



MERCY
INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION: A WAY FORWARD

MARCH 2019



MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION:

RE-IMAGINING MERCY GLOBAL ACTION IN 2019 AND BEYOND

At this time in history, and indeed in this time of global vulnerability, MIA is committed to building a solid Mercy global advocacy unit. This office has an agenda that positions itself as a change maker for global justice, not only at the United Nations, but through its work in local communities, nations and regions throughout the world. Grounded in the spirit of Mercy, MGA's justice and advocacy work seeks to analyse root causes and engage in theological, ethical, social, political, economic, gendered and human rights analysis. This Mercy unit is in a critical position to advocate and influence policy makers and governments at national and international level and to 'harness the energy that was created world-wide' through the Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP).

The MIRP review document speaks of Mercy Global Presence, in which 'a new wisdom is emerging among us' and 'calls for a vision for Mercy into the future which opens new possibilities beyond MIRP for MIA and for our congregations and institutes'. This short document provides an overview of a way forward for Mercy Global Action, tapping into these new possibilities, so that we, as Mercy, can indeed 'further the dream of the globalization of mercy and compassion'.¹

1. See 'Review of the Mercy International Reflection Process: What has been discovered? What has been revealed?' 21 April 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Contextualizing Mercy Global Action..... | 6 |
| Thematic Areas..... | 7 |
| Mercy Global Action Location and Core Strategies..... | 8 |
| Mercy Global Action Team Structure–New York 2019..... | 11 |
| Mercy Global Action Methodology..... | 12 |
| A Representation of Mercy Justice Issues as Identified by MIRP..... | 14 |
| Mercy Global Action "Harnessing the Energy Created Worldwide"..... | 15 |
| Mercy Global Action "The Dream of Globalization of Mercy and Compassion"..... | 16 |
| Linking Current Mercy Justice Configurations..... | 17 |
| Re-Imagining Global Advocacy..... | 18 |
| Global Impact..... | 19 |

FIGURES

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Mercy Global Action Location and Core Strategies..... | 8 |
| 1.1 Networking..... | 9 |
| 1.2 Education and Awareness Raising..... | 9 |
| 1.3 Leadership Development | 9 |
| 1.4 UN Engagement..... | 9 |
| 1.5 Communication and Technology..... | 10 |
| 1.6 Theological Reflection..... | 10 |
| 1.7 Research..... | 10 |
| 1.8 Human Rights Analysis..... | 10 |
| | |
| 3. Mercy Justice Advocacy Approach..... | 12 |
| | |
| 4. MIRP Mercy Justice Issues..... | 14 |
| 4.1 "Harnessing the Energy Created Worldwide" | 15 |
| 4.2 "The Dream of Globalization of Mercy and Compassion" | 16 |

CONTEXTUALIZING MERCY GLOBAL ACTION

Mercy Global Action is the justice arm of Mercy International Association and its mandate is as relevant today as when it was first established. We are in a time when peoples and earth are crying out for justice. Millions of people are living in poverty, displaced and/or have no voice to influence global justice. Note that, currently 42 individuals have the same wealth as 3.7 billion of the most impoverished.² Likewise, we are extracting and using the Earth and its resources as if they are infinite. We are "faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature."³

As Mercy is an international religious organization, there is a moral and an urgent need for the Sisters of Mercy to respond, by working to transform global systems of oppression with justice, active compassion and global solidarity. Some of the key issues MGA has been committed to responding to are:

- Human trafficking and violence against women and girls
- Ecological abuse and the effects of catastrophic climate change
- An unsustainable model of development that focuses on growth, expediency, the accumulation of wealth, and the exploitation of Peoples and Earth
- Patriarchal structures that oppress women
- Mass migration largely driven by economic, social, and political factors as well as conflict
- Human rights abuses related to water, land, air, and life of entire populations
- Government abdication of responsibility to protect human rights

In working for global justice, Mercy Global Action seeks an alternative vision to: Patriarchy, Unsustainable models of development, Neoliberalism, Anthropocentrism, Gendered Violence, Racism, Sexism, Colonialism and other systems that result in people being excluded and exploited.

The 2016 Mercy International Reflection Process affirmed and articulated even further the concern for justice and the need for action throughout the Mercy World. As a result of the MIRP, Mercy Global Action is now specifically focused on Degradation of Earth and Displacement of Persons. Mercy Global Action seeks to interact and work with Mercy grassroots ministries and at policy level at the UN.



2. Elliot, Larry "Inequality Gap Widens as 42 People Hold Same Wealth as 3.7bn Poorest" The Guardian, Jan 22 2018. Accessed March 8, 2018

3. Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home, Encyclical Letter, by Pope Francis, Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015.

THEMATIC AREAS

Degradation of Earth and Displacement of Persons are the two main thematic areas of Mercy International Association. These issues are complex and intersecting. Ultimately, while the naming of specific issues is important, it is critical for Mercy Global Action to focus on root causes. In many instances root cause analysis intersects across all the issues. Outlined below are the issues identified through the MIRP as well as those identified by Mercy Global Action.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

- 
- Ecological abuse and the effects of catastrophic climate change on people and the planet
 - Fossil Fuel Extraction
 - Garbage & Pollution
 - Mining & Fracking
 - Oceans
 - Sustainable living
 - Violations Against Human Rights Defenders
 - Water

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

- 
- Asylum seekers
 - Family Violence
 - Homelessness
 - Human Trafficking
 - Mental Illness-Dementia
 - Migration
 - Refugees
 - Violation of indigenous people's territorial rights

These concerns are critiqued and informed by Mercy Charism, Mercy Justice Advocacy Approach, Mercy International Reflection Process, Catholic Social Teaching, Laudato Si' and other relevant materials.

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION LOCATION AND CORE STRATEGIES

BUILDING A MERCY GLOBAL PRESENCE

As of March 1, 2019, Mercy Global Action will operate out of and be coordinated from New York. While it is strategic for MGA to be located in close proximity to the UN, the work of MGA extends well beyond UN processes to international NGOs, faith-based coalitions, and academic institutions. The figure below illustrates the multiplicity of tasks and responsibilities of the office.

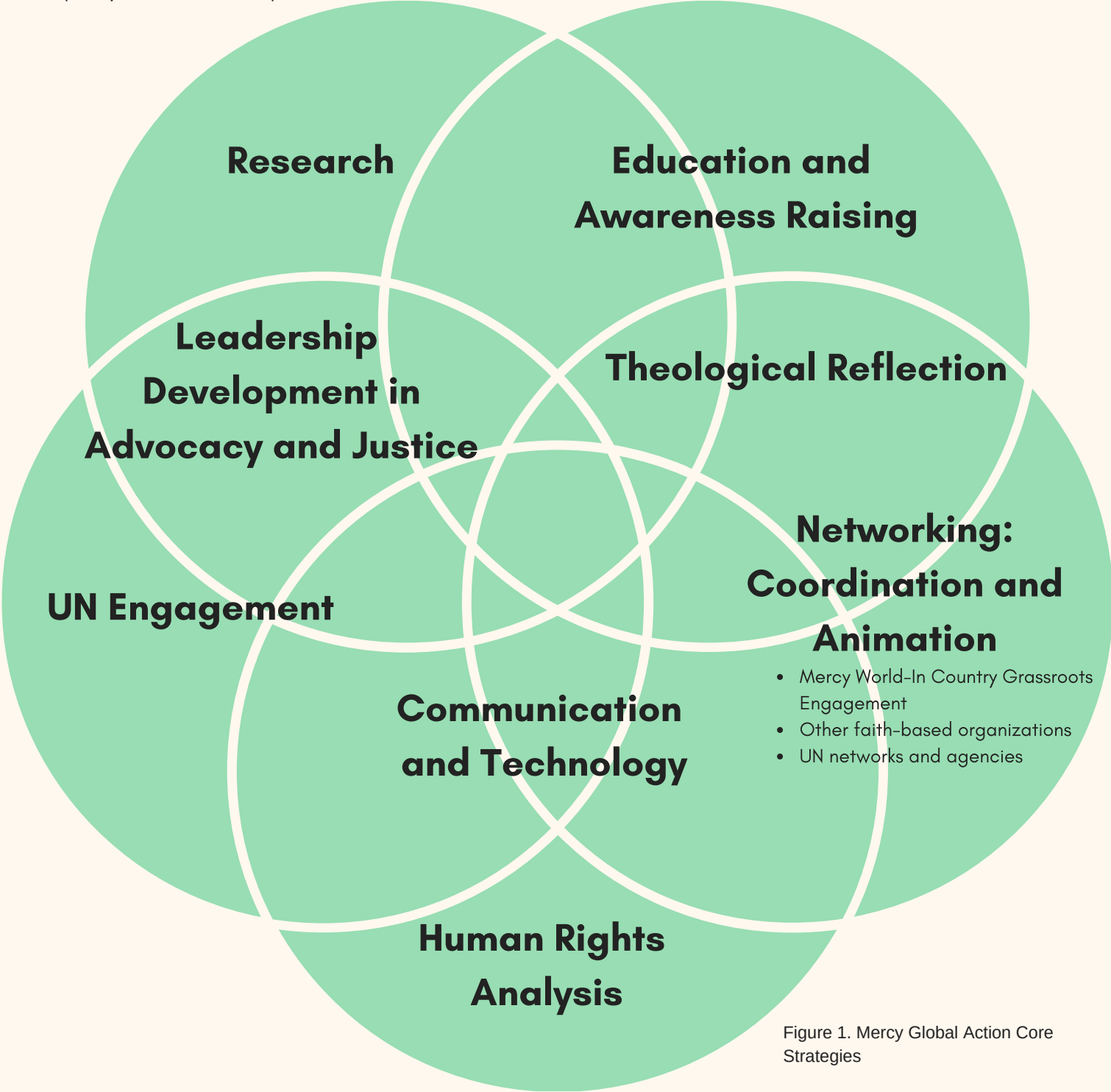


Figure 1. Mercy Global Action Core Strategies

A BREAK DOWN OF CORE STRATEGIES

Key to the work of Mercy Global Action is Networking, Coordination and Animation which requires working in partnership with others responding to justice issues. Engagement with Mercy Clusters (see p. 14) must be prioritized. Other networks include faith based justice organisations, civil society organisations at grassroots, national, regional and international level.

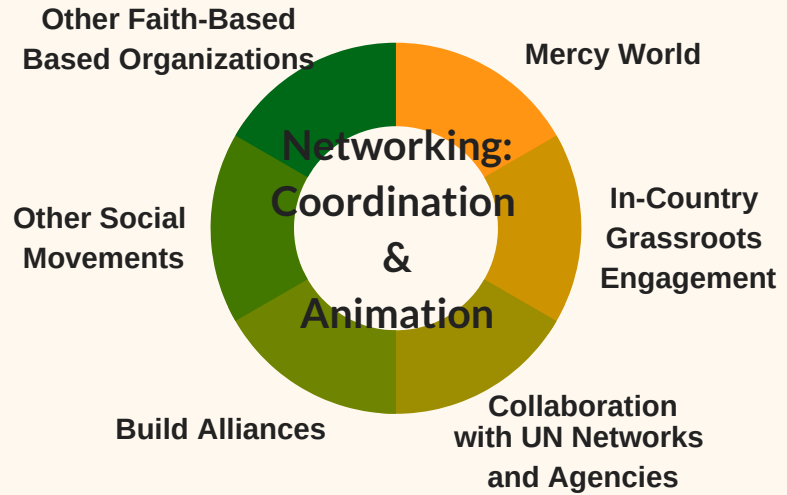


Figure 1.1 Networking: Coordination & Animation

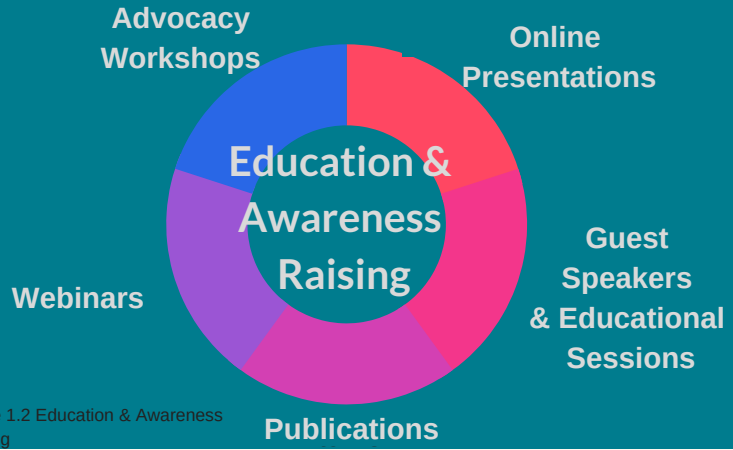


Figure 1.2 Education & Awareness Raising

Education in Advocacy and Awareness Raising is a constant call of the Mercy World. This is critical. Education and advocacy are complementary but distinct. Both are key to the work to Mercy Global Action. Mercy Global Action is committed to critical analysis, informed advocacy and participatory education resulting in new insights, ideas and action for justice.

At the heart of our Mercy charism is the education, empowerment and encouragement of women. The contribution of young women to Mercy Global Action is both a gift and an opportunity, providing mutual benefits to the women and also to the advancement of work at Mercy Global Action.

Women's positive responses to immersion in the Mercy Global Action ministry and their valuable contribution to the ongoing mission of the office are the impetus for developing a fuller and more formal leadership program in which young women can have the opportunity to share their knowledge and further develop their understandings of Global Justice.

A significant grant to fund this program for the next three years has been gifted by a private donor and will be effective Jan 2019.

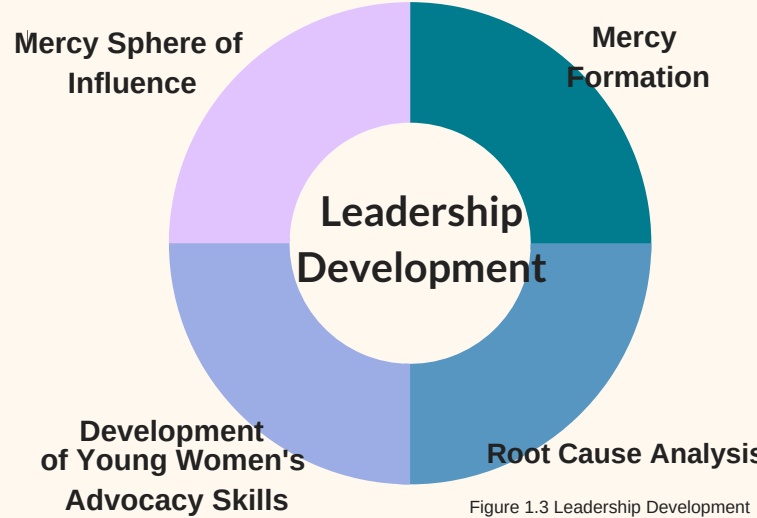


Figure 1.3 Leadership Development

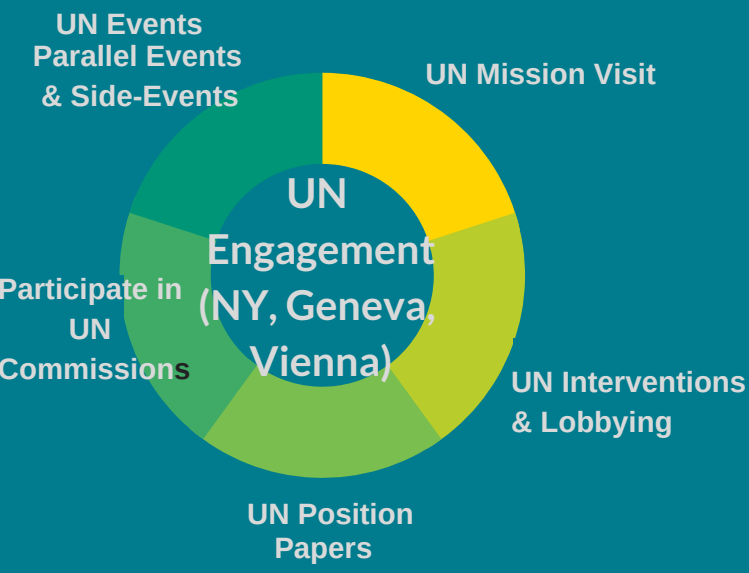


Figure 1.4 UN Engagement

The Sisters of Mercy have Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. This allows MGA to influence political decisions and to lobby for change at International, national and local levels. UN engagement requires visioning, planning and strategizing and oversight of the work in collaboration with the Mercy World. Leadership also requires navigating the dynamics and politics of complex international systems, networks, movements and alliances. Formal alliances over the long haul and learning intergovernmental processes are essential. This requires time devoted to understanding how the UN system (NY and Geneva) works, to responding to the changing environments, to collaborating with coalitions and preparing and coordinating advocacy positions. The UN operations in NY and Geneva are linked. Due to our focus on rights-based advocacy, we are using the Geneva system more often and with greater urgency.

Today, activism is practiced through numerous mediums, the most instant being through social media. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are ubiquitous throughout the international justice world. For this reason, there are specific communication skills and requirements that need on-site response. Technology serves communication across the Mercy World in numerous ways, most significantly through Mercy E-News. In addition, Mercy Global Action has a monthly newsletter specifically focused on its particular work. Communication with Mercy Clusters is largely dependent on the use of technology. Significantly, the MIRP highlighted "using the best and most creative in online communications" for "ongoing reflective engagement".



Figure 1.5 Communications and Technology



Figure 1.6 Theological Reflection

Theological reflection is at the heart of our Mercy justice activism. The most recent example of global theological reflection can be seen through MIRP. Such a process evoked a strong will and commitment to address specific justice issues. These responses are deeply grounded in our Mercy charism. The call for Mercy Global Action is to "harness the energy worldwide" (MIRP 14). Sacred listening and contemplative dialogue will replicate the four stages articulated in the MIRP at local, regional and global levels.

Mercy Global Action Research agenda is focused on identifying ways in which Mercy International Association can effectively intervene in public policy and service response. Policy analysis must always be informed by grassroots experience and service delivery. There has been increasing interest from university students seeking to undertake research. Research strategies include; literature and policy reviews, participatory action research, qualitative and quantitative research and evaluation research. There are currently numerous opportunities to undertake research in the office.



Figure 1.7 Research



Figure 1.8 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.

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION TEAM STRUCTURE - NEW YORK 2019

The 2019 Mercy Global Action team structure seeks to pursue a strategic, coordinated, collaborative and effective justice agenda that coordinates international advocacy and capacity-building to impact Mercy justice global issues. This model integrates a multidisciplinary team with specific assignments and tasks allocated according to areas of expertise. Communication is paramount to this model and operates at multiple levels. This approach is a whole of team approach.



Figure 2 Mercy Global Action Team Structure

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION METHODOLOGY

Mercy Global Action’s methodology largely reflects a participatory action research (PAR) approach. Understood more as an approach than a method of inquiry PAR has been described as:

“A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview... and bringing together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and communities”.⁴

PAR is considered to have key components:

- A focus on change
- Context Specific
- Emphasis on Collaboration
- A cyclical Process
- Grassroots Participation
- Liberatory in nature
- Resulting in collective change⁵

In the diagram to the right, a Mercy Justice Advocacy Approach can be viewed. Underpinned by Mercy values and tradition, human rights, critical feminism, Catholic social teaching, reflection and prayer, and active participation, it has proved to be a vital tool for Mercy Global Action. This Mercy Justice Advocacy Approach has been shared with some Mercy students and volunteers and has been received positively. As it addresses systemic change at local and international level, it reflects a core directive of the MIA Strategic Plan. This Advocacy Approach is also complementary to the four-staged MIRP.

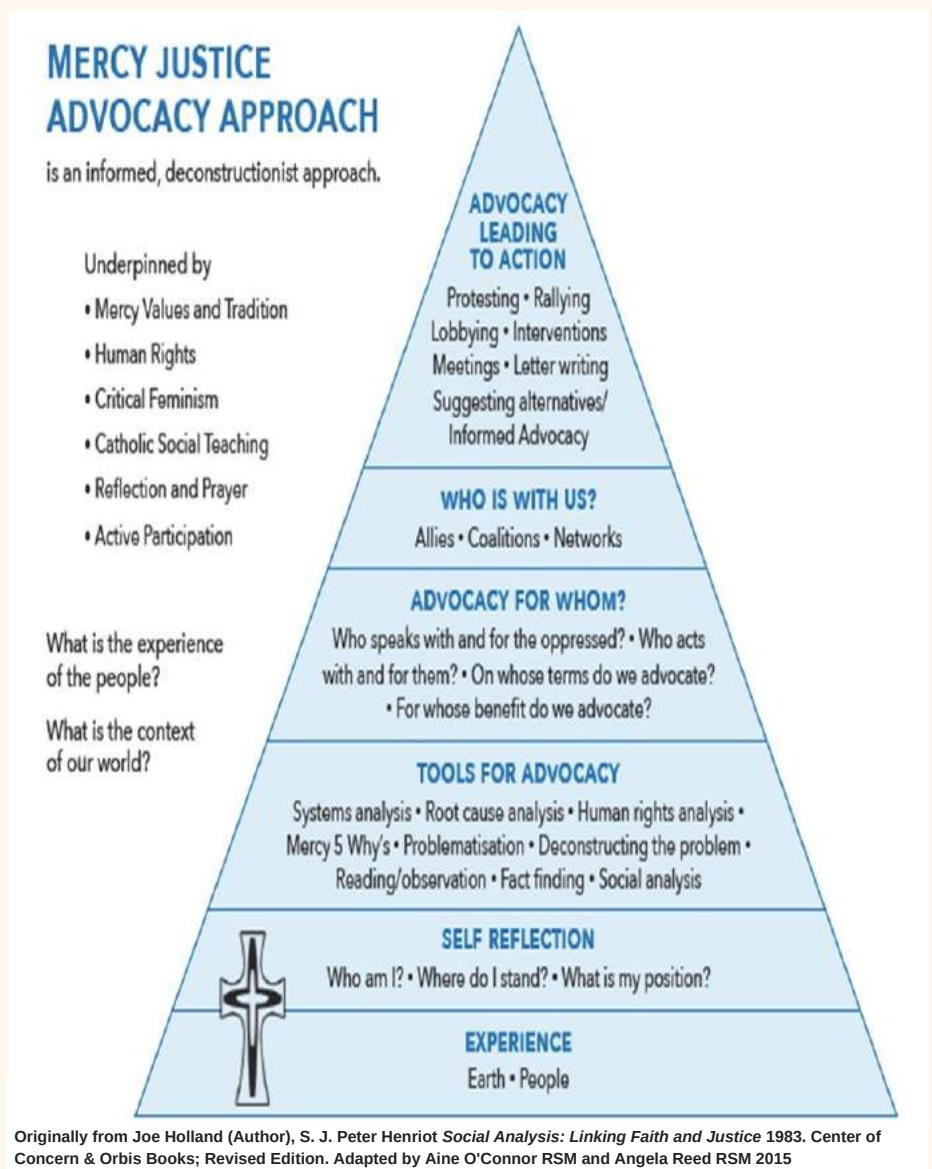


Figure 3 Mercy Justice Advocacy Approach

4. Reardon, P & Bradbury, (2001) H, “Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice, Sage Publications

5. www.participation.wordpress.com ‘Participatory Action Research and Organizational Change: What is PAR’ Accessed March 21, 2018

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION METHODOLOGY - IN ACTION



In 2019, Mercy Global Action will focus on sharing and adopting the Mercy Justice Advocacy Approach across the Mercy World. This 'bottom up' approach to justice will ensure that all organisations across the Mercy World begin a justice response by first engaging with the experience of the earth and people.

In 2018, this approach was introduced in the keynote address given by Angela Reed rsm in Dublin at the Young Mercy Leaders Conference. This was well received and young people were able to relate to and engage with the model.

Mercy Global Action will introduce the justice methodology and Mercy Justice Advocacy Approach to the Mercy World through a Webinar in 2019. This webinar will be open to any Mercy Sister and colleagues interested in adopting this approach.

This model will also be promoted through the Mercy Global Action sections of the Mercy World Website.

Angela Reed rsm will introduce this Mercy Justice Model and methodology in her keynote address to the Bi-Annual Mercy Education Conference In Australia in August 2019. This will enable all Mercy schools in Australia to become familiar with and ideally adopt this justice approach.

Over the coming year, it is hoped that the Mercy World is familiar with the approach that Mercy Global Action adopts when engaging with issues of justice related to our core themes of 'Degradation of Earth' and 'Displacement of Persons'.

ONE EXPRESSION OF MERCY

GLOBAL PRESENCE

A REPRESENTATION OF MERCY JUSTICE ISSUES AS IDENTIFIED BY MIRP

Outlined below is a pictorial representation of the justice issues identified and reported in the MIRP review document. In this representation, the Congregations and Institutes comprising Sisters of Mercy, school children, adults, people from various Christian denominations and other faith traditions can be seen as coloured clusters which represent justice issues of priority. Each cluster is dynamic, organic, free flowing and open to growth. They have a high degree of autonomy, strong communication and rapid information flow.

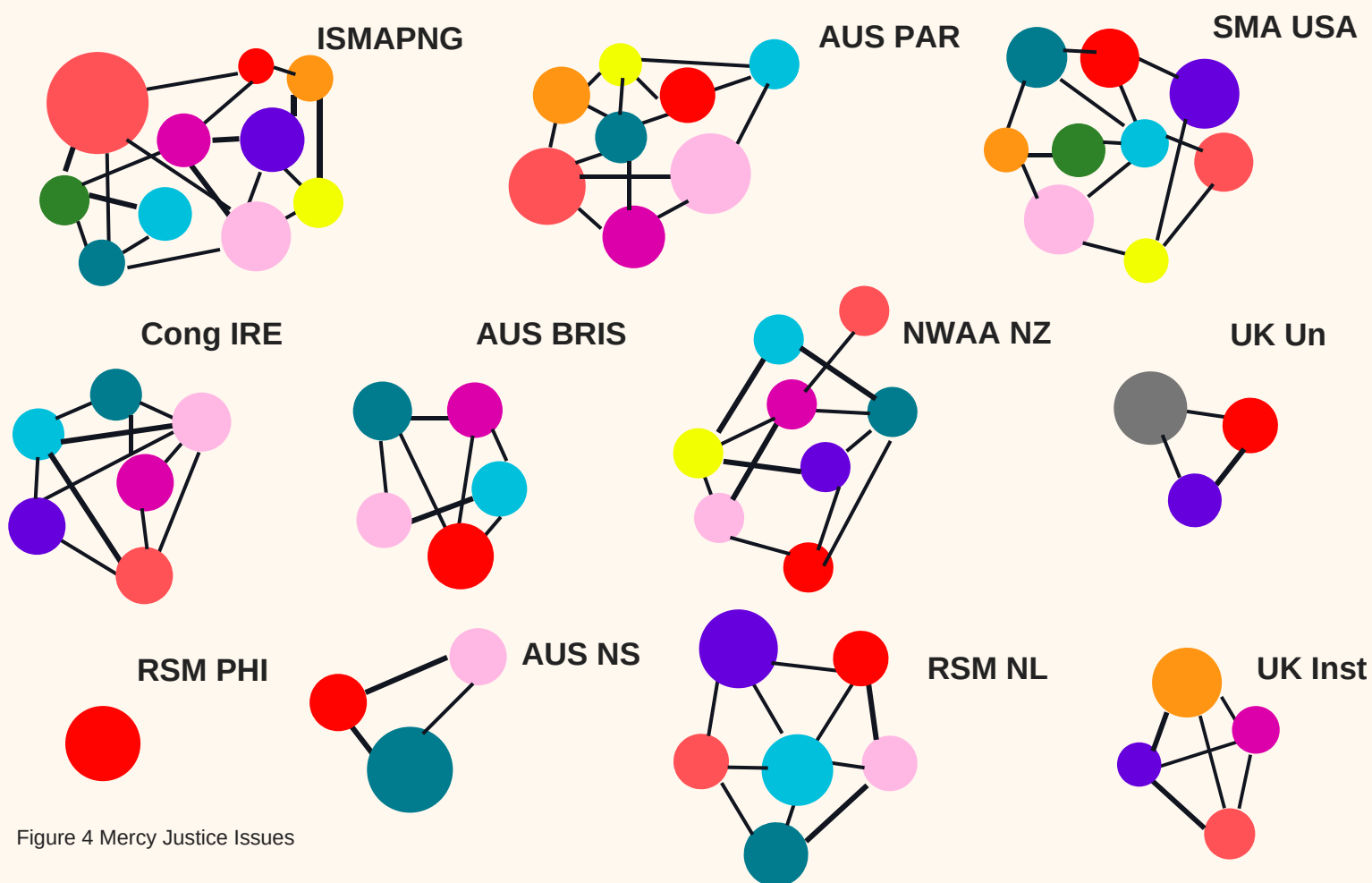


Figure 4 Mercy Justice Issues

Key:

- Refugees/Asylum Seekers
- Environmental Devastation
- Homelessness
- Water
- Dementia
- Sustainable Living
- Poverty
- Fracking
- Human Trafficking
- Garbage/Pollution
- Domestic Violence

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION 'HARNESSING THE ENERGY CREATED WORLDWIDE' (MIRP 14)

There is the opportunity for Mercy Global Action to "harness the energy created worldwide" (MIRP 14) through the MIRP. As illustrated in the diagram below, each cluster is connected and in relationship with the Mercy world. The dotted line could be representative of Mercy Global Presence. In this diagram, there are shared values and the free flow of information. The work of Mercy Global Action is to build on this dynamic energy that has been expressed worldwide through the MIRP. Mercy Global Action needs to build on this energy and create open modes of communication that helps clusters align for global justice. These clusters would operate with a high degree of autonomy, strong communication and rapid information flow.

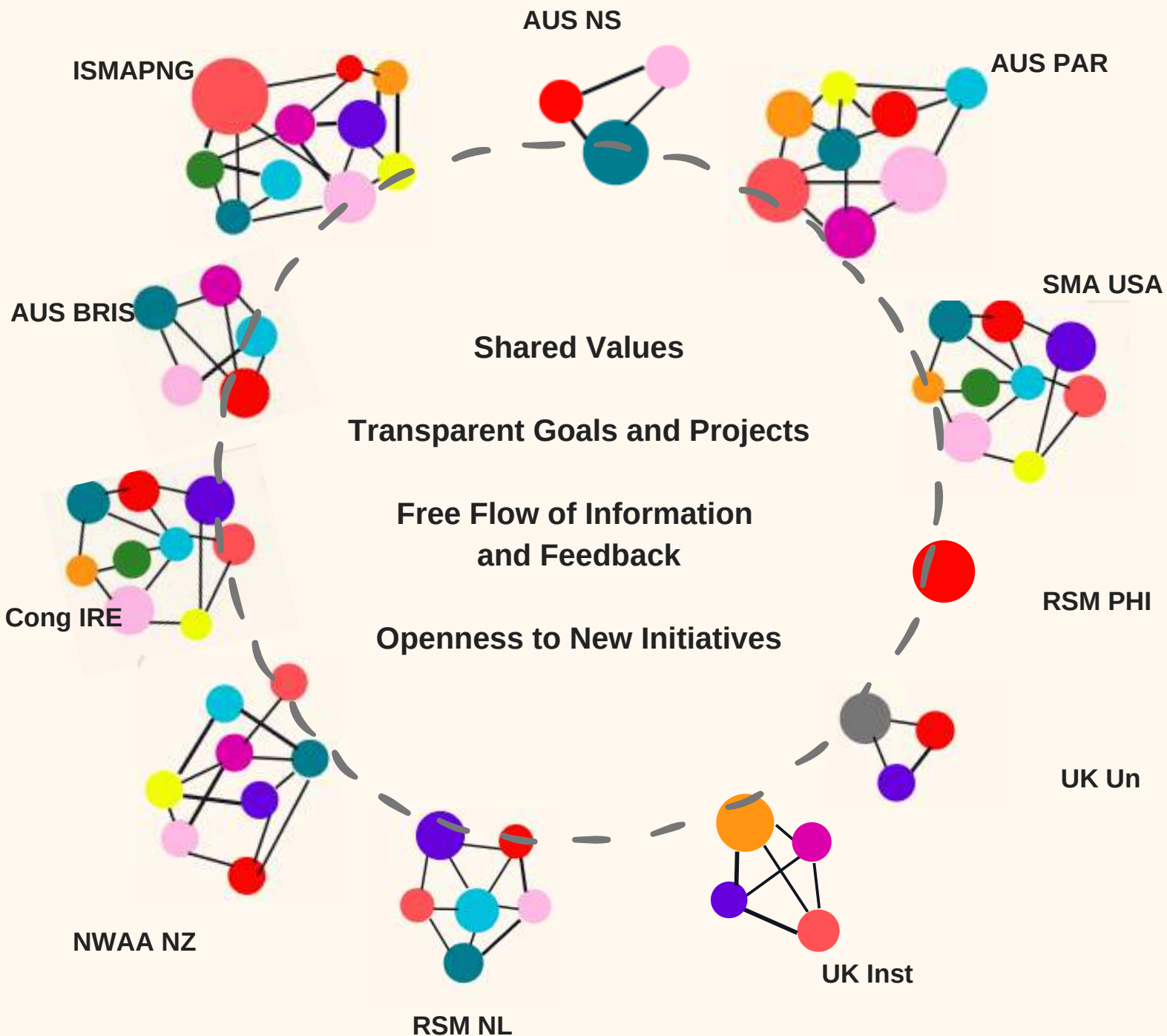


Figure 4.1 "Harnessing the Energy Created Worldwide"

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION 'THE DREAM OF GLOBALIZATION OF MERCY AND COMPASSION' (MIRP 15)

This dream-catcher envisions "the Globalization of Mercy and Compassion" (MIRP 15).

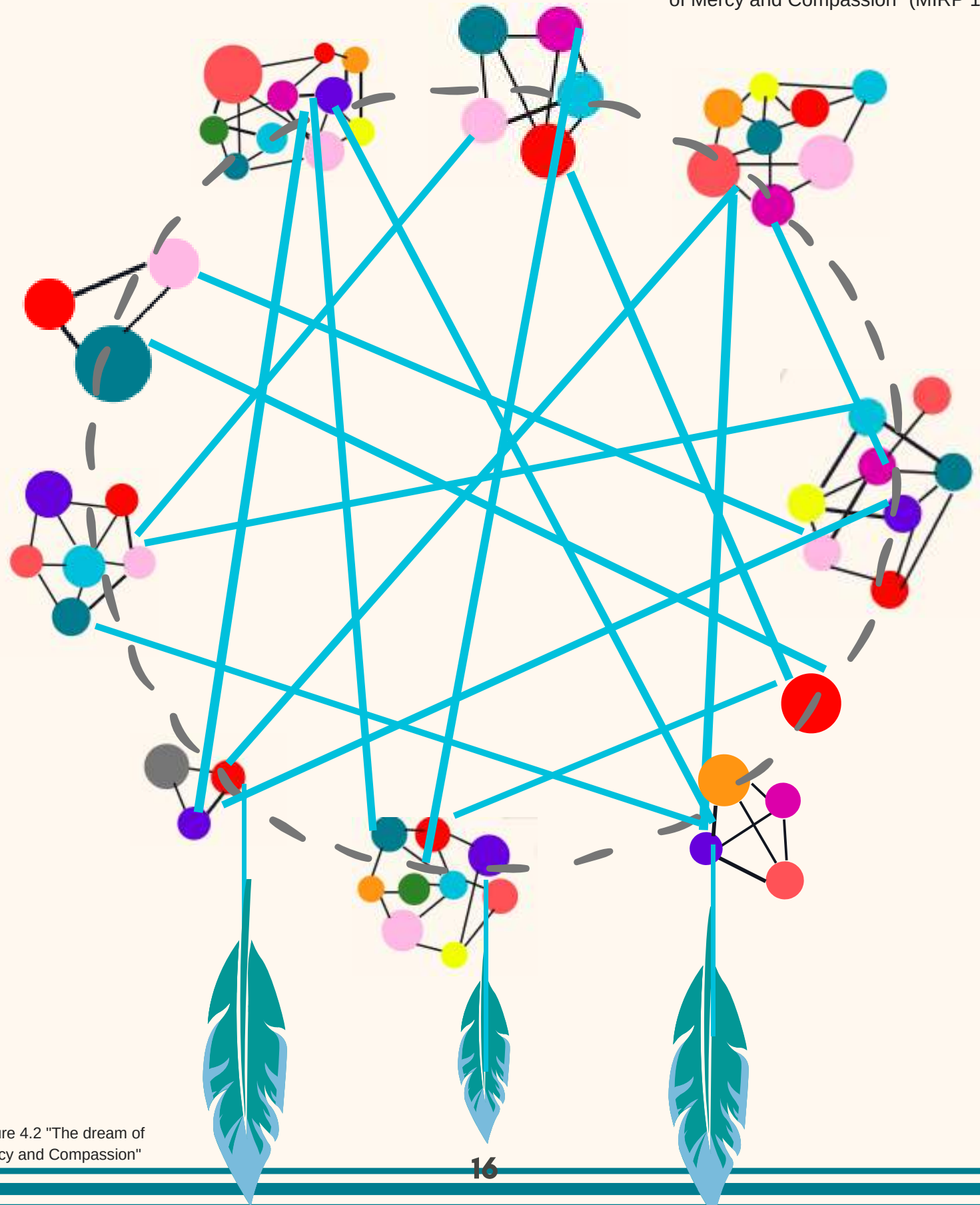


Figure 4.2 "The dream of Mercy and Compassion"

LINKING CURRENT MERCY JUSTICE CONFIGURATIONS

Mercy Justice structures within MIA vary from Congregation to Congregation. A scoping exercise of the various justice configurations of MIA members was undertaken in 2010. This study outlined where the members were involved, their specific goals, the structure for carrying out justice work, activities and a series of case studies.⁶ Significantly, many of these configurations have changed in the last five years. For example, ISMA reconfigured with fourteen Australian Congregations to become ISMAPNG, they are exploring new ways of undertaking justice work within the Institute. Three Mercy Australian Congregations, namely, Brisbane, North Sydney and Parramatta have their own justice desks and connect with the work of MGA. The Institute of the Americas is on its 'journey of oneness' and while it has a very active Institute Justice Team, this process will no doubt have implications on its justice work.

Regardless of whether there is a specific justice contact or a justice team in these new configurations, it will be essential to continue to link with these key people. It will also be important to explore the link between Mercy Justice Configurations across the Congregations or Institutes and their relationship to the Mercy Clusters as illustrated in the MIRP.

As we move into the future, MGA will be exploring numerous group configurations and ways of engaging with the Mercy World.



6. See Purcell, Mary (2010) Draft Feasibility Study on Sisters of Mercy Global Action. Dublin

RE-IMAGINING GLOBAL ADVOCACY

In 2019, Mercy Global Action, with the support of a consultant and within the parameters of MIA's Strategic Plan, will formulate a five-year strategic plan incorporating all of the dimensions of Mercy Global Action as previously discussed.

As part of the strategic plan, Mercy Global Action will encapsulate the following strategies and work models:

- Conference Calls
- Virtual Teams
- Clusters Working with MIRP
- Webinars
- Sharing of Best Practice Models
- Intercultural Teams
- Group Consultations
- Ad Hoc Groups
- Case Studies
- In Person Issues Based Visitations
- Position Statements





GLOBAL IMPACT

The impact of Mercy Global Action's work is dependent upon: grassroots initiatives, Mercy cluster participation and innovation.

The work of Mercy Global Action and re-imagining global advocacy will be seen in its impact.

- A unified Mercy position on specific justice issues
- A practical and just response to the 'cry of the earth' and 'cry of the poor' ⁷
- A proliferation of Mercy Grassroots stories that illustrate compassionate responses to injustices
- A flourishing of the Mercy community
- A dynamic group of young mercy women leaders and activists
- A greater connection between Networks, Clusters and Global Action
- A generation of new ideas and innovative programs
- A strong desire for the Mercy World to be engaged in justice work
- A globalization of mercy and compassion
- A sharing of best practices
- A strengthening of the justice skills of the Mercy World
- An engagement from new donors
- A credible justice voice at the United Nations and in Member States in which Mercy is present and in local communities
- A strengthening and integration of advocacy at local and national level
- A lynchpin of social and environmental justice action
- A collection of data that represents the Mercy Globe from Asia to Europe, to Africa to Central and South America and to North America, Australia and the Pacific

"In a global world, there will be a Mercy Global Presence. In a world of displacement, Mercy Global Presence will champion inclusion. In a world of degradation of the environment, Mercy Global Presence will realize its oneness in the sacred communion of all creation. The Mercy world has heard 'the cry of Earth and the cry of the Poor' in a new way. It will respond by seeing Mercy in a new way and by daring Mercy in a new way." (MIRP pg. 19)

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MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION-
MERCY GLOBAL ACTION

DESIGN

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