Mercy International Association

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

- ***Hello From MGA Office and Welcome to Katelin!***

It has been a busy start to the year. MGA has recently welcomed their 2026 intern, Katelin Lawrie, into the office.

This month, we attended the annual Commission for Social Development, which focused on strengthening the Doha Commitments made last year at the Second World Social Summit.

We are preparing for the upcoming Commission on the Status of Women, which will focus this year on ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers.

The Commission on the Status of Women will also welcome the MELF Fellows for their New York City immersion. You can also read about MELF Cohort 5 and their incredible achievements already down below.

As we look to the future, we are looking forward to the First International Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in April; the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in April; and the International Migration Review Forum in May.

Stay tuned for some exciting news for the year ahead.

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Image: Canva

At the United Nations

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC LENS...

- ***UN Commission for Social Development Focuses on Advancing Social Justice***

The 64th Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD64) took place from 2-10 February at UN Headquarters, focusing on the Priority Theme "Advancing Social Development and Social Justice Through Coordinated, Equitable, and Inclusive Policies," and the Emerging Theme "Eradicating Poverty and Ensuring Dignity through Resilient Care and Support Systems." You can read Mercy's written statement to CSocD64 here.

Only three months after the adoption of the Doha Declaration at the Second World Social Summit, this year's Commission for Social Development marked an important milestone in mobilizing action to implement and follow up on social development commitments.

Cecilie Kern, MGA's Global Policy and Research Advocate, moderated the closing panel of the CSocD Civil Society Forum, and delivered a statement to the Commission as Chair of the NGO Committee on Migration. In her closing remarks during the Civil Society Forum, she emphasized the importance of vibrant civil society engagement:

"At a time of rising polarization and weakened institutions, as even limited spaces for civil society engagement are narrowing, it is more critical than ever to protect and expand them. The Civil Society Forum stands as a model - a practice that makes our collective work more inclusive, more responsive, and ultimately more effective."

Next year, the Commission for Social Development will explore the Priority Theme "Strengthening social development through intergenerational approaches for achieving sustainable development and the implementation of the Copenhagen and Doha commitments towards 2030 and beyond." Later this year, the Mercy Global Action team will draft a written statement on this theme, and invites people from the global Mercy community to share how they see intergenerational approaches in their work.







All Images: MGA



Image: Giovanni Culmone

Talitha Kum

International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against the Trafficking of Humans

"Siamo Tutti Speranza" ("We Are Hope") by Katelin Lawrie

"Siamo Tutti Speranza" ('we are hope') was an apt rallying cry for the young people involved in Talitha Kum's IDPAAHT 2026.

I was sent as a youth representative from the Oceania region, alongside representatives from all over the world, including Japan, Botswana, France, Brazil and Lebanon, and more. It was powerful to come together as youth from all over the world to update, engage and inspire each other, and to send us each home with a renewed vigour in our hearts.

The week started with some of the delegates attending the Pope's address, where they were able to speak to the Pope and enlighten him of the work we're doing. With Pope Francis having been a steadfast supporter of Talitha Kum, Pope Leo shares his enthusiasm.

The youth were all given an opportunity to present on their regions and explain the work they are doing to combat Human Trafficking. From women's empowerment workshops to parish and school information sessions to legal research grants, I was so inspired and empowered to come back to my community and enliven our efforts. We undertook a Walk for Humanity through Rome, where we heard about the history of slavery in the city, and reflected on what history could teach us about modern slavery today. We also participated in a candlelight ceremony, where hundreds of friends and strangers lit the fire of hope and justice in their hearts, and heard from a survivor of human trafficking in a heartfelt and authentic expression of hope in darkness.



Image: MGA



Image: Giovanni Culmone

- *"Siamo Tutti Speranza" , continued*

Other activities, such as human trafficking workshops, survivor testimony readings, and a livestream relay focused on bringing the message out into the world about the issues of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. We ventured out on a rainy Saturday to undertake a protest and demonstration, to voice our anger, and show our commitment to the dignity of every person. We shouted, "peace begins with dignity", "no childhood should be stolen", and "siamo tutti Speranza", drawing crowds of strangers to listen to our message.

The week concluded on Sunday February 8th marked the Feast Day of Saint Josephine Bakhita, herself a former slave. On this day, we marched to Saint Peter's Square and watched Pope Leo give his address, again emphasising the right of each person to freedom and dignity.

We each take home with us a light burning in our hearts to bring hope to our communities. Young people are integral to the fight against human trafficking. We are hungry for justice. We are angry, enlivened, and passionate. Most importantly, we are hope.



MOMENT WITH MARYBETH
LENTEN REFLECTION

By William Arthur Ward

Fasting and Feasting

Lent should be more than a time of fasting.
It should be a joyous season of feasting.
Lent is a time to fast from certain things and feast on others.
It is a season in which we should:

Fast from judging others; feast on the Christ indwelling them.
Fast from emphasis on differences; feast on the unity of life.
Fast from thoughts of illness; feast on the healing power of God.
Fast from words that pollute; feast on phrases that purify.
Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude.
Fast from anger; feast on patience.
Fast from pessimism; feast on optimism.
Fast from complaining; feast on appreciation.
Fast from negatives; feast on affirmations.
Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness.
Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others.
Fast from discouragement; feast on hope.
Fast from suspicion; feast on truth.

Fast from thoughts that weaken; feast on promises that inspire.

MELF UPDATES


MELF Cohort 5 in Cambodia

Image: MGA

Check-in with MELF Cohort 5

Cohort 5 of the Mercy Global Action Emerging Leaders Fellowship has been busy over the past six months. They participated in an immersion to Cambodia in September, where they were able to connect with each other, the culture and themselves. The Fellows are now preparing for their immersion to New York, where they will attend events for the Commission on the Status of Women. The Fellows have also been attending monthly webinars on justice topics and reflecting on human rights in their communities. Read some of the insightful reflections below.

A Reflection On Leadership
Sr Mary Kanyi - Kenya

"Leadership has been a thread woven through my life from an early age. As a student in secondary school, and later through college and university, I was entrusted with leadership roles that challenged me to serve others with responsibility, integrity, and vision. Even then, I sensed that leadership was not about authority, but about service, influence rooted in example, and the ability to bring people together toward a common good."

READ MARY'S FULL REFLECTION HERE





Images: Mary Kanyi, rsm

A Reflection on the Right to Education

Pamela McLoughlin (MELF Cohort 5)

My name is Pamela McLoughlin, and I have the privilege of teaching students at Mercy College, Coolock, the heartbeat of Catherine's beginnings. As I reflect on Article 26, the right to education, I believe that Human Rights in Education is heard in the voices of our students and felt in the heart of Coolock.

When we talk about human rights, they can sound far away something written in documents, something distant from daily life, especially when we are fortunate enough not to have to search for our rights. This is particularly true when it comes to education here in Ireland.

But in Mercy Coolock, the human right to education looks far more familiar. It looks like students walking through our doors each morning, being welcomed without question. It looks like the everyday rhythms of a school where belonging comes naturally. It looks like community expressed in warm smiles, safe spaces, listening ears, and open hearts.
Here in Coolock in our classrooms, corridors, and community those rights show up in ordinary, quiet, and deeply powerful ways, in the voices of our students. In Mercy, everyone has a place. You feel that the moment you walk through the door.

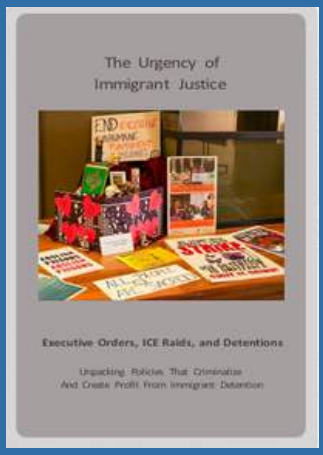
READ PAMELA'S FULL REFLECTION HERE



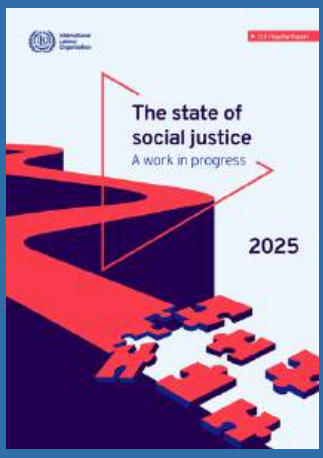


Images: Pamela McLoughlin

USEFUL RESOURCES:



Hilda Cruz (MELF Cohort 4): Urgency in Immigrant Justice



ILO: The State of Social Justice - A work in progress



NGO CSW/NY: Voices Against Violence Podcast



Image: Canva licence

UPCOMING EVENTS & INTERNATIONAL COMMEMORATIONS

- **February 20:** World Day of Social Justice
- **February 21**: International Mother Language Day
- **March 3:** World Wildlife Day
- **March 8:** International Women's Day
- **March 21-27:** Week of Solidarity with the People's Struggling Against Racism and Racial Discrimination
- **March 21:** International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- **March 22:** World Water Day
- **March 24**: International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims



Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative monthly e-newsletter (MercyeNews). 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]