

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

This marks our last newsletter for 2023. It has been a particularly big year for us with a number of milestones, including:

- The graduation of Cohort 2 from the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship (MELF), and the launch of Cohort 3 on their journey;
- The release of two new publications: 'From Sparks to Fire' & 'Gender-Based Violence Throughout the Lifecourse' in both English and Spanish;
- Running two new Task Forces with members of our global Mercy community and participating in key advocacy campaigns at the United Nations;
- Extending the reach of the Leadership Generating Project and launching our MELF fundraising campaign; and
- Welcoming new interns to the New York office – Isabel Salter and Eleanor Moreland – and celebrating the work of previous intern, Catherine Edwards.

Through all of the above, we've delighted in speaking and Zooming with so many of you. We continue to be inspired by your tireless efforts in working for justice around the world and in creating brighter futures for those rendered poor or vulnerable. This Advent, we are reminded of our world's desperate need for healing and kindness. Please take a look at Page 6 to view special Advent reflections by a few of our MELF Fellows.

We pray that you and your families and friends enjoy a safe, peaceful and hopeful festive season, and that you experience all the love that so connects and enriches our Mercy community. We look forward to working with you in 2024!

IN THIS ISSUE:

**HUMAN RIGHTS
DAY #75**

**REFLECTIONS ON
COP28**

**MERCY WATER
JUSTICE COALITION**

**MELF PROGRAM:
APPLY NOW FOR
COHORT 4**

**WOMEN IN JUSTICE
LEADERSHIP TASK
FORCE: CAMPAIGN
LAUNCH**

**MELF ADVENT
REFLECTIONS**

**RESOURCES &
UPCOMING EVENTS**

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At the United Nations

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC LENS...

- *Human Rights Day 75*

December 10 marked 75 years since the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The United Nations identified this anniversary as a special opportunity to “*rejuvenate the UDHR, demonstrate how it can meet the needs of our time, and advance its promise of freedom, equality and justice for all.*” In a time when human rights are increasingly under threat, due to intersecting crises and a growing number of unchecked authoritarian powers, it is critical to strengthen Member State adherence to the human rights architecture and restore public trust in its legitimacy.

A human rights lens has always been at the heart of the Mercy Justice Advocacy Approach. By focusing on the protection and promotion of human rights, and by working to dismantle the gender norms, forms of discrimination, and structural power imbalances which disrupt their fulfilment, we believe we can move towards a world in which all human beings are treated with dignity.

Check out the UN’s #HumanRights75 campaign [here](#).

Thematic Areas

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

- *Commencement of the 2023 UN Climate Conference (COP28)*

The 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change took place between November 30th and December 12th. Member States, NGOs, scientists, community representatives, and business leaders flocked to Dubai to discuss progress on key targets, mitigation measures, and adaptation.

COP28 President Dr Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber – current Director General and CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company – received criticism for the conduct of the Conference. The President has previously stated that “There is no science out there, or no scenario out there, that says that the phase-out of fossil fuels is what’s going to achieve 1.5°C”, the previously agreed target for maximum global temperature rise. Climate scientists have repudiated the claim, noting that the phase out of fossil fuels is only powerless so long as it is unambitious; the science tells us to cut our greenhouse gas emissions far more quickly than we have bargained for.



Nevertheless, the Conference carried on. Member States conducted multilateral negotiations regarding the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement, and a number of other events highlighted the wide-ranging implications of climate change across communities. NGOs organised side events discussing climate finance, how youth are included in, and affected by, climate decision-making, the relationship between extractive industry and the rights of Indigenous peoples, how a human rights framework can be applied to climate, and much more.

Particularly exciting for the religious delegations present was the first-ever Faith Pavilion, which sought to bring together various religious representatives to discuss how faith provides a moral imperative to care for Earth, as well as guidance on how religious organisations and institutions can themselves educate people, and engage in philanthropy and political advocacy to actualise that moral imperative. You can read more about faith-based engagement at COP28 [here](#).

The push and pull of COP28 negotiations remind us that the catastrophic effects of climate change remain very real possibilities, and that we must continue to be energetic defenders of the environment.

• *Upcoming Launch of the Mercy Water Justice Coalition*

Implementing the human right to water is one of the most critical missions of our time. In service of this mission, MGA has undertaken the Mercy Water Campaign. This is a commitment to the UN to “create a strengthened, more unified voice in the Mercy World on the human right to water, and the rights-based implementation of SDG6.”

In 2024 we will invite all Mercy communities – congregations, schools, ministries – to become members of the Mercy Water Justice Coalition. Coalition members will be tasked with both advocacy and local action to educate their communities about the scarcity and value of water, to reduce the unnecessary use of water in their communities and regions, and to resist its ongoing commodification.

Further information on how you and your community can get involved is forthcoming, so keep your eyes on this newsletter. In the meantime we invite you to view the Mercy Water Campaign pledge [here](#), and the provisional project guide outlining how we see the Coalition functioning [here](#).



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Fellowship Opportunity!

Are you passionate about advancing Mercy and Justice?

The Mercy Global Action Office is seeking expressions of interest for the MGA Emerging Leaders Fellowship 2024-2025!

This international leadership program is fully funded, and unique in the ways in which it provides an opportunity for ten women to establish strong links and networking across the Mercy World through international encounters, webinars and modules, mentorship and more. The fellowship program has been designed to stimulate creative and critical thinking, promote collaborative leadership, and inspire personal reflection, leading to a compassionate and communal response to current concerns of our world.

For information on how to apply, send a letter of interest to Marietta Latonio at mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie

"I don't think I would have labeled myself as a leader until I embarked on this trip. Through the support of the other fellows, some of our leadership and reflection work...helped me frame my personal thinking and reflection in that way. It also helped me focus on aspects of my own growth and leadership I am seeking to change or address as I embark on the rest of this year. I feel bolstered by the community of women we have created and by my new connection to the work of Mercy Global Action."



Images: Mercy Global Action

- *Updates from the Women in Justice Leadership Task Force...*

The MGA Women in Justice Leadership Task Force is pleased to present ‘Gender-Based Violence Throughout the Lifecourse’ – a handbook for the global Mercy community on advocating against gender-based violence.



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Members of the Task Force continued to meet over the last few months to plan a targeted advocacy campaign for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (25 Nov – 10 Dec) and the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This campaign has looked at the common forms of violence experienced during the lifecycle of a woman, and put forward a range of best practice preventative strategies, policies and response programs from around Mercy World.

Drawing on their networks and diverse areas of expertise, members of the Task Force have put together this handbook about gender-based violence, with the hope that it generates reflection and action throughout the Mercy community. We know that many Sisters of Mercy and Mercy ministries continue to invest in effective prevention strategies and work tirelessly for the right to life, safety and flourishing for women and girls around the world.

This handbook pays homage to the work already underway, and the work yet to be done, and will hopefully inspire readers to collaborate with initiatives and services that resonate with their own passion for justice.

A look inside the handbook...



Advent Reflections from Current MELF Participants...



Image: Andrea Haller



*“As I made this symbol for the first week of advent, I was reminded of lyrics from one of my favorite musicals, *Les Misérables*, “Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise.”*

This is the darkest time of the year with the shortest days in my part of the world. During this week of hope, I’m reminded that even in the darkest of times, the sun will rise again, and even in the darkness of suffering in our world, hope for peace, joy, and love remain.”

-- Andrea Haller (United States)

“We turn our hearts and desires to peace,

As we journey through Advent, side by side, may our actions reflect the peace we so deeply desire.

With hands joined in unity and voices raised high, inspire us to sing a new song of hope. Emmanuel, God with us, we welcome You today.”

-- Alexis Stephens (Guyana)

“If we all hope for a more just and Merciful world, then it is up to each of us to not look away from the injustices, but to step-up and take action, in whatever way we can.”

-- Cynthia Mulholland (Australia)
Full reflection [here](#).



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“USEFUL RESOURCES



Webinar re: Israel & Palestine:
‘Courage in the Unknown:
Exploring New Possibilities’
- American Friends of
Combatants for Peace

UPCOMING EVENTS & INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAYS

- *1 December - 24 December: Advent season*
- 13 - 15 December: Global Refugee Forum
- 18 December: International Migrants Day
- *25 December: Christmas Day*
- 27 December: International Day of Epidemic Preparedness
- *1 January: New Year’s Day*
- 19 January: Deadline for MELF Cohort 4 Applications
- 22 - 26 January: Global Forum on Migration & Development
- 24 January: International Day of Education
- 1 - 7 February: World Interfaith Harmony Week
- 6 February: International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation



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Address of Pope Francis to COP28



75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative fortnightly 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:

[\[Link\]](#)