

United Nations HQ

Archbishop, Madam Moderator, ladies and gentlemen:

I feel privileged to be with you today to speak at this important event:

Innovative partnerships to end trafficking in women and girls, representing the Arise Foundation.

The Arise Foundation, based in London, is one of the foremost active agencies in the world which examines the factors driving the rise in trafficking, and works to STOP this terrorism against vulnerable people. We strongly believe in partnerships with others. Over 50 million people worldwide are enslaved and exploited as human traffickers become more sophisticated and lure more and more people, including children and migrants, into the trappings of modern slavery.

The Catholic Church is increasingly on the frontlines in the battle against this phenomenon that is described by Pope Francis as “an open wound in the side of humanity.”

The work of the Arise Foundation is predominantly ‘women to women’: religious women supporting a variety of women and girls who find themselves in desperate unimaginable situations.

Over the past seven years of our existence, we have spread our web of protection to over 89 high-risk cities/areas. We examine the push factors – wars and conflicts, famine, destitution, corruption, instability and grinding poverty, as well as human-made phenomena such as climate change and natural disasters, which drive people out of their homes, communities and countries, risking their lives in doing so.

At the time of writing, we have reached over 217,023 people directly through our holistic programmes to build their resistance to trafficking. Arise is a people-centred organization and we are very aware that we work with human beings with names, families and loved ones.

We at Arise know that our model of Resourcing, Capacity-Building and Amplifying the voices of the voiceless works, and now we need to expand our reach. How?

Arise exists to address the root causes of slavery by addressing locally-led interventions. We recognize that partnerships with other anti-slavery organizations are key in order to scale our impact). Many of our intervention strategies are headed by women religious who have gained the trust of these vulnerable women and girls.

For example, in the Philippines, one of our local partnerships is with the Knights of Columbus. Arise has supported 30 frontline groups through training and capacity-building programmes. We were able to fund 8 highly effective anti-trafficking projects, reaching over 6,000 people. These people were identified as being highly vulnerable to trafficking or re-trafficking. Arise Projects aimed to build the resilience of these people and their families to human trafficking through activities ranging from education to employment and community mobilisation.

We hope to expand this work, in partnership with those in government and civil society, to eradicate online sexual exploitation of children. For example, last year, in Bacolod City in the Philippines, Arise organised awareness-raising sessions for 2,000 children and their parents. These sessions focused on the provision of information on the rights of children, community risks, red flags and who to contact to report suspicious behaviours. One girl was bold enough to share her

recent experiences in chatting online and posting photos. Initially, she thought the man she was chatting with was just nice. But when she learnt more about OSAEC (online sexual exploitation of children), she told the facilitators, "I'd learned something, so I will stop chatting with him, block him and stop sharing my photos." She also committed to share this learning with her friends and community.

Traffickers exploit situations of poverty, lack of opportunity and lack of education and information. So, alongside the provision of information on safe migration to the thousands of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), Arise facilitates carefully-targeted skills courses and vocational training for those without employment. As one beneficiary told us, "The cash allowance provided to me was such a big help for me and to my family. The money that I received goes to my daily allowance and expenses whilst I received the job training required by the school." In the year ahead, we plan to expand our mission in the Philippines, working with the local Church and frontline groups to build resilience and raise awareness among migrant fishers and their families, some of whom endure the most egregious human rights abuses.

Strengthening the resilience of those who are vulnerable to traffickers, together with building the capacity and reach of our frontline partners, are critical to the Arise approach. Building the capacity of the frontline is a force multiplier, extending the impact of our work beyond a project's duration.

None of this work in the Philippines, or indeed elsewhere, is possible without a renewed commitment on the part of governments to invest significant resources into prevention work, particularly the enforcement of the plethora of anti-trafficking legislation passed in recent years. Financial investment in anti-trafficking work must match the massive financial resources of the criminal networks responsible for this heinous crime.

Madam Chair,

As the world turns everything possible GREEN, over the next few days, to celebrate the great St. Patrick, spare a thought for those in our midst who, like St Patrick, are uprooted from family and friends and taken hostage to strange countries.

And so, while the milkshakes turn green, as the roads are painted green, rivers across the world are dyed green and people with even the slightest hint of Irish heritage are proudly outfitted for the 'wearing of the green', perhaps we could best honour this great man by being attentive to signs of human trafficking and reporting this crime against humanity.

Thank You.

Sister Deirdre Mullan RSM