

MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION



MERCY GLOBAL ACTION

Source: MIA MGA UN

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A MERCY IMMERSION IN GUYANA, A REFLECTION

- SR ANGELA REED RSM

At the invitation of Sr Karen Schneider MD, I had the privilege of travelling to Guyana and participating in Mercy Medical Mission. Witnessing numerous works of Mercy in Georgetown and then participating in the Medical Mission in the Interior of Guyana was a profound experience and one which I hold with great gratitude. Sisters of Mercy have a wonderful heritage of creating foundations where there is a need for education, health and other pastoral activities. Guyana is no exception. It is humbling to see the works of Mercy that have developed over many decades and that respond directly to a need.

Currently the Guyana Sisters of Mercy and partners are active in numerous ministries throughout the country including the Mercy hospital, Mercy Wings which is a vocational and day care school, Mercy Resident Care for the Aged, St John Bosco Orphanage a safe house for

women who have been trafficked and various other educational programs. It was evident throughout these ministries that there is a strong commitment to the dignity of each person and a desire for each one to flourish.

Ministering alongside a committed medical mission team made up of pediatric doctors, nurses and community workers, some of whom were Sisters of Mercy, was a great honor.



Photo: Angela Reed.
Pictured: The Mercy Medical Mission Team 2018

**The Sisters of Mercy have held special consultative status within the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 1998*

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Photo: Angela Reed rsm

For many children, their encounters with the medical mission team enabled them to have immediate treatment and care. Other children were referred to Georgetown Mercy Hospital for further tests. All in all, over 1500 Amerindian children were screened and treated for any medical concerns. As we travelled by boat along the Pomeroon River I observed the magnificent rainforest and beautiful surroundings in which many of the Guyanese Amerindians live. I became acutely aware of the need to preserve such an environment and was mindful of the risk that extractive industries pose to this remote, largely untouched location. I was also aware that back at UN headquarters the Indigenous Peoples Forum was being held. This forum brings Indigenous people throughout the world to the global table, where Indigenous concerns as well as visions for the future are shared with Member States and other stakeholders. Colleen Cloonan (MGA UN) was present at the forum and participated in many dialogues. Some of her reflections follow this report.

As our work at the UN aims to reflect the grassroots ministry of mercy, there is much to learn from this experience. I am mindful of the oft quoted 'leave No-one behind' from the UN 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. I am disturbed that many in our world do not have free, clean, potable water to drink. I am painfully aware that many indigenous people do not have access to affordable medical supplies and treatment. Most significantly, I am reminded of the great disparity between the rich and those rendered poor.

I am also moved by the compassion and care offered to so many in our Mercy ministries. This is a great sign of hope and provides the impetus to continue to advocate for a more inclusive and equal world. I would like to especially thank the Sisters of Mercy Guyana for their warm welcome and openness. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Sr Karen Schneider and her inspirational medical team from Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Special thanks also to Mercy Sisters; Mary McGory, Nidia Quispe, and Barbara Ghiel.

Mercy Global Action continues to bring Mercy grassroots experience to the global agenda, seeking to address the root causes of poverty which are so often steeped in discriminatory economic and social systems that marginalize and render people poor.



Photo: Angela Reed rsm

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THROUGH OUR ECOSOC* EYES...

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The Seventeenth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues commenced on April 16th and ended on April 27th. This year's Forum highlighted the priority theme of "indigenous peoples' collective rights to land, territories and resources".

At the opening session on April 16th, President of Bolivia, Evo Morales celebrated indigenous peoples within the United Nations and their ability "to debate; not just to provide indications of how we think, but as our ancestors have done- defend life, humanity and Mother Earth". His words were encouraging for participants of the Forum as he urged Member States, civil society and indigenous alike "to be organized...we have to shoulder our responsibility. This is a critical juncture in the United Nations...we have to guarantee the rights of Mother Earth...and if we aren't respectful of Mother Earth its impossible to think of there being future generations".



Mercy International Association: Mercy Global Action at the UN followed the plenary sessions and were active in supporting both side and parallel events of the Forum, see below! To view the opening session and subsequent plenary sessions recorded by the UN, click to the left! In addition, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs were diligently updating their 'United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues' Facebook Page with live events, interviews, articles, and outcome documents for those who were unable to attend. To learn more see <https://www.facebook.com/unpfii/>

- ***NGO Mining Working Group Co-Sponsors Side-Event of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues***

On April 19th, the NGO Mining Working Group, along with the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations, the Panamazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM) and the Special Rapporteur for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, came together to discuss the "Violation of Human Rights in the Amazon: Networks to Respond to and Redress Them". This event highlighted the threats and violations of mining companies at the expense of indigenous peoples and land.



Photo: MJA: MGA at the UN

Moderating this esteemed panel, Sr. Margaret Mayce, OP, the chair of the NGO Mining Working Group described the struggles of indigenous within the Amazon, where indigenous are not only at the risk of losing their lands and resources, but also their own lives for defending their human rights. Members of REPAM, such as Elvia de Jesús Arévalo Ordóñez from the Comunidad Amazonica de Accion Social Cordillera del Condor Mirador of Ecuador, described her personal experiences regarding the damage caused by extractive industries in her region. She stated "They have manipulated the prices of land, taken advantage of the economic needs of the people, and violently evicted landowners." Furthermore, explained the stark reality that "the rivers are totally contaminated and we cannot swim, drink their water, and fish. The food sustenance of its inhabitants is over, life in these rivers is over".

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People, detailed how in our own advocacy it is important to recognize extractive industries as "key perpetrators in exploiting indigenous communities and their land". We must continue to work towards an international legally binding treaty which holds these corporations accountable for their human rights abuses (as explained further in 'Degradation of the Earth' p. 5), lift up indigenous representatives of affected communities to be a voice for their people and land, and to seek remedy for these abuses.

Further information on this event can be found at: <https://holyseemission.org/contents/events/5ade0126d8fd5.php>

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THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACED PERSONS



- ***MIA: Mercy Global Action at the UN and the Global Compacts on Migration- An Update***

As there has been a stretch of several weeks with no intergovernmental negotiations toward a Global Compact on Migration, it has been a key priority for MIA: Mercy Global Action at the UN, as a member of the Committee on Migration, to meet with UN Member States' delegates to discuss the potential and progress of the Compact. Both Sr Angela Reed rsm and Colleen Cloonan have committed to partake in Mission Visits to the Permanent Mission of the Philippines, Kiribati, New Zealand, Costa Rica and Colombia to the United Nations. These visits are both strategic and vital for civil society to highlight important issues that need to be strengthened within the Compact.



In addition to Mission Visits, several of our NGO colleagues have strategically facilitated discussions to present civil society perspectives on the conversations that have been unfolding among government delegations during negotiations. One of the many noteworthy events was organized by Caritas Internationalis and the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations on May 3rd entitled "Faith Leaders Call the World to Share the Journey of Migrants and Refugees". This panel discussion was led by religious leaders from diverse faith traditions. Each brought perspectives and insights from their religion on the topic of migration and how each have respectively come to the aid of millions of refugees and migrants on the move.

In his opening remarks, Archbishop Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See Mission to the United Nations, highlighted how "Faith-based organizations are unique in their reach and presence at all points of the migratory journey, often filling gaps in services to migrants that governments, and other civil society actors, are incapable or unwilling to fill on their own...start[ing], not from political or economic perspectives, but from the affirmation of the human dignity of all people before all else." While some Member States have questioned the relevance of faith-based organizations during the negotiations towards a Global Compact on Migration, it is imperative that their work is celebrated and recognized by the international community as they play a pivotal role in the movement of peoples. Bringing attention to the strength of inter-faith partnership and collaboration, Revered Rachel Carnegie emphasized that while migration "can often times be divisive among different parties, the question of migration is often a unifying issue for religious groups." To watch this event in its entirety, click [here](#).

Moving forward, the fourth round of intergovernmental negotiations will take place from May 14th-18th. Delegations will continue their discussions where they left off in April and finish the reading of the **Draft Rev 1**, and continue on through the implementation and follow-up and review sections. Furthermore, the Co-Facilitators of the process have presented a concept note on a **capacity building mechanism** for the Global Compact. This capacity building mechanism proposes a "Migration Solutions Mechanism" featuring a proposed "connection hub", "start-up fund", "global Knowledge network" and "proposed institutional support". To read more, [click here!](#)

THEMATIC AREAS


Continued



DEGRADATION OF THE EARTH

- **MIA: MGA at the UN Attends an Interactive Dialogue on Harmony with Nature during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day**

In a meeting of the General Assembly on April 23rd, UN Member States and Civil Society met to discuss "Earth Jurisprudence in the Implementation of Sustainable Production and Consumption Patterns in Harmony with Nature". Falling in the midst of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples, this event truly encapsulated the life and spirit of Mother Earth whom we have failed with issues of climate change, consumption, pollution and loss of biodiversity. President of the General Assembly, Mirosław Lajczak, urged those present to redouble our efforts for Mother Earth. We have recognized the importance of protecting our planet, but we have no plan B or planet B, it is time to act and do. In addition, Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the UN, H.E. Diego Morejon Pazmino highlighted the need for humans to stop viewing nature as something that can be owned, but as a collective; with this, change our patterns of

 production and consumption. To view this interactive dialogue and learn more about best practice models from specific nation states, [click here!](#)

- **Business and Human Rights: Moving Towards a Treaty**

On April 25th, our colleagues in New York, including Franciscans International, Global Policy Forum, the Global Campaign to Reclaim Peoples Sovereignty and more, co-sponsored a panel discussion with the Permanent Mission of Ecuador entitled "Remedies for Cross-Border Human Rights Violations: A Status Report on the Binding Treaty on TNCs and other Business Enterprises". This interactive panel highlighted the process and progress of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group as they proceed towards an international legally binding instrument to regulate, within the scope of international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations.

This timely panel discussion was held at the end of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples, who so often have their own rights violated at the hands of these large corporations, as was emphasized in our 'ECOSOC' section. The integrity of this treaty, rests upon the political will of UN Member States to commit to recognizing human rights over trade and hold corporations accountable to people, not the other way around.



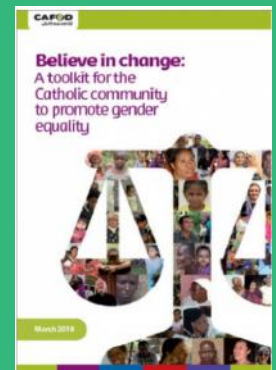
Photo: MIA MGA at the UN

The Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group will meet this October for a fourth time at the UN in Geneva; however, this time, they will have a draft of the historic treaty which is expected to be released this June. MIA:MGA at the UN are following this process closely. For more information, [click here!](#)

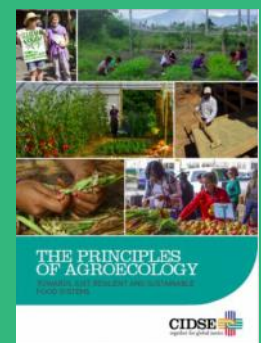
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USEFUL RESOURCES

CAFOD's Believe in Change: A Toolkit for the Catholic Community to Promote Gender Equality



CIDSE's The Principles of Agroecology: Towards Just, Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems



UN Climate Change Annual Report 2017



Child Rights in the Global Compacts



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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

• *Preparing for the High Level Political Forum's Review of the Sustainable Development Goals*

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) of the United Nations will be held from Monday, July 9th until Wednesday, July 18th 2018. The HLPF is the main United Nations platform for sustainable development and has acted as a mechanism to review the progress and challenges of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Annually, since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the HLPF has chosen a theme and/or specific SDGs to review. In addition, as part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, UN Member States are encouraged to conduct Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). These Voluntary National Reviews aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, best practices, challenges, policies and institutions of governments, as well as mobilize multi-stakeholder partnerships and support. To view which countries are up for review click [here!](#)

This year the theme of the Forum is "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies" and the goals to be reviewed are **Goal 6:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; **Goal 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all; **Goal 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable; **Goal 12:** ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; **Goal 15:** protect, resource and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable manage forests, combat".

Some of our colleagues from the NGO Mining Working Group have put together a survey to measure VNR countries' implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in light of the HLPF. If you would like to participate see <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MXKFZYK>



USEFUL RESOURCES

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) launched a series of videos to amplify the voices of migrants and refugees as part of a global campaign to "Stand Up for Human Rights". Videos reflect personal accounts, ways to change the dialogue from fear and exclusion to shared humanity, as well as sharing the positive contributions migrants and refugees make to our communities. To learn more about this initiative see <http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/migration/pages/videostories.aspx>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Some events MIA at the UN will be attending

- **14th May- 18th May- Intergovernmental Negotiations for the Global Compact Migration**
- **4th June-9th June- Intergovernmental Negotiations for the Global Compact Migration**
- **22nd May -The Santa Marta Group: Police and Religious Leaders United to Eradicate Human Trafficking**

NEWS UPDATE

The first real hint of summer coincided with the arrival of the Leaders Pilgrimage group from the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG). It's always a valuable, mutual learning experience, to work with the Leaders of the great range of Mercy ministries across Australia. Coincidentally, we are supporting a dedicated group of activists in Queensland, Australia; preparing for the upcoming session of the Permanent Peoples Tribunal on 'Human Rights, Fracking and Climate Change', May 14-18th, see notice for further information.

An excellent workshop conducted by Fr. Diarmuid O'Murchu msc titled: What Would Empowering Justice Look Like? – proved to be thought provoking and most informative, as reflected in the article below. The remainder of the month was taken up with research, conference calls, regular communications and networking with a number of different international NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations) we work closely with. This included participation in several initiatives prepared for 'Earth Day 2018', on 22nd April. MGA is committed to continue working to prevent plastic pollution, by supporting a ban on one-use plastic i.e. straws, food wrapping and throwaway coffee cups.

United in our collective work for justice
Denise Boyle fmdm
Team Leader Mercy Global Action

The Permanent Peoples Tribunal (PPT) May 14-18th



Activists across Australia have worked tirelessly to prepare the session of the PPT on 'Human Rights, Fracking and Climate Change'. It is to be co-hosted through the Spring Creek Project at Oregon State University, where for the first time in its 40 year history, the proceedings will be hosted online. The session will have an international focus and in addition to focussing on the rights of people, this PPT hearing will include arguments for the rights of nature.

The opinion handed down by the Tribunal will be available to use in other settings, to clarify and to affirm the human-rights obligations of States and all stake holders in Civil Society. Importantly, the hope is that the result of this PPT session will prove to be a significant step forward, in the on-going struggle to protect the health and wellbeing of the Earth's inhabitants... For further information see: **Permanent Peoples' Tribunal Session on Human Rights, Fracking and Climate Change**

WHAT WOULD EMPOWERING JUSTICE LOOK LIKE?

Workshop Conducted by Fr. Diarmuid O'Murchu msc, April 28th

Fr. Diarmuid O'Murchu msc is a member of the Missionary Priests of the Sacred Heart. He is a social psychologist, a couple's counsellor, author and international speaker of renown, who has been working for justice through social ministry in many places, most recently with the homeless and refugees in London. During this interactive workshop, Fr. Diarmuid focussed on the concept of empowerment and justice. He strongly believes the term justice must include eco-justice, hence he is advocating for the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, to include the 'Rights of Nature', if justice means providing the conditions for ALL life to flourish.

Fr. Diarmuid began the day by exploring important concepts related to justice:

Empowerment - co-creates the conditions for life to flourish, which it achieves in the context of mutuality. He cited John 15:15 where Jesus says to his disciples 'I call you friends' i.e. we are equals. There is no room for patronizing strategies here!

Charity versus Justice: The former is often a social service in response to an immediate need. In biblical terms the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' is a clear example of charity. The Exodus story in the Old Testament however, demonstrates the concept of justice as an example of a public collective action, responding to a long term need to change the situation.

Questions Fr. Diarmuid posed for reflection and response:

- When does charity become disempowering?
- How do we transcend the co-dependency often arising from charity?
- How do we restructure organisations so that Justice-making takes priority to Charity?
- What is / are the root cause(s) of injustice that need to be addressed?

Need to Change from King-ship to Kinship. Kingship is rational, logical, takes priority and is linear, supporting the top down, patriarchal model of leadership. In contrast kinship is relational, reflects working together and suggests companionship. Circles reflect this model best, whereas an isosceles triangle clearly indicates the authoritarian king-ship model.

Restorative Justice: is inextricably linked with right relationships. Fr. Diarmuid shared an example from Canada, modelled on the traditional practice of the First Peoples. It related to a young woman who had been sexually abused by her father. Her mother colluded by not doing anything to prevent or to protect her daughter from her father's abuse. Aged in her early 20's now, the young woman brought the issue to the police, who suggested resolving the case through restorative justice that involves the support of the local community. This entailed groups of three citizens who had minimum counselling and legal skills, committing to walk with the three key figures throughout the process.

One group journeyed with the father as he faced up to his guilt, realised the harm he had done to his daughter, coped with the betrayal of her trust and indicated his willingness to accept the consequences of his actions. The group accompanied him for a three year period, during which he agreed to intensive counselling; paid a substantial sum for his daughter to get the psychological treatment she required and carried out two hundred hours of community service. For the mother the group izens accompanyied her through the process of accepting that she was an enabler of the abuse, failed to protect her daughter, betrayed her trust and contributed to the complete breakdown of relationships within the family.

CONTINUED...

Those who accompanied the daughter ensured she had the emotional and psychological support that she required to begin the healing process. After 18 months the daughter felt strong enough to meet with each of her parents singly, to share the negative consequences of the abuse on her life. After a further 12 months she met with both parents together with a facilitator. Whilst participants had a number of questions relating to the above example, most agreed that it was more effective than the father going to prison with the possibility of no programme to process and to address the root cause of his abuse. The fact that the community continues to walk with and engage with the family has proved to be a tremendous support in the ongoing, healing process.

Ways to Reclaim the Priority of Justice in Society Today. This is urgent according to Fr. Diarmuid and focuses on education, with the emphasis not so much on Rights as on Duties. He stressed the importance of being proactive rather than reactive, including engaging with Government bureaucracy to effect change, challenging as this may be!

Networking Fr. Diarmuid believes, is a key element in reclaiming the priority of justice within society. He suggested the following as a check to ensure networking is an empowering process:

- a. Clear raison d'être for the creation or existence of the group
- b. Check how this group fits in with other like groups or movements.
- c. How does the group hope to achieve empowering outcomes?
- d. Within the group what are the skills and strategies for empowering communication?
- e. How open is the group to supplementing existing giftedness?
- f. What structures for regular evaluation are in place?
- g. Can the group recognise when its work is done?
- h. In this group who cares for the carers?



Following one of the group sessions a participant spoke of how her group had looked at language in line with the adage: 'Language Shapes Thought'. They came up with the following suggestions as empowering language:

- Working with those in poverty, rather than I'm working with the poor....
- I'm supporting instead of saying I'm supervising
- Use the term 'recovery' rather than 'addiction'.
- Say 'review' rather than 'evaluation'...

The workshop was an excellent means of thinking through important concepts related to empowering justice. To achieve it, necessitates changing attitudes, to collaborate out of the kin-ship model to provide the conditions for ALL life to flourish.

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly 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: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe