

## Laudato Si Action Plan Second Year Evaluation

These are some of the ways that the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas deepened our work on the Laudato Si Action Platform goals from December 2022 through November 2023.

### Responding to the Cry of the Earth

- The climate and sustainability director collected data on electricity, gas, and water usage for all major properties to the extent possible.
  - The design of the solar project at the Sisters of Mercy's Belmont campus has been completed and approved and a company was selected to oversee installation.
  - A community solar subscription is being implemented at one of Mercy's houses, and if successful, it will be implemented at other properties as well.
  - The Institute Leadership Team has launched an effort to increase the fuel efficiency of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' fleet of vehicles. This effort includes revising the current vehicle purchase options, prioritizing hybrid vehicles over fully gas-powered vehicles.
  - An electric vehicle program has been initiated at the Mercy property in Merion Station, PA. One EV was purchased and used regularly by one of our sisters, who has shared many of the lessons learned regarding charging and maintenance with other sisters and staff. An EV charger has been ordered and will be installed on the property.
  - The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas has purchased an electric rugged terrain vehicle (eRTV) for our campus outside St. Louis, Missouri. This pilot project will test the power and endurance of the eRTV against a standard diesel-powered RTV.
- [Mercy Focus on Haiti](#) provided salary support for the Grepén Center's team of agronomists and agronomy technicians, facilitating their efforts to train and support farmers through a seed bank, weevil eradication, soil conservation, reforestation, and animal husbandry.
- Mercy Focus on Haiti supported the construction of more than 100 ferro-cement cisterns (500 to 1,000 gallons each) to collect rainwater in the Gros Morne region, using locally available materials.
- The Sisters of Mercy transferred a 248-acre property near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to the Westmoreland Land Trust, to become a nature preserve open to the public.



## Responding to the Cry of the Poor

- [Sisters in the Philippines responded to the needs](#) of people experiencing the devastating Christmas 2022 flooding.
- 200 women graduated from Mercy Focus on Haiti's 18-month ultra-poverty eradication program in September. Children of participants were able to enroll in the Lekòl Jezi-Mari (Jesus and Mary School), thanks to tuition support from MFOH.
- Mercy Focus on Haiti created an environment of dignity, respect, and love for the 20 residents of Bon Maison Samaritain, a home for persons who are elderly or struggling with mental illness. Salary increases were provided to the staff as the value of Haiti's currency plummeted. Funding was secured to continue the Forever Friends program that allows for visitations from schoolchildren from schoolchildren from Lekòl Jezi-Mari (Jesus and Mary School).
- Mercy Focus on Haiti continued to support the Travay pou Mange (Work to Eat) Initiative, which provides emergency food to families, then funds and finally training in micro-enterprises to lead them to greater self-sufficiency.
- The Justice Team hosted three immersion experiences to equip Mercy sisters, associates, and co-workers for educating others, changing the dominant narrative and advocating for systemic change:
  - two experiences at the U.S.-Mexico border that immersed participants in the plight of migrants and the causes of migration rooted in U.S. policies d
  - an [extractivism pilgrimage throughout New Mexico](#) that demonstrated the ways in which the entire state is a sacrifice zone to the nuclear weapons industry and oil and gas corporations.



- A member of the Justice Team provided leadership for a pilgrimage to Honduras and El Salvador Nov. 29-Dec. 12 to support human rights and learn more about the root causes of migration, which include environmental degradation and climate change.
- The Justice Team developed and shared a backgrounder on extractivism and recommendations for action and deeper reflection with delegates to the Institute's Chapter.
- The Justice Team and Mercy International Association's staff at the United Nations hosted a webinar in June on Finding Hope in Global Climate Action. Participants in the international climate talks (COP 27) shared their experience,

talked about the importance of loss and damage funding for communities facing irreparable harms from climate change, and encouraged support for the Fossil fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

- [Mercy Volunteer Corps](#) once again placed a volunteer at Sanctuary Farm in Philadelphia. The urban farm addresses health inequities resulting from systemic racial oppression and economic injustice by converting abandoned and neglected areas into spaces that foster safety, hospitality, nutrition, and growth.
- [Mercy Investment Services](#) has furthered the integration of environmental, social and governance investment strategies into its portfolio by
  - approving two investment managers working to solve social inequities within the Inclusive Opportunities Fund. One manager focuses on removing families from predatory home ownership structures and establishing them into traditional mortgages, which provide more family wealth creation and community stabilization. The other women-owned manager invests in technology that leads to economic and social mobility and growth for individuals, such as cloud-based software that offers individuals largely in underserved, rural populations hands-on training for in-demand jobs in high-growth industries.
  - Strategic investing has allowed Mercy Partnership Fund to realize a large increase in its investees' efforts toward financial inclusion, from \$407 million in 2016 to \$607 million in 2022, which demonstrates MPF's ongoing commitment to reducing economic poverty for individuals and their communities globally. These investments offer capital to communities that have historically been denied this access, supporting the development of more equitable futures for children, immigrants, refugees, women, people of color, and other underserved groups.
- A sister in Argentina participated in the inaugural meeting at the Vatican of [Ecclesial Networks Alliance for Integral Ecology](#) (ENA). Indigenous peoples, laity, religious, priests, bishops and cardinals are involved in these Church-supported networks focused on protecting vulnerable communities in critical biomes in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America. Sister Rosita Sidasmed was a delegate for the Ecclesial Network Gran Chaco and Guarani Aquifer (REGCHAG) in South America.
- The Mercy Justice Team worked with Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns on letters of support for proposals from peoples of the Amazon territory for the summit of presidents of countries in that critical region. The letters were signed by 19 organizations, mostly congregations of women religious and affiliated groups, and sent to ambassadors of the Amazonian countries to the U.S. and to



officials at the U.S. State Department and at embassies in country. The letters highlighted concerns around human rights abuses and environmental degradation around extractivism in the region.

- The Mercy Justice Team worked with partners at Maryknoll to express concerns to the U.S. State Department and to the U.S. Southern Command over the repression of protests in Peru following the deposing of the president. We challenged U.S. support for the new government, whose security forces carried out the repression, and advocated that U.S. military exercises in the country be cancelled.

## **Ecological Economics**

- Mercy Investment Services continued to live into its mission by investing in community organizations and impact opportunities benefitting people, communities, and creation, and:
  - increased funding of mission-based environmental, social and governance, thematic and impact holdings to 68 percent of the portfolio;
  - originated \$20 million of additional commitments to impact managers in the Environmental Solutions Fund, which invests in renewable energy, energy and water efficiency, materials recycling, green buildings and sustainable agriculture;
  - deployed more than \$325 million through Mercy Partnership Fund's investees toward sustainable agriculture and environmental sustainability. These investments financed clean water and sanitation projects, sustainable home improvements, solar energy, access to off-grid energy, and assisted farmers with sustainable agriculture practices; and
  - used the shareholder engagement process to successfully urge companies to detail their emissions reductions and goals, including as an important member of the Climate Action 100+ global initiative of investors engaging the world's heaviest emitting companies.
- The Chapter Planning Committee incorporated three meatless meals into the two weeks of menus at this important Institute gathering, and made it known that non-meat protein was available at all meals by request. The committee purchased snacks wrapped in paper rather than plastic for the tables and didn't make bottled water available. There was a deliberate effort to reduce the use of paper, with prayer services projected on a screen and handouts shared via email with only limited paper copies available at tables.

## **Sustainable Lifestyles**

- The Justice Team, Climate and Sustainability Director and the communications staff launched a weekly [Mercy Tips to Care for Earth series](#) to support sisters, associates and others affiliated with Mercy in changing their lifestyles in solidarity with vulnerable communities and the needs of Our Common Home.

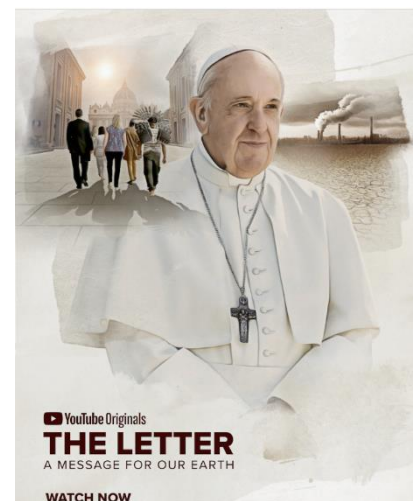




- The Justice Team provided education around how to have a more [environmentally sustainable Christmas season](#).
- Mercy Volunteer Corps offered a webinar on simple living for current and former volunteers.
- The Institute Leadership Team created a [committee to look at offering natural burials](#) as an option for sisters throughout the congregation. The committee will develop policies and processes, educational resources, and sacred rituals for natural interment.

## Ecological Education

- [Mercy Education](#) focused its student leadership and educators' conferences in 2023 on the Mercy Critical Concern for Earth. Thirty-eight high school students and faculty learned about advocacy for climate and environmental justice and shared with one another their school's efforts at integrating care for creation in the curriculum, in sustainable practices and in student clubs. Then a few months later, a couple of hundred educators from Mercy schools met in Kingston, Jamaica, to grapple with the same issues with keynote presentations, break-out sessions and site visits.
- The Mercy Education educators' conference included a [digital exposition](#) of 22 projects and lesson plans that show how care for creation is being incorporated into school life.
- The Justice Team in February hosted 11 students and two teachers from Assumption High School in Louisville, KY, for a Washington, DC-based immersion experience on extractivism and advocacy around mining for minerals needed for the energy transition.
- The Conference for Mercy Higher Education organized a program for 18 students from five universities at the United Nations in June around World Oceans Day. Students learned about advocating through a Mercy lens for clean drinking water for all, the impact of climate change on migration and the harms of extractivism on vulnerable communities and the environment.
- A member of the Justice Team attended the 2023 United Nations Water Conference, which coincided with World Water Day. In the lead-up to the conference, Brother Ryan Roberts co-chaired the Mercy Global Action Water Task Force, the output of which included [MGA's commitment](#) to UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water & Sanitation), a [summary document](#) to introduce Mercy communities to water justice, and a [Water Library](#) of resources at varying degrees of engagement (dip a toe, dive deep, reflection).
- The Justice Team co-hosted a webinar with Mercy Global Action staff at the United Nations on the outcomes of the 2022 international climate talks (COP 27) and on the [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#).
- The Justice Team co-hosted with Mercy Ecology a virtual discussion on [The Letter](#), a film based on the themes of Laudato Si'.



- Sisters in Latin America continued their formation process for sisters, associates and other collaborators in Panama eager to learn and reflect on Pope Francis' writings, with a focus on Fratelli Tutti.
- Sisters in Panama launched the [Land, Life and Hope project](#), a dream to restore Mother Earth and the communities in two large areas in the northern part of the country damaged by hurricanes in 2020: Tierras Altas in the Chiriquí province and the Ngabe-Bukle Comarca indigenous region. The project, a Mercy Fund for Ministry grant recipient, inspires community interest in caring for Mother Earth with eco-friendly farming practices, and engages young people in the commitment to taking care of Creation.



### Ecological Spirituality

- Mercy Volunteer Corps staff held its spring retreat at [Mercy Ecospirituality Center](#) and once again offered a 6-week summer volunteer program at the center.
- The Justice Team hosted for associates a shortened, virtual program from the [Awakening to a New Consciousness theological reflection process](#).
- The Justice Team invited the Mercy community to enter into the Season of Creation through prayer, reflection and action. Communications in Mercy's weekly e-newsletter and an email to more than 4,000 Mercy advocates included: Pope Francis' message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, an opportunity to join the opening ecumenical prayer service, the Catholic liturgical guide and guidance for a climate justice prayer service.

### Community participation and empowerment

- The Conference of Major Superiors in the Philippines, in which the Sisters of Mercy participate, [declared a climate emergency](#) and urged the government to do the same.
- The Justice Team provided leadership for advocacy on the FOREST Act through the Catholic Encounter for our Common Home campaign. We supported 6 virtual

meetings in which constituents urged their senators to co-sponsor this bill that would bar imports into the U.S. of goods sourced through illegal deforestation.

- Sisters in Panama joined popular protests throughout the country in late October to express opposition to the government signing a mining contract with a Canadian corporation.



- The Justice Team engaged more than 4,000 Mercy sisters, associates, companions, co-workers, volunteers, and friends in advocacy in support of humane immigration policies, environmental justice, gun violence prevention, human rights in the Philippines and protection of rainforests through the government's purchasing power, among many other issues.