

# MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION



## MERCY GLOBAL ACTION

Source: MIA MGA UN

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### NEWS FROM THE MIA MERCY

### GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE UN

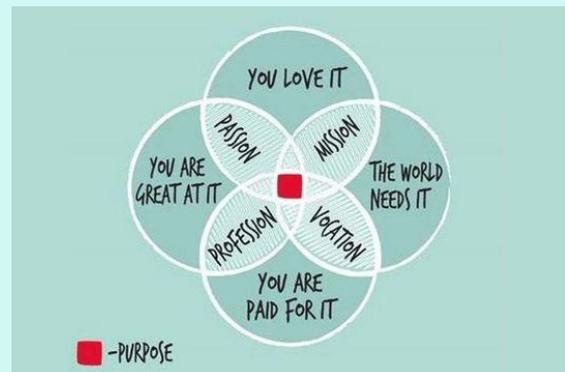
The MIA Mercy Global Action at the UN Office undertook strategic planning days with other faith based NGO's at the UN in Sea Girt, New Jersey to plan ways in which to effectively advocate at the United Nations in the coming year.

In addition to analyzing issues based strategies, a guiding **reflection** shone through on finding our 'reason for being'. In Japanese, the word Ikigai, represents just that. As a way to ground ourselves during our planning days, we looked deeper into our own missions, passions, professions and vocations. An individual's Ikigai is said to be a convergence of:



Photo: MIA MGA at the UN

- What you Love (your passion)
- What the World Needs (your mission)
- What you are Good at (your vocation)
- What you can get Paid for (your profession)



A notable quote that MIA Mercy Global Action at the UN chose from the reading reflection was:

*"Sacred Activism, encourages us... to find our purpose by 'following our heartbreak'. Andrew Harvey calls us to discover that which is most deeply disturbing in our world and to use this as a catalyst to propel our actions and discover where we can make the biggest difference. Meanwhile, philosopher and civil rights leader Howard W Thurman said: "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and do that... Because what the world really needs is people who have come alive."*

What is your Ikigai?

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

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# THROUGH OUR ECOSOC\* EYES...

## *UN women places a Spotlight on Gender and the SDG's*

MGA at the UN attended the launch of UN Women's new report entitled, 'Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. Considered to be the first of its kind, this report considers the intersectionality of gender across all of the 17 sustainable goals.

### **So what does the report reveal?**

UN Chief of Research and Data, Shahra Razavi, presented some of the major findings of the report. Despite the illusion of progress we still have far to go. Extraordinary measure must happen to address the gender gap.

- Globally there are 122 women aged 25-34 living in extreme poverty for every 100 men of that age group.
- The gender gap is most pronounced during women's productive and reproductive years
- Women are up to 11 percent more likely than men to report food insecurity.
- Globally, 303,000 women died from pregnancy-related causes in 2015. The rate of death is declining much too slowly to achieve target 3.1 of goal 3.
- Globally, 750 million women and girls were married before the age of 18 and at least 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone FGM.
- Women are less likely than men to own a mobile phone, and their internet usage is 5.9% percent lower than that of men.



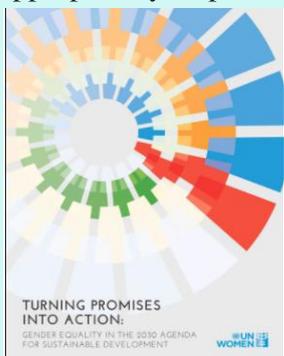
Photo: MIA MGA at the UN

The report focused on micro data, taking specific information from Columbia, Nigeria, Pakistan and the United States.

Significantly, the report reveals that there is a growing disparity between women who are poor and women who have access to greater resources.

### **Turning Promises into Action**

A key issue is the need for better data. The need for current data, monitoring progress for women across all ages, over every country, over a long period of time was identified as critical. The reader is challenged not to be 'gender blind'. It was noted that 6 out of 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals have no specific indicators tracking progress for women and girls. There needs to be a revolution in data, which will then enable the reality of women's experiences to be fully understood and appropriately responded to.



The report also argues for greater accountability, calling for transformative policies which allocate funding to currently chronically underfunded infrastructure for women and girls. The report places a spotlight on the predicament of poor, rural and remote areas in which women and girls are currently being left behind. Primarily, there is a need for public sector investment.

A key action stressed by Gita Sen concerned the role of civil society. Sen petitioned civil society to broaden their perspective and look closely at data and to not only focus on shadow reporting but bring in outsiders who can speak to the experience. The High Level Political Forum was noted as being a place of serious accountability with civil society being encouraged to vibrantly engage.

### **Inside the Report**

You can access the entire report online. The report provides a large spectrum of information through a gendered lens. Helpful sections include being able to view individual country data with fact sheets which are downloadable. Chapter 3 is interesting as it breaks down each of the Sustainable Development Goals through a gender lens. There is also a section on who is being left behind, indicating those particularly vulnerable to poverty and disadvantage. The report also focuses on violence against women and girls and makes some valuable recommendations.

Mercy Global Action at the UN recommends this report for all who wish to gain insight into the issue of gender and the SDGs.

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# THEMATIC AREAS

Continued



## DEGRADATION OF THE EARTH

### • Water, "the Lifeblood of Humanity"

Mercy Global Action at the UN attended event "Science for Water: Effective Solutions for Achieving SDG 6 and Water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda" on February 20th. This event was highlighted at the United Nations due to President of the General Assembly, H.E. Miroslav Lajčák's recognition of the issue of water, marking water as one of his main priorities during his term. He also announced that he will convene a High Level event on March 22nd, World Water Day, officially declaring 2018-2028 the Decade of Water. The event gathered esteemed panelists, bringing together policy, diplomacy and science to discuss the future of water. Water is life, and is the core of sustainable development, energy, human survival and healthy ecosystems. However, it is exacerbated by the effects of climate change and exploitation. To see change for good, panelists encouraged building upon political will, science, and the development of new and innovative partnerships.

H.E. Miroslav Lajčák started his opening remarks at the event illustrating the sobering reality of the issues of water scarcity and pollution. "Scientists predict that on June 4th Cape Town will have to start rationing water. As we approach this imminent "Day Zero", human health and life hang in the balance...we need water to survive. We can all agree on this. It is not by accident that ancient civilizations grew along the banks of rivers – from the Nile and the Yellow River, to the Tigris and the Euphrates. Technology has enabled people to settle further away from these cradles of civilization. But water will always be the lifeblood of humanity...". His solution for these issues? Science and fostering the innovative technologies that are sparking change in areas around the world.

To tackle the issues related to water the world needs coordinated action by all stakeholders at all levels. In addition, there are many technological advances that can assist this stark reality. Panelists offered best practices through both scientific and holistic approaches, along with tools to guide decision making and policies on water. While science and innovation are of primary importance, for MGA at the UN, human rights is always at the center. To learn more, watch event below!



Watch "Science for Water: Effective Solutions for Achieving SDG 6 and Water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda"

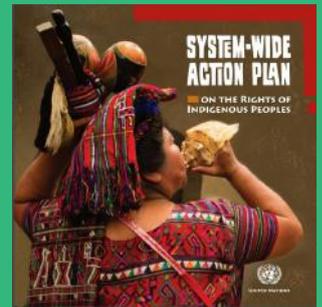
Read more: <https://www.un.org/pga/72/2018/02/20/science-for-water/>

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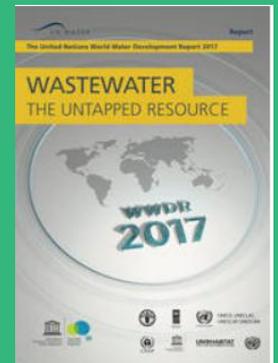


## USEFUL RESOURCES

### System Wide Action Plan on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



### 2017 UN World Water Development Report, Wastewater: The Untapped Resource



### Pope Francis's Video on welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating migrants and refugees



### Civil Society Declaration from the Commission on Social and Economic Development



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

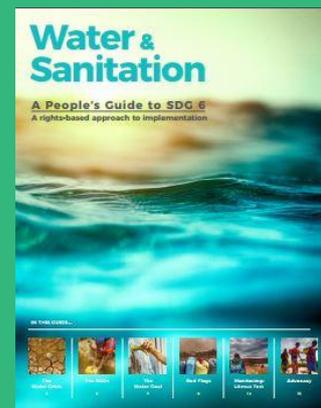
## • *Taking a Closer Look at SDG 6 "Water and Sanitation for All"*

In this issue of the newsletter, the focus of the water reflection is on the Red Flags section of the water guide. Red flags help us to ensure that we are aware of risks and possible loopholes in the understanding and implementation of the SDG water goal, targets and indicators. This is a critical section of the guide.

The points below name the red flags, for greater detail see pages 9-11. Be on the lookout for:

- Outcomes measured without reference to human rights dimensions
- Data that isn't disaggregated by different sectors of the population
- Attempts to create justifications for privatization; lack of public financing
- International co-operation restricted only to self-interested overseas development aid
- A narrow focus on water efficiency
- Market Based Conservation Strategies
- Integrated Water Resources Management

It is critical that the SDG's truly achieve what they set out to do. Therefore water advocates need to keep a close eye on water projects that claim to be responding to SDG 6. The above red flags indicate that there is a risk of overlooking the human rights dimension of water. The challenge is to be mindful of the risks and subtle ways in which dialogue and action on water can so easily take a narrow focus. As the issue of water justice is at the heart of our Mercy calling, you are encouraged to delve more deeply into the red flags section of the People's Guide to SDG 6. Try looking through a "red flag" lens with some of the resources within this edition of the Newsletter such as the "Science for Water" UN Event and the World Water Development Report. What do you find?



## USEFUL RESOURCES

The Good Shepherd International Foundation is releasing their newest documentary, "Mahila: a Women's Movement Rising," on March 8th International Women's Day, to celebrate the power of women helping each other and to support a movement of women walking together to enforce their rights. "Mahila" tells stories of empowerment from India's rural Dalit communities. Many Dalit women have suffered from a triple discrimination based on their gender, their caste and their impoverished economic class. The women of "Mahila" have found a rare voice and an important standing in their communities. They've achieved this through education, through access to credit and training to form businesses, and through awareness of their rights as citizens. Watch the film and find more information on this project at <http://www.mahilafilm.com/>.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*Some events MIA at the UN will be attending*

- 8th March - International Women's Day
- 12th March-23rd March -Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
- 12th March- 15th March- Intergovernmental Negotiations for the Global Compact Migration
- 12th March - Preventing the Trafficking of Rural Women and Girls
- 15th March - Wisdom, Water and Rural Women: Unmuting Women's Voices
- 22nd March - World Water Day

### NEWS UPDATE

In addition to regular meetings and networking with colleagues on the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, February was challenging with the migration of our email service from Outlook to Gmail. A positive outcome was that we checked and cleared hundreds of emails dating back a number of years. This in turn led to a ruthless clearing out of old reports and studies, followed by a similar 'purging' of dated articles and news items from our micro-site on the Mercy World website, in preparation for a change over to a new service.

Betty and I were very pleased to meet with Tomas Insua the Executive Director and Amy Echeverria, Board Chair of the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM), see article on this meeting below. Since meeting, Shay Dougall and the people of Chinchilla in Western Queensland, who are dealing with the consequences of unconventional gas mining in their area, we have supported their plans to participate in a Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT). Tom Kerns is chairing the planning committee for this; he and Denise had a productive Skype call to discuss progress to date and how the Mercy Family could support this initiative. See Tom's concise article on the PPT.

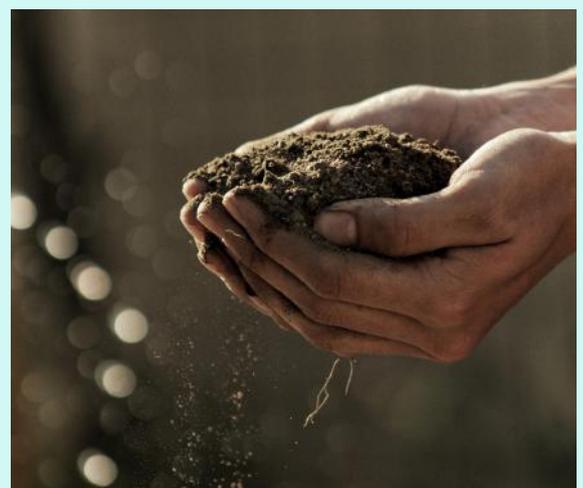
During the month we had productive conference calls with the Mercy Global Action Coordinators and the Working Group engaged in Cosmology and Eco-justice within the global Mercy Family. An important element of our meetings was how best to develop our programme, to incorporate further issues related to Earth and to Refugees / Migrants. More information on this in subsequent news updates.

Denise Boyle fmdm  
Leader Global Action Team

### GLOBAL CATHOLIC CLIMATE MOVEMENT – A Call to Action....

The Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) held their Board meeting in Maynooth earlier this month. Betty Lacey and Denise Boyle representing MIA-Global Action met with Tomás Insua, CEO and Amy Echeverria, the Chair of the GCCM Board, to discuss ongoing collaboration between the two organisations and to explore ways to expand our shared network. Like many members of the Mercy Family, Global Action has been an active member of GCCM since the organisation was set up in 2015.

In a relatively short time GCCM has grown into a global network with over 400 member organisations and thousands of individual members, many of whom are young people. The GCCM mandate is simple, respond to Pope Francis' call to action as clearly stated in his environment encyclical '**Laudato Si – On Care for Our common Home**'. As Tomás shared, GCCM was set up in January 2015 knowing that the Pope's encyclical was 'coming down the track'. When Laudato Si was launched in June of that year, GCCM was ready to embrace its message wholeheartedly and to share it globally, through its excellent communication strategy.



Via an informative power point presentation to about 40 people, Tomás shared the mission of GCCM and how it is implementing it: *"The Global Catholic Climate Movement is a first-of-its-kind international coalition of Catholics from many nations, continents, and walks of life. We are laity, religious, and clergy, theologians, scientists, and activists from Argentina, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, Kenya, Australia, the United States... united by our Catholic faith and our work in various roles and organizations on climate change issues"*.

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**1. SPIRITUAL DIMENSION:** We promote **Laudato Si'** and encourage local communities to undergo the 'ecological conversion' needed to overcome consumerism and heal our relationship with creation and the poor; the Season of Creation is the flagship project.

**2. LIFESTYLE DIMENSION:** We encourage **lifestyle changes** through the Eco-Parish program to reduce the carbon footprint from Catholic parishes worldwide and the **Divest-Reinvest** program to shift Catholic financial assets from dirty fossil fuels to clean renewable energy.

**3. PUBLIC POLICY DIMENSION:** We **raise our voice** in the public sphere to call for bold climate policies, by **mobilizing** in the streets, supporting **advocacy** efforts in the halls of power and **amplifying** the Laudato Si' message in the media.

Using a map of the world Tomás indicated how the organisation has grown rapidly across the five continents. GCCM has appealed to a huge audience of people, who are committed to working together, to tackle the climate change crisis. Laudato Si provides the way, which GCCM is highlighting in three dimensions or a three pronged approach i.e. spiritual, lifestyle and the public sphere. See diagram to the left.

The 'Spiritual' encompasses the promotion of Laudato Si and is a call to an ecological conversion. 'Lifestyle' is linked to changes that reduce my / our carbon footprint, plus it is an invitation to divest from fossil fuels and to reinvest in renewable energy. And the public sphere is a call to advocacy through mobilising on the streets, speaking truth to power wherever possible and amplifying the message of Laudato Si in the media.

Tomás emphasised the critical link between the global and the local. He was very keen to hear "stories" of implementation and change effected at grassroots level from those present and to establish links between the various organisations. He ended his talk on a positive note quoting paragraph 13 in Laudato Si: "*The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for **we know that things can change.***"

Lorna Gold from Trocaire, who is internationally known for her work on climate change and is a member of the GCCM Board, spoke about the Laudato Si Working Group in Ireland. They are liaising with the Irish Bishops' Conference, to implement the call to action in Laudato Si.

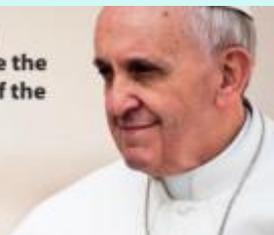
With participants from many different countries present, Lorna spoke of the importance of holding political candidates to account when they are looking for our vote to be elected. Unless we all speak about it, prospective politicians will not get the message that climate change is an urgent, moral issue. Candidates will listen if there is a group of one hundred people gathered in a room discussing their concerns around climate change, especially if they think there is an opportunity of winning votes!

In the area of education, there were many contributions from the floor. The general impression was that the schools are far more advanced in sharing the 'good news' of Laudato Si than other sectors and we should be encouraged with the advances they have made. This was particularly apparent in the primary or grade school sector.

The upcoming papal visit in August 2018 for the World Meeting of Families in Dublin was mentioned. It is anticipated that the Pope's visit will highlight the urgent issue of climate change. One concrete way is through speaking of the environmental footprint related to his visit. If the message of Laudato Si is to be translated into action, we could all get involved in promoting a 'zero rubbish campaign' i.e. to leave venues clean in the aftermath of the outdoor Papal Mass and family celebration, where thousands will gather to celebrate with Pope Francis. It was agreed to make contact with the organisers and engage with others to keep these venues rubbish free. If water fountains are made available, this will minimise the use of plastic water bottles. One participant shared that the US Super Bowl is now a zero waste event – encouraging all of us to emulate this for the papal visit.

"It is my hope that this Encyclical Letter can help us to acknowledge the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face."

Pope Francis, Laudato Si'



### The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal on the Human Rights Impacts of Fracking and Climate Change

The pockmarks of fracking pads are spreading around the world – from red rock canyons to rainforests, from farmsteads to suburbs. The effects are becoming clearer and more fully documented – poisoned water, bulldozed landscapes, sickened children, displaced families, lost livelihoods, greenhouse gas pollution, earthquakes. But as the scientific understanding of fracking's effects increases, the essential question that remains is a moral and legal one: **'To what extent does the harm caused by hydraulic fracturing constitute a breach of human rights?'**

To clarify the human-rights impacts of fracking and to affirm international standards of human rights obligations, we are assembling a session of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT) -- the *Tribunal on the Human Rights Impacts of Fracking and Climate Change*. It will be hosted virtually, and on the campus of Oregon State University, May 14-18, 2018.

The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal is a highly respected international forum that grew from the Russell-Sartre Tribunal, to investigate whether breaches of human rights norms occurred during the Vietnam War. Since then, it has conducted a series of high-profile hearings to determine whether human-rights standards were abridged in Bhopal, Chernobyl, and other sites around the world. The Tribunal on fracking will assemble a panel of jurists of international repute, to hear arguments from attorneys with expertise in human-rights law, who will call as witnesses, not only scientists and professors, but indigenous and settler people whose lands are being fracked.

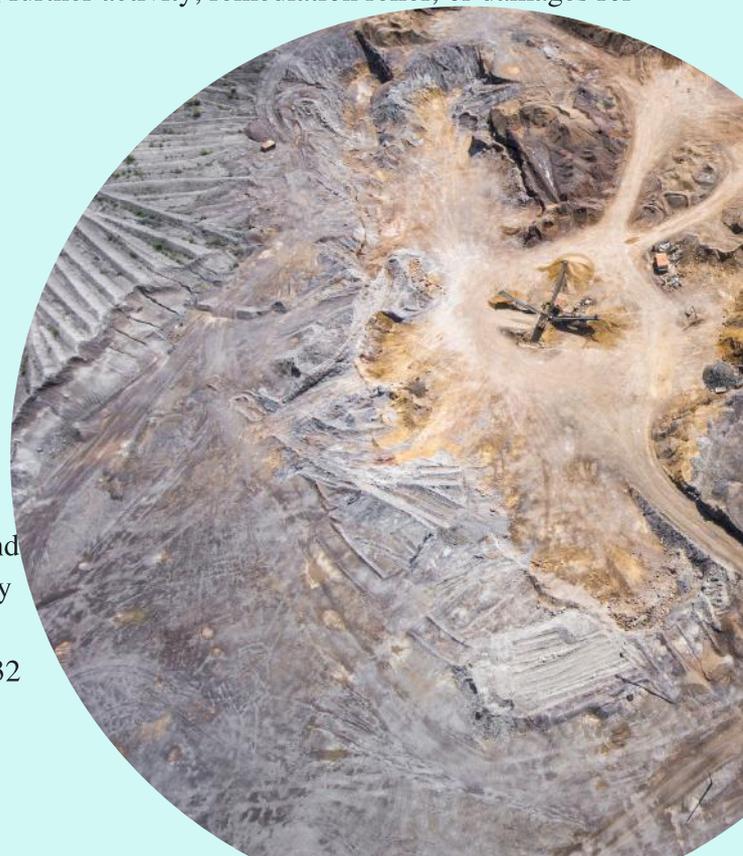
The attorneys will be asking the PPT judges for an advisory opinion on these four basic questions:

- Under what circumstances do fracking and other unconventional oil and gas extraction techniques breach substantive and procedural human rights, protected by international law as a matter of treaty or custom?
- Under what circumstances do fracking and other unconventional oil and gas extraction techniques warrant the issuance of either provisional measures, a judgment enjoining further activity, remediation relief, or damages for causing environmental harm?
- What is the extent of responsibility and liability of States and non-state actors for violations of human rights and for environmental and climate harm caused by these oil and gas extraction techniques?
- What is the extent of responsibility and liability of States and non-state actors, both legal and moral, for violations of the rights of nature related to environmental and climate harm; that is caused by these unconventional oil and gas extraction techniques?

Testimony has already been submitted from Australia on the impacts on human health written by the author of "Air Pollution and human health hazards: a compilation of air toxins acknowledged by the gas industry in Queensland's Darling Downs" at

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00207233.2017.14132>

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### CONTINUED...

The result from the PPT will be a judicial opinion of far-reaching effect. Because the Tribunal is an international, independent, deliberative body with recognized competence in human rights law, the Tribunal's opinion can be used in other settings to clarify and affirm the human-rights obligations of States and non-state actors. It promises to be a significant step forward in the on-going struggle to protect the health and wellbeing of Earth and its inhabitants.

Other documents that explain the Tribunal can be seen on **this page** of the PPT website. Also on that page...is the **Guide to Rights Based Advocacy**.

#### For more information:

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### THE ONGOING SDG CHALLENGE - From International to Local....

'The SDG CHALLENGE' was the title of an event showcased by Development Perspectives (DP) in Dublin on February 23rd. The aim of this event was to link the International to the grassroots and share what is being done to implement the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development in different countries. DP is a development education NGO, whose mission is to contribute to lessening poverty, inequality and climate change, through a programme of transformative education and active global citizenship.

Bobby McCormack, CEO of DP introduced the opening session by giving attendees a brief run down on the history of the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). He said while DP had been promoting the SDG Agenda since its foundation, awareness of this important UN initiative remains low in the general population. Bobby spoke about DP's advocate training programme for 2017, which has resulted in the implementation of some award winning projects throughout Ireland.

A panel event with a variety of experts followed. The first panellist to speak was Suzanne Keating, CEO of Dóchas, an umbrella organisation of all the Irish NGOs. Suzanne's main point was that the SDGs will fail if we do not put human rights at the centre of the SDG Agenda, a theme that ran through the rest of the programme. She then spoke about the universality of root causes that are evident everywhere i.e. underpinning poverty. Suzanne spoke of the need to listen to others and learn from them, especially people in developing countries, who have much to teach us. She then turned to global health services, asking participants if they needed to access the health service, which country would we choose from: Ireland, Mozambique or Rwanda. To the surprise of many, Suzanne shared that Rwanda has the best health service. This highlighted an unconscious prejudice so Suzanne challenged the group to listen carefully and not presume we 'know'. In terms of addressing challenges or problems, she highlighted the importance of operating out of a human rights framework.

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### CONTINUED...

The second speaker was Fr. Peter McVerry SJ, who runs a well known national programme for the homeless that includes drug treatment centres. In his opening remarks he picked up on the central theme Suzanne had spoken about. Fr. Peter focussed in on human rights and the dignity of the individual when looking at the plight of homeless people. He spoke about homelessness, emphasising that "no house means no food, no education, no job"! Currently the right to a home is denied to half a million people in Ireland, who are living in tents, cars, poor quality accommodation, or adults living with parents and relatives. Fundamentally Fr. Peter believes that the right to housing should be enshrined in the Constitution, as per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He shared that this is one of the biggest challenges he faces when dealing with Government officials, as they were not prepared to take on this responsibility. Until they do, the tragedy of homelessness will continue.

The final speaker on the panel was Maria Barry who is a teacher, educator and researcher in citizenship and history education. Maria began by saying that she was a little bit uncomfortable with the idea of integrating the SDGs into education! She went on to clarify this sharing that first, children should be taught about the society in which live. They also need to know why we live in a society which is unjust and unequal. This reality applies globally, but focussing on Ireland Maria highlighted areas of inequality in Ireland. In a provocative question she asked "why is Ireland a tax haven". In recent months western countries are challenging Ireland for the tax breaks the Government has given to large multi-nationals that encouraged them to set up business throughout Ireland. Maria said when this important question is addressed, only then can we move forward and look at education and the SDGs.

Following Maria's contribution there was an open discussion, where each of the panellists developed the points they had shared with the group. Suzanne told the group that if 'we, as in the global population was serious about lifting people out of poverty, it would cost \$45 billion dollars or 0.01% of global GDP". When we consider the amount spent on the purchase of the latest, most lethal arms, this is a relatively small amount of money, however to address this reality needs political will, which appears to be sadly lacking.

Fr Peter shared that what kept him going in his crusade for the homeless a lifelong commitment, was anger. This is fuelled daily by the inequalities he sees in our society! He also commented that he believes 99% of people were unfamiliar with the SDGs, so because of this he favoured the idea that we should focus on one goal only, and see how that could be applied locally. To be effective, this SDG should be introduced in a concrete manner, not in an abstract or theoretical way.

In the final session, participants met with the advocates from the 2017 training programme, who spoke to them about their projects. These included exciting projects in the area of SDG education, film making and creative art depicting the SDGs in a vibrant, dynamic manner. The art was the work of asylum seekers who had been living in direct provision for over nine years. It was enlightening to talk to them and listen to their stories that were not easy to hear. Sharing stories is at the centre of DP and the work they do. The advocates shared their stories in creative, illustrative ways, making them come alive. Maria did her project on femicide. She made white paper flowers to represent the 216 deaths that have occurred in the last twenty one years, one of them being her own twenty year old daughter. Maria made yellow flowers for the children of these women, and red flowers for their parents and families. Still heartbroken at her loss, she agreed one hundred percent with Fr. Peter McVerry when he said that anger kept him going. Maria said that anger gave her the energy to continue with her campaign and her life.

**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](http://www.mercyworld.org)**

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