus Christ to Flee,” recalls the flight into Egypt, when “the child Jesus experienced with his parents the tragic fate of the displaced and refugees, which is marked by fear, uncertainty and unease. Unfortunately, in our own times, millions of families can identify with this sad reality.”

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, at the end of 2019, some 50.8 million people were internally displaced due to armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, or due to sudden or slow-onset natural disasters. Extractive development and urban renewal projects can also cause displacement on a large scale. Increasingly, many IDPs live in situations of protracted displacement. Unlike refugees, who cross a border to find safety, IDPs stay within their own countries. They often move to areas where it is difficult to deliver humanitarian assistance and as a result, IDPs are among the most vulnerable in the world.

Even though they are often displaced in the same way, and for the same reasons as refugees, IDPs are not included within the international system of protection provided for by international refugee law. The recognition that a State has the primary obligation to protect all its citizens in all circumstances, coupled with respect for State sovereignty by the international community, has resulted in the absence of an internationally legally-binding protection framework and definition of internal displacement. The primary responsibility for protecting the human rights of IDPs and for providing them with humanitarian assistance remains with their national government even if that government is not always willing or able to fulfil its obligations. The difficulty of the international community to intervene and the lack of interest by the media and wider society have sometimes resulted in IDPs being ‘forgotten’, increasing their vulnerability and preventing their needs from being sufficiently recognized or met.





The vulnerabilities experienced by IDPs have been further heightened by movement restrictions and the health and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. IDPs are more at risk of contracting COVID-19 because of cramped living conditions, poor nutrition, limited access to sanitation, health care and reliable information. They also often lack support networks and face language barriers and other social and cultural obstacles. Many IDPs have been disproportionately affected by the economic repercussions of lockdown measures, given their already precarious circumstances and heavy dependence on casual labour and/or external support (from host communities, authorities and humanitarian organizations) to meet their basic needs. As such, they will continue to be even more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, including sexual violence.

In his message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis asks us to reflect on the compassion of the Good Samaritan and to take risks in order to be close to those whose wounds need binding up in our day. Building upon his call in Message for WDMR in 2018, to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees, Pope Francis invites us “To know in order to understand; To be close in order serve; To listen in order to be reconciled; To share in order to grow; and To involve in order to promote.” It is up to all of us to ensure that internally displaced persons are not made to be invisible, that their needs are met, their rights protected and promoted, and their contributions recognized and valued. In the conclusion of his message, Pope Francis prays, “May he, who shared in the sufferings of those who flee from the hatred of the powerful, console and protect all our brothers and sisters driven by war, poverty and necessity to leave their homes and their lands to set out as refugees for safer places.”





THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

Season of Creation and Global Youth Climate Action

As the Season of Creation comes to an end and the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi approaches, the Mercy World celebrates the beauty, wisdom and generosity of all Creation. The theme of the 2020 Season of Creation is ‘Jubilee for the Earth: New rhythms, new hope’, highlighting the radical new ways of living with Creation which are needed post-pandemic. During this time of renewal, we express gratitude, love and a commitment to care for all living things. The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us of our shared nature and the interconnectedness of Earth and people. Weak, unsustainable and exploitative relationships between our healthcare systems, food production systems, transportation systems and socio-economic and political structures have been revealed. We must hear the cries of the Earth and those rendered poor and echo Pope Francis’ call to “strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family”.

As the pace of life slowed at the beginning of lockdown, many found a new sense of wonder, appreciation and escapism in the flourishing of the natural world. Yet, greenhouse gas emissions keep rising, extractive industries continue to degrade the land and pollute rivers, forests are burning and continue to be cut down at alarming rates. Our overproduction and overconsumption of natural resources has led us into an ‘ecological debt’. Having an ecological and caring perspective of our Common Home is vital to reverse the ‘ecological debt’ and reaffirm a commitment to environmental justice. We must promote relationships with Creation which are not built around power, profit and ownership. Wealth must be understood as a planet rich in biodiversity; where our relationships with our neighbours are honoured; where we are present within the reality of our Common Home; where the urgency of addressing the climate crisis is acknowledged. Failure to understand this perspective of wealth enables the exploitation of Earth and people in search of profits.

Youth worldwide empathise with and recognise climate change for the existential threat it poses to our Common Home and future generations. Youth continue to strike for climate action, in line with pandemic safety recommendations.

Those unable to take to the streets have turned to digital activism, organising group Zoom calls and storming social media to raise awareness of the exploitative nature of the fossil fuel sector. Their resilience in adapting and continuing their fight for climate action, encompasses Pope Francis’ call in *Laudato Sí* for “swift and unified global action”.



Within Mercy International Association- Global Action's recent publication "Hope in a Time of Pandemic: Responding to COVID-19 Through a Mercy Lens", a Mercy Student from the United States reflected,

"Despite the past actions of generations, their current attitudes and the ongoing global pandemic, the lessons from the global response to it can and must also be applied to the climate crisis... As young people, we are asking older generations to begin to step up as we are now stepping up for you. Take the initiative, spare lives and act for the wellbeing of our shared planet. In order to fight coronavirus, we all have to be as healthy as possible. In order to fight the climate crisis, our Earth must be similarly healthy, and its inhabitants prepared to cultivate a united front against environmental injustice and exploitation."

The International Youth Climate Podcast stresses the importance of adapting the market place to produce items which last for a lifetime and encourages us all to recycle, compost and demand a no waste lifestyle. Human waste disrupts both wildlife and sea life. We must be even more conscious of the impact of our waste during this time of pandemic, as the use of masks, disposal gloves and sanitary wipes have become part of our daily lives. These items are essential to stop people from contracting or spreading COVID-19. However, they are not recyclable or biodegradable and therefore, we must try to be more resourceful and make, wash, and reuse our own face covering to help reduce waste.

During lockdown, young people worldwide started online trends upcycling old clothes into masks and sharing them across their social media. Reducing our waste decreases pollution, impedes the growth of garbage in our oceans, prevents habitat loss and protects all of Creation. Upcycling, reusability and sustainability may seem like a new movement to many young people but it is "a concept that roots from indigenous traditions". Youth embodying the traditions of indigenous communities gives us hope for the future of our Common Home, as it is from indigenous wisdom that we understand that the land does not belong to anyone and humans are but caretakers of it.



We cannot alone count on the will and generosity of youth striking for the future. Climate action must have an intergenerational and comprehensive approach addressing biodiversity, inequalities, systemic power imbalances, aggressive industrialisation and most importantly, urge ambitious political will. As Pope Francis stated in his September 2nd General Audience:

"One does not emerge from a crisis the same as before. The pandemic is a crisis. We emerge from a crisis either better or worse than before. It is up to us to choose. And solidarity is, indeed, a way of coming out of the crisis better, not with superficial changes."

Points for Reflection:

- How can we continue to educate ourselves and each other about the ecological crises facing us and threatening life as we know it?
- How can we expand our ecological consciousness? What are some of the ways we continue to live unconscious of or unconcerned about waste, pollution, a "throw away culture," overuse of resources, inequality and poverty?

Mercy World's Call to Action:

- Continue to grow our ecological consciousness of the gift of Creation and the interconnectedness of our Common Home.
- Listen to the wisdom of faith and traditional knowledge, holding Earth as sacred.
- Lift up the voices of the youth and join them in encouraging the radical change that is needed to protect our planet.
- Encourage world leaders to strengthen multilateralism and be guided by faith and science to promote environmental integrity, respect for human rights and dignity, inclusivity, gender-responsivity, and justice.

'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens' Issue Spotlight - Food and Water

COVID-19 has revealed innumerable inequalities and deeply rooted systemic injustices in areas such as physical and mental health, mobility, political institutions, and housing. Two vulnerable areas most vital to the survival of people and Earth are the supply of food and water. Stories featured in Mercy Global Action's COVID-19 Response Task Force report 'Hope in a Time of Pandemic – Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens' reveal both the challenges and resilience of communities experiencing water shortages and food insecurity during the Pandemic.

What has been revealed in terms of food and water?

• Collapse of food production and supply systems has affected food security globally

COVID-19 has threatened the food security and nutrition of many families and communities across the globe. As families have lost their economic livelihoods, they are unable to support themselves and their children resulting in lack of access to essential needs and assistance. While school closures have been put in place as mitigation measures to stop the spread of COVID-19, many children do not have access to health programs, school meals and other supports that were previously accessible to them.

On September 29th the United Nations will commemorate the first ever International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste. Sister, Associates and Partners in Mercy have mobilized to ensure that families and children receive proper nutrition in the face of food insecurity.

• Safe drinking water and adequate sanitation services are essential to combating COVID-19 and the spread of infection

While communities are being told to wash their hands to combat the spread of infection, COVID-19 has highlighted the inequitable access and availability of safe water and sanitation. Many individuals have experienced water inaccessibility as a result of loss of their economic livelihoods. And yet, many women and girls across the globe bear the burden with collection of water in their communities, placing them at greater risk of infection, risking "stay at home" orders and gender based violence due to lack of adequate water infrastructure. Access to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene is crucial for protection against COVID-19, achieving gender equality, and reducing violence against women.

Approximately 4.2 billion people do not have safely managed sanitation services and 3 billion lack basic hand washing facilities.

We also must keep in mind those in indigenous communities, those experiencing homelessness, those in aged-care facilities, migrants and refugees who do not have access to clean water and sanitation. Proper access to adequate water and sanitation services are not only lacking in households, but in education and healthcare facilities.

Click [here](#) to access the complete article and learn more about our call to action.

Spread the Word across your own social media platforms by [sharing](#) our infographic.

#6

HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

ISSUE SPOTLIGHT: FOOD AND WATER

COLLAPSE OF FOOD PRODUCTION SYSTEMS AND SUPPLY

COVID-19 has threatened the food security and nutrition of many families and communities across the globe. As families have lost their economic livelihoods, they are unable to support themselves and their children resulting in lack of access to essential needs and assistance.

FOOD SECURITY

Sisters, Associates and Partners in Mercy have mobilized to ensure that families and children receive proper nutrition in the face of food insecurity. They have designated food and nutrition as essential, while providing the necessary assistance to vulnerable groups.

LACK OF ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES DURING COVID-19

Approximately 4.2 billion people do not have safely managed sanitation services and 3 billion lack basic hand washing facilities. COVID-19 has highlighted the inequitable access and availability of safe water and sanitation.

HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER AND SANITATION

The human right to safe drinking water and sanitation is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and inextricably linked to many other human rights, including physical and mental health, and the right to life and human dignity.

CALL TO ACTION

- Advocate for the Right to Food, by bolstering agricultural and food systems with long-term sustainability goals.
- Promote the Human Right to Water and Sanitation (HRWS) in order to change systemic injustices that prevent water being accessible to all. Existing injustices include: the privatization of water, poor water governance, unsustainable agricultural practices and gender inequality.

AT THE UNITED NATIONS

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...



International Day of Peace

By Julia Morisi (MELF 2019-2020)

Every year, September 21 marks International Day of Peace. Peace can mean many things, and in years past, the International Day has been focused on climate action for peace, human rights, and education, to name a few. This year, the theme is Shaping Peace Together. People around the world are facing a common enemy—the Corona Virus, so September 21 intends to mark a day of solidarity, peace, and ceasefire across borders.

I see this theme of Shaping Peace Together as vastly relevant and important in my own context, the United States. Currently in the United States, we are racked with violence and division. And further, we are rapidly approaching a presidential election. In addition to candidate versus candidate, there is a feeling of neighbor versus neighbor. Shaping peace together poses many challenges, but it is so deeply needed, not simply from governing bodies, but from communities and individuals. While new policies, disarmament, ceasefires, and other peacemaking efforts are vital around the world, peace is not simply achieved on these governmental, national, and global measures. In many ways, peacemaking is embedded deep in the community, in the neighborly exchanges, in the grassroots.

Peace is an attitude, a value, a decision. Peace is made as a personal choice and an interpersonal gesture—it takes an intentional show of care and Mercy to self and others. The common and everyday acts of Mercy and hospitality are the true work of peacemaking. Sometimes the most profound gesture of peace is simultaneously the humblest. Maya Angelou stated this idea most eloquently in her poem recited during the 1993 presidential inauguration. Angelou tells us how to be a peacemaker each and every morning. She says,

*“Here on the pulse of this new day
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister's eyes, into
Your brother's face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope
Good morning.”*

On the outset of new political leadership, Angelou provided this wisdom and displayed this show of Mercy. Decades later, Angelou's advice greets us at a similar time of change and chance. Without commonplace grace, peacebuilding is just an ideal.



“USEFUL RESOURCES

Global Civil Society Report 2020 on the 2030 Agenda and the SDG's:
Shifting policies for systemic change-Lessons from the global COVID-19 crisis



Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2020



Race & Justice in World Affairs
World Denver Speaker Series



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 10 October - World Mental Health Day
- 10 October - World Migratory Bird Day
- 11 October - International Day of the Girl Child
- 13 October - International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction
- 15 October - International Day of Rural Women
- 16 October - World Food Day
- 17 October - International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- 24 October - United Nations Day
- 31 October - World Cities Day

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

Subscribe to our e-newsletter to learn about our vision in action and the ministries carried out by our member congregations: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:
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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

Mercy Global Action Remembers Catherine -November 11th

On her deathbed, Catherine McAuley said "Now fearing that I might forget it again, will you tell the sisters to get a good cup of tea – I think the community room would be a good place – when I am gone, to comfort one another. But God will comfort them."



This Remembrance Day is like no other; however, the COVID-19 Pandemic has reminded us that in our sorrows and challenges we come together as a Mercy World. In our unity, we find God, comfort and healing, and the encouragement to act in Mercy and Justice. We are called to celebrate the values of our intrinsic interdependence, compassion, kindness, justice and equity and use this time to focus on new creation and a new order.

Reflect:

Did it bring you comfort this china, the little cup worn at the rim and translucent as the shell of an egg, reminding you of Coolock days, the warm liquid soothing and refreshing? Did you read the leaves all those years ago and know your life would end here in quite another place? Of life filled life emptied. Of call given and fulfilled. Of encouragement and conviviality, bonds of kinship and gesture of gracious hospitality. Taking the cup of your life, the cup of your life. Drinking the sweet-bitter draught that was yours.

BAGGOT ST SUITE: CUP AND SAUCER -Mary Wickham rsm



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 Through a Mercy Lens' Issue Spotlight - Housing

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally increased the urgency of issues of housing and homelessness and the critical need to put the dignity and well-being of those without a home at the centre of the pandemic response. Homelessness is a cross-cutting issue across the globe and is often attributed to the failure of multiple social, political and economic systems. Approximately, 1.8 billion people do not live in adequate housing. The pandemic is likely to see this number escalate due to the alarming levels of unemployment, loss of livelihoods, poverty, gender-based violence and the lack of social protection and labour rights in many countries. Those living without a home, rough sleeping and living in temporary accommodation are further compounded by other difficulties, including personal and structural drivers of homelessness, making it increasingly difficult for them to be protected from contracting COVID-19. To truly build back better, the issue of homelessness must be addressed with urgency to foster a more just, equitable and humane society.

What has been revealed in terms of housing:

- **The interconnectedness of housing and health**

As the pandemic unfolded and 'stay at home' orders, physical distancing and lockdown measures became the 'new normal', the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Leilani Farha, stated "housing has become the front-line of defence against the coronavirus. Home has rarely been more of a life or death situation". For those lacking adequate shelter and access to hygiene and sanitation facilities, following the protection measures enacted to safeguard public health has been much more difficult. The need for non-congregate, accessible and affordable housing is vital to protect the health of those experiencing homelessness. Those living in informal settlements, cramped conditions and experiencing poverty and violence, are the most vulnerable to the health and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. Protection of their health and well-being is a concern across the Mercy World:

"We Papua New Guineans are communitarian people; we live together in one house making social distancing an almost impossible challenge." (Mercy Sister, Papua New Guinea)


"Due to very high population density, it's not possible to observe social distancing in slums." (Mercy Sister, Kenya)

The relationship between mental health and a lack of adequate housing has also been revealed. The uncertainty and continued changes of environment for people experiencing homelessness can be extremely traumatic and emotionally distressing. This distress has been further intensified by the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic and the threats it brings to the economy and public life. Research shows that severe mental health difficulties are more prevalent among people experiencing homelessness and that the longer a person lives on the street, the more likely they are to experience anxiety, depression, substance abuse and violence of some form. Hence, the provision of a place to call home is essential not only for sustaining physical health but mental health too.

- **COVID-19 has further further exacerbated the global housing crisis**

Even before the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the cost of housing was rapidly rising making long term affordability a huge challenge for many low income, disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and families. UN Human Rights experts have highlighted that the global housing crisis has resulted in mass human rights violations

and is due to the promotion of unsustainable economic growth and an exploitative economic model which centres profit over people. The rapid growth among the homeless population has resulted in the increased promotion of short-term interventions, an over reliance on the private sector to provide housing to low-income families, and a lack of outcome oriented systems by governments and local authorities. These short-term interventions often include homeless shelters that are overcrowded and reduce the freedoms, dignity and social equality of those staying there, as they do not offer the social and psychological supports which are often needed.




HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC
RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

Issue Spotlight: Housing

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally increased the urgency to end homelessness and the critical need to put the dignity and well-being of those without a home at the centre of the pandemic response.

Homelessness is often attributed to the failure of multiple social, economic & political systems.

THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF HOUSING & HEALTH




- Adequate, secure, non-congregate housing, along with access to hygiene & sanitation facilities is essential to safeguard public health.
- Uncertainty and continued changes of environment for people experiencing homelessness is extremely traumatic and emotionally distressing.


Increasing vulnerabilities:

- Mass human rights violations.
- Over reliance on the private sector to provide housing.
- A lack of long term outcome oriented systems by governments and local authorities.
- Economic instability.
- Lack of Social Protection.

COVID-19 HAS EXACERBATED THE GLOBAL HOUSING CRISIS



THE MERCY WORLD CONTINUES TO BE A LEADING MINISTRY HELPING THOSE AT RISK OF AND EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



- Mercy communities have continued to provide essential services to those living on the streets and in temporary accommodation.
- The Mercy World continues to actively advocate at local and international level to end homelessness.

Call to Action

- **Advocate for the Human Right to Adequate Housing** - Focus on inclusive, safe, supportive, affordable and accessible housing to enable individuals and families to live secure, dignified lives.
- **Promote a new opportunity to shape housing policy** - Enact policies that address the root causes of homelessness and protect the human right to housing. Include those with lived experience of homelessness in decision making and influencing policy.

As the global housing crisis meets the global health crisis, there is an increased risk of forced evictions with families and individuals struggling to pay their rent. Many rent freezes and eviction moratorium which were brought in under emergency legislation in some countries during lockdown are being lifted causing increased uncertainty. The lack of social protection floors to ensure access to shelter, income protection and universal healthcare, compounded with the current economic instability, increases the vulnerabilities of people at risk of homelessness. This is especially evident for migrant workers who have lost their livelihoods due to COVID-19.

• **The Mercy World continues to be a leading ministry helping those vulnerable to or experiencing homelessness**

Mercy Sisters, Associates and Partners in ministries around the world continue to actively advocate at local and international level for a people-centred and community-centred approach to tackle and address the root causes and drivers of homelessness. The Mercy World fosters the dignity and social and economic potentials of all people experiencing homelessness. Many Mercy communities working on the ground with women, girls and families address the personal and structural drivers of homelessness and provide shelter, support and resources to those in need. Throughout the COVID- 19 pandemic, Mercy communities have continued to provide essential services to those living on the streets and in temporary accommodation.

“It is indeed a privilege to serve the poor... and to offer them in Mercy some of the necessities, comforts and supports which so many of us often take for granted.”
(Mercy Sister, Newfoundland)

Call to Action -

- **Advocate for the Human Right to Adequate Housing**
- **Promote a new opportunity to reshape housing policy**
- **Show gratitude for essential workers**
- **Spread the word** across your own social media platforms by sharing ‘Hope in a Time of Pandemic’ and MIA Global Action’s infographics on COVID-19 and Housing.

The global pandemic has had huge implications for people all over the world. It is described as a global health crisis, but the pandemic has also had enormous socio-economic impacts. This report looks at what has been revealed in terms of the impact on peoples' livelihoods, and focuses particularly on the circumstances of women. Following a discussion on the various impacts on livelihoods, we provide suggestions for action and advocacy.

What has been revealed in terms of livelihood?

The pandemic has meant that throughout the world, governments and their health teams have had to implement 'stay at home' orders and work lockdowns. For the most part, this has been a preventative measure to stop further spread of the virus and to contain infection. Whilst this has been a significant health and safety strategy, it has had a huge impact on the livelihood of many. In their report on [COVID and the world of work](#), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) states that working hour losses in the final quarter of 2020 are expected to amount to 8.6 per cent, or 245 million FTE jobs. It further states that 'the decline in employment numbers has generally been greater for women than men.'

Workplace closures have, for a significant proportion of workers, meant loss of work hours and hence loss of income. In both the formal and informal economy, livelihoods have been threatened. The risks to livelihood have had a disproportionate impact on women. UN Secretary General, Antonio Gutiérrez, stated in his policy brief on [COVID 19 and its impact on women](#) that 'nearly 60 percent of women around the world work in the informal economy, earning less, saving less, and at greater risk of falling into poverty.' The feminisation of poverty has long been a concern for women and girls throughout the world. However, this global pandemic has highlighted even further, already existing inequalities and marginalisation on account of gender.

In addition to the impact of workplace lockdown and 'stay at home' orders, absence from work due to contracting COVID 19 has meant that many have lost income due to sickness. This is especially evident in the healthcare sector, in which 'women make up 70 percent of the global health workforce, putting them at greater risk of infection. In some cases, the major breadwinner has been incapacitated due to the virus, and in the worst of cases, the sole income provider has died, leaving the family household with acute financial stress. In some cases, this has left families in or at risk of poverty. Globally, as of 21 October 2020, there have been 40,665,438 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 1,121,843 deaths, reported to the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#).

MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC
RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

Issue Spotlight: Livelihoods

Lockdowns, "stay at home" orders, and sickness due to the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in loss of livelihood and income for many individuals and families. Women, migrants and workers in the informal economy have experienced particular hardships due to the increased burden of unpaid care work, unregulated working conditions, low wages and a lack of social protections. Throughout the Mercy World, Sisters, Associates and Partners have been responding in a multitude of ways to those suffering from the impacts of COVID-19.

- UNPAID CARE & DOMESTIC WORK**
Women spend **3x** as many hours as men in unpaid care and domestic work, limiting their access to decent work.
- GENDER PAY GAP**
The global gender pay gap is stuck at **16%** with women paid up to 35% less than men in some countries
- ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES**
Globally, **65%** of women had an account at a financial institution in 2017, compared to 72% of men
- FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY**
Women aged 25-34 globally are **25%** more likely than men to live in extreme poverty

Call to Action

- Raise the plight of women and girls in all efforts to address the socio-economic impact of COVID-19
- Advocate for supporting measures in response to COVID-19 that go beyond workers who hold formal sector jobs and include informal, part-time and seasonal workers, most of whom are women
- Celebrate and acknowledge frontline workers, recognising that they are vital workers in our society who are valued and make a positive contribution

COVID-19 has also majorly affected the livelihoods of those working in industries ranging from the agriculture industry to the hospitality sector. Farmers have been faced with loss of livelihood due to varied supply and demand, and lack of workers. Transport both nationally and internationally has been drastically reduced, resulting in major breakdowns of supply chains and causing further job loss. The hospitality sector has also been hit hard, with most restaurants and cafes being closed whilst trying to contain the virus. This has resulted in loss of jobs and income, especially for casual and flexible workers who often do not receive any workplace benefits. This lack of workplace security has highlighted the fragile positions in which some workers find themselves. Some governments have provided employment packages for employees to continue to be employed and have an income during the crisis, in the hope that after the pandemic they will resume their positions and their businesses will survive. This, however, has not been the case for many, especially women, who have been noted as having less security in the workplace.

With the increase of children out of school due to the pandemic, extra pressures have been placed on women to undertake unpaid care work. As women take on greater care demands, they risk losing important gains made in the workforce. For women who head up their household this is a major risk factor. The UN Secretary-General discusses the risk to women's paid work in his policy brief on '[The Impact of COVID-19 on Women](#)', where he states, 'From past experience and emerging data, it is possible to project that the impacts of the COVID-19 global recession will result in a prolonged dip in women's incomes and labour force participation, with compounded impacts for women already living in poverty'.

At a global level, 60 percent of women work in the informal economy where they generally experience unregulated working conditions, low wages and a lack of social protections (ie guaranteed vacation, social security, health insurance, maternity leave). Without these social protections women are more at risk of discrimination and marginalisation. Women migrant workers are even more vulnerable to these types of conditions. According to a report entitled, [Addressing the Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women Migrant Workers](#), 'Women migrant workers already have to grapple with multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities, gender-specific restrictions in migration policies, insecure forms of labour, racism, and xenophobia. Women migrant workers face a higher risk of losing their livelihoods, having their labour and human rights violated and contracting coronavirus'.

There is a clear need to design and implement long term livelihood recovery plans with a gender lens. Social protections are necessary to prevent women from being left behind especially as governments work towards recovering from the coronavirus by stimulating their economies. A social protection floor will free women from dependency and increase economic opportunities.

The Mercy World continues to be of service to vulnerable populations, especially women who are experiencing risks to their livelihoods

Throughout the Mercy World, Sisters, Associates and Partners have been responding in a multitude of ways to those suffering from the impacts of COVID-19. In many places throughout the world, Mercy is the point of reference for individuals and families. Numerous anecdotes shared from the Mercy World in 'Hope in a Time of Pandemic' attest to the fact that many vulnerable populations are being assisted in some way. This is evident through ministries that are, providing direct health care, comforting those experiencing grief, providing food and shelter to those in need, offering financial assistance through livelihood projects and praying for all those in need of care.



Read the complete article [here](#) to learn more about our Call to Action



THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH



- *Mercy Global Action Attends Virtual Faith For Nature Conference*

The Faith for Nature: Multi-Faith Action Conference was convened 5-8 October 2020 at the historic Skálholt Cathedral in Iceland where high-level sessions were livestreamed. This global event was designed to lay the foundation for inter-faith collaboration for sustainable and regenerative development to achieve the SDGs. The concept of the Faith for Nature Conference aimed to increase ambition towards the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly which will be held in February 2021 in Nairobi with the overall theme “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”.

The conference focused on the role of values, ethics and moral responsibility towards nature based solutions when responding to issues of poverty, inequity, climate change and biodiversity loss. Throughout the week, participants were broken down into regional UN Environment hubs to discuss themes such as contribution of values, ethics, spirituality and faith based action as drivers of sustainable development, the challenges for faith-based organizations, and the way forward for action.

The conference successfully concluded with the adoption of a declaration “[Our Sacred Commitment](#)”. The declaration is a bold statement of commitment to action recognizing the key role of faith communities in working together for our common home and means in which to maintain prosperity, peace and partnership.

The conference was addressed by more than 30 high-level faith and thought leaders and attracted 450+ participants from 60 countries. Recorded sessions from the global event can be found at: <https://faithfornature.org>



• *Towards a Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Human Rights*

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased vulnerability and suffering of workers and affected people throughout the global supply chains. It has revealed the stark realities of why we cannot delay in addressing transnational corporate rights violations. The Open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights (OEIGWG) met for its 6th session from 26-30 October. Prior to this session, the OEIGWG released the 2nd draft of the legally binding instrument on business activities and human rights.

Mercy Global Action signed on to a joint oral statement which was pre-recorded ahead of the session. The joint oral statement addressed Articles 5-7 of the draft legally binding treaty focusing on protection of victims, prevention, and access to remedy, seeking to include specific references to the rights of children and girls. Sessions can be viewed [here](#).

Human rights abuses and violations particularly due to extractive industries go hand in hand with environmental degradation. A virtual side event entitled “Human rights abuses and environmental degradation – what the treaty can bring” examined two cases from Zambia and Chile involving pollution and waste from mining activities. These two cases exemplified the legal gaps that prevent communities to access and obtain justice. Panelists, including the Special Rapporteur on Toxic Waste analyzed the degree the current draft treaty covers, the gaps, and what needs to be done to have an effective international framework. Watch here!



Mercy Global Action continues to urge states to actively engage in this UN process towards a legally binding instrument and work to ensure the rights and dignity of people and the planet over private profits.

For more information see:

- <https://bindingtreaty.org/>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/wgtranscorp/pages/igwgontnc.aspx#:~:text=At%20its%2026th%20session%2C%20on,to%20elaborate%20an%20international%20legally>
- <https://www.stopcorporateimpunity.org/binding-treaty-un-process/>
- <https://www.cidse.org/areas-of-work/corporate-regulation/>
- https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/big-issues/binding-treaty/?utm_source=Business+%26+Human+Rights+Resource+Centre+Updates&utm_campaign=51850f61f3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_10_26_10_44&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c0049647eb-51850f61f3-182120705&mc_cid=51850f61f3&mc_eid=a9dafbf25a <https://www.ncronline.org/earthbeat/past-events>

AT THE UNITED NATIONS THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...



The International Day of the Girl

By Siobhan Golden (MELF 2019-2020)

On the 11th of October 2020, the United Nations invites us to celebrate the ninth annual International Day of the Girl (IDG) and to raise awareness of girls' situations, struggles and potentials all around the world. This year's theme centres on building equity for girls, recalling the oppression, challenges and discrimination faced by girls and the vital need for girls to get equal opportunities with their male counterparts. The Day of the Girl was officially declared by the UN General Assembly on the 19th of December 2011, with the adoption of [Resolution 66/170](#). Girls are powerful agents of change, especially when their voices are heard, they are involved in decision-making, they are given equal opportunities, and can demand transformative action. The celebrations of the International Day of the Girl encompass energy, enthusiasm, fearlessness, courage and hope, as girls and young women share their voices, talents, art and experiences of resilience, while advocating for the attainment of their basic human rights.

For me, the International Day of the Girl is one of the most important celebrations worldwide, as it demands that the challenges, stereotypes, violence and disempowerment of girls are addressed. As a child, I grew up with the privilege of not having my abilities, opportunities and behaviours limited due to gender norms, which limit some girls' lives from birth. Being from a small village in the west of Ireland, I spent six years as the only girl in a class with seven boys and not once did I feel inferior or discouraged to compete because of my gender. I can still remember the confusion, sadness and anger I felt, as a seven year old, trying to understand that not all girls were born with the freedom, opportunities and hope that I was.

Every Lent we were given a Trócaire donation box in school to bring home and collect donations to support the work of Trócaire in the global south. There was a photo of a seven year old girl on the outside of the donation box with the caption "give her an opportunity to be educated so she can know more than poverty". I was baffled. I couldn't understand how a girl, my age, needed to be given an opportunity to be able to go to school. I went to school everyday, it was never a question. Why was it not the same for her?

This was my first lesson on gender, discrimination, injustice and privilege. From that moment on, the true power of education, and the stereotypes, obstacles and oppression of girls became much clearer in my day to day life.

Traditionally, the International Day of the Girl celebrations have taken place at the United Nations Headquarters in NYC and compiled of a number of events organised by girls from around the world. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's celebrations look a little different. The events have been adapted and digitally transformed into an online global celebration, by sharing experiences, holding conversations and posting girls' submissions across popular social media platforms.



The Working Group on Girls has organised the main events which includes the Girls Speak Out, the Girls' Rights Townhall, and of course, the 11 Days of Action leading up to the International Day of the Girl. The 'Girls Speak Out' will be live streamed on Youtube and will premiere a video compiling submissions from girls all around the world. Girls will be speaking out about the gender imbalance, as they continue to be overlooked and disproportionately impacted by poverty, inequalities and crises.

The IDG submissions by girls from around the world have been informative, empowering and creative. Ufoma from Nigeria highlighted the importance of advocating for equal and quality education for girls. Education increases girls' levels of health and nourishment, and improves their chances of employment and better livelihoods. She wrote "the fight for girls' rights needs me because I believe that as a youth, I have what it takes to create social change with education, because education is power".

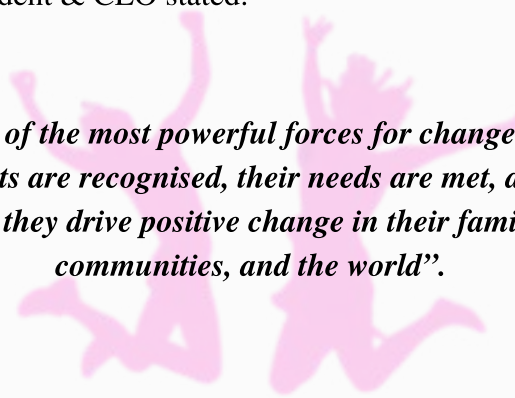
The past twenty five years have seen a lot of progress in the realisation of girls' rights, as a result of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, especially Critical Area L, which focuses specifically on the girl child. A recent report by UNICEF states that the number of girls out of school dropped by 78 million between 1998 and 2018. However, what seemed like tremendous progress is now at risk of being lost due to the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls. The pandemic has exposed the systemic inequalities which prevailed in the world before COVID-19, and which failed to protect the dignity and well-being of girls in all of their diversities. The UN has revealed that 11 million girls may not return to school post-pandemic which is alarming for their health and well-being. During the 11 Days of Action Twitter chat, the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd emphasised the importance of keeping girls in school stating that "they will be more likely not to go back when schools reopen and fall into early marriage, child labor, and teen pregnancy. Keeping girls in school keeps girls safe."

The COVID-19 pandemic makes us more conscious than ever of the systemic root causes of gender inequality, exploitation of girls, gender-based violence and poverty. The pandemic not only risks reversing the progress made on girls' access to education, but it also risks reversing the many achievements made to reduce child marriage and gender-based violence around the world. Throughout the IDG submissions, girls' voices are loud and clear calling for their own protection against violence. Maya, from the USA, states that "We shouldn't have to be afraid in our own communities or at home in our own houses. We should feel just as equal and supported [in] our differences and our genders". In her poem, Imaan from India, wrote, "So when the world asks 'why do girls need rights? I say 'I want safety and freedom to give'. To be yourself truly and unrestrictedly, is a human right, Yet there are those who are denied them day and night."



We must listen when girls speak out! We must reflect their voices in our efforts to build an equitable, sustainable and peaceful world. We are inspired by girls who are boldly demanding action against the discrimination they experience daily. Mercy Global Action encourages girls everywhere to speak out to improve girls participation, strengthen girls empowerment, increase female leadership, and champion their right to make their own decisions. As Kathy Calvin, former United Nations Foundation President & CEO stated:

"Girls are one of the most powerful forces for change in the world: When their rights are recognised, their needs are met, and their voices are heard, they drive positive change in their families, their communities, and the world".



World Mental Health Day

By Anastasia Freeman (MELF 2019-2020)

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization in announcing the theme for World Mental Health Day 2020 “Mental Health for All: Greater Investment – Greater Access” stated, “The world is accepting the concept of universal health coverage. Mental health must be an integral part of UHC. Nobody should be denied access to mental health care because she or he is poor or lives in a remote place.” In the wake of COVID 19, the need for universal access to mental health services has become even more urgent. His statement cuts to the heart of the global mental health response, much of the world’s population still do not have access to psychologists, psychiatrists, or any kind of treatment for psychological illness or substance use disorders. In Australia, mental health awareness during the past decade has grown significantly, as has funding for it. Yet globally mental ill-health is widely under-reported and underdiagnosed, particularly in lower-income countries.

In lower-income countries where mental health research is sometimes non-existent, lower numbers of mental ill-health are documented and therefore treated. However, the WHO estimated one in four people globally will suffer from a disabling mental illness or neurological disorder at some point in their lives and estimated that 5% of the population are diagnosable for significant mental disability in any one year. This quite broad definition includes many forms; depression, anxiety, bipolar, eating disorders, and schizophrenia.

Most people use the terms of mental health and mental illness interchangeably. Yet the WHO definition refers to health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being”. So we must consider mental health as the objective for all of us, mental illness is “generally characterized by some combination of abnormal thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others”. This difference is extremely important. Many agree mental illness should be completely de-stigmatised because it is essentially another kind of health problem. Yet if you have never experienced severe mental illness in yourself or with people close to you, it is hard to grasp what destigmatising mental illness looks like in practice. Mental illness is by its very nature relational because it affects thoughts, emotions, and behaviour. Where physical ill-health locates illness in a body, mental ill-health does not just affect a single mind/body. It affects relationships and affects not just the mind of the individual, but all the minds linked to this individual by chance or by choice.

De-stigmatisation of mental illness thus requires a radical re-thinking of how we relate to others, and not just to those with a diagnosed condition. It calls for insight into the process of our minds while practicing compassion and patience when we encounter, what we consider to be abnormal thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in others.

Yet, the caveat here is that “abnormal” and “normal” behaviour are socially constructed at any given point in time. Thus, interrogating one’s understanding of what is considered normal and abnormal behaviour is an essential part of de-stigmatising mental ill-health and understanding how to respond compassionately when you meet someone who may be experiencing a mental illness or crisis. If you do experience a mental illness in your life, whether you receive timely adequate treatment and your basic human rights are respected, all depends to a great extent on where you are located geographically.





Having talked to many people for a long time about mental health issues in very frank and personal terms, the most common thing I hear from those who have experienced mental illness at some point in their lives is that the kindness, patience, and compassion from others is what they needed most at that time. My own experience is the care of others saved me, along with medication. What most people need when they are experiencing a mental illness or crisis is a community of care that can assist with everyday tasks and checking in on sleep, personal hygiene, and making sure they are eating regularly. This can become burdensome if it is only one or two people doing the caring, which is why a community of support is needed. The other role a community of care assists with is deep listening, practicing non-judgment, and staying with the experience of the other in a calm way, no matter what arises for as long as they need. Here is what one friend would like me to share with you about her recent experiences:

“Mental illness can affect anyone...I am suffering from severe depression, a few times I felt suicidal because I lost my job, friends, and my dignity. I’ve always been self-sufficient; I’ve always had more than enough so I always helped people in need. Now I feel helpless and I don’t recognise myself anymore...Most days I just want to sleep the whole day, sleep helps me not to think. Time freezes and it’s the only time I don’t think of my problems...I didn’t know this could happen to me...I live in a country that has a ‘survival of the fittest’ policy, so if I don’t have a job to support myself, I am on my own....What do I crave most at this time? Someone to be with me, to drag me back, to shine a candle into my darkness, to tell me ‘it’s ok not to be ok’ and tell me ‘it’s gonna be ok, I don’t have anything to give but you have my friendship’ because I feel so alone and I feel like I don’t have anyone.”

I wanted you to hear her words directly because she expresses through her lived experience many of the themes mentioned in this article. Her words should remind us that though all the statistics, data, and talk of global mental health issues, there is an individual human in need of connection and support. Destigmatising mental illness is showing up and giving that support, in the same way we do for people who have a physical illness.



If you have never encountered mental illness before, here are some of my top things to remember:

- Mental health plans are wonderful things to share with friends and family when we are healthy, that way in a time of crisis friends and family will know our wishes or how they can be of assistance.
- Do be there for your friends and family experiencing hardship, spend time with them, and listen to them. Check-in on them, don't be offended if they don't ever call you, they may not be able to. Rally a community of support around them.
- Don't post or share videos online of people who are acting strangely and who are possibly experiencing a psychotic episode.
- If you meet someone or encounter someone with poor personal hygiene, be kind, do not be rude to them, or say anything. They may be aware of their situation but are struggling with doing basic life skills for themselves. There is no need to mention it to others after. All humans have a smell, even you.
- If someone confides in you about how they are feeling, or is hearing voices or is having suicidal thoughts, urge them to seek professional help. Unless you have experienced this exact thing yourself, hold off from giving advice. Sit with them and listen, ask questions. Seek details and try to encourage them to see a professional.
- If you have a friend or family member who is amid a crisis, don't try to help them all on your own, seek help and support from others in a respectful way. Make sure you don't put your mental health at risk in trying to assist them

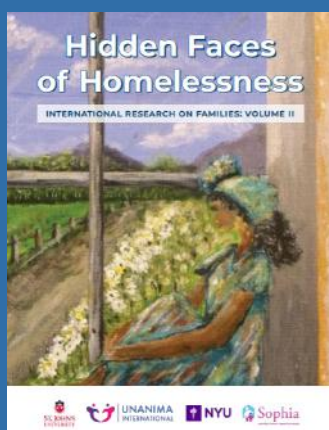
Click [here](#) to access the complete article on *Mercy eNews*

“USEFUL RESOURCES

Faith For Nature - Humans and Nature as an Integral Whole



UNANIMA International - Hidden Faces of Homelessness: International Research on Homelessness Vol II



UN75
#TheWorldWeWant Exhibit



A Rights-Based Economy: Putting People and Planet first

UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 2 November - International Day to End Impunity of Crimes against Journalists
- 5 November - World Tsunami Awareness Day
- 6 November - International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict
- 10 November - World Science Day for Peace and Development
- 14 November - World Diabetes Day
- 15 November - World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims
- 16 November - World Day for Tolerance
- 19 November - World Toilet Day
- 20 November - Africa Industrialisation Day
- 21 November - World Television Day
- 25 November - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- 29 November - International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
- 30 November - Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

Subscribe to our e-newsletter to learn about our vision in action and the ministries carried out by our member congregations: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

NOV/DEC 2020 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 12



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COLLEEN SWAIN

GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

As we open our hearts to the beauty of this hope-filled season, Mercy Global Action wishes you and your loved ones every blessing this Christmas and into the New Year.

"If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give in to it. There are plenty of lives and whole towns destroyed or about to be. We are not wise, and not very often kind. And much can never be redeemed. Still, life has some possibility left. Perhaps this is its way of fighting back, that sometimes something happens better than all the riches or power in the world. It could be anything, be very likely you notice it in the instant when love begins. Anyway, that's often the case. Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb."

Mary Oliver "Don't Hesitate" from Swan: Poems and Prose Poems





THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens' issue spotlight - Violence

The global pandemic has highlighted not just a health crisis, but also a social, political, environmental and economic crisis. 'Hope in a Time of Pandemic: Responding to COVID -19 through a Mercy Lens' has revealed a number of significant issues that have come to the fore. One of these issues is violence, and in particular, violence against women and girls.

What has been revealed in terms of violence?

Family violence, already a significant global problem prior to the pandemic, has been exacerbated during this time. As many community services and educational institutions have closed and families have been rendered isolated due to lockdown measures, the experience of family violence has increased across the globe.

Perpetrators of violence are seen to be taking advantage of this isolation and separation.

Likewise, there is seen to be a greater risk of human trafficking as loss of employment, increased poverty, lockdowns, travel restrictions and online interactions leave women and girls more vulnerable to being coerced by traffickers. Advocates such as Mercy Efforts for Child Protection against trafficking with the Hospitality and Service Sectors (MECPATHS) argue for more collaboration and conversation about these increasing hidden realities.

Girl children are also at higher risk of exploitation. This is because the longer they are out of school, the less likely it is they will return. This is especially true in places where economic struggles are rife and women and girls feel compelled to earn money for their families. UN experts have also expressed concerns of child labour and child marriage, and call on States to increase child protection measures during the pandemic.

The Mercy World continues to be of service to vulnerable populations, especially women who are experiencing violence

As the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence are soon to begin, we encourage the Mercy World to be part of the action for change. The Mercy World continues to strive to eliminate gender-based violence and human trafficking by addressing the lack of prevention, access to services and other social protections. The Mercy World seeks to empower women and girls to strengthen their capacities to claim their rights.

HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC
RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

ISSUE SPOTLIGHT: VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence is considered to be any harmful act directed against individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender... Although men & boys are also targets of gender-based and sexual violence in conflict situations, the victims of such violence continue to be disproportionately women & girls.

"The Mercy World seeks to empower women and girls to strengthen their capacities to claim their rights"

Worldwide, nearly one in three women (30%) have experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives committed by their intimate partners.

Women and girls account for 84% of the victims of forced marriage and 96% of early marriage

99% of victims in the sex industry are women and girls

38% of all murders of women are committed by (ex-) intimate partners

"Through individual, local, national and global mobilization we can challenge harmful gender narratives that justify violence against women and stigmatize survivors"

Gender Violence & COVID-19

Violence against women tends to increase during every type of emergency, including epidemics. Older women, girls, and women with disabilities are likely to have additional risks and needs. Women who are displaced, refugees, and living in conflict-affected areas are particularly vulnerable.

Call to action:

- The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 5 calls on all countries to make gender equality the foundation of a peaceful and sustainable world.
- Participate in Mercy Global Action's advocacy actions for the **#16DaysOfActivism** against Gender-Based Violence. Join us on Twitter **@MIAGlobalAction**.

5 GENDER EQUALITY

Click [here](#) to read the complete article.



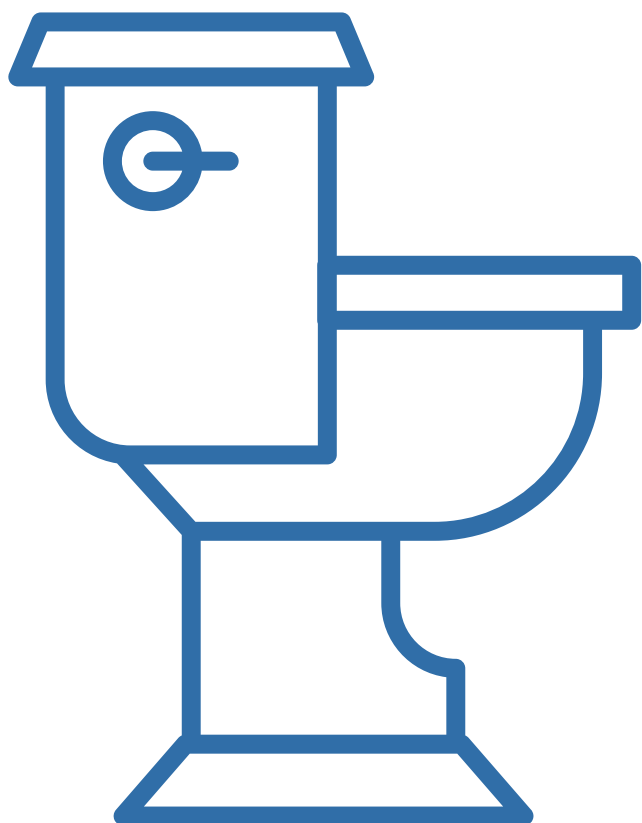
THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

MGA celebrates World Toilet Day 2020

On November 19th, we celebrate World Toilet Day 2020 to encourage the implementation of policies which increase access to sanitation and call to end the practice of open-air defecation. The celebration raises awareness of the 4.2 billion people living without access to safely managed sanitation facilities across the globe. This year's theme is 'sustainable sanitation and climate change', highlighting the need for urgent action to tackle the global sanitation crisis which is being exacerbated by the climate emergency

The human right to water and sanitation is a core concern across the Mercy World. Access to water and quality sanitation facilities are essential to stop the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19, cholera, diarrhoea and typhoid. This year marks the beginning of the Decade of Action which calls for accelerated measures to implement the extensively negotiated Declaration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2014, MGA strongly engaged in the advocacy efforts for the inclusion of the human right to water and sanitation in the 2030 Agenda, along with the NGO Mining Working Group. This successfully resulted in the inclusion of a stand alone goal, SDG 6, to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all."



Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events which have a great impact on access to quality sanitation services. Weather events, such as storms, flooding and droughts, threaten sanitation systems by contaminating water or causing water scarcity. Extreme weather events can also seriously damage the infrastructure which provides sanitation services, exposing public health to infectious diseases. As the global climate crisis continues to accelerate and extreme weather events become less predictable, the provision of functional, climate-resilient toilets, which safely treat and dispose of human waste, needs to be a top priority of UN Member States in order to protect human health, safety and dignity at all levels of society.

MGA strives to raise awareness and tackle issues related to sustainable sanitation and climate change across the globe. To read the complete article click [here](#).

AT THE UNITED NATIONS THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

MGA's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

On November 25, the UN Commemorated the International Day of Eliminating Violence against Women. This day marks the beginning of the 16 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence which takes place every year beginning on November 25 and ending on December 10, Human Rights Day. To participate in MIA Global Action's advocacy for these days, join us on twitter at @MIAGlobalAction.

The pandemic has exacerbated and brought to the forefront the systemic and deeply entrenched economic and societal inequalities that are among the root causes of human trafficking. Human Traffickers prey on those who are experiencing vulnerabilities, such as insecure housing, unemployment, displacement, domestic and family violence to name a few. For many who experience human trafficking, it is not a random act of exploitation, but rather an experience of further discrimination and victimisation.

Many NGO's have reported an increase in domestic violence during this time of pandemic and are concerned about the rights of workers within the informal economy, especially domestic workers who find themselves in even more precarious circumstances now. The risk of debt bondage is even further escalated by loan sharks who promise low interest loans at a time when people are desperate for some form of income. Traffickers can operate with virtual impunity, since much of their activity is hidden from the public domain. This means a vulnerable population has now become even more exposed to the risk of severe exploitation as they try to identify means to secure their livelihoods.

Children experiencing marginalisation are also considered to be at further risk of human trafficking. School closures to prevent the spread of infection, have further isolated and precluded some children from community connectedness and safety. This is of great concern in developing countries, particularly in the rural areas, whereby isolation can already be a struggle. Concerns of online sexual exploitation have also been raised by the international NGO community, given the increased use of information technology.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING



Human Traffickers prey on those who are experiencing vulnerabilities, such as insecure housing, unemployment, displacement, domestic and family violence.

- The pandemic has exacerbated the systemic and deeply entrenched economic and societal inequalities that are among the root causes of human trafficking.
- Essential and practical operations to support victims have become a challenge, due to countries adjusting their priorities during the pandemic. Calls to helplines have increased five-fold in some countries.



- 71% of all human trafficking victims worldwide are women and girls and 3 out of 4 of these women and girls are sexually exploited
- 1/10 of women in the European Union report having experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15

Working Together to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons:

- **Listen and believe survivors** - "We hear you. We believe you. We stand with you."
- **Call on governments** to address human trafficking, to ensure essential services are maintained during the pandemic & to implement preventive measures to end trafficking in persons.
- **Demand more data** - Investment in data collection is urgently needed to adapt and improve life-saving services for survivors of trafficking.
- **Be a conscientious and informed consumer** - discover your [SlaveryFootPrint](#).
- **Start a conversation & raise awareness** - show your solidarity with survivors and where you stand in the fight against trafficking in persons.

#16DaysCampaign #OrangeTheWorld #EndHumanTrafficking



IN COMMEMORATION

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

BY JEMIMA WELSH

(MELF 2019-2020)

The 3rd December marks the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Observed yearly by the United Nations, this day is celebrated internationally and aims to increase 'public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability, and celebrate their achievements and contributions' (IDPWD 2020).

I would like to preface this article by saying that I do not identify as someone with a disability. So I can merely offer thoughts that are informed by observing the experiences of others and working with people with different disabilities, and by living alongside a husband who is a paediatric physiotherapist working with children and young adults with Cerebral Palsy.

Together, we have had many conversations about the structural and policy barriers that prevent the validation of worldviews of people with disabilities. We've spoken with parents who fly across the world to receive specialised care for their children, and we've observed when the financial situations of some families limit their ability to buy ramp-fitted taxis to transport their children to therapy sessions. We've been with friends in wheelchairs who struggle to enter public bathrooms because the doors won't stay open long enough for them to get through, and we've had beers with other friends who speak with longing about wanting to meet romantic partners who don't give up on them because of their ASD. And of course there are countless people around the world who live in countries with governments that don't see them as equal citizens.

These stories are not new. Anyone thoughtfully considering the way our societies are built knows that we (consciously or subconsciously) make decisions to benefit the 'majority norm'. This means that we struggle to imagine the needs of people who live life differently. Instead, we set up charitable institutions to 'fill the gaps' and to remind us every now and then to consider those who may think, behave, speak or move around in less than fluid ways.

But these responses are often 'philanthropic' in nature. We have a tendency to lament how hard it must be for those who live with disabilities, instead of looking for ways to embed the inherent talents of these people within the very mechanisms of how our world operates. In other words, we work on a basis of pity, rather than potential. We see only the 'lack of' and not the 'ability to'.

This is something that holds back our development as an inclusive and prosperous world. What if, when a doctor revealed to new parents that their foetus had Down Syndrome, we supported those parents to look forward with excitement to the life their child was going to lead? What if, instead of needing to find alternative education for children growing up with disabilities, we supported our teachers to embed specialised knowledge and techniques within mainstream schooling? And what if we prioritised the standardisation of buildings, cars and public services that accounted for people with limited mobility?

For the last five years, I have worked in the social enterprise sector, and specifically with businesses that provide meaningful and well paid employment opportunities for people with disabilities who would otherwise struggle to find work in the mainstream economy. These businesses look fundamentally different to both traditional corporate entities and to charitable institutions. They're a hybrid of commercial nuance and structural support. Built around market gaps, they offer a unique opportunity for the talents and perspectives of people living with disabilities to be applied in a concrete, purposeful way that reflects the inherent value of their skills and their immense adaptability.

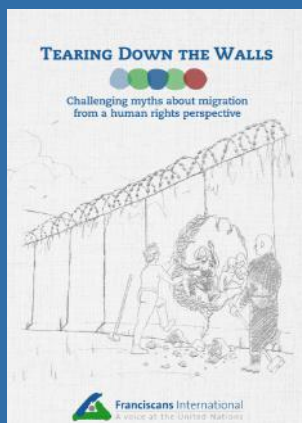
What I love about these employment-focused social enterprises is that they don't treat people with disabilities as deserving of our pity or persistent concessions. They are set up foundationally to make productive work possible for those with different capabilities. And the businesses themselves are expected to become financially sustainable and eventually, turn over a profit. In other words, they aren't about charity - they are about dignity. And we all know about the close connection between dignity and a good job.

This isn't to say that these social enterprises are easy to set up or run, and they continue to face challenges from the market as they struggle to compete with more easily productive mainstream alternatives. But they're worth fighting for, because they represent how we can do business, capitalism and society differently - to benefit all people.

This year, the theme for the International Day is "Building Back Better: toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 World". The pandemic gives us a fresh start to rethink many of our systems and policies. When we do, let's make sure they not just take into account the direct experiences and first-hand perspectives of those living with different abilities, but embed them with thought into our new 'business as usual'. The opportunities are endless!

“USEFUL RESOURCES

[Franciscans International: Tearing down the wall - Challenging Myths about Migration from a Human Rights Perspective](#)



[Secretary-General Report on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration on Perspective](#)

Report of the United Nations Secretary-General

“ From Promise to Action:
The Global Compact for Safe,
Orderly and Regular Migration ”

[Sr Carmen Rosa on Fratelli Tutti and Migration of Persons](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 1 December - World AIDS Day
- 2 December - World Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- 3 December - International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 5 December - World Soil Day
- 5 December - International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
- 9 December - International Anti-Corruption Day
- 9 December - International Day Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime
- 10 December - Human Rights Day
- 11 December - International Mountain Day
- 12 December - International Day of Neutrality
- 12 December - International Universal Health Coverage Day
- 18 December - International Migrants Day
- 20 December - International Human Solidarity Day

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