

Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship In Cambodia



Cohort 3 of the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship (MELF) had their first international immersion in Siem Reap, Cambodia from August 21st - 30th, 2023. The ten days were both busy and fulfilling, consisting of workshops on Mercy, justice and leadership, grassroots engagement, and advocacy trainings on issues related to the degradation of Earth and Displacement of People. The Cambodia Immersion was opened by a beautiful and meaningful ritual with the theme “Journey to Peace and Reconciliation” where Fellows were invited to prayer, song, and reflection. It concluded with the sharing of individual symbols brought from each individual home country from around the world. The day concluded with sharing the stories of survival, suffering, hope, and resilience among the Cambodian people and a tour around Metta Karuna Reflection Centre led by Sr. Denise Coghlan rsm.

Throughout the immersion, Fellows had the opportunity to visit to a primary school and a local market, garden with a local community of women with disabilities, reflect at a dam where the Pol Pot regime committed acts of genocide, explore a floating village, and interact with Bishop Enrique Figueredo, fondly known as the ‘Bishop of Wheelchairs.’ Aside from the grassroots visits, Fellows were exposed to the history and local culture by visiting Angkor Wat and surrounding Temples, as well as attending a Cambodian Circus depicting the day-to-day traditions and experiences of the local community. All of these exposures were aimed to stimulate Fellows’ creative and critical thinking and ethical discernment while they explored the world through a Mercy lens which seeks to challenge oppressive systems. These exposures promote personal reflection and collaborative leadership amongst the group leading to a compassionate and communal response to current concerns of our world in order to advance justice.

Some Reflections

“MELF has given me a golden opportunity to become a great leader in my already existing culture which is very different from what others are. I personally believe I have to recognize the blessings in my life and be thankful. I will therefore be able to show mercy to those that truly need it”.

Dinah Mwendwa

“So much has happened to me before and during this immersion that it will take many weeks to process. However, I have never been more certain of both the urgency and the necessity of initiatives such as the Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship. The old leadership paradigms have failed us time and time again, and we find ourselves in a world desperately in need of new leaders who are driven first by care and compassion for people. I am truly grateful to have been invited to be on this journey”.

Alexis Stephens

“While the day was busy, we found the opportunity for quiet prayer and meditation within the sacred spaces of the temples. We walk with gratitude for the hospitality and inspiration from the commitment to faith, reconciliation, and interconnectedness to one another, Earth, and the Divine.”

Andrea Haller

