Mercy International Association

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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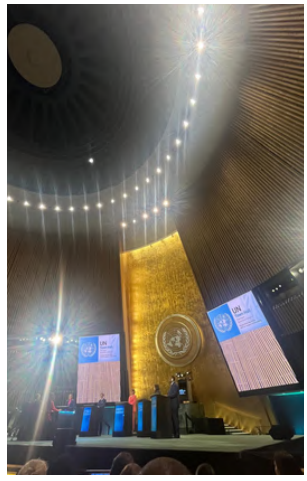
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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

- ***UN Secretary-General Townhall***

In anticipation of the election of a new UN Secretary-General later this year, the current candidates Michelle Bachelet, María Fernanda Espinosa, Rafael Mariano Grossi, Rebeca Grynspan, Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett, and Macky Sall appeared in a Townhall session where they defended their values and articulated their priorities as candidates.

"The relationship with the local organisations to be able to craft the strategies to to help the communities is a major pillar of any action that the UN has to take. I have said very clearly, the UN is unique, but it is not alone. [What we need to do] is to partner with regional organisations, to partner with local organisations that are able to be boots on the ground with the knowledge, with a closeness to the people for us to be able to act more and much more accordingly to the needs of the people […] we need to empower also our people on the ground; with headquarters trying to be like a wall between the ground and member states. So, let's do the reform on the ground for the UN to act as one and partner with the organisations on the ground with the ownership of the country, but also the ownership of civil society."



--- Rebecca Grynspan, on the meaningful participation of civil society

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

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Image: Canva

At the United Nations

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC LENS...

- ***Mercy at the 2026 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development***

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development took place from 7-15 July at the United Nations in New York. The HLPF is the annual review of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals that were developed in 2015. This year's Forum theme was 'Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all' and focused specifically on SDG 6 (water and sanitation), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 17 (partnership for the Goals).

During the first week of the Forum, Angela Howard McParland from the Justice Team of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas (and MELF Cohort 5 member) as well as Julia Cavallo and Bobbie Anne Abson from the Conference for Mercy Higher Education visited the Mercy Global Action office to engage in the HLPF as and to develop future programming for Mercy university students with Mercy Global Action.



Mercy engaged in the HLPF through attending events in the UN and also events run by other faith-based organisations and coalitions, engaging in the Voluntary National Reviews, especially from countries of Jamaica and Tonga where Mercy has a presence, and following the reviews of the SDGs. In particular, the review of SDG 6 was important to Mercy's work and advocacy, and served as an important stepping stone on the road to the upcoming UN Water Conference in December.







- ***HLPF cont.***

During the second week of the Forum, Mercy co-sponsored an event run by the NGO Committee of Social Development and the Mining Working Group entitled 'Improving Access to Safe Water: Innovative Initiatives at the Grassroots'. The event focused on the incredible initiatives happening at local and grassroots levels that ensure water justice in impoverished or disadvantaged communities. This featured speakers from civil society participants who are doing work on the ground for water justice, a representative from the Mission of Burundi, and a professor from Colombia University's School of Public Health focusing on water and sanitation. The event also featured video and written submissions highlighting real work being done.

Mercy contributed a video from the Mukuru Promotion Centre in Kenya, where the Sisters of Mercy maintain a borehole for the residents of the Community and work to address pollution and environmental degradation so everyone can have access to clean, safe water. Katelin and Cecilie from the MGA office were integral to the planning and running of the event and it was a huge success. Everyone came away inspired by the efforts of the community.

- ***Mercy Presence in the HLPF Voluntary National Reviews***

As part of the 2026 High-Level Political Forum, Jamaica and Tonga contributed Voluntary National Reviews to report on their progress towards the 2030 Agenda. We have a Mercy presence in both countries; Jamaica's Sisters of Mercy serve nine schools, educating about 5000 students, while Sisters in Tonga engage in secondary school teaching, parish work, support for women and children, prison chaplaincy, and justice and development programmes. The following are quotes from the VNR presentations delivered by Jamaica and Tonga:

JAMAICA



"Notwithstanding shifts in global dynamics and challenges to multilateralism, demand that SIDS pursue context relevant solutions that leverage our unique strengths of strategic geography, vast ocean resources, institutional learning and systems built through decades of experience and cooperation [...] We are a resilient people so that even as we work on recovery and reconstruction with our partners and stakeholders, we have evaluated progress on the SDGs and continue to embark on a transformative pathway to accelerating sustainable development progress once more."

--- Kamina Johnson Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

TONGA



"We're proud to share the progress reflected in this review, having witnessed firsthand the positive changes and transformations taking place across many areas of our society. While the figures and indicators are important, they tell only part of the story. Behind every statistic is a family with greater security, a child with new opportunities and a community with new hope and resilience. Since our first VNR in 2019, we've strengthened the integration of sustainable development goals, international planning and made strides in improving our monitoring systems. The number of SDG indicators has nearly doubled from 69 in 2019 to 128 in 2026."

--- Fatafehi Fakafānua, Prime Minister of Tonga



Image: MGA

- ***Mercy Explores the Future of Migration Advocacy at the Reclaiming Space Forum***

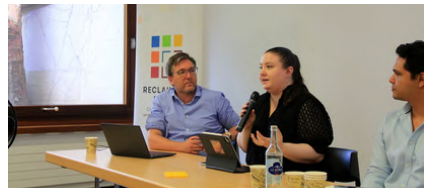
From 7-9 July, the "Reclaiming Space: Civil Society Strategy and Engagement Forum" took place in Geneva, Switzerland. The Reclaiming Space Forum gathered migration-focused civil society advocates focusing on capacity-building, strategic alignment, alliance-building, and forward-looking coordination across global migration governance processes.

This Forum was convened in a context of eroding protections of the human rights of migrants and increasing restrictions on the meaningful participation of civil society organizations, including migrant-led, grassroots, and marginalized communities. These constraints have been seen across global processes at the United Nations, such as the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and the recent International Migration Review Forum, and outside the UN, such as at the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD). This Forum was designed to bring together experienced leaders who have had the privilege of accessing these global decision-making spaces, along with grassroots migration experts who have not been afforded the same chances.

Cecilie Kern, Mercy Global Action's Global Policy & Research Advocate, was invited to participate as a panelist, workshop facilitator, and participant in this Forum, which was designed as a space for peer exchange and practical learning. During the multistakeholder dialogue on Day 1, Cecilie brought civil society priorities into conversation with Member States and UN representatives to identify openings for follow-up and creative engagement across the GFMD, GCM reviews, regional dialogues, thematic forums, and other spaces where migration governance is shaped. She participated in workshops on Day 2 focused on social protection, labor rights, and human rights, as well as gender and participation. Cecilie also led a workshop on Day 3 to prepare participants for Mission Visits, providing skills training on how to prepare impactful advocacy messages and how to conduct successful meetings with Member State delegates. After this workshop, participants conducted fruitful discussions with four Missions to the UN in Geneva. Cecilie also joined other civil society leaders in a strategic evaluation and reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of our cooperative mechanisms, and how we can adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities.

It was an honor to be invited to share Mercy's expertise and leadership engaging in international migration policy spaces, and we're looking forward to future gatherings rooted in solidarity to protect civic space and uphold the rights of people on the move.







MELF COHORT 5 Presentations

As we draw nearer to MELF Cohort 5's final immersion in Dublin, we are excited to share the summaries of the Justice Projects our Fellows are undertaking:

Floravel Ambas



RETHINK & ACT NOW

The JUSTICE Project: RETHINK & ACT NOW! (Acknowledging the Crisis to Transform and Nurture Our World) is a children and youth-led environmental advocacy campaign that seeks to cultivate climate awareness, environmental accountability, and sustainable action among young people. Initiated by Floravel K. Ambas under the mentorship of Maria Melba I. Cinco. This project is implemented through a team named GEM Champz (Green Earth Misericordian Champions) composed of children and youth facilitators from Misericordia Children & Center, Inc.(MCCI) and Holy Infant College of Tacloban City, Inc. (HICTCI) both under the guidance of the Religious Sisters of Mercy Tacloban Phillipines, led by Lakisha Lazaro nd Lino Cart Cabillos. Inspired by the lessons of Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda and anchored on the RETHINK (Refuse a Throw-away culture and Innovate Nature-friendly Knicks) framework. In accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 13, the initiative empowers children and youth in the community to become active stewards of creation. Rooted in the charism and mission of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, the project embodies Mercy through compassionate service and Justice by promoting the integrity of creation and care for our common home.

Tatiana Diaz



Critically Discussing Immigration Today: A Compilation of Mercy Words and Works

As immigration enforcement increasingly affects our communities, the urgency to lead thoughtful, compassionate responses has grown. In this moment, grounding my work in Mercy has been essential. I have leaned on the words, prayers, and advocacy of the Mercy community to guide myself and others with clarity and conviction. Across Sisters, associates, and lay partners, I have witnessed a consistent and courageous commitment to supporting immigrants. Their statements offer moral clarity and a shared language that helps foster solidarity, shape consistent responses, and strengthen advocacy efforts. In times marked by fear, particularly within immigrant communities, this shared language becomes a powerful form of resistance—one I have found especially strong within Mercy. This compilation aims to make these resources accessible to others seeking guidance and courage, while murals further root these messages in lived experience, honoring the resilience and stories of immigrant communities.

Mary Kanyi, RSM

Soil Degradation and Its Effect on Education



Soil degradation is the decline in the quality and productivity of soil caused by factors such as deforestation, overgrazing, erosion, pollution, and poor farming practices. When soil becomes degraded, it loses essential nutrients needed for healthy plant growth, leading to reduced agricultural production. This affects many families, especially in rural areas that depend on farming for their livelihood. As household income decreases, parents may struggle to pay school fees, buy learning materials, or provide adequate nutrition for their children. Poor nutrition can affect student's concentration, health, and academic performance. In some cases, children may be forced to miss school or drop out to help their families earn an income. Soil degradation can contribute to poverty and food insecurity, which negatively impact the overall learning environment. Therefore, protecting and conserving soil is important not only for agriculture but also for ensuring access to quality education and sustainable community development.

Aura Matalines, RSM

MERCY FORWARD: An Integrated Leadership Formation Program Handbook



Mercy Forward is an integrated Leadership, Spirituality, and Mission Formation Program designed to prepare current and emerging leaders to embody the Mercy Charism in every dimension of their personal, professional, and ministerial lives. More than a leadership development initiative, it is a comprehensive formation journey that integrates spiritual growth, leadership competency, and mission engagement to cultivate leaders who serve with wisdom, compassion, integrity, and hope. Grounded in the life and spirituality of Catherine McAuley, informed by Catholic Social Teaching, and inspired by the Critical Concerns of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas—Earth, Nonviolence, Racism, Migration, and Women and Children—Mercy Forward seeks to form leaders who respond courageously to the needs of today's world while remaining faithful to the Gospel and the Mercy tradition. Rather than viewing leadership merely as a position of authority, Mercy Forward presents leadership as a vocation of service. Participants are invited into a lifelong process of formation that nurtures the whole person—mind, heart, spirit, and action—so that they may become compassionate leaders capable of transforming ministries, organizations, and communities in the spirit of Mercy.

Saska Sertimer

"SILENCE NO MORE: Building an Interprofessional Elder Protection Network to Detect, Prevent, and Respond to Elder Abuse in Georgetown, Guyana".



Elder abuse is a serious and underreported global public health concern affecting millions of older adults worldwide. Despite its prevalence, cases frequently remain undetected due to stigma, fear of retaliation, cognitive impairment, and limited provider training in Georgetown, Guyana, increasing socioeconomic strain, migration of adult children, and caregiver burden heighten the vulnerability of older adults. Globally, approximately 1 in 6 adults aged 60 years and older experience some form of abuse in community yet reporting rates remain low.

Pamela McLoughlin



Mercy in Our Steps - The Catherine McAuley Mercy & Justice Camino: An Interactive student Pilgrimage Experience Online or On Location

The Catherine McAuley Mercy & Justice Camino is a learning and reflection journey inspired by the life of Catherine McAuley and the places in Dublin connected to her story. Designed for students in Mercy schools, and especially for the students of Mercy College Coolock, the Camino invites participants to explore Catherine's life, the Mercy story, and the values that continue to shape Mercy education today. The Camino can be experienced by walking the route through Dublin or virtually through a range of learning resources, allowing students to participate wherever they are. Through reflections, photographs, audio recordings, prayers, and learning activities, students are invited to engage with Catherine's story and discover its relevance for their own lives.

Angela Howard McParland



Integrity of Word & Deed: Living Mercy under Rising Authoritarianism in the United States

Since Catherine McAuley's opening of the house on Baggot Street, Sisters of Mercy have anchored their work and charism in meeting the concrete needs of the people and context in which they serve. Members of the Mercy community focus on both charity, meeting direct needs, and justice, addressing systemic roots of social issues. In the United States, this justice work has leveraged democratic norms to advocate for policies that uphold human dignity and the integrity of all of creation. In the last several years, however, we have witnessed new and unrelenting violence in this country against immigrants, women and the LGBTQ+ community, People of Color, as well as violence continuing to seep outside our borders to other countries around the world.

Josie Ruawhare



Preventing Economic Displacement in Vulnerable Communities: A Culturally Grounded Approach to Economic Dignity

Economic displacement is often seen as the loss of housing, employment, or financial security, but it often begins earlier through debt, financial stress, limited support, and reduced agency. This justice project explores a culturally grounded approach to economic dignity as a way of preventing displacement in vulnerable communities. Grounded in grassroots practice in Aotearoa New Zealand, the project draws on a Financial Wellbeing initiative co-designed with community members and specialist advisors. It moves beyond traditional financial literacy through a holistic approach that integrates cultural identity, relationship-based learning, mentoring, collective support, and behavioural change. The project shows that economic dignity is restored not through information alone, but through culturally responsive spaces that strengthen confidence, self-determination, and informed decision-making. My hope is that Mercy ministries can adapt these principles to invest more intentionally in prevention, restoring dignity and supporting stronger families and communities.

Kilisitina Vaetangitau, RSM **Raising Awareness to Recognise, Respond to, and Prevent the Harmful Impact of Drug Abuse on Individuals, Families and School Communities in Tonga**



Tonga is experiencing a growing drug crisis, shifting from being a transit hub for drug trafficking in the South Pacific region to facing serious local addiction issues, primarily involving methamphetamine, along with increased sales and manufacturing. This growing issue is leading to mental health crises, which put a significant strain on the public health system. This situation is also associated with increased crime rates and a rise in violent crime, significantly impacting children and families within the community. The purpose of this justice project is to implement a programme aimed at raising awareness to recognise, respond to, and prevent the harmful effects of drug abuse on individual health, family well-being, and school communities. This programme addresses various aspects of health, including physical well-being, mental and emotional health, and spiritual, family, and community health, based on the four pillars of the Tongan House model.

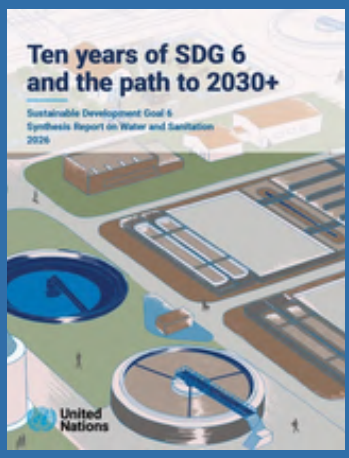
Presentations will take place on 26-27 August 2026. Presentations will not be livestreamed, but recordings will be made available online after the immersion. We look forward to sharing all of the Fellows' hard work with the Mercy community.



READ MORE:



[UNODC: World Day against Trafficking in Persons 2026 - Trapped Behind the Scam]



[UN: SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2026]



[UN: Meet the Candidates for UN Secretary-General]



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UPCOMING EVENTS & INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAYS

- **July 30:** International Day of Friendship
- **July 30:** World Day against Trafficking in Persons
- **August 9:** International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
- **August 12:** International Youth Day
- **August 19:** World Humanitarian Day

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