

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

Welcome to our first issue of 2024! We are delighted to be back on board and connecting with our global Mercy community.

There's been a flurry of activity in the MGA office as we prepare for a big year ahead. In terms of events at the United Nations, the Commission for Social Development launched on 5th February (see Page 2) and our MGA team is busily preparing for a special parallel event at this year's Commission on the Status of Women, which will take place in March. This parallel event will coincide with the NYC immersion of Cohort 3 of the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship, and we can't wait to join the Fellows in learning and advocacy on the theme of 'Leading with Dignity'.

We can't believe it's here already, but the Lenten season is soon approaching! Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 14th and ends on March 31st. This year, Fellows from the MELF Cohorts have been invited to participate in Mercy International Association's (MIA) Lenten Reflection Series, 'Opening our Hearts'. Stay tuned for their reflections during each week of Lent. Reflections will be shared across MIA and MGA social media platforms.

Our existing priority justice themes of *Water*, *Migration*, and *Women's Leadership* will continue to guide us in 2024. We look forward to the adventures ahead, and please remember that we love to hear from you. Contact us anytime at mercyrep@mercyinternational.ie

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OF COMMISSION
FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT #62**

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS
ISSUE:

ANGELA REED RSM
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JEMIMA WELSH
MARIETTA LATONIO
ISABEL SALTER



Image: Canva licence

At the United Nations

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC LENS...

- *Commencement of the 62nd Commission for Social Development (February 5-14)*

February 5 marked the beginning of the 62nd Commission for Social Development, an annual conference which unites UN Member States, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders in a dialogue on the transformative policies needed to advance social development. At its core, social development is about moving towards a world where everyone enjoys a standard of living that is reflective of human dignity, regardless of variables such as ability or income.

This year’s priority theme is: ‘**Fostering social development and social justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication.**’ There will also be discussion on the emerging theme, which is about the influence of digital technology on social inequality.

This year, the MGA office is engaging with the Commission in several ways. We have submitted a written statement to the UN on our hopes for a new ‘eco-social contract’ which honours both the rights of people and planet, we are engaging with the adjacent Civil Society Forum, and we have sponsored two brilliant side-events: one with UNANIMA International, and one with the Working Group to End Homelessness.

COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
INCLUSIVE SOCIAL POLICIES & POVERTY ERADICATION:
KEY TO END HOMELESSNESS & ACHIEVE THE 2030 AGENDA
 Join us for a discussion between representatives of UN agencies, a person with lived experience of homelessness, and civil society representatives about the intersections between eradicating poverty, ending homelessness, and achieving the 2030 Agenda. Speakers will identify the transformative social policies needed to achieve a just future in which the human right to a secure, habitable and affordable home is a reality for all.
Thursday, 08 February, 2024
 1:15-2:30pm EST
 Conference Room A, United Nations Headquarters

COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Decommodifying People, Place, and Planet: Transformative Policies Towards Unconditional Inclusion and Belonging
Wednesday, 07 February, 2024
 1:15pm-2:30pm ET
 Conference Room A, UNHQ New York



Looking beyond this year’s Commission, we have also contributed to a report by the NGO Committee on Social Development titled ‘Bridging Vision to Action.’ The report critically assesses the implementation of both the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, identifying gaps and providing recommendations for the succeeding set of global development objectives post-2030.

Thematic Areas

DISPLACEMENT OF PEOPLE

• *MGA at the 2024 Global Forum on Migration & Development*

From 22-26 January, Cecilie Kern, MGA's Global Policy and Research Advocate and Chair of the NGO Committee on Migration, attended the 14th Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Summit in Geneva. The Summit was the culmination of 18 months of preparation under the French chairmanship of the GFMD. Mercy Global Action has been engaged every step of the way, contributing actively to the background papers and the thematic workshops through the Civil Society Mechanism.

Before the Summit began, 110 civil society delegates gathered for an in-person Civil Society Preparatory Meeting, which began with a ceremony to honor migrants and civil society leaders who have passed before us, those who are missing, and all migrants at risk of their lives. Members of civil society from all over the world discussed the state of migrant and human rights worldwide, whether multilateralism is working, social cohesion, closing civic space, and concrete collective steps forward in addressing the lack of global progress, accountability, and shrinking civil society space.

During the GFMD Summit itself, national governments came together with civil society, the business community, local authorities, and youth to discuss and share practices related to climate mobility, the rights of migrants, diaspora, labor migration, the role of culture and narratives in shaping public perceptions of migration, and multi-level governance. Cecilie facilitated a conversation between civil society and governments on the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, participated in the Roundtable on Culture and Narratives, and co-moderated a discussion between the United States government and US-based civil society representatives. She also attended various side events, including at the newly-created Grassroots Forum for Migration Governance, an important civil society-organized space focusing on migrants themselves.

Cecilie reflects: "It has been a privilege to participate in the GFMD, and to advocate for representation of the diverse perspectives, experiences, and voices of civil society in conversations about migration narratives. All stakeholders have important responsibilities to ensure that the language we use and the information we share about who migrants are, why they move, and what they contribute to their communities upholds the dignity and identities of migrants, strengthens social cohesion, and works to eliminate xenophobia and discrimination."

MGA looks forward to engaging with the incoming Chair of the GFMD, Colombia, in the year ahead.



• Halfway through her internship with MGA, Izzy shares some of her highlights so far!

Images: Isabel Salter

Intern Update!



Engaging with the United Nations

Representing MGA at UN events



IT'S POSSIBLE WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EMPOWERED TO SHAPE THE FUTURE.



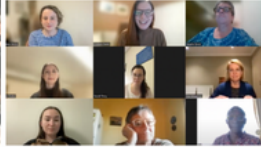
Being welcomed into the UN faith-based community



Taking our advocacy to the streets



Making new Mercy connections from around the globe



Early international calls



Boiling the kettle every 2 mins



Soaking in the office views



Living in Astoria

with Mercy Volunteer Corps



& being welcomed into their retreats



Exploring NYC...



Broadway



The Met



Central Park



Snow!





- ***Upcoming: MELF NYC Immersion & the 68th Commission on the Status of Women (March 11-22)***

Every year, the MGA office looks forward to participating in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which is the premier UN event on gender rights. This year, the theme of the Commission is ***‘Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective’***.

At the end of January, Cohort 3 MELF Fellows had an introductory webinar on CSW, presented by Sr Winifred Doherty (Congregation of Our Lady of the Good Shepherd). See below for Fellow reflections...

“Sr Winifred’s presentation about the UN was very well put together. I loved her ease as she presented such a complicated system for those of us who have never attended any of the convenings. I also took to heart her quote that “the UN is a gospel space worth of our interest, engagement, and prayers.” I found myself feeling reassured by her quote this week when a close family member commented that “nothing good comes out of the UN.” And the conversation turned to the hearing about the genocide in Palestine and how the UN’s security council vetoed a cease-fire.

I have also recently learned more about the enormous amounts of money corporations or governments spend to lobby for their issues within the UN. And all this time, I thought this was a place where no lobbyists were allowed. I was naive to think that this was the place where only people of goodwill, representing their countries came seeking justice. AUGH!”

– ***Hilda Cruz***

“It is a source of hope for women and girls that the UN established the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Being the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, is something big for women. Through this commission, the voice of women throughout the world will be heard. Although this is not the reality at this time, but it will pave the way to this aspired reality.

I am grateful to Sr Winifred for walking us through the ins and out of UN, particularly CSW. So much has been going on in addressing the issues on women. The issues on discrimination of women, trafficking, gender equality and many more are given importance and attention. Our challenge is to take an active part on this advocacy on women. Even in the church, we still do not feel that real equality. It is a long way to go but we will keep the faith and courage to continue the work.” – ***Sr Virgencita Alegado (Jenjen)***



• *Upcoming: MGA Side Event for CSW68*

MGA is excited to be hosting a parallel event during the 68th Commission on the Status of Women. Titled **‘Financing with Dignity: Aligning Capital and Values for Gender Justice’**, the event is set to take place on Friday, March 15th at 12:30PM EDT in the Church Centre for the United Nations, New York City.

The event will explore how our faith and values can serve as lodestars for the global economy, guiding the ways we use capital to achieve sustainable gender equality. Contributors will share how their organisations have used capital to combat poverty and improve the lives of women and girls around the world. In doing so, they will address the importance of reframing ‘progress’ to create new models of investment that are rooted in belonging, creativity, and human dignity, while sharing how their personal and spiritual values guide their work. We welcome members of the Mercy World to attend! A recording will also be made available.



The poster features the Mercy International Association logo at the top center. Below it, the title 'FINANCING WITH DIGNITY: Aligning Capital & Values for Gender Justice' is written in large, bold, purple letters. Underneath the title, it says 'A CSW68 Parallel Event'. On the left and right sides, there are illustrations of women in blue hijabs looking at tablets. In the center, there is a circular portrait of Jemima Welsh, with the text 'Moderated by Jemima Welsh' and 'Women's Leadership Development Associate, Mercy International Association'. To the right of the portrait, there are three icons: a calendar icon with the date 'March 15, 2024', a location pin icon with the address 'Chapel, Church Center for the United Nations, NY', and a clock icon with the time '12:30 - 2:00PM EDT'. Below these icons, the word 'FEATURING:' is written in purple. At the bottom, there are four columns, each with a name and title: Elizabeth Garlow (Co-Founder, Francesco Collaborative), Bryan Pini (President, Mercy Investment Services), Sr Marilyn Lacey rsm (Founder & Executive Director, Mercy Beyond Borders), and Ciara Feehely (Head of Fundraising & Communications, VITA).

• *Jemima attends Facilitative Leadership Course*

From 10-13 January 2024, MGA’s Women’s Leadership Development Associate, Jemima Welsh, attended a Facilitative Leadership Training with Sr Marg Endicott and Pam Searle. Marg and Pam have been running this training, which covers Theory U and Theory of Participation methods, for many years throughout the Mercy and Edmund Rice communities both in Australia and overseas.



Image: Jemima Welsh

This course took place at Seville Mercy Conference Centre in Cairns, Australia – a beautiful place surrounded by lush rainforest! Jemima is one of five people being mentored by Marg and Pam to be able to run this course for others; she was also joined in this training by Sr Theresia Tina, member of the Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea. The wider group consisted of representatives from Mercy ministries, Edmund Rice flexi schools across Australia, and other Christian ministries.

Jemima says, *“This was such an amazing opportunity and I feel immensely lucky to be learning from two experts in their field. I hope to soak up as much knowledge as possible to improve my facilitation skills and build my confidence applying these in service to our growing Mercy community.”*

“USEFUL RESOURCES

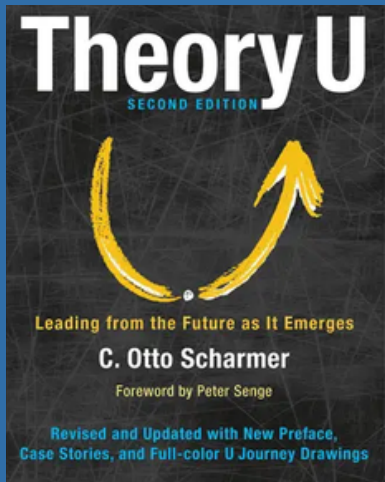


‘Bright Shining: How Grace Changes Everything’
A memoir by Julia Baird



Image:
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Classroom Resources on Conflict in Israel and Gaza
Mercy Education System of the Americas



Theory U Website and Resources

UPCOMING EVENTS & INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAYS

- *February 5-14: 62nd Commission for Social Development*
- February 8: MGA Asia Pacific Network Forum
- *February 15-March 31: Lent*
- February 20: World Day of Social Justice
- March 2024: Announcement of Cohort 4 MELF Fellows!
- March 6-17: MELF Cohort 3 Fellows’ NYC immersion
- March 8: International Women’s Day
- *March 11-22: 68th Commission on the Status of Women*
 - March 15: MGA’s side-event: ‘Financing with Dignity: Aligning capital and values for gender justice’



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