

Rotarians against Child Slavery

IA Newsletter for the proposed Rotarian Action Group – See website www.racsrag.org

Editor: Mark Little – Rotary Club of Norwich St Edmund, England

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“The organisations that liberate slaves know how to help freed slaves achieve autonomous lives & dignity. What they cannot do is mobilise funds that will help extend their work further” (Kevin Bales)



Review of the past year

The birth of a new year has a special significance for people of all races, classes and creeds. As well as for merrymaking, it is a time for stocktaking,

for sober reflection on that which has been achieved in the past and for conjecture on that which is yet to come in the future.

So like Janus, the Roman

God with two faces, I find myself looking both backwards and forwards at the same time on the Action Group's past, present and future role in helping to combat slavery

Membership increase

On the numbers front at the start of 2010, there were over 270 members in 27 countries in the proposed Rotarian Action Group against Child Slavery. Now there are over 340 members in 33

countries. The bulk of the increase resulted from the anti-slavery stand which we organised at the last RI Convention in Montreal. Sadly for health reasons, I shall not be participating/organising a

similar stand at the RI Convention in New Orleans, but I am hoping that a certain Australian member of the Action Group will be successful in his application for a similar stand.

Projects completed/to be completed

On the project activity front, we are pleased to report that since the start of 2010, Action Group members have persuaded their Clubs to help with the

a) purchase a motorcycle for Bal Vikas Ashram – a Child Slave Rehabilitation Centre, near Allahabad, India. The motorcycle is being used to enable staff to monitor the continued health, well being and freedom of the children who had been rescued from slavery and who have since left the Ashram.

The participating clubs were the Rotary Clubs of West Chester Downtown, USA and Norwich St Edmund, England.

b) purchase of a 6/8 seater vehicle for Bal Vikas Ashram. The vehicle, which was purchased with the help of a RF Matching Grant, is being used, amongst other things, to provide transportation for children during rescue operations.

The participating clubs were the Rotary Clubs of West Chester Downtown, Norwich St Edmund, Reims St Remi, France, Mainz 50° Nord, Germany and Exton Frazer, USA.

c) construction of a Bio Gas Oven at Punarnawa Ashram – a Shelter for trafficked women in Bihar, India. The Bio Gas Oven will provide energy for the

kitchen at Punarnawa. The participating club was the Rotary Club of West Chester Downtown.

d) purchase of seven sewing machines for Punarnawa Ashram. The sewing machines will be given to the girls who have completed their stay at the Ashram and who will require the equipment to help them to reintegrate back into their own villages.

The participating clubs are the Rotary Clubs of Wiveliscombe & District, England and Hluboka & Vltavou, Czech Republic.

Photos of some of these projects are shown on Page 2 of the Newsletter.

The Future of the Action Group ?



Rtn Carol Metzker hoping to try out BVA's new motorcycle at the Diocesan Offices in Allahabad, India. 18th November 2010

Planning for the future is a little uncertain because we are waiting for the RI Board's decision at the end of this month as to our future status.

If the RI Board does not give the Action Group the required status it desires, or the RI Board's guidelines for RAGs are not conducive to the members' wishes, our Action Group can/will still carry on in the way it has

operated these last 18 months, hopefully with direct involvement by more members.

Also we should not rely too much on increasing our membership via the annual stand in the Hall of Friendship at the RI Convention. Instead members should encourage other Rotarians to join our Action Group in order to publicise the existence of slavery and to persuade

their own clubs to help support the work of anti-slavery organisations.

Even better would be direct involvement by their clubs in anti-slavery projects.

Page 4 provides a list of project options for Punarnawa Ashram – the Restoration and Rehabilitation Shelter for trafficking victims in Bihar, India.



The boys of Bal Vikas Ashram admiring the new Mahindra Bolero vehicle purchased with the aid of a RF Matching Grant. – 18 November 2010



Concreting the base for the new Bio Gas Oven at Punarnawa Ashram – 23 November 2010

Trafficking – a common misconception

A few months ago, I watched a TV documentary on "Slavery" which referred to "human trafficking" as a major form of slavery. This is a misconception because "trafficking" is simply a mechanism or conduit that brings people into slavery. It is a process of enslavement itself, not a condition or result of that process, such as bonded labour or contract slavery.

In his book "Stop the Traffik" Steve Chalke defines "Human trafficking" as "*the dislocation of someone by deception or coercion for exploitation, through forced prostitution, forced labour or other forms of slavery*".

It is estimated that there are approximately two and a half million people who are in slavery through trafficking. This is slightly under 10% of the total number of people who are estimated to be in slavery worldwide. The other 90% have been enslaved without having being moved from one country to another. Usually they have been enslaved by their own people. The classic example here is India, but there are many other countries which follow India's example, like Ghana, Thailand, China and Myanmar.

Nevertheless trafficking is a global problem. It affects every continent and most countries. The continents/regions from which the victims are usually trafficked from (ie originate) are Africa, Asia, Latin America and Central and South Eastern Europe, The regions which usually are the destinations of the trafficked victims are North America, the Middle East, Western Europe and some parts of Asia, eg Japan for the sex industry.

According to the US State Department, around 800,000 men, women and children are trafficked each year across international borders into slavery and human trafficking is now the third largest source of organised crime, after drug smuggling and arms smuggling. International human trafficking data also shows that of the 800,000 victims mentioned above, around 80% are female, and 50% are children. These enter a range of economic activities, but predominantly the sex industry. Some of our Action Group members are directly involved in helping anti-slavery organisations to protect vulnerable young girls from forced prostitution. An indication of that involvement in two areas of the world ie Northern Thailand and Northern India is outlined below.

Child sex slaves in Thailand

David Black of the Rotary Club of Dunedin Central, New Zealand, has been generating support from Rotary Clubs in Australia and New Zealand for the work which is being undertaken by an organisation in Northern Thailand which is called "Rescue Mission for Children". The organisation, which is headed by David Stevenson and is based in Chiang Mai, aims to protect the Akha Hill tribe children who live in the highlands of Northern Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and China and who are continually being targeted by slave holders for forced prostitution and continuous sexual abuse.

David Black sent me an article from the Otago Daily Times. Two extracts from the article will illustrate the sort of problems which are being encountered by David Stevenson and his organisation.

In the first extract, Mr Stevenson talks about those of Southeast Asia's population who place a twisted value on the Akha – in particular their children. *"Networks of professional sex trade traffickers prey on these people. They go in disguised as a vendor of some sort and talk to the villagers. "I have a friend who needs a babysitter – would your daughter be interested in that?" And that is the last they see of her"*

The second extract refers to a recent trip to Thailand by Mr Black himself where he was approached by children about 4 years old selling flowers. *"That is preparatory work for them. They get used to attracting a customer, selling them something. The next thing they are selling is themselves. Kids walk up and down showing cards with all sorts of pictures of what you can get engaged in for the right price. You only have to say you want someone really young and they will take you off the main street....go back a block or two and there will be kids as young as 3 or 4 who are locked up in cages like animals. For the equivalent of about \$NZ20 someone can rape one of these kids"*

According to Mr Stevenson, a child in the sex trade in Thailand is worth more than drugs. This is because "they can be used multiple times a day, so they become worth more than Heroin, which is a huge industry"

David Stevenson has been helping keep Akha children out of the clutches of paedophiles for 16 years. With the help of his wife Asa (a well-educated Akha woman) he looks after up to

500 children at their Chiang Mai training centre. Though they have applied to various organisations, their primary support comes from Rotary Clubs.

If you would like to help David Stevenson and the work of "Rescue Mission for Children", please contact Rtn David Black whose email address is dblack@mainlandpoultry.co.uk.

Punarnawa Ashram – a haven for sex slave survivors

In the last Newsletter I provided brief comments about my recent visit to Punarnawa Ashram which is in Bihar State, India. This Shelter provides accommodation for up to 50 young girls who have been rescued after being trafficked for sex purposes in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. As with all such humanitarian establishments in India, its continued existence is reliant solely upon the generosity of organisations like Rotary International.

If you would like to contribute to the work of the Ashram, please consider helping with the funding of the under mentioned list of the Ashram's current requirements.

<u>Items</u>	<u>Cost in US dollars</u>
12 Ceiling fans @ Rs1,200 each	320
Utensils for kitchen	222
2 Trunks – to keep cushions & quilts	133
12 Solar Lamps @ Rs 40,000 each (\$888) (to help with safety at night)	10,666
2 Solar Panels to go on the roof of the two main dormitory buildings to provide warm water & washing clothes.	2,272
Motor Scooter	1,000
Motor Vehicle (taking residents into town for medical needs, collecting Bulk groceries, meetings with lawyers & officials, etc)	15,600
Canopy – round gazebo type structure for meetings	2,222
Shutter for garage (iron)	1,111

Further information on each of the items can be obtained either from me or from Ginny Baumann, who is the Director of Partnerships at Free the Slaves, an Anti-Slavery organisation based in Washington DC. Ginny's telephone number is ++1 202 7757480. Her email address is baumann@freetheslaves.net.

**PLEASE ENCOURAGE FELLOW ROTARIANS TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE
AND SIGN ON AS A MEMBER. THE WEBSITE IS: www.racsraq.org....**

Mark Little, RC of Norwich St Edmund,
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18th January 2011