

# Rotarian Action Group against Child Slavery

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Website [www.racsrag.org](http://www.racsrag.org)

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

*"Human Trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ, it is a crime against humanity"*

(Pope Francis)



## Religious leaders pledge to end human trafficking

During a meeting at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the Vatican on 2 December, Pope Francis and several of the world's leading religious leaders joined together in a pledge to end human slavery by 2020, focusing on the tens of millions of people "in chains" due to human trafficking and forced labour.

*sexual and psychological exploitation of men and women, boys and girls, is chaining tens of millions of persons to inhumanity and humiliation,"* the Pope said and signed the pledge to do "all in our power, within our faith communities and beyond" to end modern slavery by 2020.

The signatories of the declaration included Anglican

Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury; Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs for the American Jewish Committee; Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi al-Modarresi, an influential Shiite scholar; Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, as well as representatives for Ahmad el-Tayeb, a grand Imam from Egypt

"The physical, economic,

## Former RI President John Kenny attends London Santa Marta Conference on Modern Slavery

John Kenny, Past RI President, Judith Diment, RI Representative to the Commonwealth of Nations and Mark Little, Chair of the Rotarian Action Group against Child Slavery were invited by Home Secretary, Theresa May to participate in the second Santa Marta Conference on Modern Slavery which was held in London on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December.

The Santa Marta Group is an alliance of International Police Chiefs and Bishops from around the world working together with civil society to eradicate human trafficking and modern slavery. Membership of the Group is by invitation only, and by virtue of their presence members agree to join the common objective to develop responses to support victims and pursue those responsible for these crimes. The group was formed at the first Santa Marta Conference convened by Pope Francis in the Vatican last April at which those present signed the "Declaration of Commitment" to combat human trafficking.

The London event was headed by Cardinal Vincent Nichols (Roman Catholic Church), Home Secretary Theresa May and Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. The event brought together representatives of law enforcement officers, bishops and other personnel from 33 countries.

The three representatives from Rotary International and the Rotarian Action Group had a detailed discussion with the Minister for Modern Slavery and the Head of the Home Office Modern Slavery Unit as to how best Rotarians can help in the fight against human trafficking and modern slavery.



From left to right: Mark Little, Judith Diment, Karen Bradley (Minister for Human Trafficking) and John Kenny



A meeting with the Minister of Modern Slavery, Karen Bradley to discuss how Rotarians can help in the fight against human traffickers and slavers.



## Editorial

It was a great privilege to represent RACSRAG at the Santa Marta Conference in London and to be accompanied by two very significant Rotarians, Past RI President, John Kenny and RI Representative to the Commonwealth of Nations, Judith Diment.

It was also a privilege to have had the opportunity to make a presentation about the role and work of our Action Group at one of the workshops during the Conference.

One of the most moving presentations was the one made by Diane Martin, a former sex slave, who is now working with law enforcement officers to help the victims and survivors of sex slavery.

Several anti-slavery initiatives were highlighted but the ones that interested me most were the work of Met's new Trafficking and Kidnap Unit, BACA, an organization which provides accommodation and care for victims of trafficking and the Bakhita initiative at Twickenham, which inter alia, will provide accommodation, care and rehabilitation for up to fourteen women guests and for others who have been trafficked but not resident at Bakhita House, through emergency support, psychological therapy, legal and financial assistance, mentoring and help with accessing accommodation.

Thanks to Judith Diment, we also managed to squeeze in

a private meeting with Karen Bradley, the Minister for Modern Slavery and Organized Crime to discuss how Rotary International in general and RACSRAG in particular could help in the fight to eradicate modern slavery.

PRIP John Kenny made the valid point that Rotary International's prime focus must continue to be the eradication of polio, but that should not preclude clubs and districts from raising awareness and taking action against the burgeoning growth in the numbers of peoples enslaved.

According to Walk Free's latest Global Slavery Index, it is estimated that there are approximately 36 million people enslaved in every country and continent in the world.

One of the problems with this issue of "slavery" is that most people still think that it disappeared a long time ago, or at best, believe that it is restricted to countries like India, China, Northern Nigeria and North Korea. Nothing can be further from the truth, of course.

All countries have made laws against slavery, but making something illegal doesn't make it cease to exist. Making something illegal only causes it to vanish from view.

Behind closed doors, in remote places and right under our noses, slavery has continued throughout the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, making people rich, feeding our lifestyles and burning up lives.

This ignorance of reality is

one of the reasons why the Rotarian Action Group against Child Slavery was formed. We each have a responsibility to end this obnoxious crime against humanity once and for all.

Effective action is imperative because it is highly likely that within a few years, human trafficking will surpass drug trafficking and weapons trafficking as the most lucrative criminal activity in the world.

One of the main themes running through the Santa Marta Group sentiment is the notion that modern slavery and human trafficking can only be defeated if partnerships can be developed which bring civil society and law enforcement together to support victims and focus on the prosecution of perpetrators.

Every Rotarian knows the veracity of that statement. Look how successful Rotary International's partnership has been with UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the US Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in almost eradicating polio from the face of the globe.

I have a dream that after polio has been defeated, RI will look to use its global coverage to tackle modern slavery, but of course there are other major problems to consider, such as malaria, aids etc.

In the meantime, RACSRAG continues to work towards its objectives of a) raising awareness and b) taking action against this most disgracefully overlooked crime against humanity.



*"The world is now waking up to this appalling crime against humanity that is taking place in our midst... We can no longer turn away and say we didn't know"*

(Theresa May)



Left to right: Mark Little, Judith Diment, Cardinal Vincent Nichols and Home Secretary, Theresa May



## The Ultimate Gift - Freedom

By Carol Metzker, One World e Club Rotarian

If you have never looked into the eyes of a child rescued from slavery, you have never seen the greatest depth of hope imaginable or the pain that will haunt a human for a lifetime. In the eyes of survivors, I have witnessed both.

My first encounter with rescued slaves was in India during a Rotary National Immunization Day trip in 2004. At a center for children liberated from quarries, domestic servitude, rug factories, the circus and the sex trade, my brief interaction with an eleven-year-old girl named Maina led me to seek solutions to this heinous crime. The children at the center had been liberated, but millions of others worldwide then and now still suffer at the hands of brutal slaveholders.

### You Can Help

This year during the season of giving, will you present the gift of freedom to a child in honor of someone you love? It's a gift that doesn't require wrapping or mailing and you don't have to water it or clean up after it. But it lasts for generations. Under a Christmas tree, in a red envelope or in a simple letter, let someone special know that your donation in their honor will break the cycle of illiteracy, poverty and enslavement for a child today and future generations.

How? Participate in RACSRAG's School4Freedom project—freeing an entire village in India, starting by building a school. Give the equivalent of freedom for a child in a village in India: \$360.

### Thanks to our most recent donors!

Lana Rouff, individual (PDG D. 7170)  
Carol Metzker, member of One World Rotary e-Club  
Tojo Thatchenkery, individual

To donate or to learn more about this project, please contact Carol Metzker at [echmetzker@aol.com](mailto:echmetzker@aol.com), or Mark Little at [Mark.Little@btinternet.com](mailto:Mark.Little@btinternet.com). Or visit RACSRAG's website ([www.racsrag.org](http://www.racsrag.org)) or revisit previous newsletters.

### Progress Toward Funds to Free a Village – We're Up to 25 People!

Each figure represents \$360 – the equivalent of freedom for one person in our School4Freedom project. When we have 100 figures, we've made our goal and the project can begin!



The boys freed from slavery being rehabilitated at Bal Vikas Ashram, India



## Project involvement is the key to success



*Collection of a car from a dealership in Allahabad, India for use as a vehicle to rescue children from slavery in Uttar Pradesh, India. The car was purchased with the help of a RF Matching Grant.*

Today there are millions of slaves waiting to be freed. The organizations which liberate the slaves know how to set slaves free and they know how to help slaves overcome the traumas of their enslavement through rehabilitation. What they struggle to do is to mobilize funds that will help extend their work further.

Over the last few years, members of the Action Group have initiated, participated and funded several successful anti-slavery projects in India, Nepal, Ghana and Thailand. Sadly, some of these Rehabilitation Centres have had to close because of the lack of government support or the withdrawal of funds from sponsoring bodies. So, there is an urgent need for funds to keep these Rehabilitation and Trafficking Shelters open.

## The need for Rehabilitation Centres

For every one of the millions of slaves alive today, liberation is not enough. In Europe or the United States, a child kidnapped and held in captivity for a number of years would automatically be given counselling. It would be assumed that the child would need help for years to come. The trauma of slavery is just as bad.

**The rehabilitation process**.....Children when rescued from their sex, quarry or factory prisons, are usually broken in body, mind and spirit and if taken directly back their homes, would undoubtedly remain traumatized and withdrawn for the rest of their lives. They therefore need to go through a physical, mental and spiritual rehabilitation process. For the lucky few, this process is undertaken wherever there is a place available at one of the few Rehabilitation Centres which do exist.

At these Centres, the rescued children are re-educated a) to believe that they are worthwhile, not worthless, b) to learn to like themselves again and c) to play and mix with other children. Also, because the majority of these children are from the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society, they are likely to be illiterate, so they are taught to read and to write and to acquire trade skills such as welding, weaving, tailoring, sewing, candle making, bicycle repairs and screen printing.

**Rehabilitation is not an easy task**....For the freed slave, freedom is not the end, only the beginning of the road back to normality. Rehabilitating traumatized minds is not an easy task. There is no body of knowledge or expertise built up by doctors or psychologists about how to help the freed slaves. When slavery is the only life you have ever known or can ever remember, when your identity is wrapped up in your subjugation, finding a way through to a new life is very difficult. When a mind has erected internal walls to help it survive slavery, those walls have to come down before the freed slave can enter the "real" world. But breaking down these walls is a dangerous and complex operation.

**How can Rotarians help**.....Only a very small percentage of the number of children who are rescued from slavery are rehabilitated because of the paucity of Rehabilitation Centres. If freed slaves are given no support (both psychologically and financially) to rebuild their lives, they will inevitably fall back into slavery. Some may even return to slavery by choice. So it is essential that the existing Rehabilitation Centres, which have been supported by RACSRAG members, continue to receive support and that new ones, are built to maximize the number of freed slaves who do receive the rehabilitation which they need to rebuild their lives.

**Editors Note:** In the New Year, this Newsletter will contain up-to-date information about project opportunities which will be made available to members and supporters of this Rotarian Action Group. This will include a new Trafficking Shelter which is envisaged in East Bengal and the Wish Lists of Trafficking Shelters which I propose to visit with my Grandson in March.



*Survivors at Balika Ashram, near Delhi, India, learning how to sew*



*Bicycle repair vocational workshop at Bal Vikas Ashram – a Boys Rehab Centre near Allahabad, India. Sadly the Ashram had to close down earlier because the Centre's German benefactor ceased its support.*



## Raising a Wall – A Project Completed

Earlier this year we reported upon a project which involved a height extension of the perimeter wall at Punarwawa Ashram, a Trafficking Shelter for young women and girls rescued from sex slavery, in Bihar, India at an estimated cost of \$18,000.

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 became a lot easier for traffickers to snatch a girl back after rescue – to steal her to stop her testifying or to revictimize her.

At the request of one of the contributors, I am now including two photographs, one of the work in progress and the other, the completed wall which came within budget. This is a project which was completed with our partners, [Free the Slaves](#) based in Washington DC and a grass roots anti-slavery organization called [M.S.E.M.V.S.](#) based at Varanasi, India.



The following Clubs/individuals contributed to this successful project.

Rotary Clubs in England: Stevenage Grange (D1260), Swaffham, Norwich St Edmund, Littleport (D1080) and Croydon South (D1140).  
Rotary Club in Australia: Walkerville (D9500)  
Rotary Club in USA: West Chester Downtown (D7450)  
Churches: Sutton Methodist Church, Norfolk, England  
Personal Donations: Roger Brunt (RC of Accrington (D1190), Val Kirk (RC of Walkerville), Teresa Evans (RC of Adelaide EDGE (D9500), Mark Little (RC of Norwich St Edmund).

NB Other projects recently completed at Punarnawa Ashram include new Solar Lamps, Bio Gas Oven Project, Solar Panels for Dormitories, new Soak aways for toilets and new outdoor meeting room.

## Power Point Presentation Template

RACSRAG Treasurer, Stephen Sypula recently delivered a presentation to a local Rotary Club which was based on this [Power Point Presentation](#)

The presentation entitled 'Facing up to Slavery' and the emerging role of RACSRAG is a template which might give readers a starter for 10 to customise to suit themselves / their audience. Apart from personal customisation, PowerPoint of course allows various shows to be run from the 'Customise' button by choosing the slides to be used for a particular presentation. It is presently compiled with some timings with slide elements following each other. Others respond to a 'click'. It also contains 2 YouTube videos which are accessed via wifi on a click on the picture. (File size is 6.4mbs). If you have any skills to improve the impact of Stephen's template, please talk with him via [Stephen@racsrag.org](mailto:Stephen@racsrag.org)

Stephen has also uploaded the Walk Free's Global Slavery Index for those who wish to download / read the 2014 Edition. It can be obtained from this link [www.roisigt.org/cs/resources/gsi2014.pdf](http://www.roisigt.org/cs/resources/gsi2014.pdf) File size is 6.9mbs

### RACSRAG Board

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

Board Member: Dave McCleary, RC of Roswell (D6900), USA [dmcleary@fms-inc.us](mailto:dmcleary@fms-inc.us)  
Board Member: Dorothy Pulsford-Harris, RC of Swaffham (D1080), England. [dorothy@racstrag.org](mailto:dorothy@racstrag.org).  
Board Member: Girish Mittal, RC of Mumbai Boravali East (D3140), India [girish@racstrag.org](mailto: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](mailto:mpdoyle@mweb.co.za)  
Oceania and parts of SE Asia: David Black, RC of Dunedin Central (D9980), New Zealand  
[dblack@mainlandpoultry.co.nz](mailto: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](mailto:Laura.dry@windowslive.com)

#### Australian States

Victoria: Tony Stokes, RC of Box Hill (D9810) [stokes9@optusnet.com.au](mailto:stokes9@optusnet.com.au)  
Western: Gillian Yudelman, RC of Bay View Claremont (D9455) [yudelman@westnet.com.au](mailto:yudelman@westnet.com.au)  
NSW: John Roberson, RC of Wagga Wagga, (D9700) [johnroberson@bigpond.com](mailto:johnroberson@bigpond.com)  
Tasmania: Chris Love, RC of Salamanca, (D9830) [chrislove@internode.on.net](mailto:chrislove@internode.on.net)  
South: Teresa Evans, RC of Adelaide, EDGE, (D9500) [teresa1407@hotmail.com](mailto:teresa1407@hotmail.com)

**NB** There is vacancy for a Coordinator to cover Queensland.