



MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP (MELF)

Extending Mercy Women's Sphere of Influence

2025 – 2026



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The Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship provides a transformational experience for women who are passionate about advancing Mercy and Justice. This international leadership program is fully funded, and unique in the ways in which it provides an opportunity for Fellows to establish strong links and networking across the Mercy World through international encounters, webinars and modules, mentorship and more. Participants are empowered to think creatively and critically, develop collaborative leadership skills, and engage in deep personal reflection, leading to a compassionate and communal response to current concerns of our world.

BACKGROUND TO THE FELLOWSHIP

Mercy Global Action is the justice arm of Mercy International Association, an association founded by the Sisters of Mercy. The Sisters of Mercy are an international faith-based organization founded in Dublin, Ireland in 1831, with members in 47 countries and territories worldwide. The Mercy World is committed to serving those who suffer from poverty and other forms of disadvantage, especially women and children, empowering them to live full and dignified lives within diverse social and cultural contexts.

At the heart of our Mercy charism is the education, empowerment, and encouragement of women. The contribution of women leaders to the Mercy Global Action office is both a gift and an opportunity, providing mutual benefits to the women and also to the advancement of our work. Women's positive responses to our internship program in the Mercy Global Action office and their valuable contribution to its ongoing mission are the impetus for developing a fuller and more formal leadership program. The Fellowship program seeks to provide opportunities for participants to share their knowledge and further develop their understandings of Global Justice. Grounded in Christian tradition, doctrine, and foundational beliefs, the program seeks to build upon the capacities of women and provide effective tools for them to be agents of change in their own communities and in the greater society. This involves theological reflection, critical thinking, ethical discernment, looking at the world through a Mercy lens, and challenging oppressive systems in order to advance justice.



“From the local to the global level, women’s leadership and political participation are restricted. Women are underrepresented as voters, as well as in leading positions, whether in elected offices, the civil service, the private sector or academia. This occurs despite their proven abilities as leaders and agents of change, and their right to participate equally in democratic governance.”

- UN Women

The above quotation indicates the need to promote and build upon women’s leadership potential and influence in both the global and local arenas. In this time of global turbulence, it is vital that women have access to global political forums in order for their voices to be heard and so that they can make meaningful contributions to Global Justice.

The MELF Program supports women to become transformative feminist leaders who share power with others, enabling creativity and mobilization around collective goals.

We see three levels of transformation:

1. At a micro-level participants experience a sense of empowerment, capacity to create change and a flair for critical thinking. They are encouraged to realise their own strengths as leaders for peace and justice in their own communities and the global arena.
2. At a mezzo level, participants realise their interconnection with each other and the planet, and experience solidarity with a range of visionary organisations working for human rights and positive change.
3. At a macro level, participants reach a global awareness of social and environmental issues. Ultimately, a MELF participant has the capacity to actively respond to social justice issues in her own context for a more peaceful and merciful world.

At the heart of this project is the aim to provide opportunities for women who have the potential to develop and contribute to Mercy Leadership and in turn, extend their sphere of influence. This builds on and ensures that Mercy Global Leadership endures within our Mercy Institutions and beyond. Our foundress, Catherine McAuley, had a deep trust and desire to develop women’s skills and capabilities so that they could carry on the work of Mercy.

Meet our current Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellows [here](#).



OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

This Fellowship seeks to build on key objectives that have been paramount to the work of Mercy Global Action, the justice arm of Mercy International Association. The objectives of the program are as follows:

1. Thinking critically about the global reality of our world through the lens of Mercy

Every day the world is changing. We see environmental destruction – both human and natural- we see the economic markets fluctuating – leaving individuals marginalised from society. We see war, hatred, trafficking, countries closing borders to migrants and refugees, and multinational companies undertaking large development projects that abuse the human rights of local communities. The global reality for Mercy is that despite all of these things that are driving our world apart, there is hope. Mercy brings hope to individuals. A key outcome of this program is for Fellows to encourage others to think critically about the root causes of issues and advocate for justice towards fundamental and systemic change.

2. Providing opportunities to explore Mercy values in a justice context

Mercy education in justice and advocacy is a vital part of the work we do. Women are seeking ways to be active leaders for justice and peace in our world. The Fellowship aims to give these women the opportunity to explore Mercy values and have their voices heard in the global arena. A key outcome is for Fellows to develop their Mercy leadership skills and justice advocacy.

3. Capacity building and empowering women

Key to the Mercy education component is building capacity and empowering women to be future Mercy leaders around the world. There is a need to focus on the gender dynamic in the international arena and encourage women to participate and share their skills. A key outcome is for Fellows to build relationships with other Mercy leaders around the world and form a united network, advocating for justice in their own communities and beyond.

4. Growth through mentorship

The role of mentoring is critical to the program. Many Mercy women throughout the world have valued the role of mentors in their lives. Establishing strong connections with women of Mercy who can provide companionship and wisdom is a crucial element of the program. A key outcome of the Fellowship is to recognise the transformative impact of shared knowledge and experiences between Mercy women.

5. Expand Mercy influence and knowledge of our global critical concerns

The educational component focuses on our key issues of concern: the Degradation of Earth and Displacement of Peoples. Fellows are given opportunities to share their own experiences and to engage in theological reflection and social analysis. Through training and support, Fellows are encouraged to build upon their leadership skills and capacities, thus becoming a leader in Mercy and human and environmental rights advocacy. A key outcome is for Fellows to step up in their own congregations, organisations, and communities to be an advocate, addressing the challenges of our world.



THE PROGRAM

The Fellowship consists of the following **six** components;

1) Three International Engagements and Encounters:

- **Siem Reap, Cambodia** – September 26 - October 5, 2025 (Induction & Retreat – Metta Karuna Reflection Centre) 10 days
- **New York, USA** – March 7 - 16, 2026 (Human Rights and Advocacy Training and United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women) 10 days
- **Dublin, Ireland** – August 25 - September 3, 2026 (Presentation of Justice Project & Graduation - Mercy International Centre) 10 days

2) Individual Research Project

Each Fellow is required to choose a pertinent justice issue related to the Degradation of Earth and/or the Displacement of Peoples. They will undertake a project that educates, informs and provides specific actions for justice in relation to this issue.

3) Reading Modules

A core component of the Fellowship is reading modules. A reading package is available to all Fellow and comprises of literature related to Mercy Spirituality, justice, leadership, advocacy, human rights and other relevant topics. This requires Fellows to set aside at least 3 hours per week to read and reflect on what new insights and understandings are emerging for them.

4) Mentorship Program

During the 12-month program, each Fellow is supported by a Mercy mentor. This involves a monthly engagement in which the Fellow can explore with their mentor aspects of their own personal development, reflections, and insights into the program.

5) Grassroots Mercy Justice Engagement

Fellows are advised to engage with local and/or regional Mercy justice networks and are supported to make the relevant links with the Mercy Global Action Network.

6) Webinars and Online engagement

Fellows are required to connect regularly online for facilitated discussions. A monthly webinar covering leadership, advocacy, and Mercy spirituality etc. forms part of the program and online participation is essential.

This program is fully funded and makes a significant investment in each Fellow, in the hope that each one will be personally transformed and commit to making a difference in our world. As such, Fellows must be fully prepared to invest time and energy to actively engage in all the above components.



CRITERIA

To be considered for the Fellowship, applicants must meet the following criteria;

- Strong affiliation and/or involvement with the Sisters of Mercy and Mercy works
- Hold at least an academic Bachelor's degree (or an equivalent qualification) or relevant life/work experience as of May 2024
- A recognized 'emerging leader' within a Mercy context
- Basic English proficiency required
- Highly motivated to learn from new experiences and encounters
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Demonstrates leadership potential and capacity to put learnings in justice and advocacy into action in the next 10 years
- Able to embrace diversity and inclusiveness in a cross cultural context
- Resilience in new environments and challenges
- Ability to attend and participate in all aspects of the Fellowship (total of 30 days in person, writing and reading assignments, webinars, and mentor meetings)
- Reasonable level of health and fitness to take part in moderate activities including walking in both extremely warm and cold climates

APPLICATIONS

Please start by emailing Marietta Latonio (mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie) with subject heading 'MELF Application Form' to request the application form.

The form is extensive. Potential Fellows are encouraged to take time to reflect on and answer each question meaningfully. It includes:

- 1) Contact and Biographical Information
- 2) Verification of Program Eligibility and Commitment
- 3) Current Employer Information
- 4) Formal Education
- 5) Long Answer Questions (1- 8)
- 6) Supporting Materials

- A current resume or CV
- A letter of recommendation from a Mercy affiliated person or institution to be submitted to mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie by **January 24, 2025**.

Application deadline: January 24, 2025



APPLICATION TIPS

- Prepare your answers to the long answer questions on a separate document before transferring them to the application.
- Answer the long answer questions thoroughly and thoughtfully, making sure to answer all parts of each question and stick to the 250-word limit.
- Ask for your letter of recommendation at least three weeks prior to application deadline and be sure to follow up and remind your recommender.
- Email mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie ahead of time with questions and concerns about the program and/or the application

For the Letter of Recommendation...

Please select a current or recent Mercy affiliated person or institution with whom you have worked closely and ask them to submit a brief letter of recommendation in support of your application.

The letter should address some combination, though not necessarily all, of the following: your relationship to them, your accomplishments and performance; any job-related knowledge and/or skills; work ethic and initiative; learning style and demonstrated capacity for growth; your leadership qualities and potential; how you work with and influence others; and your management abilities. Encourage the writer to be specific and offer brief examples. The letter should not exceed 500 words in length.

If shortlisted...

- You will be asked to provide three referees, and if shortlisted, participate in an interview with a panel.
- If accepted and formally employed, please have your executive director, or other senior executive in your reporting structure send a letter to mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie by March 1st 2025 ensuring support upon completing aspects of the program that requires time off. A sample letter will be sent to Fellows upon acceptance.
- Fellows will be required to sign a Verification of Commitment form declaring they will attend and participate in all aspects of the Fellowship.



To receive the application form, please email Marietta Latonio at mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie with the subject heading 'MELF Application Form'

Applications must be submitted by **January 24, 2025**.

Upon submission, you will receive a confirmation email. If you don't see it, check your spam mail. If it's not there, contact mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **What type of individual is the fellowship looking for?**

The Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship is looking for women who have a strong Mercy affiliation, commitment to justice and advocacy, recognized as an "emerging leader" in a Mercy context, highly motivated and team oriented, and open to inclusivity and diversity.

- **If I am not affiliated or involved with the Sisters of Mercy or a Mercy Institution, can I still apply?**

The Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship was designed to be inclusive and diverse; however, the grant calls upon the capacities of emerging leaders that have been affiliated and involved in the Mercy Network.

- **I am a Sister of Mercy, am I eligible?**

Yes, the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leader Fellowship highly encourages Sisters to apply.

- **I am a male, can I apply?**

Unfortunately, no. The grant was developed to provide leadership opportunities and expand upon the capacities of women to be leaders around the world.

- **How many Mercy Global Action Emerging Leader Fellowships are awarded each year?**

The Mercy Global Action Emerging Leader Fellowship is highly competitive and we plan to award 10 Fellowships to a diverse group of women from around the world.

- **What is the timeline for the application process?**

- Application opens - November 27, 2024;
- Application submission deadline - January 24, 2025;
- Shortlisted applicants are notified for interview - January 31, 2025;
- Interviews (shortlisted applicants) - February 3-14, 2025;
- Processing of interview results - February 17-26, 2025;
- Notification to successful applicants - February 28, 2025;
- Announcement of Cohort 5 Fellows to the Mercy World - March 8, 2025;
- Program Orientation - May 14, 2025;
- Check-in Session (preparatory for Cambodia immersion) - September 8, 2025

- **How long is the Fellowship? When does it begin and end?**

The Fellowship runs for approximately 12 months, officially beginning in September of 2025 and ending in September of 2026.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **I cannot attend one of the program international encounters, can I still apply for the program?**

Unfortunately, no. All aspects of the program are mandatory for Fellows. If you cannot attend this year, we encourage you to apply next year.

- **Are there issues in which MELF is particularly interested in?**

The Sisters of Mercy, Mercy International Association through the Mercy International Reflection Process have identified environmental degradation and the displacement of persons as two areas of concern. These concerns are complex and interconnected. Key issues identified are, but not limited to: mining and fracking, oceans, violations of human rights defenders, climate change, water, refugees and migrants, homelessness, human trafficking, women's political participation, family violence and mental illness.

- **What is the cost of the fellowship?**

This program is fully funded and makes a significant investment in each Fellow, in the hope that each one will be personally transformed and commit to making a difference in our world. As such, fellows must be fully prepared to invest time, energy and personal commitment to this program.

- **What is expected of the fellows during the program?**

Fellows are expected to attend and participate in three international encounters in Cambodia, New York, and Dublin; complete an individual research project on a pertinent Mercy justice issue of choice; engage with local Mercy justice grassroots networks, participate in online webinars; meet with a Mercy mentor; and complete all reading modules over the course of 12 months.

- **If I still have a question about the program after reviewing this document, how should I contact the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship?**

If you have reviewed this document and still have a question, please email us at: mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie.

You can expect an answer to your email in three business days, but usually sooner.



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