



**WATER**  
ACTION DECADE  
2018-2028



**MERCY**  
INTERNATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION



# MERCY WATER JUSTICE COALITION

A COMMITMENT TO THE UN WATER ACTION AGENDA

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“WATER  
IS A FREE  
BEVERAGE.”

- Catherine  
McAuley

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHY A MERCY WATER JUSTICE COALITION?

For some, there is perhaps no natural resource that feels more ubiquitous than water. From the water cooler where stories are exchanged to the oceans and lakes where we hear the waves lapping; from the bathroom taps where we wash off the day to the suburban pools where children play; from the radiators warming cold houses to the can of Coke that perks you up in the afternoon – *water is all around us*. That appearance of ubiquity is misleading, though.

While many people of the Global North treat water as unconditionally available, most people in the Global South know that it is not. In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis warns of the growing depletion and degradation of water. He notes that extractive and industrial activities have rapidly used and contaminated the world's water supply, leaving a significant part of the world – approximately 2 billion people – without access to safe drinking water. The result is poor hygiene, disease, and infant mortality. Often the ones responsible for collecting water, women and girls are disproportionately affected.

Such circumstances are not random. They are underpinned by a system that treats water as a commodity and incentivises its privatisation. In many parts of the world, management of water sources is now driven by the interests of big businesses seeking maximum profits, rather than human rights norms. As people of Mercy, we are called to resist such commodification, and to ensure the fair and equitable provision of this precious, life-giving resource. In this mission, we are pleased to introduce the **Mercy Water Campaign**, and to invite you to join the **Mercy Water Justice Coalition**.



“THERE IS A GROWING TENDENCY, DESPITE ITS SCARCITY, TO PRIVATISE THIS RESOURCE, TURNING IT INTO A COMMODITY SUBJECT TO THE LAWS OF THE MARKET.

YET ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKABLE WATER IS A BASIC AND UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHT, SINCE IT IS ESSENTIAL TO HUMAN SURVIVAL AND, AS SUCH, IS A CONDITION FOR THE EXERCISE OF OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS.”

– POPE FRANCIS, LAUDATO SI'



## MERCY AND THE UNITED NATIONS

Mercy International Association – Global Action (MGA) has held Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) since 1998. Through this status, we have the privilege of placing items on the ECOSOC agenda, attending UN conferences, and submitting written and oral statements. A large part of this responsibility involves bringing the goals of the UN back to the Mercy World for consultation and implementation.

The Mercy Water Campaign is MGA's commitment to the 'UN Water Action Agenda', an initiative which came out of the 2023 UN Water Conference. It is our pledge to mobilise the 250,000 strong Mercy World to raise awareness of the multiple values of water, and to advocate for a rights-based approach to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6, 'Clean Water and Sanitation'. At its core lies the formation of a global Mercy Water Justice Coalition.

[Click here to read Mercy's UN Water Commitment](#)

Water has long been a focus for Mercy communities. The Sisters of Mercy, alongside their Associates and partners worldwide, have experienced the impacts of water in all of its manifestations, including floods, droughts, contamination, and depletion. The hope of this campaign is that it will build upon the Mercy World's pre-existing water initiatives, create new avenues for collaboration, and lead to a strengthened 'Mercy voice' on water.



# WHAT WE STAND FOR:

WE CALL FOR A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO THE ISSUE OF WATER, WHICH:

Recognises that the rights to safe drinking water and sanitation are inalienable human rights, just like breathing air.

Recognises the multiple values of water – biological, cultural, social, spiritual, and aesthetic – beyond its economic use in agriculture, industry and energy.

Recognises that the use of water should not threaten the right of nature to exist, thrive, and regenerate.

Recognises that water is a common good and therefore should never be commodified.

Recognises the knowledge and leadership of women and girls, Indigenous peoples and rural communities in discussions and decisions on water.

# MERCY WATER LEADERSHIP

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MERCY WATER LEADER?

A **Mercy Water Leader** is an individual with an identified interest in water issues who is motivated to work alongside MGA to create and implement a **Water Action Agenda** within their Mercy community – whether it be a Mercy school, church, congregation, healthcare facility, volunteer group, or other network.

Mercy Water Leaders will work closely with MGA staff, share knowledge and resources throughout the Mercy Water Justice Coalition, and report on their community's progress and best practices.

We envisage that Mercy Water Leaders will be present in all regions of the Mercy World, creating a globally informed and unified 'Mercy voice' on water that is heard and valued at the United Nations.

# WATER ACTION AGENDAS

## POSSIBLE ACTIONS

Water Action Agendas are bound to look different depending on region and organisation. In essence, the goal of a Water Action Agenda is to commit to several actions which are aligned with our core values...

**1** The rights to safe drinking water and sanitation are inalienable human rights, just like breathing air...

- Disseminate '[A People's Guide to SDG6](#)' within and beyond your Mercy community.
- Identify and raise awareness of places where water is scarce or contaminated in your region, centering the voices of those affected.

## **2 The use of water should not threaten the right of nature to exist, thrive, and regenerate...**

- Read about and raise awareness of the **'rights of nature' movement**.
- Hold businesses accountable for acting with impunity with regard to the depletion and contamination of water, for example through a letter-writing or digital campaign.

## **3 Water has many values beyond its economic use: biological, cultural, social, spiritual, and aesthetic...**

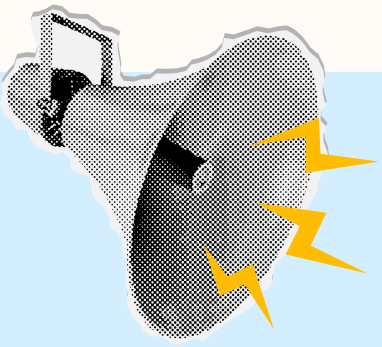
- Disseminate **'Reflections on Water'** within and beyond your Mercy community.
- Host an event for World Water Day (March 22) or Earth Day (April 22) which highlights the multiple values of water.
- Create a lesson plan or resource on the values of water for students or young people in your community.

## **4 Water is a common good and therefore should not be commodified...**

- Lobby local, state, and federal governments to bring water back into public hands, for example through a petition.
- Commit to phasing out the sale of bottled water at your organisation.

## **5 The knowledge and leadership of women and girls, Indigenous peoples and rural communities must be centred in discussions and decisions on water...**

- Highlight the work of water justice advocates who have gone before you, especially that of women and girls, Indigenous peoples and rural communities.
- Incorporate the expertise of these groups in the creation and implementation of your Water Action Agenda.



*Calling all people from Mercy schools, universities, congregations, ministries & organisations...*



**ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT WATER ISSUES?**

JOIN THE ←

# MERCY WATER JUSTICE COALITION



If you're looking to get involved in the Mercy Water Justice Coalition, or have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to the MGA team via email at [mercyrep@mercyinternational.ie](mailto:mercyrep@mercyinternational.ie). We look forward to hearing from you!

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [The Mercy Water Campaign Commitment](#)
- [The Mercy Water Campaign Toolkit](#)

