

Rotarian Action Group against Child Slavery

(This RAG is not an agency of, or controlled by, Rotary International)

Website www.racsrag.org

19 June 2014

Issue No 48



To contact RAG Board Members or Coordinators, please see relevant email addresses on page 7 of this Newsletter



Mark, Harry and Carol waiting to greet delegates



RAG member Sita Rupakheti (RC of New Road City, Nepal) and her daughter visits the booth

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

“The organizations that liberate slaves know how to help freed slaves achieve autonomous lives and dignity. What they cannot do is mobilise funds that will help extend their work further”

(Kevin Bales)



Chairman's reflections - RACSRAG in Sydney

Armed with the good wishes of RAG members and the blessings and wholesome support of a local church in my area, I travelled to the RI Convention in Sydney, Australia, with other members of the RACSRAG team, to give the enslaved children of the world a voice.

We were also there to encourage more Rotarians to support the work of anti-slavery units whose raison d'être is to protect vulnerable children from slavery and its consequences.

With the latter objective in mind, three of the RAG team (myself, Secretary, Harry Payne and former Board Member, Carol Metzker) flew into Sydney before the Convention to meet with anti-slavery organizations based in Australia.

On Thursday 29 May, we met with members of International Justice Mission, (IJM), Australia. This is the newest IJM Office (opened in May) with other Partner Offices being based in Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK.

Chief Executive, Amber Hawkes, who has served as

an IJM legal advocate in Chennai, India, explained that IJM Australia, will be working overseas to protect the poor from slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression and locally to “grow the movement of Australians seeking justice for the oppressed.”

After a very positive meeting, we agreed to work together through the RAG Coordinators which we aimed to appoint for each State in Australia.

More information about IJM Australia's work, can be obtained at their website

Friday 30 May (am) saw Harry Payne and myself taking the train to the Olympic Park for an early start to set up RACSRAG's booth in the House of Friendship.

That completed we returned to the city for our next appointment which was at the University of Technology. Joined later by Carol Metzker, we met with Beau Neilson and

Jennifer Burn, Director of Anti-Slavery Australia.

Apart from being a law, policy and research centre at the University, we learnt that Anti-Slavery Australia, is dedicated to supporting the human rights of people who have experienced slavery, exploitation and trafficking; access to justice and legal representation; awareness raising and education; and maintaining a strong collaborative network with government, community, media, unions and academics.

The RAG team came away with a plethora of Anti-Slavery Australia literature which we were pleased to use as handouts from our booth and a strong desire to form a working relationship with each other in the future. Watch this space.

For more information about the work of Anti-Slavery Australia, please visit

www.antislavery.org.au



RACSRAG in Sydney (Cont'd)



Aussie volunteers Val (RC of Walkerville) and Robbie (RC of Bargara) ready to meet the delegates. Teresa (RC of Adelaide EDGE) is ordering more refreshments

“You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know” (William Wilberforce)

Before the Convention I had asked for volunteers to staff the RACSRAG booth. I was not disappointed with the response.

This year more than ever I had to absent myself from the booth to attend various relevant meetings, eg RAG Chairs, Leader’s Break Out Sessions, Breakout Session rehearsals, RACSRAG’s Breakout Session, RACSRAG’s AGM, etc.

As my new Aussie friends would say to me each time, “no worries”. There were always volunteers ready to step in to cover whenever the core volunteers’ presences were required elsewhere. To those I say thank you for your support.

Nor was I disappointed with the siting of the RACSRAG

booth. We were ideally placed in the House of Friendship and situated amongst other RAG booths.

We met so very many Rotarians keen to “step up to the plate” and offer their assistance to further our RAG’s cause. This applied especially to the Australian Rotarians who came in droves to our stand. Already, we have the names of Rotarians who have agreed to take on the role of RAG Coordinator for each of the six States in Australia. Their names will shortly be submitted to the RAG Board for approval.

In all well over 200 Rotarians expressed their interest in the work of our RAG by leaving their name and club

details for future contact. These Rotarians will be receiving a RAG Newsletter and we hope that in due course they will become fully paid up members of our Action Group. According to Treasurer, Stephen, some have already joined and paid their subscriptions. (See his note on page 6)

Finally my special thanks go to my Rotary friends Inder Gupta (RC of Delhi Metro, India and Mohan Plastics), Dennis Underwood (RC of Salisbury, South Australia and the Rotary Club of Walkerville for producing and sponsoring the wonderful RAG lapel badges which we used as handouts at the RAG booth.

*Mark Little
RAG Chair*

Illuminating

by Carol Metzker, Member of RACSRAG and One World Rotary e-Club

Standing on a tiny concrete platform that jutted into the Sydney Harbour was a thrill. The night wind whipped through my hair. A cacophony of laughter, music and ferry engines jangled in the background. The reflection of lights—dazzling and dancing in the water—turned the harbour into a painter’s palette. It was the lights that drew me to the spot

VIVID Sydney, a spectacular light display on buildings along the waterfront and cityscape, ran during the 2014 Rotary International Convention. Alfonso, a professional photographer, offered Rotarians a tour and night-photography lesson to capture the lights at spots along the harbour known by locals. How could I resist such a combination? I signed up and grabbed my camera.

Having great fun, Alfonso and I photographed the breathtaking Sydney Harbour Bridge from the platform below, the twinkling cityscape from a pavilion on The Rocks and the iconic Sydney Opera House bathed in kaleidoscopic color from the balcony of a cafe. With Alfonso’s tripod, tutoring and encouragement, my photos were stellar. The evening was illuminating.



Illuminating (Cont'd)

by Carol Metzker, One World Rotary e-Club

Upon reflection, the photography adventure capturing the VIVID lights was like my experience at the Rotary International Convention, also a first. I found vibrancy, color and warmth.



Breakout Session – 3 June 2014 “Rotarians Combating Child Slavery”

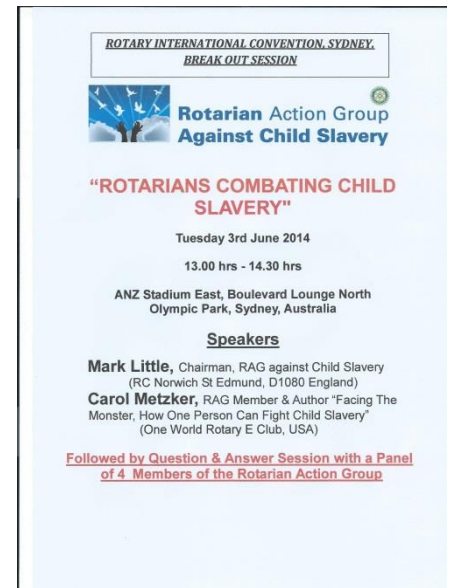
At the Rotarian Action Group Against Child Slavery's Breakout Session, hundreds of people filled chairs and windowsills, then sat on the floor and stood in the hall. Their vibrant and passionate response to the first Convention speech about Child Slavery and the ensuing conversations with us were electrifying. Many offered to help with our next project—freeing a village, starting with a school

Talking to other Rotarians, I discovered a spectrum of ideas as broad as the rainbow of colors displayed at VIVID. They shared tips for addressing problems and techniques for better fundraising and project participation. We shared dilemmas, solutions and hope.

Most welcoming was the warmth I found over the week--reuniting with Rotarians from around the world I'd met on polio immunization trips years ago, and finding friends who became family during our days at the Action Group's House of Friendship booth.

Like the millions of tiny sparkling lights, dramatic fireworks and colorful laser shows lighting the night of Sydney, Rotarians left the Convention to light the darkness of child slavery.

Editor's footnote: There were an estimated 250 plus Rotarians who attended the RACSRAG Breakout Session, many standing 7-10 deep in the room and in the corridor of Boulevard Lounge North in the ANZ Stadium.



Walk Free targets Daewoo & Warner Bros



“Remember the consumer is king. What we say, goes. If enough of us ask, there will have to be answers.” (Steve Chalk – “Stop the Traffik”



The Walk Free Foundation is an organization which is attempting to end modern slavery. It was founded by Andrew and Nicola Forrest. Its widely cited report “Global Slavery Index 2013, gave an estimate of 30 million people enslaved around the world.

The Foundation’s strategy includes mobilising a global activist movement of individuals to demand change in those countries and from those industries which help to perpetuate all forms of modern slavery. It is currently targeting Daewoo because of its ostrich-like stance on the use of slavery in Uzbekistan and Warner Bros for failing to accept that its cocoa supply from the Ivory Coast is still tainted by the use of slave labour.

Daewoo gets its cotton from Uzbekistan

As reported in a previous issue of this Newsletter, the Uzbek Government is still ignoring pleas from anti-slavery organizations to stop the use of hundreds of thousands of children from working without pay, in the cotton fields for up to three months (Sept – November) at the expense of their education.

As a result of adverse publicity it previously received because of its use of young children working in the cotton fields, the Uzbek Government has now redirected its mass mobilisation efforts to older children from secondary schools and adults instead. Walk Free reports that over a million children and adults are being used to meet daily picking quotas. Doctors are dragged from their hospitals. Some colleges stand empty as teachers and students are forced to work the fields.

Well over 100 clothing companies from all over the world have taken a stand and pledged not to buy Uzbek cotton in an effort to force the Uzbek Government to end its slave labour system. Whilst these companies are sending out a strong signal, the biggest customer for Uzbekistan’s slave picked cotton, Daewoo continues to do business with the Uzbek Government, thus undermining the commitments undertaken by other well-known retailers.

Walk Free believes that if Daewoo were to cancel its operations in Uzbekistan and publicly pledge its opposition to the Uzbek government’s forced labour system, **Daewoo would send a strong message to the Uzbek government that forced labour cannot continue.** So using the facilities provided by Walk Free, call on Daewoo to end its links with Uzbekistan produced cotton by clicking on and using the link below.

[Call on Daewoo to help end modern slavery in the cotton fields of Uzbekistan.](#)

Warner BrosCocoa from the Ivory Coast

In the Ivory Coast there is a strong association between chocolate and child slavery. Young boys whose ages range from 7 to 16 have been sold into slave labour and forced to work in cocoa farms in order to harvest the beans, from which chocolate is made, under inhumane conditions and extreme abuse. This West African country is the leading exporter of cocoa beans to the world market. Thus the existence of slave labour is relevant to the entire international economic community.

Whilst many chocolate brands have made public commitments to find the best solution to end the use of slaves on the cocoa plantations in the Ivory Coast, Warner Bros, which produces Harry Potter Chocolate Frogs, is not following suit. An independent investigation into their supplier (Behr’s Chocolates) led to a failing grade in 47 of 48 categories. Behr, which is based in Orlando, Florida, gets its cocoa supply from West Africa.



Walk Free targets Daewoo and Warner Bros (Cont'd)

Warner Bros dismissed the findings of the investigation, simply stating that they were "satisfied" that fair labour practices were being used in the production of their chocolates. Given the conflicting information, outraged consumers have asked Warner Bros, what steps were being taken to ensure there was no slavery in Harry Potter Chocolates. Warner Bros is still refusing to respond to the public's concerns.

Warner Bros is heading now into one of the busiest times of the year for their theme parks. Children excited to experience the world of Harry Potter will be asking their parents to buy these chocolates.

Walk Free has just sent the company a message asking them to let Walk Free know what steps are they taking to make sure that Harry Potter chocolates are free of slavery. Using the facilities and information provided by Walk Free, [Will you please take a moment to do the same?](#)

The Cost of Freedom

by Carol Metzger

Would you spend \$360 to free a fellow human? For less than half of what most Americans spend on coffee for a year, you or your club could free a person. In fact, for what the average Starbucks coffee drinker spends per year, an entire family could be liberated.

All it takes is 100 Rotarians or clubs to donate.

Join us in a new project. Free a village.

It starts with a school. When freedom workers go carefully into enslaved villages in India and talk about a better life for children through education, parents listen. Although defying slaveholders' wishes can be risky, parents muster hope and courage to send their children to school and to learn for themselves about their rights. Adults acquire new vocational skills and they begin to self-organize. Over a three-year process, villagers gain the strength and ability to take back their freedom. An old destructive cycle is broken; new generations can thrive.



Would you give \$200 to liberate each child ?

So far, the following Rotarians and clubs together have promised to donate enough money to free 17 villagers:

One World Rotary e-Club, USA-based (with members worldwide) and Carol Metzger
 Rotary Club of Norwich St Edmund, England, Longwood Rotary Club, USA,
 Rotary Club of Peterborough Orton, England and its president, Geoff Knipe
 Kennett Square Rotary Club, USA, Rotary Club of Stevenage Grange, England
 Val Kirk and the Rotary Club of Walkerville, Australia

Please become the next Rotarian or club to participate. To donate or to learn more about this project, please contact Carol Metzger at echmetzker@aol.com or Mark Little at or see more information about the budget, project and partners at:

http://www.roisight.org/cs/Projects/schools4freedom/Schools4Freedom_invite.pdf

Raising a Wall – A Project Completed

In Newsletter 45 this Newsletter asked for funds of approx \$18,000 to increase the height of a wall around Punarnawa Ashram, a Trafficking Shelter for girls rescued from sex slavery in Bihar, India. The perimeter wall needed to be increased because, when a new paved road was built in the developing village, changes in grading and the addition of materials made the road much higher than it was. It effectively made the Ashram wall three feet shorter. Thus it was a lot easier for traffickers to take back a girl – to steal her to stop her testifying or to re-victimize her.

The project has now been completed and RACSRAG has just received the final report from Free the Slaves. Their report is attached in a separate PDF file.

The following Clubs/individuals contributed to this enormously successful project.

Rotary Clubs in England: Stevenage Grange (D1260), Swaffham, Norwich St Edmund, Littleport (D 1080), Croydon South (D 1140)

Rotary Clubs in Australia: Walkerville (D 9500)

Rotary Clubs in USA: West Chester Downtown (D7450)

Churches: Sutton Methodist Church, Norfolk, England

Personal donations: Roger Brunt (RC of Accrington - D 1190), Val Kirk (RC of Walkerville – D 9500), Teresa Evans (RC of Adelaide EDGE – D9500), Mark Little (RC of Norwich St Edmund – D1080)

Note from RAG's Treasurer, [Stephen Sypula](#)

Convention promotes increased Membership

To all those that attended the Sydney Convention thank you for supporting RAGSRAG. I hope you had a really rewarding and enjoyable time, and a safe journey home.

Delighted to say as a result of RIC14 and RACSRAG presence we have had many join the Action Group. I suspect however that many more set off home resolved to join on their return but have been diverted by other more pressing events.

If you are one of the many resolved please do sign up now. It's our year end on 30th June and we would love to record you as a paid-up Member in our records.

Three levels of subscriptions are available

- Lifetime or Centennial – just 27 places left at £83.60
- Charter Membership, last 5 years and costs £52.50
- Annual Membership cost £21
- Reduced charge for Rotaractors - just £10

Fees included card and foreign exchange costs but are cheaper if you have a PayPal account or can pay in UK £sterling

You can apply for Membership and pay your subscription at this [Sign up](#) page of the website.

RACSRAG Board

Chairman: Mark Little, RC of Norwich St Edmund (D1080), England. mark@racstrag.org
Vice Chairman: Mark Doyle, RC of Pretoria West (9400), South Africa. mpdoyle@mweb.co.za
Vice Chairman: Stephen Sypula, RC of Stevenage Grange (D1260), England. stephen@racstrag.org
Secretary: Harry Payne, RC of Burnham on Crouch (D1240), England. harry@racstrag.org
Treasurer and
Webmaster: Stephen Sypula, RC of Stevenage Grange (D1260), England. stephen@racstrag.org
Board Member: Bob Christie, RC of Dalkeith (D1020), Scotland. bob@racstrag.org

Board Member: Dave McCleary, RC of Roswell (D6900), USA dmcleary@fms-inc.us
Board Member: Dorothy Pulsford-Harris, RC of Swaffham (D1080), England. dorothy@racstrag.org.
Board Member: Girish Mittal, RC of Mumbai Boravali East (D3140), India girish@racstrag.org

RACSRAG Coordinators

Americas: Dave McCleary (For contact details see above)
Africa: Mark Doyle, RC of Pretoria West (D9400), South Africa. mpdoyle@mweb.co.za
Oceania and parts of SE Asia: David Black, RC of Dunedin Central (D9980), New Zealand
dblack@mainlandpoultry.co.nz
India: Girish Mittal (For contact details see above)
Italy: Laura Dryjanska, RC of Roma Centenario (D2080), Italy.
Laura.dry@windowslive.com

NB

Proposals to appoint RAG Coordinators for the Australian States of Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia will be submitted shortly to the RACSRAG Board for approval.