

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

Responding to the Global Pandemic through MGA COVID-19 Taskforce

United Nations, Secretary General, Antonio Guterres recently released a policy brief entitled “We are all in this Together.” The policy brief insists that a response to the COVID -19 pandemic must derive from a Human Rights Framework. Recognising that the Virus does not discriminate but its impacts do, a human rights approach ‘ puts everyone in the picture and ensures that no-one is left behind’.

Much of what is proposed in this policy briefing can provide a blue print for a collective Mercy response.

From a Mercy Global Perspective, we are indeed in a position to observe and respond to how it is affecting earth and people, particularly the most vulnerable. Sisters of Mercy and Associates have unique insights into the impact this virus is having on local, regional and global communities. This impact is not only in terms of health, but also has economic and social consequences.

As a way of standing in solidarity with those most vulnerable, Mercy Global Action has set up a Mercy CoVid 19 Taskforce to explore a Mercy response to this Pandemic. Drawing on our Mercy Tradition, Catholic Social Teaching and utilizing a Human Rights Framework, It is hoped that this taskforce will provide opportunities for reflection, information sharing and action.

For more information and to read the full article, see mercyworld.org



THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

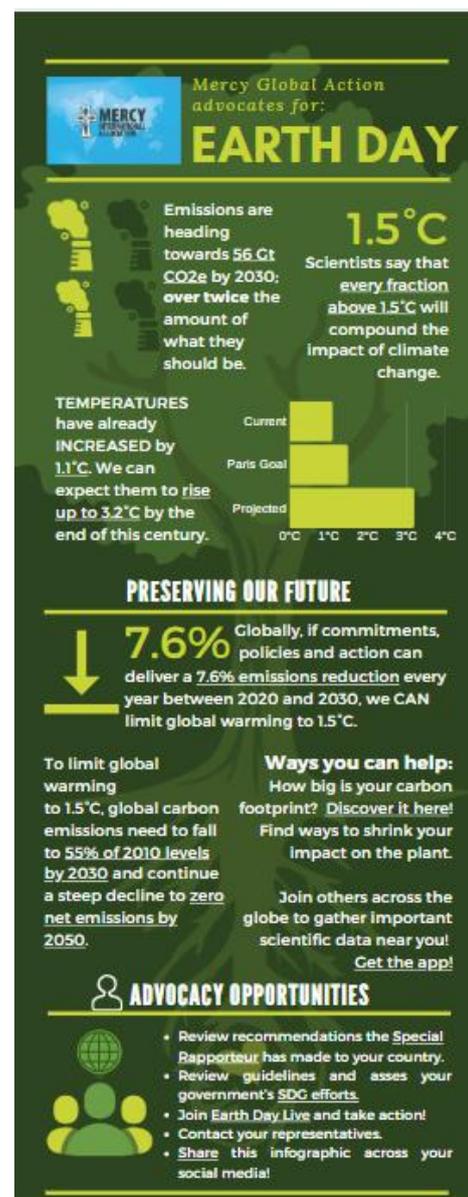
• *Mercy Global Action Celebrates the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day*

On April 22nd, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day with the theme “Climate Action” amid the complex reality of a global pandemic. Our global efforts in social distancing have reduced emissions leading to reports of clearer air, cleaner water, and a healing ozone. While these observations show that we can turn the tide and prevent catastrophic climate change the lesson comes at the high price of human life, isolation, and increased hazardous medical waste. A global ‘war-time’ response is necessary to protect humanity from COVID-19, and any ‘war-time’ effort must include recovery and rebuilding after the crisis. The question that remains is how we can build a healthier, greener future post-COVID-19. There have been environmental benefits as a side effect of social distancing, but we must realize they are only as permanent as our life-style changes.

Our planet has already warmed up by 1.1°C and the international goal is to limit that warming to 1.5°C, which would mitigate global warming’s impact (limiting extreme weather, desertification, ocean acidification, food insecurity, etc.). At our current rate of pollution, we can expect the temperature to rise to 3.2°C, resulting in exponentially worse climate change for every fraction of a degree over 1.5°C. [1] The scientific community agrees that to meet our goal of 1.5°C the global community must quickly drop emissions to 25 gigatons (Gt) by 2030; however, current commitments in the Paris Agreement have steered us on a path towards emitting 56 Gts of carbon by 2030. [2]

We can only meet the necessary reductions in emissions through systemic change and broad lifestyle changes. Buying disposable items, plastics, inefficient cars and appliances, and transportation are all key areas to examine in each of our lives. Additionally, we must advocate for the sweeping policy changes that will stop corporations from destroying our planet for profit.

Mercy Global Action recognizes that we have an opportunity now as COVID-19 stimulus plans come into effect around the world. We must use the economic revitalization effort to build environmental protections into the ‘new normal’ that will emerge after the pandemic. All efforts to recover economically and socially after COVID-19 must include “an ambitious, measurable and inclusive framework, because keeping nature rich, diverse and flourishing is part and parcel of our life’s support system.” [3] The health of earth intertwines with the health of humanity. As the health of earth declines the probability of contracting zoonotic disease like Corona will continue to grow.[4] We can no longer afford to miss any opportunities to protect the health and stability of earth.



Continued...

We will not survive if earth dies at the hands of our own economic systems. We are intertwined with the ecosystem, and the intricacies of our human dependency on earth have become increasingly clear. As a result, there is an emerging legal movement recognizing “the inherent rights of Nature to exist, thrive and evolve.” [5] The legal framework moves from our modern ideas of property and dominion over the earth to the understanding that earth is a “rights-bearing partner with which humanity has co-evolved.” [6] Laws that recognize our fundamentally symbiotic relationship as necessary for both human and planet survival are emerging at the local and national levels.

With our voice and collective will, Mercy Global Action will continue to advocate for laws to protect the rights of earth and the human right to a safe environment. Advocacy for earth and for our right to life on this planet rests with each one of us and what we say and the petitions we sign matter just as much as what we buy and how we choose to live our lives. This Earth Day remember that “whatever you are not changing, you are choosing.” [7] Make a choice for the future survival and health of humanity and earth today.

[1] Emissions Gap Report 2019: Global progress report on climate action. UN Environment Programme. 2019. <https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/emissions-gap-report/2019/>

[2] Ibid

[3] Andersen, Inger. “First Person: COVID-19 is not a silver lining for the climate, says UN Environment chief.” UN News: Climate Change. 5 April, 2020. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061082>

[4] Ibid

[5] “Rights of Nature Law, Policy and Education.” United Nations: Harmony with Nature. <http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/rightsOfNature/>

[6] Ibid

[7] Buchanan PhD, Laurie. “Note to Self: A Seven-Step Path to Gratitude and Growth.” She Writes Press. November 1, 2016.



Celebrate Laudato Si Week!

As we commemorate the 5th anniversary of Laudato Si', please join Mercy Global Action in celebrating Laudato Si' Week with workshops to pray, reflect, and prepare for action together. All workshops are interactive hands-on opportunities to grow and learn together. Click **here** for more information!



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

• A Theological Reflection on the Issue of Migration



Experience

Think of a time when you relocated. How did you feel? Were you afraid? Think of a time when you met or heard about a person who migrated. What do you remember? How does this memory make you feel now?



Word

Begin by centering yourself in prayer as you reflect on **1 kings 19:1-9**.

What touches you in the reading?

Enter the story in your imagination. Who are you? What does it feel like to be in this encounter?



Analyze

Research current concerns about migration, especially considering the Corona pandemic. What is your community doing to address the needs of migrants and refugees? Consider how migration intersects with other areas of concern: women, the environment, homelessness, health. Are there other intersections you can see?



Action

As a result of this reflection, what actions can you take? 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.

MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Mercy Global Action recognizes

MIGRATION

APPROXIMATELY 48% OF MIGRANTS ARE FEMALE

THERE ARE AROUND 271.6 M INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS

TYPES OF MIGRATION

- Urbanization migration
- Environmental Migration
- Family migration
- Forced migration or displacement
- International students
- Irregular migration
- Labor migration
- Return migration

Policies Around the World

- 76% of countries have policies on safe, orderly, and regular migration. **74%**
- 54% of countries have policies on migrants' rights. **54%**
- 57% of countries have policies on migrant's socioeconomic wellbeing. **57%**

WHAT AGES ARE MIGRANTS?

Young migrants are at risk of abuse, trafficking and exploitation especially if alone.

0-19	1-29	30-49	50-64	65+
~10%	~35%	~35%	~15%	~5%

WHO IS A MIGRANT?

A person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. At the international level, no universally accepted definition for "migrant" exists.

SDG 10.7

Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies

HOW YOU CAN ADVOCATE:

- 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!

[Download and share the interactive PDF and the PNG version here.](#)

At the United Nations

THROUGH OUR

ECOSOC EYES...

• *The Pandemic Sheds Light on Gender Based Violence*

Since the beginning of Catherine McAuley's ministry in Dublin, the Mercy community has maintained a special concern for women. The coronavirus quarantine shows us just how much work is left undone as the rate of gender-based violence (GBV) increases and women and girls are at risk of being left behind without adequate social protections. Now more than ever, Mercy International Association- Mercy Global Action calls for an end to GBV and gender inequality by addressing the lack of access to essential services, stereotypes that lead to violence, and the lack of social protections.

For some women and families, the quarantine is more painful and deadly than the virus itself. Last year, 243 million women and girls experienced sexual abuse or violence at the hands of an intimate partner; this violence is increasing in our new reality. [1] The quarantine keeps women experiencing violence, isolated with their abusers and limits access to support systems, medical care, and shelters. As a direct result of quarantine rules, agencies around the world have reported a 30% increase on average in calls to domestic violence hotlines. [2] The lack of access to necessary resources makes the isolation worse for women experiencing GBV. Many have no way of escaping the escalating violence in quarantine as authorities have deemed some services unessential and converted some shelters into Corona treatment overflow spaces. [3] Services for women and families experiencing GBV are imperative, States must recognize them as essential and keep them operational during the pandemic.

In recognition of the intersectional impacts? of the pandemic António Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations, called for economic protections stating that Covid-19 is "deepening existing inequalities." [4] He states that, "measures to protect and stimulate the economy, from cash transfers to credits and loans, must be targeted at women. Social safety nets must be expanded." [5] Social protections, and the safety net they provide, are often not available to women given that social norms and stereotypes frequently limit job opportunities. Around the world, 60% of women work in the informal economy (e.g domestic work), which is characterized by decreased opportunity, low wages, and a lack of social protections (i.e. guaranteed vacation, maternity leave, social security, health insurance, or unemployment benefits). [6] Working without social protections leaves women vulnerable to discrimination, poverty, and violence. Social protections are necessary to prevent women from being left behind, especially as States work towards recovering from the coronavirus by stimulating their economies. A safety net provided by social protections will free women from dependency and increase economic opportunities, which will prevent further abuse.

MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Mercy Global Action Focuses On:
GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

MURDERS
Globally 87,000 women were murdered in 2017. Most of the killings were committed by an intimate partner.

\$1.5 TRILLION
The cost of domestic violence adds up. Lost salary from sick days taken to recover, diminished employment opportunities, and health care costs add up to \$1.5 Trillion.

1 IN 3
1 in 3 (33%) women and girls have experienced sexual and/or physical violence.

PREVENTION
Preventing gender-based violence and inequality must begin with a human rights-based approach. Seeking to empower women and strengthen their capacities to claim their rights.

VALUING UNPAID WORK
Globally, women spend an average of 4.1 hours a day on unpaid domestic and care work. It would cost about \$11 Trillion to pay for that work..

SOCIAL PROTECTIONS
Ensured access to health and maternity care, guaranteed income, and service prevent GBV and empower women.

TRANSFORMATION
Communities need support transforming stereotypes and values that allow GBV. Community mobilization, workshops, marketing and entertainment can reshape these norms.

Advocacy Opportunities
Assess your government's SDG efforts. Download the Voices against Violence handbook for educational materials (ages 5-25). Contact your representatives. Share this infographic across your social media!

"Sometimes, I think about not going to work anymore because of this [sexual harassment]. But then I think about my family condition and I know I cannot quit."
Female garment worker, Iran, *Caribbean CARE Agency*, 2017, p.41

Download and share the interactive PDF and the PNG version here.

Gender Based Violence, Continued...

We must address the underlying issues of gender inequality if we hope to eradicate GBV. At its roots, GBV stems from the stereotypes and social norms that promote discrimination and subordination.. In line with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recommendation, we call on States to name and confront social norms and stereotypes that lead to violence against women and girls as a necessary step towards greater respect for women, and gender equality for all. [7] It is crucial to educate communities and children to stop GBV from perpetuating in generations to come. Education, such as the UNWomen’s “Voices against Violence,” will prevent future abuse before it begins.

Education and safety were some of Catherine McAuley’s goals for women seeking shelter at the first House of Mercy. The women she encountered struggled to find safe employment where they would be free from sexual abuse.

Before Catherine opened the House of Mercy, she found herself unable to help a woman in need; this experience roots Mercy’s call to serve women in vulnerable situations.

Catherine never knew what became of that woman, just as we do not know the many faces of women and girls who survive abuse today.

Echoes of the untold stories of women around the world reach us through the stark statistics illustrating our current culture of gender inequality. As we carry on Catherine’s mission, the Mercy Family continues to work for equality for the women and girls we may never meet.



[1] “Policy Brief: The Impact of Covid-19 on Women.” United Nations. April 9, 2020.

<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>

[2] Ibid

[3] Mlambo-Ngcuka, Phumzile. “Violence Against Women and Girls: the Shadow Pandemic.” UNWomen. April 6, 2020.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>

[4] Guterres, António. “Put women and girls at the centre of efforts to recover from COVID-19.” United Nations Covid-19 Response. <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/put-women-and-girls-centre-efforts-recover-covid-19>

[5] Ibid

[6] Ibid

[7] “Launch of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating General Recommendation No. 19.” OHCHR. 2017.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/GR35.aspx>

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

BY ANNEKE KAT

As the only Jewish fellow in the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship, I think it is important to share a bit about my journey that led me to this moment. In 2017 I was invited to participate in a gathering called, “Nuns & Nones,” where I spent two days at Cranaleith Spiritual Center with a group of women religious and millennials sharing stories and discussing our commitment to social justice. Coming from the field of interfaith community education, I was curious to spend time with women religious, a group of people I hadn't encountered much before that moment. My friends playfully teased me, a queer Jewish atheist, spending her birthday weekend with a bunch of nuns. Little did they know, I credit the two days I spent with Nuns & Nones with radically influencing my outlook on social justice, inter-generational learning, and the valuable, often underappreciated role women religious play in the fabric of the city I call home. Among many of those women were Sisters of Mercy. During these two days, and through interfaith programming I lead in Philadelphia, I was able to deepen my relationship with the local community of the Sisters of Mercy.



Two years later, I am now part of the inaugural group of Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship. Without the support of the local Sisters of Mercy I developed relationships with, I most likely would have not become such a unique candidate for a catholic women's leadership program. Nor would I have been as inclined to devote a year of my life to being deeply connected with women religious. The MELF program has continued to offer such a layered and deeply meaningful experience. The combination of local Mercy mentorship, monthly webinars and readings on important social justice topics, the experiential learning opportunities with an international group of fellows, and the freedom to explore and execute a personal project have all created a very important space in my life. I am able to devote more focused time to increasing my awareness of important issues and explore my own personal growth as a leader.



One aspect of the program I have valued is the access we have been granted to Sisters of Mercy and other female experts who are embedded in policy and grassroots work within the topics we are exploring each month. I believe there is something quite unique and special in learning about this issues solely from a woman-centered perspective. Adding to that nuance, I have appreciated hearing how each woman has connected her work to the Mercy charism and their catholic identity.

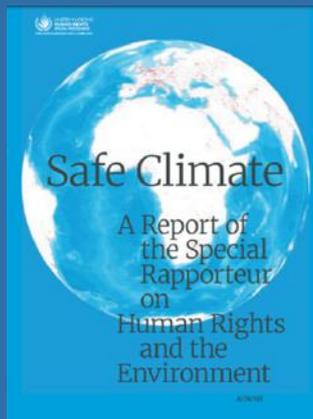
A huge gift of the MELF program has been simply becoming connected to the fellows around the world and the Sisters who are all engaged in incredible work. I was struck by the vulnerability and openness of all of the participants. During our time in Cambodia, the program leadership were able to create an open and supportive space for us. I often facilitate dialogue but rarely do I get to participate in or benefit from such an intimate space where everyone went deep quite quickly. I deeply value the mini community and the special liminal space of vulnerability between our lived realities that our group was able to create. I have learned so much from the other fellows so far and I greatly look forward to how we can grow this special community.

“USEFUL RESOURCES

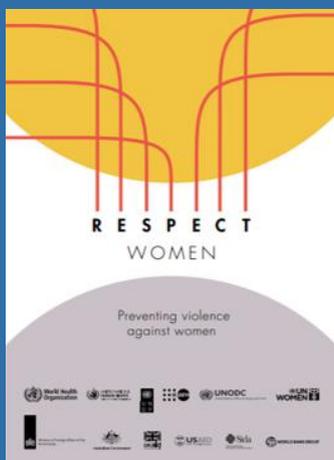
NGO Working Group to End Homelessness Statement on COVID-19 and Homelessness



Safe Climate: A Report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment



Respect Women: Preventing Violence Against Women



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 15 May International Day of Families
- 16 May International Day of Living Together in Peace
- 16 May International Day of Light [UNESCO]
- 20 May World Bee Day
- 21 May International Tea Day
- 21 May World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development
- 22 May International Day for Biological Diversity
- 29 May International Day of UN Peacekeepers
- 1 June Global Day of Parents
- 3 June World Bicycle Day
- 4 June International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
- 5 June World Environment Day
- 7 June World Food Safety Day
- 8 June World Oceans Day

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