

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

As we open our hearts to the beauty of this hope-filled season, Mercy Global Action wishes you and your loved ones every blessing this Christmas and into the New Year.

"If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give in to it. There are plenty of lives and whole towns destroyed or about to be. We are not wise, and not very often kind. And much can never be redeemed. Still, life has some possibility left. Perhaps this is its way of fighting back, that sometimes something happens better than all the riches or power in the world. It could be anything, be very likely you notice it in the instant when love begins. Anyway, that's often the case. Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb."

Mary Oliver "Don't Hesitate" from Swan: Poems and Prose Poems



IN THIS ISSUE

THEMATIC AREAS

INSIDE THE UN: THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES

USEFUL RESOURCES

UPCOMING EVENTS

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THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

'Hope in a Time of Pandemic - Responding to COVID-19 through a Mercy Lens' issue spotlight - Violence

The global pandemic has highlighted not just a health crisis, but also a social, political, environmental and economic crisis. 'Hope in a Time of Pandemic: Responding to COVID -19 through a Mercy Lens' has revealed a number of significant issues that have come to the fore. One of these issues is violence, and in particular, violence against women and girls.

What has been revealed in terms of violence?

Family violence, already a significant global problem prior to the pandemic, has been exacerbated during this time. As many community services and educational institutions have closed and families have been rendered isolated due to lockdown measures, the experience of family violence has increased across the globe. Perpetrators of violence are seen to be taking advantage of this isolation and separation.

Likewise, there is seen to be a greater risk of human trafficking as loss of employment, increased poverty, lockdowns, travel restrictions and online interactions leave women and girls more vulnerable to being coerced by traffickers. Advocates such as Mercy Efforts for Child Protection against trafficking with the Hospitality and Service Sectors (MECPATHS) argue for more collaboration and conversation about these increasing hidden realities. Girl children are also at higher risk of exploitation. This is because the longer they are out of school, the less likely it is they will return. This is especially true in places where economic struggles are rife and women and girls feel compelled to earn money for their families. UN experts have also expressed concerns of child labour and child marriage, and call on States to increase child protection measures during the pandemic.

The Mercy World continues to be of service to vulnerable populations, especially women who are experiencing violence

As the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence are soon to begin, we encourage the Mercy World to be part of the action for change. The Mercy World continues to strive to eliminate gender-based violence and human trafficking by addressing the lack of prevention, access to services and other social protections. The Mercy World seeks to empower women and girls to strengthen their capacities to claim their rights.



HOPE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC
RESPONDING TO COVID-19 THROUGH A MERCY LENS

ISSUE SPOTLIGHT: VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence is considered to be any harmful act directed against individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender... Although men & boys are also targets of gender-based and sexual violence in conflict situations, the victims of such violence continue to be disproportionately women & girls.

"The Mercy World seeks to empower women and girls to strengthen their capacities to claim their rights"



Worldwide, nearly one in three women (30%) have experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives committed by their intimate partners.

Women and girls account for 84% of the victims of forced marriage and 96% of early marriage



99% of victims in the sex industry are women and girls



38% of all murders of women are committed by (ex-) intimate partners



"Through individual, local, national and global mobilization we can challenge harmful gender narratives that justify violence against women and stigmatize survivors"

Gender Violence & COVID-19

Violence against women tends to increase during every type of emergency, including epidemics. Older women, girls, and women with disabilities are likely to have additional risks and needs. Women who are displaced, refugees, and living in conflict-affected areas are particularly vulnerable.



Call to action:

- The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 5 calls on all countries to make gender equality the foundation of a peaceful and sustainable world.
- Participate in Mercy Global Action's advocacy actions for the **#16DaysOfActivism** against Gender-Based Violence. Join us on Twitter **@MIAGlobalAction**.

5 GENDER EQUALITY



Click [here](#) to read the complete article.



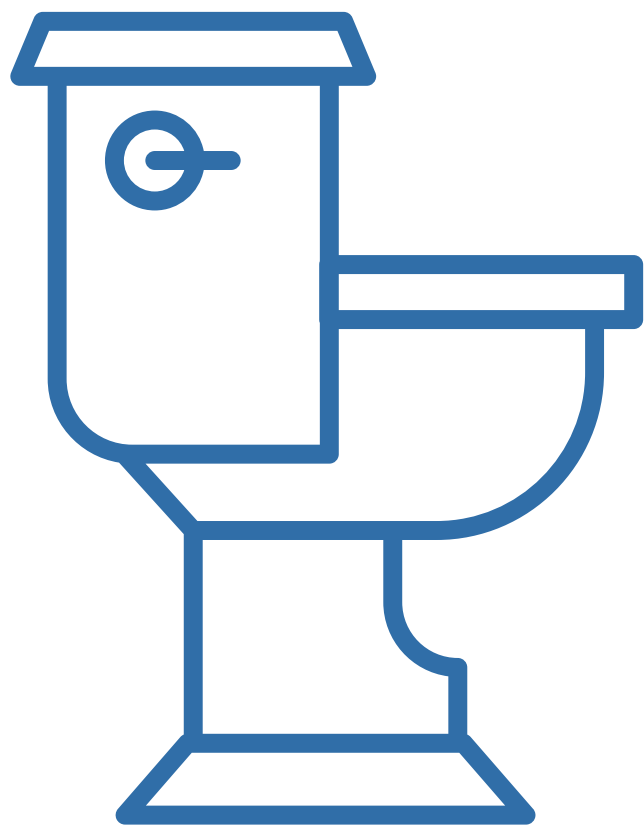
THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

MGA celebrates World Toilet Day 2020

On November 19th, we celebrate World Toilet Day 2020 to encourage the implementation of policies which increase access to sanitation and call to end the practice of open-air defecation. The celebration raises awareness of the 4.2 billion people living without access to safely managed sanitation facilities across the globe. This year's theme is 'sustainable sanitation and climate change', highlighting the need for urgent action to tackle the global sanitation crisis which is being exacerbated by the climate emergency

The human right to water and sanitation is a core concern across the Mercy World. Access to water and quality sanitation facilities are essential to stop the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19, cholera, diarrhoea and typhoid. This year marks the beginning of the Decade of Action which calls for accelerated measures to implement the extensively negotiated Declaration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2014, MGA strongly engaged in the advocacy efforts for the inclusion of the human right to water and sanitation in the 2030 Agenda, along with the NGO Mining Working Group. This successfully resulted in the inclusion of a stand alone goal, SDG 6, to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all."



Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events which have a great impact on access to quality sanitation services. Weather events, such as storms, flooding and droughts, threaten sanitation systems by contaminating water or causing water scarcity. Extreme weather events can also seriously damage the infrastructure which provides sanitation services, exposing public health to infectious diseases. As the global climate crisis continues to accelerate and extreme weather events become less predictable, the provision of functional, climate-resilient toilets, which safely treat and dispose of human waste, needs to be a top priority of UN Member States in order to protect human health, safety and dignity at all levels of society.

MGA strives to raise awareness and tackle issues related to sustainable sanitation and climate change across the globe. To read the complete article click [here](#).

AT THE UNITED NATIONS THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

MGA's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence


On November 25, the UN Commemorated the International Day of Eliminating Violence against Women. This day marks the beginning of the 16 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence which takes place every year beginning on November 25 and ending on December 10, Human Rights Day. To participate in MIA Global Action's advocacy for these days, join us on twitter at @MIAGlobalAction.

The pandemic has exacerbated and brought to the forefront the systemic and deeply entrenched economic and societal inequalities that are among the root causes of human trafficking. Human Traffickers prey on those who are experiencing vulnerabilities, such as insecure housing, unemployment, displacement, domestic and family violence to name a few. For many who experience human trafficking, it is not a random act of exploitation, but rather an experience of further discrimination and victimisation.

Many NGO's have reported an increase in domestic violence during this time of pandemic and are concerned about the rights of workers within the informal economy, especially domestic workers who find themselves in even more precarious circumstances now. The risk of debt bondage is even further escalated by loan sharks who promise low interest loans at a time when people are desperate for some form of income. Traffickers can operate with virtual impunity, since much of their activity is hidden from the public domain. This means a vulnerable population has now become even more exposed to the risk of severe exploitation as they try to identify means to secure their livelihoods.

Children experiencing marginalisation are also considered to be at further risk of human trafficking. School closures to prevent the spread of infection, have further isolated and precluded some children from community connectedness and safety. This is of great concern in developing countries, particularly in the rural areas, whereby isolation can already be a struggle. Concerns of online sexual exploitation have also been raised by the international NGO community, given the increased use of information technology.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING



Human Traffickers prey on those who are experiencing vulnerabilities, such as insecure housing, unemployment, displacement, domestic and family violence.

- The pandemic has exacerbated the systemic and deeply entrenched economic and societal inequalities that are among the root causes of human trafficking.
- Essential and practical operations to support victims have become a challenge, due to countries adjusting their priorities during the pandemic. Calls to helplines have increased five-fold in some countries.



71% of all human trafficking victims worldwide are women and girls and 3 out of 4 of these women and girls are sexually exploited

1/10 of women in the European Union report having experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15

Working Together to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons:

- Listen and believe survivors** - "We hear you. We believe you. We stand with you."
- Call on governments** to address human trafficking, to ensure essential services are maintained during the pandemic & to implement preventive measures to end trafficking in persons.
- Demand more data** - Investment in data collection is urgently needed to adapt and improve life-saving services for survivors of trafficking.
- Be a conscientious and informed consumer** - discover your [SlaveryFootPrint](#).
- Start a conversation & raise awareness** - show your solidarity with survivors and where you stand in the fight against trafficking in persons.

#16DaysCampaign #OrangeTheWorld #EndHumanTrafficking



IN COMMEMORATION

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

BY JEMIMA WELSH

(MELF 2019-2020)

The 3rd December marks the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Observed yearly by the United Nations, this day is celebrated internationally and aims to increase 'public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability, and celebrate their achievements and contributions' (IDPWD 2020).

I would like to preface this article by saying that I do not identify as someone with a disability. So I can merely offer thoughts that are informed by observing the experiences of others and working with people with different disabilities, and by living alongside a husband who is a paediatric physiotherapist working with children and young adults with Cerebral Palsy.

Together, we have had many conversations about the structural and policy barriers that prevent the validation of worldviews of people with disabilities. We've spoken with parents who fly across the world to receive specialised care for their children, and we've observed when the financial situations of some families limit their ability to buy ramp-fitted taxis to transport their children to therapy sessions. We've been with friends in wheelchairs who struggle to enter public bathrooms because the doors won't stay open long enough for them to get through, and we've had beers with other friends who speak with longing about wanting to meet romantic partners who don't give up on them because of their ASD. And of course there are countless people around the world who live in countries with governments that don't see them as equal citizens.

These stories are not new. Anyone thoughtfully considering the way our societies are built knows that we (consciously or subconsciously) make decisions to benefit the 'majority norm'. This means that we struggle to imagine the needs of people who live life differently. Instead, we set up charitable institutions to 'fill the gaps' and to remind us every now and then to consider those who may think, behave, speak or move around in less than fluid ways.

But these responses are often 'philanthropic' in nature. We have a tendency to lament how hard it must be for those who live with disabilities, instead of looking for ways to embed the inherent talents of these people within the very mechanisms of how our world operates. In other words, we work on a basis of pity, rather than potential. We see only the 'lack of' and not the 'ability to'.

This is something that holds back our development as an inclusive and prosperous world. What if, when a doctor revealed to new parents that their foetus had Down Syndrome, we supported those parents to look forward with excitement to the life their child was going to lead? What if, instead of needing to find alternative education for children growing up with disabilities, we supported our teachers to embed specialised knowledge and techniques within mainstream schooling? And what if we prioritised the standardisation of buildings, cars and public services that accounted for people with limited mobility?

For the last five years, I have worked in the social enterprise sector, and specifically with businesses that provide meaningful and well paid employment opportunities for people with disabilities who would otherwise struggle to find work in the mainstream economy. These businesses look fundamentally different to both traditional corporate entities and to charitable institutions. They're a hybrid of commercial nuance and structural support. Built around market gaps, they offer a unique opportunity for the talents and perspectives of people living with disabilities to be applied in a concrete, purposeful way that reflects the inherent value of their skills and their immense adaptability.

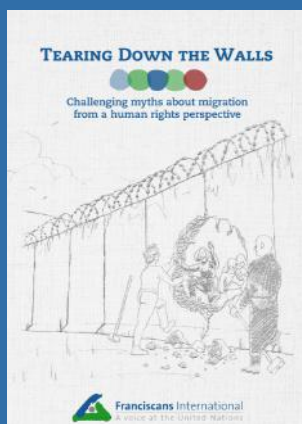
What I love about these employment-focused social enterprises is that they don't treat people with disabilities as deserving of our pity or persistent concessions. They are set up foundationally to make productive work possible for those with different capabilities. And the businesses themselves are expected to become financially sustainable and eventually, turn over a profit. In other words, they aren't about charity – they are about dignity. And we all know about the close connection between dignity and a good job.

This isn't to say that these social enterprises are easy to set up or run, and they continue to face challenges from the market as they struggle to compete with more easily productive mainstream alternatives. But they're worth fighting for, because they represent how we can do business, capitalism and society differently – to benefit all people.

This year, the theme for the International Day is "Building Back Better: toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 World". The pandemic gives us a fresh start to rethink many of our systems and policies. When we do, let's make sure they not just take into account the direct experiences and first-hand perspectives of those living with different abilities, but embed them with thought into our new 'business as usual'. The opportunities are endless!

“USEFUL RESOURCES

Franciscans International: Tearing down the wall - Challenging Myths about Migration from a Human Rights Perspective



Secretary-General Report on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration on Perspective



Sr Carmen Rosa on Fratelli Tutti and Migration of Persons



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 1 December - World AIDS Day
- 2 December - World Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- 3 December - International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 5 December - World Soil Day
- 5 December - International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
- 9 December - International Anti-Corruption Day
- 9 December - International Day Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime
- 10 December - Human Rights Day
- 11 December - International Mountain Day
- 12 December - International Day of Neutrality
- 12 December - International Universal Health Coverage Day
- 18 December - International Migrants Day
- 20 December - International Human Solidarity Day

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly 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: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe