

# MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

JUNE - JULY 2024 | VOLUME 8 ISSUE 5



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## GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!



WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO MERCY'S INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE WORK AT THE UNITED NATIONS?

# JOIN THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION TEAM 10-MONTH INTERNSHIP

SEPTEMBER 2024 - JUNE 2025  
NEW YORK CITY



READ THE ROLE DESCRIPTION AND LEARN HOW TO APPLY [HERE](#).

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- *Reflections from an Outgoing Intern by Isabel Salter*



Leaving behind everything you know and journeying halfway across the globe to start an internship in a foreign country is undeniably daunting. Yet, much of my apprehension dissipated when I landed in New York and was instantly embraced by the familiar hospitality of the Mercy World. From meeting my new roommates, a supportive community of Mercy Volunteer Corps volunteers, to being welcomed by the Mercy Global Action team, I felt as though I'd found a home away from home. These two support systems have been *invaluable* as I've adjusted to life in New York City and learned to navigate the complex world of the United Nations (including its hundreds of acronyms).

The support from MGA has been profound, but so has the trust they've placed in me. Much like Catherine McAuley, who did not wait until young women were 'fully formed' before entrusting them with great responsibilities, the MGA team has encouraged me from the outset to challenge myself and seize every opportunity. Within a matter of weeks, I found myself actively participating in four issue-based NGO working groups at the UN (focusing on extractivism, homelessness, migration, and social development), assisting with research and drafting processes for numerous MGA position statements, and representing MGA at UN conferences. This set a bold trajectory of personal and professional growth that has only accelerated throughout my internship.

Another key source of community for me has been RUN ('Religious at the UN'), a coalition of individuals representing religious congregations and faith-based NGOs at the UN. This group has taught me *so much* about the vital role of civil society within the UN system, and all governance structures for that matter. Faith-based organisations, in particular, tend to bring a lens of human dignity and compassion that is easily lost in the bureaucracy of political processes, and they make space for the voices of people with lived experience, which is key to developing effective policy solutions. I have endless admiration for the religious Sisters who have worked tirelessly in this space for decades, despite the incremental nature of UN advocacy wins.



When I think about the highlights of my internship, I recall the bustling two-month period during which the UN Commission for Social Development and Commission on the Status of Women took place. I assisted with the execution of panel events, organised and attended a ‘mission visit’ to a UN Member State mission, hosted the incredible women from Cohort 3 of the MGA Emerging Leaders Fellowship during their New York immersion, and had the opportunity to hear advocates like Malala Yousafzai speak. I also recall my trip to the US-Mexico border, where I was able to bear witness to the realities of migrants, and my trip to Rome, where I attended the Talitha Kum General Assembly and heard the strong calls-to-action of passionate human trafficking survivors.



Overall, the past ten months have been such a fun, dynamic, and enriching experience. I will always be grateful for this incredible start to my career and for the drive for justice it has instilled in me. My heartfelt thanks extend to Angela, for her mentorship, to Cecilie, for being the best manager I could ask for, and to Colleen, Jemima and Mayet for their unwavering warmth and encouragement. Lastly, I could never have made it here without the support of my parents, and Gaby, Meredith and Catherine from Young Mercy Links South Australia.

*In Mercy,  
Izzy*

- *The Inaugural Task Force of the Mercy Water Justice Coalition has Begun!*

On Wednesday 29 May, 18 passionate individuals from all corners of the world gathered for the inaugural Mercy Water Justice Coalition Task Force meeting. These inspiring members hail from Argentina, Australia, Guyana, Kenya, New Zealand, Philippines, Paraguay, and the United States of America, bringing with them a diverse range of expertise and backgrounds. Among them are dedicated Sisters of Mercy from the Americas, ISMAPNG, Kenya, and the Philippines, as well as a school principal, a medical microbiologist, communication specialists, environmental engineer, marine biologist, science educator, global policy and research advocates, and medical professionals. Together we hope to be a powerful force for change in the world of water justice.



Image: MGA



## *MGA Invites Members of the Mercy World to Attend the Research Presentations & Graduation of MELF Cohort 3!*

In a few weeks' time, Cohort 3 of the MGA Emerging Leaders Fellowship will be jetting off to Dublin for their final overseas immersion. As a core component of their program, the Fellows have developed extensive research presentations on a range of justice issues. **The presentations will be delivered and live-streamed via Zoom on Wednesday, July 10th, and Thursday, July 11th, 2024.** Please refer to the schedule below for specific presentation times. Note that all times are listed in Ireland Time (GMT+1).

<b>JULY 10, 9:45AM</b>	<b>Jo Thompson</b> – The Road to the Abolition of Prostitution
<b>JULY 10, 10:45AM</b>	<b>Hilda Cruz</b> – Called to Welcome & Accompany Asylum Seekers
<b>JULY 10, 2:00PM</b>	<b>Cynthia Mulholland</b> – Free & Equal: An Australian Conversation on Human Rights
<b>JULY 10, 3:00PM</b>	<b>Andrea Haller</b> – Building Bridges: Finding Common Values and Paths Forward Together
<b>JULY 10, 4:00PM</b>	<b>Dinah Mwendwa</b> – The Impact of Teenage Pregnancies on Girls' Education in Mercy Schools in Mukuru Slums
<b>JULY 11, 9:45AM</b>	<b>Maria Pearson</b> – Development with Dignity
<b>JULY 11, 10:45AM</b>	<b>Virgencita Alegado, rsm</b> – Laudato si': Claiming the Cultural Identity of the Subanen People in Mount Ranges
<b>JULY 11, 2:00PM</b>	<b>Sarah Dwan</b> – Drips, Sparks and Power of Young People
<b>JULY 11, 3:00PM</b>	<b>Yonette Alexis Stephens</b> – Extractivism, Displacement and Land Degredation: A Learner's Handbook

Additionally, **MGA invites you to virtually attend the Fellows' graduation ceremony on Friday, July 12th, from 10:00AM to 12:30PM Ireland Time (GMT+1).** We are delighted to announce that the keynote speaker for the graduation will be Ms. Susan Pascoe, a distinguished leader celebrated for her substantial contributions to the non-profit sector, Catholic education system, and public administration in Australia. We look forward to seeing you online! RSVP below.

[\*\*CLICK TO RSVP FOR THE RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS!\*\*](#)

[\*\*CLICK TO RSVP FOR THE GRADUATION!\*\*](#)

## *Thank You & Farewell to Colleen and Jemima!*

Over the past two years, Jemima Welsh and Colleen Swain have worked to promote the value of women's leadership, education and empowerment, and to secure the long-term sustainability of the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship in their roles as Leadership and Advocacy Associates.

Together, Colleen and Jemima have contributed significantly to the work and life of the MGA office – publishing the MELF Impact Report and our advocacy guide 'From Sparks to Fire', establishing the MELF Alumnae Network, launching the MELF fundraising campaign, promoting the MELF program through MGA communications and social media, leading our Task Force on Women in Justice Leadership, and in countless other ways.

We are so grateful for all of the skills and talents Colleen and Jemima have shared with us and with the Mercy World, always with eager spirits, creative minds, and hearts filled with Mercy. They have left a legacy of excellent work and partnerships that will continue to bear fruit for months and years to come. We wish them the best of luck in their future endeavours.



## FROM THE GRASSROOTS:

### *Mukuru Promotion Centre Responds to Flooding & Demolitions in Kenya*

In Kenya, El Niño rains brought above-average rainfall during the "long rains" season this year. While the Kenyan Meteorological Department had warned of the possibility of an unprecedented downpour in April, the government did little to prepare. When the rains came, floods ravaged low-lying areas within the capital city and other neighbouring counties, including informal settlements like Mukuru slums. Mukuru is one of Nairobi's largest informal settlements, home to over 700,000 people living in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. The lack of proper infrastructure, including roads, sewage systems, and housing, makes Mukuru particularly susceptible to flooding. Additionally, deforestation and improper waste disposal contribute to blocked drains and increased surface runoff, further amplifying the risk. Many makeshift dwellings were submerged, forcing residents to wade through contaminated water and exposing them to waterborne diseases and other health hazards.

The Ngong River, a significant watercourse in the region, runs through Mukuru slums. Unfortunately, the Ngong River has faced considerable pollution and environmental degradation over the years due to industrial effluents, sewage discharge, and solid waste dumping. This not only affects the water quality but also contributes to flooding as the river's capacity to carry water is diminished by waste and debris.



Regrettably, most of Mukuru settlement is built on what is known as 'riparian land'; land that borders the river and is susceptible to flooding. The vulnerability of these areas is compounded by poor infrastructure, inadequate drainage systems, and the effects of rapid urbanisation.

In order to control the floods, the government issued orders on any buildings built on riparian land to be demolished immediately. Since many structures in the slum were considered illegal or informal by the authorities, they were subject to demolition orders. These demolitions were often carried out without adequate notice or alternative housing options, leaving many Mukuru families homeless and exacerbating the cycle of poverty and vulnerability.



The impact of the flooding and demolitions on the residents of Mukuru is clearly profound and multifaceted. Many schools, including some MPC schools, were adversely affected. The government postponed the opening of schools for a second term in order to prevent further disaster. Also, a number of residents (both adults and children) sadly lost their lives as they got swept up in the raging rainwater. The government announced over 200 people died from flooding throughout the country. A huge number of families have lost their homes and belongings, as their children's education has been disrupted, and most of their livelihoods destroyed. Currently, the psychological toll of these families living in a perpetual state of uncertainty and insecurity cannot be overstated. They have no shelter, let alone food or any belongings and nowhere to go. Moreover, the disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups such as women, children, and the elderly highlights the need for urgent action.

Mukuru Promotion Centre (MPC), founded in 1985 by the Sisters of Mercy, continues to play a vital role in assisting flood victims through various initiatives aimed at providing relief, support, and long-term solutions to mitigate the impact of flooding. MPC has now provided emergency relief to over 1000 households by distributing essential items such as food, mattresses, warm blankets, and clothing. Our efforts are just a small fraction in trying to assist the Mukuru residents from flooding and displacement due to demolitions.

*Written by Dinah Mwendwa, MELF Cohort 3 Fellow  
& Assistant/Deputy Director, Sisters of Mercy Mukuru Promotion Centre*

# Thematic Areas - Displacement of People

Image: MGA

## • *Reflections on the IOM International Dialogue on Migration*

On 21-22 May, MGA attended and participated in the annual International Dialogue on Migration, organized by the International Organization for Migration. This year, the theme of the first session of the dialogue was "Facilitating Regular Pathways to a Better Future: Harnessing the Power of Migration," and the conversation will continue with a second session in Geneva later this year.

The International Dialogue on Migration brought together Member States, UN agencies, local authorities, youth organizations, the private sector, labor organizations, and civil society to connect and share challenges and innovative solutions for regular pathways to address the needs and rights of people on the move and their communities. The session also featured the introduction of America Ferrera as IOM's newest Global Goodwill Ambassador and a performance by Kofi Kinaata, National Goodwill Ambassador from Ghana.

In her role as Chair of the NGO Committee on Migration, Cecilie Kern, MGA's Global Policy and Research Advocate, participated actively in the dialogue and important bilateral meetings with Amy Pope, Director-General of IOM, and with representatives of the US State Department. You can read the Mercy+NGO Committee on Migration statement for Panel 3 on "Strengthening Regular Migration Pathways through Effective Community Engagement and Social Cohesion" [here](#).



Images: MGA

- *Reflections on the Talitha Kum 2nd General Assembly & 15th Anniversary*

From May 18 – 24, MGA Intern, Isabel Salter attended the 2nd General Assembly and 15th anniversary celebration of Talitha Kum. Talitha Kum is a global Catholic network against human trafficking established with the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) in 2009. Held in Rome, Italy, the conference brought together 155 delegates from 71 countries.

The theme of the conference was “Journeying Together to End Human Trafficking: Compassion in Action for Transformation”. The key aim of the gathering was to strategise on the network’s 2025-2030 priorities using the synodal process of listening and discernment. The final declaration was informed by delegates’ grassroots experiences of accompanying and advocating for survivors of trafficking, expert speakers’ presentations on the root causes of exploitation, and generous sharing by survivor-advocates themselves.



*Image: MGA*

Representing her region as the Oceania Youth Delegate, Izzy was invited to speak on a panel about the socioeconomic impacts of human trafficking, as well as a youth panel where she shared best practices from ACRATH (where she volunteers), Talitha Kum Pasifika and Talitha Kum Aotearoa New Zealand. Oceania delegates also had the opportunity to meet with Chiara Porro, Australian Ambassador to the Holy See. Izzy says, “Fuelled by the calls-to-action of strong survivor-advocates from around the world, I am more motivated than ever to continue my advocacy against the scourge of human trafficking.”



*Image: Talitha Kum*



*Image: Australian Embassy to the Holy See*



# “USEFUL RESOURCES



[ImPact for the Future Outcome Package from the 2024 UN Civil Society Conference](#)



[World Migration Report 2024 Interactive Page](#)



['We Were Here' UNHCR Documentary Series for World Refugee Day \(scroll down\)](#)



## UPCOMING EVENTS & INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAYS

- June 8: World Oceans Day
- June 12: World Day Against Child Labour
- June 15: World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
- June 16: International Day of Family Remittances
- June 17: World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
- June 19: International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict
- June 20: World Refugee Day
- **July 4-14: MELF Cohort 3 Final Immersion**
  - July 10-11: MELF Research Presentations
  - July 12: MELF Graduation Day

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