

# Rotarians against Child Slavery

*IA Newsletter for the proposed Rotarian Action Group – See website [www.racsrag.org](http://www.racsrag.org)*

Issue No 16

**“If we are going to stop slavery, we must convince the world that human rights need even more protection than property rights”  
(Kevin Bales)**



A child working in a brick factory – photo by ML – 19/11/10

## Action Group status still awaited !

I had hoped that we would have received official Action Group status last month. However, on my return from a Rotary trip to India, I received the following communication from Evanston

*“As you are aware, the RI Board of Directors placed a moratorium on reviewing*

*new RAG proposals until November 2010. The moratorium has now expired and it is possible that the Board may decide to consider new proposals at its next meeting in January. As some time has passed since the proposed Rotarian Action Group Against Child Slavery application was*

*submitted, we would like to provide you with the opportunity to submit any updates you may wish to make to the application we currently have on file”.*

I have of course submitted an update, but sadly we are no further forward on the approval front since our Action Group’s submission was made last March.

## Rotarians visit to Bal Vikas Ashram

On 18 November, 13 Rotarians and friends of Rotary from Denmark, USA and England visited Bal Vikas Ashram – a Child Slave Rehabilitation Centre for boys near Allahabad, India.

The previous day three representatives visited a car show room in the city to pick up the new 6/8 seater vehicle which was the subject of a successful MG submission and which

will be used in raids to release children from slavery and to bring them to the Ashram for rehabilitation.

It was wonderful to experience the excitement of the boys as we drove the car into the Ashram. We then enjoyed a session of singing and dancing by the boys. Later the boys were given gifts (eg toys, sets of clothes, footballs etc) which we

had brought with us.

After lunch with boys and the staff of the Ashram, the Rotary team visited the three vocational training workshops within the premises. These consist of a cycle repair, tailoring and carpentry workshop. In the next Newsletter I shall outline some of the costed requirements of these workshops.

Photos of the visit are included on page 3

## Trafficking in Bihar, India

Bihar is one of the poorest states in India. With poverty comes vulnerability, then exploitation, trafficking and finally enslavement.

So many of the boys rehabilitated at Bal Vikas Ashram started their journey into servitude in

Bihar. An even greater number of girls are trafficked into sex slavery in Bihar.

“Trafficking” involves transporting people away from their communities, through the use of violence, deception or

coercion, for the purpose of their exploitation. When children are trafficked, no violence, deception or coercion needs to be involved. Simply transporting them into exploitative conditions constitutes trafficking and this is rife in Bihar.

## Punanawa Ashram – a trafficking Shelter in Bihar



Constructing a Bio Gas Oven at Punanawa – 23 Nov 2010



Candle making at Punanawa  
23 Nov 2010

On 23 November I visited Punanawa Ashram – a Restoration & Rehabilitation Shelter for Trafficked young ladies near Punea, Bihar. I was accompanied by Supriya Aswati - the South Asia Director for “Free the Slaves” – an anti-slavery organisation which is based in Washington DC but which makes a difference to the lives of thousands of slaves and survivors in Africa, in Nepal and India.

The Punanawa Shelter was opened last February and provides accommodation for up to 50 young ladies. There are currently two dormitories, one for girls under 18 years of age and the other for women over 18 years.

Each dormitory has five rooms and each room can house 5 survivors.

Here the inmates remain for a 6 month average stay. In addition to legal assistance and help in accessing economic entitlements, the rescued women and girls will receive shelter, medical care, help with emotional & psychological recovery, education and vocational skills training.

On my visit I witnessed the construction of a bio gas oven which will provide energy for the Ashram’s kitchen. This is currently being funded by a Rotary Club in Pennsylvania, USA.

I also enjoyed meeting with the staff, interacting and dancing with the girls and watching some of the girls learning how to sew and make candles.

When each girl is ready to leave she is supplied with a piece of relevant equipment, (eg a sewing machine or candle making equipment) which will help her to set up a small business as she reintegrates back into village life.

In a future Newsletter I will provide members with costed project options as to how they can help to support this wonderful Shelter.



Some of the survivors showing off their tailoring skills



Meeting with some of the girls at Punanawa

## Visit to former inmates of Bal Vikas Ashram

After lunch, accompanied by Supriya and several other anti-slavery activists, I visited some of the villages in Bihar and met with former residents of Bal Vikas Ashram. Following “rehabilitation” at the Ashram, comes “reintegration” into village life. Like the girls of Punanawa, each boy leaving Bal Vikas Ashram is provided with a relevant piece of equipment which will assist him in setting up a small business. This facility is supplemented by other state entitlements (under the Indian Bonded Labour Act), such as a compensation grant of 20,000 rupees, a regular grant entitlement of 200 rupees per month, food vouchers for those under the poverty line and housing for the survivor and his family. Free the Slaves and its various Indian partners ensure that these entitlements are paid over to the boy survivors and their families. The photos on page 3 show two of the former slaves enjoying their new found freedom and earning the monies which help to sustain them in their new lives.

## Photo gallery - BVA and Punanawa



Collecting the new vehicle from the show room in Allahabad before driving it to Bal Vikas Ashhram (BVA)



Rtns Raj Pandey (RC of Hertford, England) and Carol Metzker (RC of West Chester Downtown, USA) with some of the boys at BVA



S was a former carpet slave who was rehabilitated at BVA and now runs a bicycle repair shop in his village in Bihar



N was a former slave in an embroidery factory who, after leaving BVA is now displaying his skills at tailoring in his home in Bihar

## Trafficking in the UK

I have been reminded by Anti Slavery International about the disappointing situation which currently exists vis a vis "trafficking" in the United Kingdom.

The Government itself recognizes that there are some 5,000 people trafficked at any one time in the UK. As a consequence in April 2009, the Government adopted the Council of Europe *Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings*. The Convention requires the UK to guarantee minimum standards of protection and support to trafficked people. Measures include:

- a mechanism to accurately and fairly identify trafficked people.
- access to specialist services including counselling and safe housing
- access to redress, including compensation

## Trafficking in the UK (Continued)

Sadly a recent report released by the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, has highlighted repeated failures of the Government to meet its obligations under the Convention. For example, the report criticises the identification system for trafficked people as “not fit for purpose”, exposing differential treatment of victims depending on their immigration status. Whether intentionally or not, the system appears to be putting too much emphasis on where the trafficked person is from rather than prioritising their support needs as a victim of a crime.

The report also highlights

- a) the UK's failure to protect trafficked children
- b) failures in the identification process
- c) the difficulties for victims accessing the services they are entitled to.
- d) the fact that current measures have not improved the rate of trafficking convictions.

In short the reports finds that trafficked people continue to be treated as criminals rather than the victims of a serious crime.

Anti-Slavery International is urging supporters to write a politely worded letter to their MPs and to the Home Secretary Theresa May MP (The Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1 4DP)

- welcoming the progress made by the Government so far in tackling human trafficking, particularly the adoption of the Council of Europe *Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings*.
- expressing concern that although trafficked people are entitled to specialised support and protection under the Convention, in practice many obstacles remain in enabling them to access these rights.
- Stating that these failures significantly hinder the recovery of victims from the psychological, physical and social consequences of their ordeal, alongside curtailing the fight by law-enforcement agencies to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice.
- Urging the Government to recognise the immediate need to : reform the identification process by adopting a multi-agency approach to decision making; ensure those trafficked are referred to appropriate support services and increase resourcing of these services; appoint an independent anti-trafficking watchdog to oversee anti-trafficking measures in the UK; and ensure no victims of trafficking are prosecuted for crimes they committed whilst under coercion.

## Kevin Bales – How to combat modern slavery.

A couple of days ago I received the undermentioned links from the website of “Free the Slaves”. Both links are very interesting but I would particularly urge you to click on the first link and go directly to the third video which shows Professor Kevin Bales talking about slavery and how to combat it.

<http://www.freetheslaves.net/Page.aspx?pid=316>

<http://www.freetheslaves.net/Page.aspx?pid=362>

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1<sup>st</sup> December 2010  
Action Group's Website: [www.racsrag.org](http://www.racsrag.org).