Innovative partnerships to end trafficking in women and girls

The Santa Marta Group model

Driven by many factors—poverty, war, political instability, climate change, mass migration—human trafficking is a multifaceted reality with one common characteristic: it deprives victims of their freedom and traps them in webs of exploitation and abuse. Of the victims who are detected, roughly 60 percent are female, and, as victims, women and children often face more violent forms of exploitation.

The scourge of trafficking in persons has received greater attention and is the subject of international conventions and a global action plan. However, this terrible crime remains pernicious and difficult to fight. Despite increased attention and collaboration, many gaps remain at all levels regarding how trafficking works and how best to intervene to rescue and support trafficking victims, particularly women and girls.

The Santa Marta Group was born as a direct result of Pope Francis’ consistent call for action to combat human trafficking, founded to be “a catalyst to bring systemic change to end human trafficking by bringing together leaders from civil society, law enforcement, business, faiths and communities.” Since its founding, the group has convened members of these groups to share knowledge and best practices, create partnerships, and act together for systemic change. Coordination and collaboration of this sort are essential, for where they happen the impact is overwhelmingly positive: trafficking networks are broken, and their victims are healed.

A key aspect of the Santa Marta Group’s work is serving as a bridge between law enforcement and religious communities on the ground. As a project within the Catholic Church, which is both global and intensely local, the group has been able to plug into a world-wide network of know-how and best practices, while understanding local reality on the ground in all its complexity. This deep local knowledge is a precious asset in the fight against human trafficking. These partnerships help set a firm foundation for systemic change and decisive action to rescue victims and shut down trafficking networks.

Religious sisters contribute uniquely to these efforts working in local communities. Trafficked women and girls perceive them as trustworthy and non-threatening, willing to listen and help. They can offer shelter to women and girls who have been trafficked, particularly the victims of sexual exploitation and violence. The sisters are uniquely placed to assist law enforcement with an approach that is sensitive to victims, helping to avoid the revictimization and criminalization of the victims of trafficking. They can share their models within their own international network of communities as well as with law enforcement and civic leaders.

This event will bring together speakers with experience in different areas of these efforts with a view to sharing their experiences in working to end human trafficking through innovative partnerships and collaboration.

Speakers:
- Commissioner Faydah Maniri Dumarpa, Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines
- Mr. Kevin Hyland, Santa Marta Group
- Fr. Márcio Toniazzo, S.C., Director, Scalabrini International Migration Network
- Sr. Abby Avelino, M.M., Talitha Kum (via video)
- Sr. Deirdre Mullan, R.S.M., Arise
- Mrs. Donna Edwards, Trustee, Santa Marta Group; Louisiana First Foundation (via video)
- Ms. Abby Jae Wilhelm, Senior Business Leader & Policy Advisor, Hogan Lovells U.S. L.L.P.


Attendees are requested to register online at https://holyseemission.org//14MarchEventCSW68. Those without UN grounds passes must register by 11 March. The event will be live-streamed via UN WebTV.