

Rotarians against Child Slavery

(A Newsletter for the proposed Rotarian Action Group)

Issue No 7

Rotary to work with the UN

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



Rotary's relationship with the United Nations dates back to 1945 when some 49 Rotary members acted as delegates, advisors and consultants at the UN Charter Conference.

To-day Rotary holds the highest consultative status possible with the United Nations as a non-governmental organization. As a result there is an annual event in New York in November called "Rotary International UN Day".

At this year's event last month, it was agreed that Rotary International will collaborate with the UN Global Compact network to set up a series of joint

activities to advance the shared ideals of "high ethical business practices, sustainable humanitarian action and world peace and understanding"

This is wonderful news for all who believe that Rotarians **should** adopt a more proactive approach to human rights issues. I say this because the main plank of the UN's Global Compact is to align business operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of labour, environment, anti-corruption and **human rights**.

For many, "Slavery" is the greatest human rights

challenge of the modern era. It will be interesting to see how this new initiative is implemented by the various Global Compact networks and Rotary International's 33,000 clubs.

In RI General Secretary, Ed Futa's own words "*through discussion, collaboration and joint cooperation, Rotary Clubs and the UN's Global Compact can foster high ethical standards, universal principles and tangible humanitarian successes. Together we can work for the benefit of all*"

Let us hope that "slavery issues" will be high on the agenda of these future discussions.

Slavery – a crime against humanity

Someone has aptly described "slavery" as "the most disgracefully overlooked crime against humanity". The charge is justified because most governments appear to be doing very little to enforce their own ratification of Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) or any other accepted slavery convention.

The facts speak for themselves. Two hundred years after the British Parliament passed the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, more children than ever before languish in slavery, forced to work, under threat of violence and for no pay. On the African Continent, hundreds of thousands are considered as chattel and slavery is accepted as

an everyday social institution, whilst on the Indian Sub Continent, millions languish in general debt bondage. Across the globe, young girls sold for sex and labour, are already the second most lucrative commodity for organized crime.

Rotary Clubs around the world can help to redress the balance.

Slavery can be eradicated



Slavery is the most pernicious of human institutions. Yet like all human institutions, it can be changed by human action **and** it is worth emphasising that the obstacles which Wilberforce and his fellow abolitionists faced all those years ago, no longer exist.

In the first place, the moral argument has already been won. Every country in the world has declared against slavery, and no significant religious group or ethnic majority argues

that slavery is desirable or acceptable.

The second favourable situation for to-day's abolitionists is that there is no economic argument to be won. As Kevin Bales has already stated "*The monetary value of slavery in the world economy is very small and slave-based revenues flow to support not national economies or trans-national industries, but small scale criminal networks*".

The third great advantage is that the legal argument has also been won. Slavery is illegal in every country in the world because all the necessary national and international laws against this pernicious practice have already been passed and unlike the early abolitionists, present day anti-slavery activists do not have to violate any law to help victims. All that is necessary is the political will to enforce laws which protect the rights of human beings.

Niger schools appeal by Anti-Slavery International

Anti-Slavery International, an anti-slavery organization based in London, has built six schools in Northern Niger for children whose families have been subjected to slavery. These schools aim to secure freedom through education for formerly enslaved children in Niger, by challenging ingrained discriminatory attitudes which are broken down by using a curriculum that emphasizes equality and human rights.

Anti-Slavery International is giving us an opportunity to help fund these schools by contributing towards either books (£10), or a school desk & chair (£24), or a pair of goats (£40), or 3 hens (£10), or a donkey (£55), or a camel (£95) or a host of other items of equipment or services. If you would like to find out more about the schools or items required please click onto the relevant link below.

http://www.antislavery.org/english/donate/niger_schools_appeal/default.aspx

Alternatively think about purchasing one of the above items as a Christmas gift friends and family and Anti-Slavery International will send you a gift card describing the project and your generous donation on their behalf. However, please bear in mind that the last date to place an order to ensure that you receive your card in time for Christmas is 17th December 2009. You are perfectly welcome to purchase gifts after this date but I understand that cards will not be sent until after 4th January.

Mark Little, RC of Norwich St Edmund
District 1080, England 12 December 2009

Action Group's Website: www.racsrag.org.

[How about making a New Year's Resolution which will ensure that you and your club participates in an anti- child slavery project in 2010 ?](#)

A happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year to you all