

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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IN THIS ISSUE

THEMATIC AREAS

INSIDE THE UN: THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES

USEFUL RESOURCES

UPCOMING EVENTS

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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

Announcing the Recipients of the MIA-Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship 2020-2021

To mark International Women's Day (March 8th), Mercy Global Action is pleased to announce the recipients of the MIA-Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship 2020-2021. Congratulations are extended to each woman who participated fully and with enthusiasm throughout the extensive selection process.

The ten selected Fellows come from across the Mercy World, reflect different professional and educational backgrounds, and life experiences. This diverse group of women will seek to explore Mercy and Justice over the next twelve months through intensive dialogue, deep listening, personal and communal reflection, and critical analysis. Through their unique contributions and shared experiences, Fellows will have the opportunity to build on and further develop their capacities as Mercy leaders.

We wish each one blessings over the next twelve months as, together and individually, they endeavor to explore and respond to the displacement of Persons and degradation of Earth.

[Visit the Fellowship section of our website to meet each of the recipients.](#)



THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

• *World Water Day: From Contemplation to Action*

In honor of World Water Day, MGA invite you to engage in a theological reflection around the human right to water.

1

Experience

Think back on your own experience. Can you recall a time when you were unable to access water or sanitation? Have you ever carried your own water? Or take a moment to reflect on a time when you were grateful for water.

What do you feel when you enter these memories?

Can you see a connection between your experience and Isaac's?

2

Word

Begin by centering yourself in prayer and reflection on Genesis 26:17-22.

What touches you in the reading?

What can we learn about our right to access water?

3

Analyze

Research current concerns about water. Consider access to clean drinking water, the affect on women, pollution, energy, or any other water related topic to which you feel drawn.

We have prepared the infographic (right) to help you get started. Each data point is a link that will lead you to more information.

4

Action

As a result of this reflection, what can you change in your own life concerning water?

What can you address in your local area, community, or country?

Do any of the advocacy suggestions listed on the infographic inspire you to action? Share what you have learned through research and prayer.



FACTS AND FIGURES



Women and girls are responsible for water collection in eight out of ten households with water off-premises.



More than 700 children under five years of age die every day from diarrhea linked to unsafe water and poor sanitation.



4.5 billion people lack safely managed sanitation services.



An estimated 20% of the world's aquifers is being over exploited leading to serious consequences such as land subsidence and saltwater intrusion.

80% of wastewater flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused.



A third of the world's biggest groundwater systems are already in distress.



700 million people worldwide could be displaced by intense water scarcity by 2030.



Water scarcity already affects 4 out of every 10 people.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



6.1 Ensure everyone has universal and equitable access to safe, affordable drinking water



6.2 Ensure everyone has access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene



6.3 Reduce pollution, eliminate dumping of hazardous materials, halve the proportion of untreated wastewater and increase recycling and safe reuse



6.4 Increase water-use efficiency and ensure sustainable withdrawal and supply of freshwater

- Review recommendations the Special Rapporteur has made to your country.
- Review guidelines and assess your government's SDG efforts.
- Communicate with experts to denounce systemic violations or deprivations.
- Contact your representatives.
- Share this infographic across your social media!



ADVOCATE FOR THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER TODAY!

[Interactive PDF version of Infographic](#)
[Shareable JPEG version of Infographic](#)



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

• Mercy Global Action calls for Inclusive Housing Policies

During 10-19 February, 2020, the 58th session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSocD) met to discuss and respond to the theme "Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness". Mercy International Association- Mercy Global Action contributed two oral statements to the Commission (read [first](#) and [second](#) here) and co-sponsored and participated in several key events and meetings. This marked the first time homelessness has ever been a priority theme at the United Nations.

The Call for Recognition

Key to MGA's justice advocacy approach is listening to the experiences of the people and planet. Listening to the stories of people experiencing homelessness, and simply asking what they need, were a common best practice response shared by agencies during the Commission. The inclusion of those currently experiencing homelessness, as well as survivors, is an important step towards more informed, and thus more effective, policy. Recognizing that those experiencing homelessness as experts was a key learning of the commission and is an important step towards more informed and effective policy. As in Catherine McAuley's experience, "the patient hearing of their sorrows" is more valuable than any service agencies could contrive to provide without consulting the people who are experiencing homelessness. Listening is a place anyone can start when addressing the issue of homelessness. At one event, 'Street Homelessness and Catholic Theological Ethics', Fr. James Keenan SJ reminded everyone that, "our job is the job of recognition, to give face" and voice to people pushed to the margins of society. Our everyday interactions with those rendered homeless can humanize society narrative, ease the stigma, and combat discrimination of the only people who are truly experts on homelessness.

MGA Advocates For A Human-Rights Approach to Homelessness

At CSocD, Mercy Global Action advocated for the human right to housing and against the inherent injustices, especially towards women and girls, in housing systems across the world. It was our hope that UN Member States would adopt [the universally inclusive definition](#), as proposed by the Expert Group that met in Nairobi; however, delegates were unable to agree on a definition which would have provided the necessary framework to promote concrete policy and accountability. However, it does not end there; [housing intrinsically relates to all of the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). Adequate housing links directly to the wellbeing, development, and education of children, and a home is critical for all areas of growth over a lifetime. Mercy Global Action will continue to advocate with the use of the Sustainable Development Goals on issues related to housing and homelessness. In a Mercy Global Action co-sponsored side event "The Hidden Faces of Family Homelessness from the Perspective of Women and Children/Girls", Mary MacAleese, former President of Ireland, highlighted an often-overlooked factor in the housing debate. "It is not houseless-ness, its homelessness," she stated while pointing out that a home is not just the physical structure, it is a place of self-identity. Homes also provide a sense of emotional and physical safety, which are key concerns for women and families living in unstable housing situations. For many women, housing insecurity is coupled with domestic violence. The realities of personal crisis, such as violence, often forces women to choose between abusive situations and the dangers of living on the street or in shelters. If women and families choose to seek help, it is important that agencies focus on a trauma informed model of care by integrating the lived experience of each individual into a holistic approach.



CSocD Presents Best Practice Examples in Addressing Homelessness

At the same event, Sophia Housing, founded by Jean Quinn of UNANIMA International, shared how their practices are informed by survivors of homelessness while also working within the paradigm of holistic housing in Ireland. Tony O’ Riordan, the CEO of Sophia Housing, shared their ‘housing first’ model, which provides those rendered homeless with a home of their own as quickly as possible. While the government and many other NGOs do the necessary work of providing shelters and emergency responses to homelessness, Sophia Housing has focused their resources on long-term solutions. In their work, they also encountered the need for ongoing support after people moved into their own home. To meet that need, O’ Riordan explained that Sophia began providing community oriented support, rather than clinical support, delivered with “warmth and comprehensive understanding and empathy for what people have experienced.” Asking survivors what they need is the only way to understand and value the complexity of their dynamic and evolving situation, and yet so many social systems are static and rigid. Unyielding social systems cannot fully address the issues of homelessness and often add new trauma to the lives of people experiencing this crisis.



Domestic Violence and its Connection to Homelessness

The failure of multiple social systems of protection is indicative of the intersectionality inherent in the complex experience of survivors. Dr. Nkiru Nnawulezi, speaking on the panel ‘Women’s Rights to Affordable Housing’, explained the intersecting layers of trauma as experienced by women. Dr. Nnawulezi shared the example of a woman trapped in an abusive relationship with her husband. The woman could not legally divorce her husband because his signature was needed for the court to recognize the divorce. She was unable to break the lease on their apartment, so he was still able to find her by waiting where they had lived together. Without other affordable housing options near her job, she was unable to move and the police could not evict her husband because his name was still on the lease. The woman found the

police were unwilling to work with her because she was unwilling to move to a shelter, which would statistically raise her risk of being assaulted by others and make it more difficult for her to keep her job. Failures of court, police, housing, and social systems is a common experience for survivors experiencing multiple issues. The same is true for people struggling with homelessness who are also discriminated against for their age, sexual orientation, race, gender, or disability. Mercy Global Action supports Dr. Nnawulezi in calling for agencies and governments to address this reality with housing policies that also dismantle instability created by power systems. Dr. Nnawulezi also reminded us that within our society a “crisis response that only speaks to one need excludes people.” Working towards inclusive housing policies has a better chance of helping survivors today while also working to reduce homelessness in the future through the support of families and children surviving homelessness.

Every situation of homelessness is unique and intersects with other crises. The increase in extreme weather, the acceleration of climate change, the degradation of the earth -especially in the extractive sector- and displacement of peoples all lead to increased vulnerability, poverty, and homelessness. For many years, Sisters of Mercy and Associates throughout the world have been working with those who have experienced homelessness. A Mercy response has included direct service including providing shelter, vocational training and education, providing companionship and recognition, and contributing to policy debates on homelessness. Throughout 2020 and beyond, MGA will continue to listen to and bring the voices and experiences of those rendered homeless, to the global table. In addition to this grassroots experience, we will call on Mercy ministries’ expertise in order to inform and enhance policy at the global, national and local level.

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

• *World Water Day: Continuing our Work for Justice*

The United Nations will commemorate World Water Day and celebrate freshwater on March 22. Amidst the celebration of water, we recognize the ongoing struggle of many people around the world who cannot easily access clean water and sanitation. The continued degradation of Earth and gender inequality create complications on the path to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6, access to water for all. The privatization of water, and corporate impunity, further complicates the work towards an equitable achievement of SDG 6. The intersection of these issues continues to create a barrier to the full enjoyment of the right to water, which is necessary for all other goals and rights.

Our world's climate continues to change as pollution and greenhouse gases build. Weather patterns, especially rainfall, have already shifted because of global warming. Scientists do not expect climate change to reverse and many believe it will get worse. The diminished rainfall resulting from climate change makes it harder to grow the crops needed to feed our growing global population. The effects of rain and food shortfall is already noticeable in vulnerable communities, and especially by children. UNICEF projects climate change will continue to cause food, water, and sanitation scarcity and lead to a diminished child survival rate for approximately one in four children by 2040 [1].

The worsening water shortage intersects with the reality of gender inequality experienced around the world. For example, in eight out of ten households without access to clean water, women and girls travel, carrying the water their families will need that day [2]. In a climate of inequality, carrying water exposes women and girls to additional harassment and violence. Additionally, school attendance rates are typically lower for girls responsible for carrying water because of the time involved and the lack of menstrual hygiene that results from inaccessible water. Enhancing access to water will minimize gender discrimination and improves the lives of women and girls through access to education.

Reducing water scarcity in some areas may require new or improved infrastructure, but it will also mean lifestyle changes for all. UN Water, an organization that coordinates water efforts, encourages better daily water practices like shorter



Happiness is a Chatodo
by Mercy Focus on Haiti

a little showers, and lesser-known actions like conserving power.

With 75% of industrial water usage going towards energy production, reducing the amount of electricity we use will keep water in our already stressed ecosystems [3]. Smarter use of water, coupled with better protections for our watersheds, will help preserve our climate's water system and improve our ability to preserve important carbon sinks like wetlands and oceans as we work for climate justice.

In the effort to promote climate justice, we must also contend with the disturbing trend of privatization. The privatization of water may seem like an efficient approach to ensuring everyone's access to water. However, it has become evident that this profit based approach causes further degradation of the Earth, displacement, and human rights violations [4]. The pollution and depletion of watersheds by agribusiness, mining operations, and beverage

• *World Water Day: Continued*

companies shows the negative effects of privatization in pursuit of profit. We must work towards a new paradigm that recognizes the public right to, and responsibility for, water. Any meaningful achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 must include promoting a commons-based approach to water management that will “empower local communities to protect watersheds and ensure an equitable and sustainable distribution of water resources.” The lack of international law makes upholding the public right to water difficult since many corporations profiting from water resources operate globally. Working towards a just legal framework that closes the gaps exploited by global corporations would be a meaningful step towards achieving SDG 6.

Just as Catherine McAuley clothed and fed her students because she knew their lives could not improve without first meeting basic needs, we understand the importance of Mercy World’s continued commitment to the realization of the right to water. In our work today, we face the same reality as Catherine; without clean water and sanitation, people cannot fully enjoy all of their human rights. It is essential for us, as a community of Mercy, to work for the conservation of water and the restoration of the environment not only in our personal lives but also as an entity that circles the globe. Through advocacy and action, locally and internationally, Mercy World can address people’s need for water and promote a more just and equitable reality for all.

For a more in-depth study of SDG 6 please see [Water & Sanitation: A People’s Guide to SDG 6, a Rights-Based Approach to Implementation](#).



Water & Sanitation
By NGO MWG



[1] “Water and Climate Change.” UN Water.
<https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/climate-change/>
[2] “Water and Gender.” UN Water.
<https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/gender/>
[3] “Water, Food and Energy.” UN Water.
<https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-food-and-energy/>
[4] Lyons, Amanda, NGO MWG. Water & Sanitation: A People’s Guide to SDG 6, a Rights-Based Approach to Implementation. 2016. p5.
[5] *ibid.* p4.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP (MELF)

BY ANASTASIA FREEMAN

Some say the world is built from the stories we tell, and one such story for our times is that of the great turning. This story is the essential adventure of our times. “It involves the transition of a doomed economy of industrial growth, to a life sustaining society committed to the recovery of our world.” [1] As one of the recipients of the Mercy emerging leadership fellowship, I feel a calling to participate in the healing of my own community here in the small regional town of Bathurst. A place strangely obsessed with car racing and Elton John.

To be honest, I never thought of myself as a leader. I have always been passionate about issues around sustainability, education, community and the arts and have always volunteered my time to causes I thought worthy on top of trying to do meaningful work as an artist and art teacher. But for my entire adult life, I have struggled with quite serious mental health problems. As far as I was concerned with my diagnosis, holding down a job and maintaining a home has been an achievement. So, it has been an unexpected honour and a blessing to be given a place in this truly incredible Mercy Emerging Leadership Program (MELF).

The program is helping me to value my experience, knowledge and passions to become a woman of Mercy in the world responding to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor in a way that meets the needs of my local community. The most valuable part of the program for me has been the reflection process and meeting the most inspiring fellows who have already become steadfast friends and allies in our search for ecological and social justice. We are the great turning.

Being able to take these past 6 months to reflect on the climate emergency, social justice issues and leadership has allowed me to realign with my core values and to work out a more measured, less frantic way of responding to the environmental and social crises I see unfolding. I have a tendency to see a problem and jump in headfirst and volunteer my time and money to try to work on that issue but struggle to keep focused, as there are so many problems in the world and so much work to be done. The MELF program is helping me address what my strengths are and how I can be more effective in finding solutions to social and environmental problems, as well as developing my capabilities as an effective leader for ecological and social change.



Our recent immersion in Siem Reap, Cambodia last year was an incredible whirlwind of 10 days. Meeting like-minded social and ecological justice warriors and being able to spend time with them, brainstorming, creating and learning alongside them about the history of social justice in Cambodia, was a beautiful way to start the fellowship. The team at Metta Karuna, who were so hospitable and welcoming taught us much about dedicated commitment to making change happen. Their achievements have led to a commitment from over 100 countries in ending the use of landmines and their story of hope is one that needs to be told and heard.

The monthly readings and webinars have been transformative in helping me to understand a more global perspective to social and environmental justice. I have learnt lots from the other fellows about situations in Peru, Ireland, USA and PNG and it has been wonderful to hear their perspectives on different social issues.

The research project has also been a fascinating experience and I have used this time to study art therapy, eco-arts and how to help communities become more ecologically sustainable through creative projects. This study has culminated in a project that brings art workshops to Bathurst women and helps them connect to ecological issues through visual art and it has been running with the assistance of the Bathurst Women's Health Centre. Reflecting on this process and working with these women, I have made considerable adjustments to my original plans for the project and feel grateful for the materials that the fellowship leaders have provided. As they have been a fantastic resource to keep returning to. I have had positive feedback from the participants who love the art-making process and it seems artmaking is therapeutic in and of itself.



Us fellows are very soon headed to New York and Mercy Global Action headquarters. We are all very much looking forward to this amazing opportunity and are sure that it will help us in our journeys as women of Mercy in this exciting time of the great turning.

[1] Joanna Macy & Chris Johnstone in Active Hope: How to face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy.

“USEFUL RESOURCES

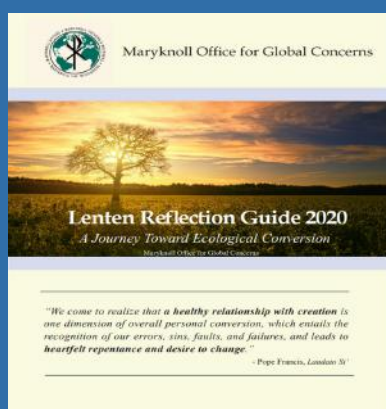
Political Declaration Commemorating
25th anniversary of the Fourth World
Conference on Women



UN Water World Water Day
Resources for action and social media



Lenten Reflection Guide 2020
A Journey Toward Ecological
Conversion



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 1 March Zero Discrimination Day
- 3 March World Wildlife Day
- 8 March International Women's Day
- 13-21 March Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship
New York Immersion
- 20 March International Day of Happiness
- 21 March International Day for the Elimination of Racial
Discrimination
- 21 March World Poetry Day
- 21 March International Day of Forests
- 22 March World Water Day
- 24 March International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning
Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims
- 25 March International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of
Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

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