



MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

# MERCY GLOBAL ACTION EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP (MELF)

*Extending Mercy women's sphere of influence*  
2024 - 2025





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Mercy International Association

Extending Mercy Women's Sphere of Influence

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The Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship provides a transformational experience for women who are passionate about advancing Mercy and Justice. This international leadership program is fully funded, and unique in the ways in which it provides an opportunity for fellows to establish strong links and networking across the Mercy World through international encounters, webinars and modules, mentorship and more. The fellowship program has been designed to stimulate creative and critical thinking, promote collaborative leadership and personal reflection leading to a compassionate and communal response to current concerns of our world.

## BACKGROUND TO THE FELLOWSHIP

Mercy Global Action is the justice arm of Mercy International Association, an association founded by the Sisters of Mercy. The Sisters of Mercy are an international faith-based organization founded in Dublin, Ireland in 1831, with members in 47 countries and territories worldwide, and committed to serving those who suffer from poverty and other forms of disadvantage, especially women and children, empowering them to live full and dignified lives within diverse social and cultural contexts.

At the heart of our Mercy charism is the education, empowerment, and encouragement of women. The contribution of younger women to the Mercy Global Action Office is both a gift and an opportunity, providing mutual benefits to the women and also to the advancement of our work at Mercy Global Action. Women's positive responses to immersion in the Mercy Global Action office 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 women can have the opportunity to share their knowledge and further develop their understandings of Global Justice. The Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship is grounded in Christian tradition, doctrine, and foundational beliefs. The program seeks to build upon the capacities of women and provide effective tools to be agents of change in their own communities and in the greater society. This involves critical thinking and ethical discernment, looking at the world through a Mercy lens, and challenging oppressive systems in order to advance justice.



*'From the local to the global level, women's leadership and political participation are restricted. Women are underrepresented as voters, as well as in leading positions, whether in elected offices, the civil service, the private sector or academia. This occurs despite their proven abilities as leaders and agents of change, and their right to participate equally in democratic governance'.*

-UN Women

The above quotation indicates the need to promote and build upon women's leadership potential and influence in both the global and local arena. In this time of global turbulence, it is imperative that women have access to global political forums in order that their voice be heard and so that they can make meaningful contributions to Global Justice.

The MELF Program supports women to become transformative feminist leaders who share power with others, enabling creativity and mobilization around collective goals.

We see three levels of transformation:

1. At a micro-level participants experience a sense of empowerment, capacity to create change and a flair for critical thinking. They are encouraged to realise their own strengths as leaders for peace and justice in their own communities and the global arena.
2. At a mezzo level, participants realise their interconnection with each other and the planet and experience solidarity with a range of visionary organisations working for women's rights and positive change.
3. At a macro level, participants reach a global awareness of social and environmental issues. Ultimately, a MELF participant has the capacity to actively respond to social justice issues in her own context for a more peaceful and merciful world.

At the heart of this project is the aim to provide opportunities for women who have the potential to develop and contribute to Mercy Leadership and in turn, extend their sphere of influence. This builds on and ensures that Mercy Global Leadership endures within our Mercy Institutions and beyond. Our foundress, Catherine McAuley had a deep trust and desire to develop women's skills and capabilities so that they could carry on the work of Mercy. While we seek to develop leadership within the community of the Sisters of Mercy, this program also seeks to provide leadership opportunities for women inspired by the charisma of Mercy. These women may possibly lead our Mercy Institutions into the future and will need to have global vision and acute analytical skills as well as a Mercy heart.

Meet our current Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellows [here](#).



This Fellowship seeks to bring out key objectives that have been paramount to our work of Mercy Global Action: Mercy International Association over the course of the past twenty years.

The objectives of the program will be as follows:

### **1. Thinking Critically about the Global Reality of our world through the lens of Mercy**

Every day the world is changing. We see environmental destruction – both human and natural- we see the economic markets fluctuating –leaving individuals marginalised from society. We see war, hatred, trafficking, countries closing borders to migrants and refugees, and multinational companies undertaking large development projects that abuse the human rights of local communities. The global reality for Mercy is that despite all of these things that are driving our world apart, there is hope. Mercy brings hope to individuals, encouraging others to think critically about the root causes of these issues and advocate for justice towards fundamental and systemic change.

### **2. Providing Opportunities to Explore Mercy values in a Justice Context**

Over the course of the years, there has been an increasing number of requests to learn more about and engage in the work of Mercy's justice work. These requests have come from Mercy Partners including; Sisters, School Principals, Students, Volunteers and others. Mercy education and advocacy is a vital part of the work we do and we would like to expand this capacity through this program. We believe that this is a unique call at this particular time in our Mercy history. Women are seeking ways to be active leaders for justice and peace in our world. This request is coming from the grassroots and is seeking a response. We aim to give these women the opportunity to have their voice heard in the global arena and build on their own leadership skills and development.

### **3. Capacity Building and Empowering Women**

Key to the Mercy education component is building capacity and empowering women to be future Mercy leaders around the world. There is a need to focus on the gender dynamic in the international arena and encourage women to participate and share their skills. To build a stronger voice, participants will build relationships with other Mercy leaders around the world and form a united network, advocating for justice in their own communities.

### **4. Mercy as Mentor**

The role of mentoring will be critical to the program. Many Mercy women throughout the world have valued the role of mentors in their lives. Establishing strong relationships with Mercy women who can provide companionship and wisdom will be a crucial element to the program.

### **5. Expand Mercy influence and knowledge of our global critical concerns**

The educational component will focus on our key issues of concern: the Degradation of the Earth and Displacement of Peoples. Participants will be given the opportunity to share their own experiences and to engage in theological reflection and social analysis. Participants will also develop further advocacy and critical thinking skills. Through training and support, participants will build upon their leadership skills and capacities, thus becoming a leader in Mercy and human and environmental rights advocacy themselves. Participants will be encouraged to step up in their own congregations, universities, and communities to be an advocate, articulating the challenges of our world and seeking viable solutions.



# THE PROGRAM

The Fellowship consists of the following **six** components;

## **1) Three International Engagements and Encounters:**

Siam Reap, Cambodia – September 16 - 25, 2024 (Induction and Retreat – Metta Karuna Reflection Centre) 10 days

New York, USA – March 7 - 16, 2025 (Human Rights and Advocacy Training and United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women) 10 days

Dublin, Ireland – August 25 - September 03, 2025 (Presentation of Justice Project and Graduation- Mercy International Centre) 10 days

## **2) Individual Research Project**

Each Fellow will be required to choose a pertinent justice issue related to the Degradation of Earth and /or the Displacement of Peoples. They will undertake a project that educates, informs and provides specific actions for justice in relation to this issue.

## **3) Reading Modules**

A core component of the fellowship will be the reading modules. A reading package will be assigned to each fellow and will comprise of literature related to Mercy Spirituality, justice, leadership, advocacy, human rights and other relevant topics. This will require Fellows to set aside 3 hours per week to read and reflect on what new insights and understandings are emerging for them.

## **4) Mentorship Program**

During this ongoing 12 month program, each fellow will be supported by a mercy mentor. This will involve a monthly engagement in which the fellow can explore with their mentor aspects of their own personal development, reflections, and insights into the program.

## **5) Grassroots Mercy Justice Engagement**

Fellows will be required to engage with local and/or regional Mercy justice networks and will be supported to make the relevant links with the Mercy Global Action Network.

## **6) Webinars and Online engagement**

Fellows will be required to connect regularly online for facilitated discussions. A monthly webinar covering leadership, advocacy, mercy spirituality etc. will form part of the program and online participation will be essential.

This program is **fully funded** and makes a significant investment in each fellow, in the hope that each one will be personally transformed and commit to making a difference in our world. As such, fellows need to be fully prepared to invest time and energy to actively engage in all the above components.



To be considered for the Mercy Global Action, Emerging Leaders Fellowship, applicants must meet the following criteria;

- Strong affiliation and/or involvement with the Sisters of Mercy and Mercy works
- Hold at least an academic Bachelor's degree (or an equivalent qualification) or relevant life/work experience as of May 2023.
- A recognized 'emerging leader' within a Mercy Context
- Basic English proficiency required
- Highly motivated to learn from new experiences and encounters
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Demonstrates leadership potential and capacity to put learnings in justice and advocacy into action in the next 10 years
- Openness to diversity and inclusiveness in a cross cultural context
- Ability to attend and participate in all aspects of the Fellowship (Total of 30 days in Person, writing and reading assignments, webinars, and one regional conference over 12 month span)
- Reasonable level of health and fitness to take part in moderate activities including walking in both extremely warm and cold climates

## APPLICATIONS

The application form is extensive and potential fellows are encouraged to take time to reflect on and answer each question meaningfully.

- 1) Contact and Biographical Information
- 2) Current Employer Information
- 3) Formal Education
- 4) Long Answer Questions (1- 8)
- 5) Supporting Materials

- A current resume or CV
- A letter of recommendation from a Mercy Affiliated person or Institution to be submitted to [mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie](mailto:mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie) by **January 19, 2024**

Application deadline: January 19, 2024



## For the Letter of Recommendation...

Please select a current or recent Mercy Affiliated Person or institution with whom you have worked closely and ask them to submit a brief letter of recommendation in support of your application. The letter should address some combination, though not necessarily all, of the following: your relationship to them, your accomplishments and performance; any job-related knowledge and/or skills; work ethic and initiative; learning style and demonstrated capacity for growth; your leadership qualities and potential; how you work with and influence others; and your management abilities. Encourage the writer to be specific and offer brief examples. The letter should not exceed 500 words in length.

## APPLICATION TIPS

- Prepare your answers to the long answer questions on a separate document before transferring them to the application.
- Answer the long answer questions thoroughly and thoughtfully, making sure to answer all parts of each question and stick to the 250-word limit.
- Ask for your letter of recommendation at least three weeks prior to application deadline and be sure to follow up and remind your recommender.
- Email [mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie](mailto:mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie) ahead of time with questions and concerns about the program and/or the application

## If accepted...

- You will be asked to provide three referees, and if shortlisted, participate in an interview with a panel.
- If accepted and formally employed, please have your executive director, or other senior executive in your reporting structure send a letter to [mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie](mailto:mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie) by March 1st 2024 ensuring support upon completing aspects of the program that requires time off. A Sample Letter will be sent to Fellow upon acceptance.
- A signed verification of commitment form to attend and participate in all aspects of the fellowship. Verification of Commitment Form to be sent to Fellow upon acceptance.



To receive the application form, please email Marietta Latonio at [mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie](mailto:mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie) with subject heading "MELF Application Form"

Online Applications must be submitted by **January 19, 2024**. Upon submission, you will receive a confirmation email. If you don't see it, check your spam mail. If it's not there, contact [mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie](mailto:mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie)



# Reflection by Past and Current Fellows

"I don't think I would have labeled myself as a leader until I embarked on this trip. Through the support of the other fellows, some our our leadership and reflection work...helped me frame my personal thinking and reflection in that way. It also helped me focus on aspects of my own growth and leadership I am seeking to change or address as I embark on the rest of this year. I feel bolstered by the community of women we have created and by my new connection to the work Mercy Global Action"



"We are still at the beginning of our journey, but the first couple of months of the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship have been challenging and compelling. We have been confronted with difficult realities - poverty, trafficking, statelessness, oppression and environmental degradation - and while I have struggled at times to confront or 'be present' with these realities, I know that my struggle in merely being confronted with them is nothing compared to the struggle of those who experience these realities everyday. I knew this Fellowship wasn't going to be easy, but I already feel like it's going to be one of the greatest learning curves of my life. And we know that genuine leadership always has to begin with learning and discomfort..."

"For me, the greatest strength of our Fellowship lies in our group. We have an incredible group of women who come from many walks of life and bring their own experiences, wisdom and sense of humour... Together, in Cambodia, or on our webinars and weekly discussions, we often find ourselves saying 'I never thought of it that way', or 'What can be done about this?' It's rare to have the opportunity to work so closely with a group of people who are so like-minded in their hope for justice..."



# REFLECTION ON FELLOWSHIP



"It is now about two months into the fellowship program but it feels like we have walked on this journey for much longer. The Fellowship has linked us together, women of mercy, from many miles across the world. We come from the countries of United States, Peru, Australia, Ireland, and Papua New Guinea. It has enabled and engaged us to link social justice issues which are affecting the earth community, beginning with the various countries from which we all have come. Our passion for justice for all individuals has united us to journey together on this fellowship. So far, it has been a great experience of uniting us as one in the name of mercy and justice within self, family, community and society.

We are all aware that there are many people on this planet who care about others and our earth, but painfully, there are also those who care only about themselves but not about others or our common home. For some people there is no realisation of a growing change in human behaviour or the environment around them. However, those that are connected by the touch of a web of justice are united because their hearts are disturbed by the displacement of people and the displacement of the resources of our earth.

The fellowship is like a spider web that connects us - the fellows - in a web with our leadership team and our mentors; while we the fellows then connect with other Mercy people building on the web by making more connections...

“  
**OUR PASSION FOR  
JUSTICE FOR ALL  
INDIVIDUALS HAS  
UNITED US TO  
JOURNEY TOGETHER  
ON THIS  
FELLOWSHIP**  
”

By reading and reflecting on the monthly resources and the webinars, we deepen our connections, as well as connecting with others in the world when we are sharing and reflecting with them. It is an invisible, yet tangible and alive connection. Each of us has gone beyond our doors for the sake of the displacement of our earth and the displacement of people. So often this happens due to a self-centered hunger for power, wealth, and greed. The monthly resources affirms, strengthens, supports, and motivate us, as well as giving us insights about the effects of change in the world and how these affect our whole earth, all human beings, and all life forms. All of this encourages and gives us hope for a more just world.

The other fellows, our leaders, and the different panelists on the webinars, as well as most of our other resources, all reveal that women have a lot of power to influence and to lead. It is women who care about others in practical ways such as caring for the whole household. We join with other justice women in the world crying and longing for a just world that allow each individual to be respected and enable them to live life to the fullest. It is a challenge for us when we don't always see immediate effects of change in community and society. It is easy to feel disempowered when whole systems are imbalanced and corrupt in some countries. It is always the ordinary person and family who are most effected at the grassroots level.

For example, in my own country of Papua New Guinea, people are dying from curable diseases due to lack of proper medical facilities, or not enough specialised doctors. Poor roads full of potholes mean many do not have access to good health care and local hospitals or aid clinics. It is those who are vulnerable and marginalized who cannot afford to go somewhere else for the better health treatment. And so mortality rates are high.

It is my hope that one day the cry of the 'displaced persons' and 'the earth' will be heard by the people in power so that there is peace and justice in the world."

## REFLECTION BY

### THERESIA TINA (MELF 2019-2020)





# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **What type of individual is the fellowship looking for?**

The Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship is looking for women who have a strong Mercy affiliation, commitment to justice and advocacy, recognized as an "emerging leader" in a Mercy context, highly motivated and team oriented, and open to inclusivity and diversity.

- **If I am not affiliated or involved with the Sisters of Mercy or a Mercy Institution, can I still apply?**

The Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship was designed to be inclusive and diverse; however, the grant calls upon the capacities of emerging leaders that have been affiliated and involved in the Mercy Network.

- **I am a Sister of Mercy, am I eligible?**

Yes, the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leader Fellowship highly encourages Sisters to apply.

- **I am a male, can I apply?**

Unfortunately, no. The grant was developed to provide leadership opportunities and expand upon the capacities of women to be leaders around the world.

- **How many Mercy Global Action Emerging Leader Fellowships are awarded each year?**

The Mercy Global Action Emerging Leader Fellowship is highly competitive and we plan to award 10 Fellowships to a diverse group of women from around the world.

- **What is the timeline for the application process?**

- November 19th, 2023: Application opens
- January 19th, 2024: Application submission deadline
- January 26th, 2024: Finalists are notified and interview dates are scheduled
- January 26 - February 12th, 2024: Interviews (selected applicants)
- February 12th, 2024: Mercy Global Action notifies candidates of acceptance
- September 16-25, 2024: First Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship Session

- **How long is the Fellowship? When does it begin and end?**

The Fellowship runs for approximately 12 months, beginning in September of 2024 and ending in September of 2025.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **I cannot attend one of the program international encounters, can I still apply for the program?**

Unfortunately, no. All aspects of the program are mandatory for Fellows. If you cannot attend this year, we encourage you to apply next year.

- **Are there issues in which MELF is particularly interested in?**

The Sisters of Mercy, Mercy International Association through the Mercy International Reflection Process have identified environmental degradation and the displacement of persons as two areas of concern. These concerns are complex and interconnected. Key issues identified are, but not limited to: mining and fracking, oceans, violations of human rights defenders, climate change, water, refugees and migrants, homelessness, human trafficking, women's political participation, family violence and mental illness.

- **What is the cost of the fellowship?**

This program is fully funded and makes a significant investment in each fellow, in the hope that each one will be personally transformed and commit to making a difference in our world. As such, fellows need to be fully prepared to invest time, energy and personal commitment to this program.

- **What is expected of the fellows during the program?**

Fellows are expected to attend and participate in three international encounters in Cambodia, New York, and Dublin; complete an individual research project on a pertinent Mercy justice issue of choice; engage with local Mercy justice grassroots networks, participate in online webinars; meet with a Mercy mentor; and complete all reading modules over the course of 12 months.

- **If I still have a question about the program after reviewing this document, how should I contact the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship?**

If you have reviewed this document and still have a question, please email us at: [mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie](mailto:mariettalatonio@mercyinternational.ie).

You can expect an answer to your email in three business days, but usually sooner.



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