

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2024 | VOLUME 8 ISSUE 8



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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

Dear friends,

Welcome to the October edition of our newsletter!

This edition is another jam-packed one, with reflections by Cohort 4 of the MGA Emerging Leaders Fellows on their first overseas immersion in Cambodia, as well as updates on the UN Summit of the Future and other global events attended by our team.

With conflict continuing to ravage many parts of our world, including Palestine, Lebanon, Sudan, Haiti, Ukraine and Myanmar, and with increasingly *unnatural* disasters tearing through many of our communities, we would like to share a prayer of hope written by Sr Angela Reed rsm, Head of MGA.

Her words remind us of the strength that can be found in unity, compassion, and a commitment to holding onto ‘outrageous hope’ in dark times. You can find this prayer on the following page.

We hope you find the articles in this edition insightful and uplifting as we continue to work together for a more just and merciful world.

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ISSUE:

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Look for the Light

Look for the Light,
Sustaining, energizing light.
Source of Healing, Source of Joy.
Look for the Light

When violence erupts and guns, canons and bombs take life,
Casting shadows over the earth,
Leaving overwhelming grief and sorrow.
Look for the Light

When women are degraded, humiliated and killed,
Robbed of their dignity and life.
Look for the Light

When generations of people are displaced, disorientated and uprooted
from their homes.
Look for the Light

For those overwhelmed by chronic illness, addiction and despair.
Paralyzed by fear of abandonment.
Look for the Light

When Indigenous people are ignored, despised and sacrificed.
Scarred by endless discrimination.
Look for the Light

When Earth is extracted, ravaged and pillaged,
Leaving no room for regeneration and life.
Look for the Light

For those who are disillusioned and empty, no longer connected,
No longer Believers.
Look for the Light

Look for the Light,
Sustaining, energizing Light.
Source of Healing, Source of Joy.
Look for the Light.

– Sr Angela reed rsm, 2024



Image: MGA

Cohort 4 of MELF Embarks on First Overseas Immersion...

The first overseas immersion of Cohort 4 of the MGA Emerging Leaders Fellows took place from September 16 – 25 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Over the course of the ten days, the fellows enjoyed a rich tapestry of experiences and spent quality time getting to know one another. From the joy of being welcomed into Pchum Ben – a deeply spiritual festival where Cambodians honour their ancestors through prayers and offerings to monks – to the heartbreak of hearing local speakers talk about Cambodia’s journey to reconciliation after years of civil war and genocide, the immersion was nothing short of profound. The serene grounds of Metta Karuna Reflection Centre, combined with the gracious hospitality of Sr Denise Coghlan rsm and the Jesuit Refugee Service staff, provided the perfect space for deep contemplation and group bonding.

Towards the end of the immersion, the Fellows took part in a webinar to share about their experiences in Siem Reap. [A recording of the webinar is available to watch here.](#)

Scroll on to read daily reflections from the Fellows and watch short videos of the experience...



Reflections from the Fellows...

Day 1 – McKenna Smith & Sr Mai Nguyen Doan

On the first day, we took a tour of Metta Karuna Reflection Centre. Sr Denise introduced us to symbols around the grounds that represent the culture, history and faith of the Khmer people.

McKenna: One thing that stood out to me was the ‘woman at the well’ statue and how important water is to the world. Water allows us to survive and pray but it can also cause ample destruction, especially when resources for protection are depleted. Getting to bring the water from the well up was moving because it allowed me to live in the shoes of the samaritan woman and think about how often I question Jesus’ motives in my life when all he wants to do is love me.

Sr Mai: I was deeply touched by each of the symbols, as each of them speaks to me on a different aspect of my personal life experiences, faith journey and religious life journey. I take what I perceived today with gratitude, acknowledgement and mindfulness. I hope what I learnt today continues bringing awareness in my day-to-day encounters with others.



Day 2 – Jewellyn Enemecio & Libby Blom

On day 2 Sr Denise arranged for our group to hear the stories of Reth and Not, two individuals who are integral to the work of Metta Karuna, as well as Sok Eng, who works with vulnerable children in Cambodia.

Reth shared his harrowing experiences of captivity under the Khmer Rouge – surviving detention, losing both legs to a landmine, and overcoming challenges as a double amputee. His resilience and determination are a testament to his character. Not, who also lost a leg to a landmine, shared how he found care and support from religious figures during his painful childhood. Sok Eng, who lost her family and old life when the Khmer Rouge came to power, endured extreme hardships as a university student forced to abandon her studies and work on the Trapenge Thmore Dam. Despite the brutality and challenges she faced, Sok Eng survived and has since dedicated her life to protecting vulnerable children in Cambodia. As a group, we participated in a mass of thanksgiving at the dam, recognising its significance as a life source for the people today.



The stories of Reth, Not, and Sok Eng highlighted how forgiveness played a crucial role in their healing and ability to move forward. As time goes by these stories will serve as a reminder of the importance of forgiveness in our own lives. It's a process that can be challenging but ultimately liberating, allowing us to break free from the chains of the past and embrace a more positive and hopeful future.

Day 3 – Teresa Vaughan & Fozia Gulab

Day three was marked with fellows' participation in 'Pchum Ben' ceremonies at two pagodas. Pchum Ben spans over fifteen days of spiritual significance during which families gather to visit different pagoda to make offerings of food (rice/eatables), drink and prayers, specially remembering and praying for the deceased members of the family.

The fellows were accompanied by some of the community members of Metta Karuna. Each one of us carried food, drinks and incense to be offered at pagoda, following the customs of the Cambodians. We participated in some of the rituals such as prayers, putting rice in different bowls for the monks, lightening of candles, offering incense to the statue of Lord Buddha and listening to the prayers chanted by the chief monks.

Overall it was an experience of respect and reverence to embrace differences for a just and peaceful world.



Day 5 – Charlotte Cummings & Sarah Terry

Day five began with a beautiful session of prayer, in which the Fellows were encouraged to share Prayers of the Faithful and reminded that we were half-way through our first immersion. A beautiful blessing by Mary Wickham was read, entitled 'Honouring the Works of the Sisters of Mercy from Around the World'. An excerpt reads as follows:

“We are people from many parts of the world, diverse of tongue, talent and place – who pray together as friends of Mercy and friends for Mercy. We are united by a spirit and a story born in a house in Dublin, now spread to the outer reaches of the earth and the inner recesses of the heart.”



Fellows then had a chance to engage the group with presentations about the Mercy works in their home countries. We learned so much from each other, including the shining light that is illuminating the way forward for Mercy around the world, in so many ways.



Images: MGA

Day 6 – Jessica Marshall & Luciah Njogu

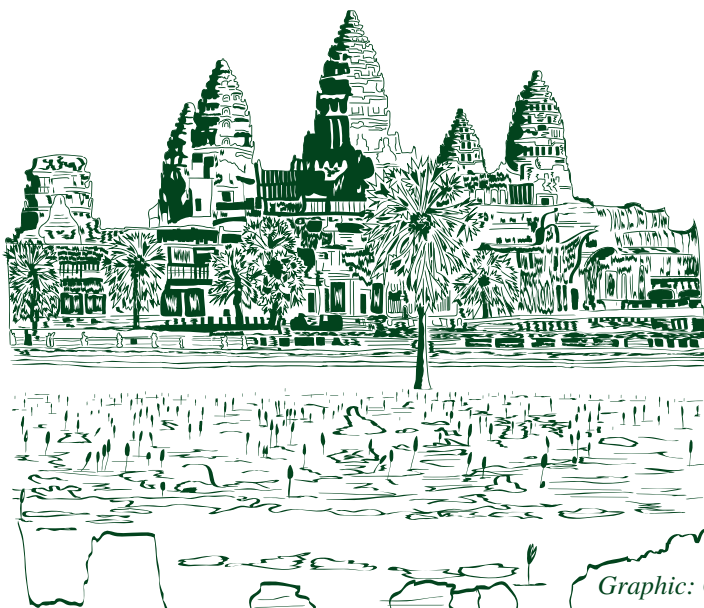
Day six saw us set out on Tonlé Sap Lake, where we offered a prayer of gratitude and praise for the beauty of creation surrounding us and thinking of our own countries that we all come from. The experience of cruising through the floating village was eye-opening; homes built on the water, each telling stories of resilience and resourcefulness as the communities adapt to the ebb and flow of the waters. These communities have adapted to their unique environment; standing as a testament to sustainability, as its residents have developed methods to coexist with the lake's natural cycles.

We paddled through the mangroves of Kampong Phluk, navigating passages in small canoes. Accompanied by local women, their singing harmonised with the gentle lapping of water, creating a serene and tranquil atmosphere. This journey deepened our appreciation for the fragile balance of life in these unique ecosystems. In the evening, we gathered together as one united community at the local Catholic church for mass, including the priest's pet dog.

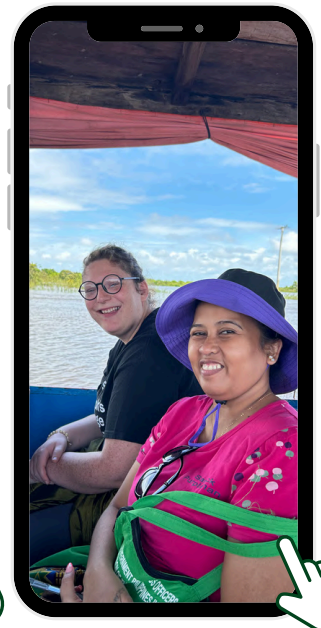


Image: MGA

Watch the Fellows' Adventures...



Graphic: Canva licence





At the United Nations

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC LENS...

- *Updates from the Summit of the Future*

At the end of September, world leaders, members of global civil society, and various other stakeholders came to UN Headquarters for the Summit of the Future, which aimed to address pressing global challenges and strengthen international cooperation. At the Summit of the Future, and the Action Days which immediately preceded it, governments and stakeholders discussed issues like climate change, sustainable development, peace and security, and digital governance. At a time when the world is experiencing multiple and intersecting crises, the Summit focused on better equipping the multilateral system to address the challenges of the 21st Century. If you are interested in the government commitment adopted at the Summit, you can read the [summary of the Pact of the Future](#) here.

MGA co-organized a side event during the Summit Action Days entitled “Migration for the Future,” focusing on human mobility considerations within the main chapters of the Pact for the Future (1. Sustainable development and financing for development; 2. International Peace and Security; 3. Science, technology, innovation and digital cooperation; 4. Youth & Future Generations; 5. Transforming global governance). Speakers from Palestine, Afghanistan and the United States spoke about the issues they have encountered from their lived experience and academic research and discussed how human mobility should be considered in the future of the international system. Cecilie Kern, MGA’s Global Policy and Research Advocate gave opening remarks during the event. She said, *“In order to realize the aspirations of the Pact of the Future, governments and other stakeholders will need to implement comprehensive and effective international cooperation efforts to ensure that migration can happen in a safe and dignified way. We will continue to uplift the realities of migrants and communities at the grassroots so that the global frameworks we need to address the challenges of the present and the future are centered on the experiences, needs, and rights of people on the ground.”*

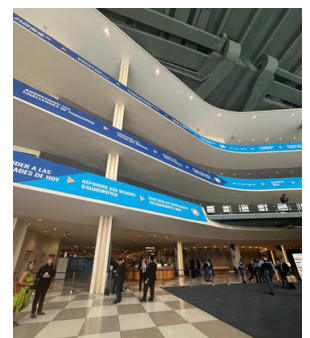




Image: MGA

Thematic Areas

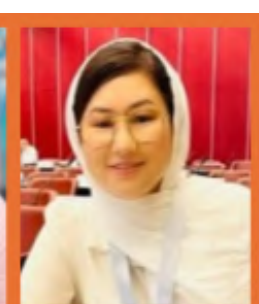
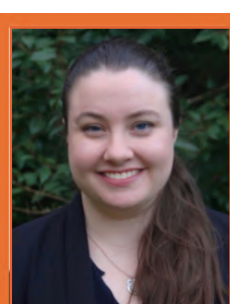
DISPLACEMENT OF PEOPLE

- *MGA at Mercy Foundation’s “Home Truths” Webinar*

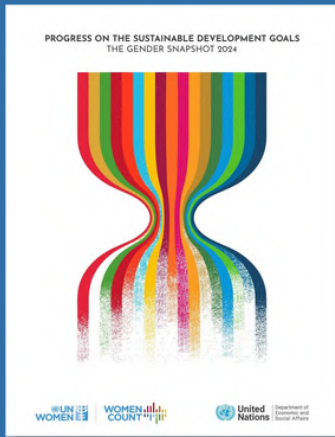
Cecilie Kern, MGA’s Global Policy and Research Advocate, spoke as a panelist at Mercy Foundation’s webinar to commemorate World Homeless Day on October 10th, entitled “Home Truths.” Cecilie joined experts in Australia who discussed the challenges and barriers women face and the effective solutions and interventions that enable women to achieve independence and escape cycles of violence, exploitation and homelessness.

Cecilie gave updates about the state of affairs of global policymaking at the United Nations related to homelessness and migration with a gender lens. She spoke about how MGA engages with advocacy at the UN through the Working Group to End Homelessness and the NGO Committee on Migration. She also shared important upcoming opportunities for us to raise the experiences and challenges faced by migrant women who are at risk of homelessness, and to advocate for policies that ensure that people can live and move in safety and dignity.

Sue Mowbray, CEO of Mercy Foundation, also announced the launch of the Mercy Foundation’s Grants to End Homelessness program for 2025. Grants are available for seeding initiatives, services, projects, advocacy and research that will contribute to the goal of ending homelessness by supporting permanent housing, housing first and permanent supportive housing solutions. You can find [more information here](#).



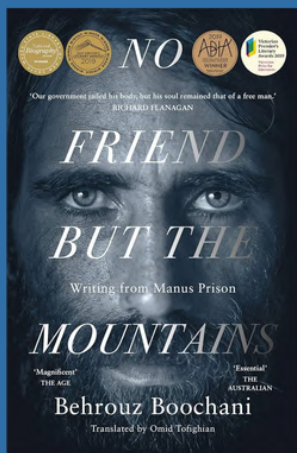
“USEFUL RESOURCES



Progress on the SDGs:
The Gender Snapshot 2024



World Migration Report 2024
International Organisation for
Migration



No Friend But the Mountains:
Writing from Manus Prison,
Behrouz Boochani



UPCOMING EVENTS & INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAYS

- October 11: International Day of the Girl Child
- October 13: International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction
- October 15: International Day of Rural Women
- October 17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- October 24-30: International Disarmament Week
- October 24: United Nations Day



Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative fortnightly 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:

[\[Link\]](#)