

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!



• Cohort 2 New York Immersion

We were so excited to have had Cohort 2 of the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship arrive in New York for their immersion from March 12 to 21. From the moment the Fellows arrived, they hit the ground running with final preparations for our Parallel Event at the Commission on the Status of Women. It was amazing to see their hard work pay off as they spoke with skill and passion about our experiences with the Fellowship and in the context of the priority theme of "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls" to a crowd of both in-person and 115 online participants.



Attending a town hall-style meeting at the General Assembly and having the opportunity to ask United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' representatives questions was an incredible experience.

IN THIS ISSUE

MELF NEW YORK IMMERSION

WORLD WATER DAY AND THE 2023 UN WATER CONFERENCE

INSIDE THE UN: THROUGH OUR ECOSOC LENS

USEFUL RESOURCES

UPCOMING EVENTS

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

- ANGELA REED RSM
- CATHERINE EDWARDS
- CECILIE KERN
- COLLEEN SWAIN
- JEMIMA WELSH
- MÀIRE CUNNINGHAM
- MARIETTA LATONIO

Staying at Thomas Berry Place in Queens provided a welcoming and comfortable environment for the Fellows to reflect and debrief on their experiences and connect with one another. The Fellows were able to attend various CSW events and discussions hosted by Missions at the United Nations and Civil Society, which deepened their understanding on global issues and commitment to leadership.



The Fellows at the Philippine Mission

Meeting with Ambassador Antonio Manuel Revilla Lagdameo at the Philippine Mission to the United Nations was a highlight of the immersion. It was an honor for the Fellows and the MGA team to have the opportunity to connect with such an accomplished individual and hear his thoughts on the importance of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Lastly, the Fellows had time to prepare for their research project on either the Degradation of Earth or Displacement of People with guidance from the MGA team. The Fellows' research project highlights the Mercy Emerging Leadership program's focus on creating leaders committed to positively impacting society. It's inspiring to see the Fellows dedicating themselves to these critical issues, and we have no doubt that they will go on to make a difference in their respective communities.

• *Wednesday, March 15, 2023 Reflection*

"If you want to walk fast, walk alone. But if you want to walk far, walk together." This is the powerful phrase I heard today from one of the African panelists during a CSW67 side event led by Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe about Constitutional Gender Commissions. And yes, it is true that all that is happening during our immersion cannot be successfully done or realized if I only walk by myself. I am just so overwhelmed by the experiences and surprises each day of our immersion here in New York.



Listening at the events challenged me to expand my ways of collaboration and connection. It opened up my conception that if we collaborate with other nations and/or NGOs and GOs that have the same plea and interventions, then our aspirations and ideas will be addressed. This is a virtue that a leader should also adopt. It is not enough to have advocacy champions only from one country. We need to shout out to be heard and be an inspiration for others. Working together is more influential than working alone. This is what I experienced also with the MELF fellows. The parallel event would not have been successful if we had not worked by helping and uplifting each other rather than being competitors. Truly, as leaders we need to walk together to walk that far!





The Fellows and MGA Staff presented with their egg from Srs Ann Brady, Paula Carron rsm and Lorraine Cunningham

Sr Paula Carron rsm shared very heartwarming and inspiring words this morning that also lifted me up: A leader must be gentle and firm! As I engage with others, I will keep in my heart the image of a hand holding an egg in a way that best supports the egg to thrive. Words from Catherine McAuley are a gift to me and to us, "I have great confidence in you to do what you think is best. State your opinion and always act with courage."

Lastly, I am so grateful and will always be grateful to the MELF team and MGA staff for untiringly and courageously leading us in this immersion. They helped us realize that we don't need to be superhuman or perfect to be in a diplomatic conference; just simply live the best we can, and surely God will guide and take care of the rest!

Sr Derby Mercado rsm

• *Saturday, March 18 Reflection*

Today centred on Human Rights and Advocacy with a focus on laws affecting women. This started with a talk by Màire Cunningham around how women are reflected in and affected by laws and constitutions around the world. Màire explained the need for more just representation of women in our legal systems. She emphasised the role of advocates working with governments and other stakeholders to develop policies and programs that support women's representation in laws and constitutions. The conversation flowed onto how we can empower ourselves and our peers as women in the workplace through skills such as building effective CVs, being mindful of microgressions and the importance of mentorship.

EQUALITY LEGISLATION

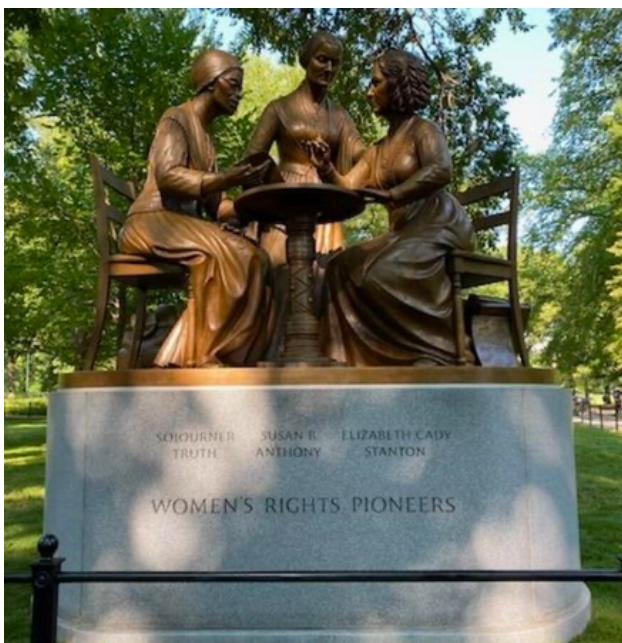
Employment Equality Acts 1998 -2015

Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2018

Acts prohibit discrimination in the provision of goods and services, accommodation and education. They cover 9 grounds – gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of the Traveller Community



Part of Màire Cunningham's presentation.



The Women's Rights Pioneer Monument

We reflected on our conversations with Màire at "The Women's Rights Pioneer Monument". Located in Central Park in New York City, it is a powerful tribute to the struggle for women's rights and a reminder of the sacrifices made by the women who fought for equality. The monument depicts three women who were instrumental in the women's suffrage movement: Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Sojourner Truth. Anthony and Stanton were leaders of the suffrage movement. They played key roles in the fight for women's right to vote, particularly learning about Sojourner Truth, an abolitionist and women's rights activist who fought for the rights of both women and African Americans. It is significant for honoring these women because it is the first statue of real women in Central Park. For many years, the park was filled with statues of male figures, but there was no representation of the countless contributions made by women throughout history.



The Fellows at Central Park

The Women's Rights Pioneer Monument serves as a symbol of progress and a reminder of the ongoing fight for gender equality. Our visit acknowledged the importance of monuments like this one in acknowledging and honoring the contributions of women to society. Such monuments can also serve as inspiration for future generations of women and girls, showing them that they too can make a difference and contribute to a more just and equitable world.

Reflection from Sarah Brown, Stellah Mathe and Sr Derby Mercado rsm

Monday, March 20 Reflection

The morning began with a call to count our blessings and with timely words from Catherine McAuley. Those that resonated most with me were:

“Every place has its own particular ideas and feeling which must be yielded to when possible.” (Catherine McAuley to Frances Warde, 17 November 1838)

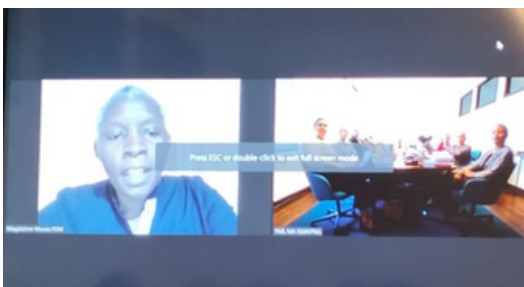
“Our mutual respect and charity is to be cordial; now cordial signifies something that revives, invigorates and warms; such should be the effects of our love for each other.” (Cork Manuscript)

“I would like to tell you all the little cheering things that God permits to fall in our way.” (Catherine McAuley to de Pazzi Delaney, 3 October 1837)



We then held space for reflection and sharing and all the “cheering things.” On this last programmatic day, themes that surfaced were gratefulness, the diverse gifts each fellow brings including unique leadership style, and our cohort’s honoring of each fellow’s need and gifts.

The next session provided each fellow an opportunity to provide a project update and receive feedback, focus, support, and resources from other fellows and the MELF Team. It impressed upon me again how remarkable, compassionate, intelligent, determined, and generous these women are and how blessed I am to be and journey in this experience with them. The MELF Team encouraged us to use the diverse gifts we bring in Mercy to inspire hearts and action.



Though difficult to believe, the time came for our closing ritual which the fellows planned and facilitated. We began with “Break the Shell” by India Arie, a song that held meaning and encouragement for our cohort on the first immersion in Cambodia. It was followed by readings, shared reflections, written affirmations, and expressions of gratitude for each other and to all who made this immersion possible especially the MELF and MGA team members. We look forward to what the rest of our fellowship year will hold and to completing our projects and graduating in Dublin, Ireland in July.



Reflection from Dominique Marendy, Rebecca Rathbone and Sr Michelle Gorman rsm



THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH



- *World Water Day and the 2023 UN Water Conference*

The UN Water Conference, held in March 2023, aimed to address the global water crisis and provide safe water and sanitation for humanity. The conference resulted in the agreement to establish a UN Special Envoy for Water, renewed political momentum, and approximately 700 voluntary commitments and pledges from many stakeholders and UN Member States to the Water Action Agenda, including from [Mercy Global Action](#). Additionally, to great commendation, the closing plenary announced the appointment of a Special UN Envoy for Water.

Despite decades of progress in the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) world, two billion people still use unsafe drinking water sources, while 3.6 billion people live without safe sanitation. Eighty per cent of wastewater is still released into the environment without being treated or reused. The climate emergency, wars, conflicts, population growth, and the COVID-19 pandemic all put previous water progress at risk.

The conference identified the need for global action on the water crisis, with recommendations including empowering UN-Water, and establishing a human rights-based approach. A Special UN Envoy on Water would be appointed, with inclusive follow-up meetings. The conference also identified the need for innovative finance, public-private partnerships, and data collection to support policy.

During the conference, vulnerable groups such as rural communities, Indigenous Peoples, women, and youth were highlighted, as well as the value of traditional knowledge and concepts of guardianship and protection. Several countries announced their commitments to the Water Action Agenda, including investments in water infrastructure, irrigation plans, and the development of policies for major river basin management. Additionally, international organizations and companies committed to initiatives, including a multi-stakeholder Global Dialogue on Water Tenure and a 25% water reduction in rice production.

Some significant pledges were made, such as the US pledging to invest up to USD 49 billion for climate-resilient water and sanitation infrastructure and services. Additionally, India pledged USD 50 billion to provide safe drinking water to rural households before 2030. The private sector is also committing to invest in more than 2,700 water-smart technologies.

Despite the many commitments and positive momentum, there is still a long way to go to deliver on SDG 6. However, the mood inside the UN headquarters was energized and optimistic, and participants expressed their strong desire to continue these sorts of collective conversations in a multilateral setting.

[Read the full conference summary here](#)



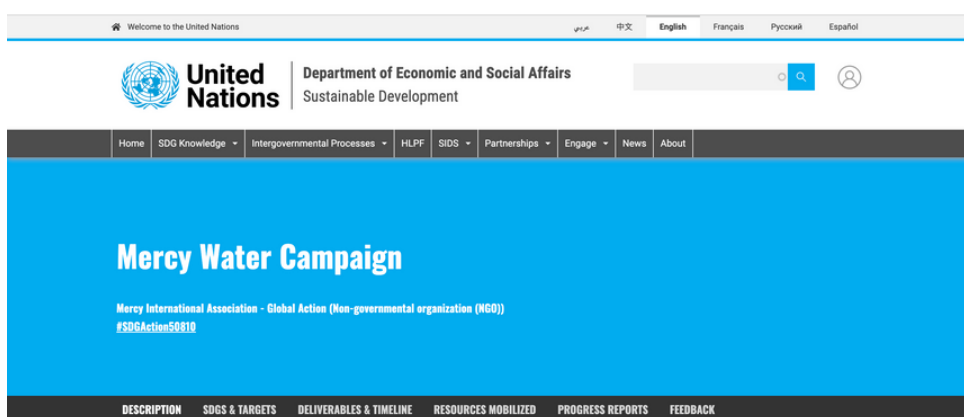
Cecilie Kern and Sr Angela Reed rsm at the UN Water Conference

- [Launch of World Water Day and the 2023 UN Water Conference Resource](#)

The Mercy Water Task Force in line with the commitment made to the United Nation's Water Action Agenda is launching the Mercy Water Campaign which is to educate and empower people across the Mercy World to take action on the most precious resource, water.

As part of the Mercy Water Campaign, the Water Task Force gathered some water stories from across the Mercy World and included written information, videos, prayers, and links for further exploration. The resource is encouraged to be shared widely with communities.

[Read about the Mercy Water Campaign on the United Nations website here:](#)



Included in the resource is our Water Library. Water is a very complex issue, and we are deluged with materials on the water crisis and water issues. The Water Task Force has compiled articles, videos and links on water which align with our rights-based approach (human rights and rights of nature) to water in our [\[link to Water Library\]](#).

This includes the must read "Water and Sanitation a People's Guide to SDG6, A rights-based approach to implementation" [\[link\]](#) along with a quick read summary. The Water Library is divided into sections. The first section is for those who want, or just have time, to "dip in" - articles and links with a broad or high-level overview of water issues as well as resources that may be useful for schools. The next section is for those who wish to take a "deeper dive" into water issues - articles. Academic papers and links on issues such as commodification and privatisation of water, water and gender equality, and advocacy on water issues. The Water Library also includes theological resources - prayers and reflections on water.

There is a brief description of each article/ link with keywords highlighted to help you navigate the resources. We will continue to add to the Water Library and keep it updated.



[Read the resource here](#)



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

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) was established in 2000 as an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with the mandate to address issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health, and human rights of Indigenous Peoples. The forum comprises 16 independent experts, eight nominated by member governments and eight directly nominated by indigenous organizations. The UNPFII provides expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the Council, as well as to programs, funds, and agencies of the United Nations, and promotes awareness and coordination of activities related to indigenous issues within the UN system. It is one of three UN bodies that deal specifically with Indigenous Peoples' issues. Its engagement and role in promoting Indigenous Peoples' rights are made possible through the Trust Fund on Indigenous Issues.

The forum holds a yearly session at the UN Headquarters in New York. The session is usually for ten days each year, focusing on a specific area in addition to the six mandated areas. Its mandate was established in response to the challenges indigenous communities face in areas such as human rights, the environment, development, education, and health.

The UNPFII's twenty-second session is scheduled from April 17-28, 2023, with the theme "Indigenous Peoples, human health, planetary and territorial health, and climate change: a rights-based approach."

There are more than 370 million Indigenous People in some 70 countries worldwide. The forum plays a critical role in addressing the issues faced by Indigenous Peoples and ensuring their rights and concerns are taken into account in the work of the United Nations System.

To learn more about The UNPFII's twenty-second session [[click here](#)]

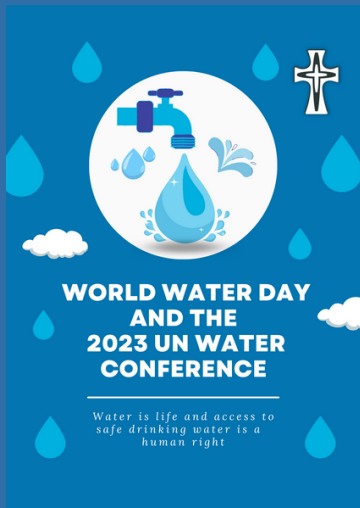


United Nations Permanent Forum
on Indigenous Issues

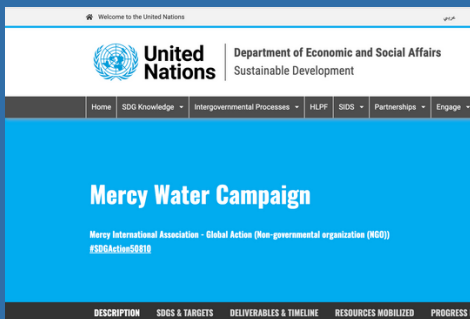
“USEFUL RESOURCES



[Watch a Recording of our CSW67 Parallel Event "Digital Engagement as Key to Women's Empowerment and Feminist Leadership."](#)



[Read our World Water Day and the UN Water Conference Resource](#)



[Read about the Mercy Water Campaign on the United Nations website here:](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS & INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAYS

- April 6 - Holy Thursday
- April 7 - Good Friday
- April 8 - Holy Saturday
- April 9 - Easter Sunday
- April 17 - 28 - Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
- April 22nd - International Mother Earth Day



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