

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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MERCY GLOBAL ACTION ADVENT GREETINGS

*Thus says our GOD, the Holy One of Israel:
O people of Zion, who dwell in Jerusalem,
no more will you weep; God will be gracious to
you when you cry out, as soon as God hears God
will answer you. Our God will give you the bread
you need and the water for which you thirst. No
longer will your Teacher hide, but with your own
eyes you shall see your Teacher, while from
behind, a voice shall sound in your ears: "This is
the way; walk in it," when you would turn to the
right or to the left. (IS 30:19-21)*



Isaiah's words of hope reach us today amidst Advent, our season of preparing, while we wait in our own time of injustice. We wait to celebrate Jesus' birth and we wait for justice to prevail in our world. Reflecting on this passage fills me with hope and a sense of purpose. These words remind me of our responsibility to work with our Teacher to create this promised future. The words, "This is the way; walk in it," keep me focused and fueled for mission during this crucial time in our cosmic story. So many issues held dear by the Mercy world call forth in us a deep response; finding our own light in the darkness will keep us fresh on this long road to a more just society.



THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH



- *Mercy Global Action to Advocate at COP25*

Colleen Swain will be attending COP 25 in Madrid, Spain on behalf of Mercy International Association Mercy Global Action as we continue to respond to the climate crisis and heed the call to respond to the degradation of the earth and the displacement of peoples.

The 25th Session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25) commenced on December 2nd and will end on December 13th. Originally scheduled to take place in Santiago, Chile, the conference was cancelled and Spain made an offer to host the event.

Pope Francis sent an urgent plea to the official conference calling for an increase in ambition towards addressing climate change. “We are facing a “challenge of civilization” in favour of the common good and of a change of perspective that places this same dignity at the centre of our action, which is clearly expressed in the “human face” of climate emergencies. There remains a window of opportunity, but we must not allow it to close. We need to take advantage of this occasion through our responsible actions in the economic, technological, social and educational fields, knowing very well how our actions are interdependent.”

In line with Pope Francis message, Mercy Global Action aims to bring the voices of those from Latin America and the Amazon to COP25. Working with members of CIDSE, as well as other Catholic and faith-based organizations attending the COP, side and parallel events are taking place to bring Latin American and Amazonian voices to the forefront (see ways to engage below). MGA will also be advocating on behalf of local and indigenous communities who have been impacted by extractive industries such as oil and gas drilling, hydroelectric dams, transnational corporate agriculture, mineral and coal mining and more.

We continue to bring the voices of those from the 2018 Mercy Asia Pacific Gathering who emphasized that climate change is human made and exacerbates issues including: loss and damage of biodiversity, sea level rise and rise of carbon emissions, waste management, pollution of the earth, sea, and food, displacement of peoples, water scarcity, erosion, sea bed mining and other forms of extraction. These robust and vivid contributions from the Mercy Asia Pacific Gathering, as well as local knowledge from Latin America, has further informed our key advocacy and lobbying points at COP 25; taking into account the interconnectedness of environmental degradation and human displacement.

Read the full article on mercyworld.org with "What's at Stake?", "Mercy's Focus at COP", "Ways to Engage" and more!



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

- *Inherent Dignity workshop provided in Lima, Peru*

Angela Reed rsm, Team Leader, Mercy Global Action, provided a workshop in Lima for members of Red Kawsay who are a network within Talitha Kum. The workshop focused on human trafficking advocacy and how prevention is an important way to address the issue. Participants included religious women working to prevent trafficking, some of whom also provide service provision to trafficking survivors. The workshop introduced participants to the advocacy guidebook produced by the Mercy Global Action Office and now translated into Spanish.



In exploring the different paradigms for understanding trafficking, participants felt a strong association between gender violence and human trafficking. Many shared stories where women were treated as objects and subjected to violence and ultimately commodified. Angela stressed the importance of understanding the local manifestations of trafficking and enabling trafficking survivors to inform policy and service delivery.

Special thanks to the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas for funding the Spanish Translation of the publication.

- *The Eye that Cries: the Global Reality behind Femicide*

Achieving gender equality around the world is not only a Sustainable Development Goal for the United Nation; it is also a key concern for Mercy Global Action. Empowering women, encouraging the enactment of just laws, and ensuring all children receive a good education[1] are some of the steps organizations at the UN are pursuing in order to address the culture of inequality. Taking action to end violence against women, which is rooted in social inequality, continues to be of vital importance to the Mercy world, and MGA affirms the work being done to end this crisis.

Globally, gender-based violence claims the lives of women every day. In 2017, approximately 87,000 women were killed[2] out of the total 464,000 homicides[3] worldwide; family members or intimate partners intentionally killed 58% of those women[4]. Motives for femicide can be difficult to research especially in the context of wars, gangs and organized crime. However, within the context of family life motives for violence

[1] UN Women. "Focusing on Prevention to Stop the Violence." What We Do, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/prevention> Accessed 4 Dec. 2019.

[2]United Nations. Global Study on Homicide:Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls. Vienna, Austria, Division forPolicy Analysis and Public Affairs, July 2019.

[3]United Nations. Global Study on Homicide:Executive Summary. Vienna, Austria, Division for Policy Analysis and PublicAffairs, July 2019.

[4]]United Nations. Global Study on Homicide:Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls. Vienna, Austria, Division forPolicy Analysis and Public Affairs, July 2019



DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

- *Continued...*

are well-documented. Domestic violence, honor killings, deaths related to gender-based violence such as female genital mutilation, dowry disputes, and sex-selective abortions[5] are all a part of this category.

Additionally, motives for femicide include human trafficking, prostitution, sexual orientation and gender identity, and witchcraft. These studies show that femicide is fundamentally based on cultural norms that under value women and girls. Furthermore, these social norms also validate gender-based roles for men that foster a climate of dominance. The most common motives noted in studies of femicide show the cultural roots of femicide: “possessiveness, jealousy and fear of abandonment.”[6] In addition to a culture of inequality lack of education, poverty, migration, and a large age discrepancy between intimate partners all increase the risk to women and girls. [7]

To pray for an end to femicide Sisters of Mercy from several countries visited a memorial in Lima, Peru called the Eye that Cries. Tucked between low hills and embankments the memorial is quiet and still while children play nearby and families relax under shady trees in the large Campo Marte Park. The memorial itself is a massive stone labyrinth with smooth river stones lining the paths. Many of the stones are marked with the names and ages of people killed by the Shining Path in the 1980-90’s, and the retaliatory violence following that guerrilla movement. Names include men and women from a wide range of ages, even infants.

Flowers decorate the memorial, and at the center of the labyrinth is a reflecting pool where a large rough stone stands. An eye carved near the top of the stone slowly drips water into the pool below.

At the memorial, we remembered the violence endured by Peruvians, and the violence still endured today by countless women and girls due to gender-based violence and femicide. Praying in a circle around the weeping eye, and carrying symbols of our home countries, we proclaimed the names of women murdered in our geographic areas.



Photo: Angela Reed rsm/MIA MGA

By surrounding that memorial with our Mercy presence, we gave voice to those who have been silenced by femicide thereby adding to the Mercy World’s continuing work for greater inclusion and justice. While the struggle for gender equality continues, we add the strength of our convictions to those who fight the injustice of gender discrimination every day. Like Catherine, we will work with women and girls to form a better and more just world.

[5]United Nations. Global Study on Homicide: Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls. Vienna, Austria, Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs, July 2019.

[6]Ibid

[7]Ibid

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

- *Former MGA Intern Avery Kelly Attends Business and Human Rights Forum in Geneva*

I am a former intern of Mercy International Association: Global Action and am now a human rights lawyer at Corporate Accountability Lab, where I work on developing innovative legal strategies to address corporate impunity for human rights and environmental abuses worldwide. With MGA's support, I had the opportunity to participate in this year's Forum on Business & Human Rights at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, a dedicated space at the UN for discussions on the impacts of business operations on communities and the environment. At the Forum I had the opportunity to meet with civil society partners from around the world to share strategies and make connections for collaborations going forward and to attend the Forum's sessions on relevant topics in the field.

On the first day of the BHR Forum, I attended the opening panel "Voices from the Ground," one of the most important sessions of the Forum, with the most representation from communities on the front lines of corporate abuses of human rights around the world. At this session, activists from Brazil, the Philippines, Colombia, and Armenia shared their experiences defending people and the planet from corporate abuse in their local contexts and denounced the violence and harassment they and their communities face as a result of their activism. At this session, CAL partner Danilo Rueda from the Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz stressed

the importance of the ongoing truth and reconciliation process in Colombia as a forum for Colombians harmed by business activities and corporate support of armed groups during the long-lasting civil conflict to face those actors and demand justice. Indianara Ramires Machado of the Guarani Kaiowa community in Brazil spoke about the human rights abuse and environmental destruction her community faces from extractive industries and that while Brazil, like many other countries, upholds the rights of Indigenous People on paper, the reality on the ground is starkly different.

On the second day of the Forum, CAL Founder and Co-director Charity Ryerson and Innovation Fellow Zobaida Khan spoke on a panel with partners from MSI Integrity, SOMO, WSR Network, the Clean Clothes Campaign, and OECD Watch to discuss the shortcomings of and alternatives to multi-stakeholder approaches, which bring together private companies, government actors, and affected communities into initiatives to develop and implement voluntary guidelines to address human rights abuses. Across the varying perspectives that were shared at the panel, the speakers all agreed that it's time to rethink multi-stakeholder initiatives.



THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

Continued...

I also attended a riveting film screening and discussion with members of the European Coalition for Corporate Justice and the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights about a textile factory fire that killed 260 people in Pakistan in 2012 and subsequent litigation brought in Germany against KiK, a retail clothing company that was the factory's main client.

On the last day of the Forum, I attended a session on child labor in cocoa supply chains. During this session, Antoine Fountain of the Voice Network described the dire situation of child and forced labor in cocoa that continues despite 10 years of multi-stakeholder initiatives in the sector: "Farmers are still poor, children are still working, and trees are still being cut down." At this session, a Nestle representative made the disturbing revelation that the company has identified 28,000 child laborers in the cocoa supply chain in West Africa, all on farms that have a fair trade or social compliance certification. This point raises fundamental questions about the validity of certification schemes and whether they address root causes of child labor in the cocoa sector.

Another noteworthy session I participated in was a research sharing session in which the authors of the Mind the Gap project debuted some of their key research findings. Mind the Gap is a project of many non-governmental organizations and organized by SOMO. The project uses a large sample of data and extracts overarching strategies that corporations use to skirt accountability for human rights abuse. These strategies include: constructing deniability, using judicial strategies to avoid liability, distracting stakeholders, undermining defenders and communities, and utilizing state power. This research will be immensely helpful for communities and civil society who seek to address corporate abuse of human rights and the environment to develop counter strategies based on these pervasive tactics that are often used against them.

Recorded sessions from the BHR Forum can be accessed [here](#), with key words "Forum on Business and Human Rights 2019."

I am so grateful for the opportunity to have attended the BHR Forum this year and to have heard from and connected with so many fearless civil society and frontlines representatives. The connections and learnings gathered there will greatly serve my work on human rights and environmental abuse by corporate actors going forward.

Avery is a Staff Attorney at Corporate Accountability Lab and former Intern/Fellow at MIA:MGA.

MGA A WAY FORWARD...

As in past Newsletters we are featuring a section from the "MGA: A Way Forward" document. See [here](#).

HUMAN RIGHTS ANALYSIS



Rights based advocacy is at the heart of our global justice work. Human Rights Analysis requires familiarity with human rights instruments and mechanisms. This is largely made up of conventions and their review mechanisms. A significant part of the work of MGA is to undertake human rights analysis and to inform grassroots of the way in which rights can be realised.

A further focus is to document circumstances in which the Mercy World identifies the denial of human rights and to seek redress.

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

BY SIOBHAN GOLDEN (MELF 2019-2020)

"I am just over three months into my Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship journey and I am really enjoying every experience of it! I am so grateful to Sr Angela Reed and Colleen Swain for their support and encouragement, as I extend my knowledge on issues of Social and Environmental Justice through the Mercy lens.

My MELF journey began last August in Cambodia. This was an incredible trip which truly touched my heart. I met the other nine fellows and a strong bond formed among us regardless of age, ethnic or racial background, as we share the same vision for Mercy and Justice. A strong sense of empowerment grew

as we learned that together we can create change and advocate for justice. It was a very special time. I am still in awe of the generosity, openness, hospitality and wisdom from Sr Denise Coughlan and the Cambodian community.



Photo: Colleen Swain/MIA MGA

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Photo: Colleen Swain/MIA MGA

Our MELF circle has remained engaged through the use of our online platform and monthly webinars to communicate. Each week, there are core readings and materials for us to examine. They focus on the different themes of justice that we concentrate on each month. These resources guide me with my critical thinking, as they touch on many complex dimensions, such as how to use your privilege to create change. The monthly webinars are a great online resource for learning and are always very inspiring. We are joined by amazing panellists who offer great wisdom about working towards justice and dismantling oppressive systems. This, along with their intimate nature, rekindles the sense of empowerment and our shared vision for Hope and Justice that we created in Cambodia.

On top of this, I have been assigned Sr Suzanne Ryder as my mentor for the year, who has grass root experience achieving Peace and Justice, as part of a strong group of women. I am very grateful to be connected with her. I hope to follow in her footsteps!

I am carrying out my MELF research project on Homelessness in Ireland. I am focusing my project on women and the impact being homeless can have on their health and well-being. MELF supported my attendance to a regional conference which focused on 'Youth Homelessness: Practice, Policy and Campaigning'. Attending this event deepened my knowledge on the homeless crisis and the fundamental need for measures of prevention instead of only focusing on emergency aid.

I am looking forward to advancing in Social Justice Work and Human rights while continuing to look at the world through a lens of Mercy. I am so excited for our next international encounter in New York in March 2020 and to continue to learn, laugh, share and grow in this sisterhood and with the huge support that MELF has received from around the world."



Photo: Colleen Swain/MIA MGA

“ USEFUL RESOURCES

Culture in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda



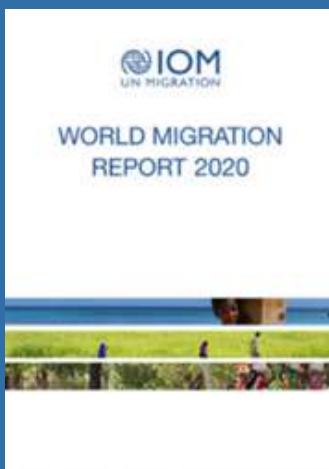
UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- December 7th - 13th - Colleen at COP25
- December 10th - Human Rights Day
- December 11th - International Mountain Day
- December 18th - International Migrants Day
- December 20th - International Human Solidarity Day
- December 25th - Christmas Day

Convention on the Rights of the Child 30 Years



International Migration Report



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