

Rotarians against Child Slavery

(A Newsletter for the proposed Rotarian Action Group - See website www.racsrag.org)

Issue No 9

"If you want to touch the past, touch a rock; if you want to touch the present, touch a rose; if you want to touch the future, touch a life, especially a young life"



The vulnerable children of Haiti

As the dust settles over Haiti, a clearer picture is emerging of the situation: many thousands of people killed, many more injured and over a million displaced. Almost half of Haiti's population are children and many of these have lost their families and are at risk from dehydration, malnutrition and disease. But tragically, they are also in danger from people who seek to exploit their vulnerability. Isolated and alone - child trafficking, illegal adoption and sexual abuse are an even greater threat now than ever before.

For decades domestic child slavery has been endemic in Haiti where parents, unable to care for their children, often send them to live with relatively more affluent families. The children commonly known as *restavecs* receive food and housing in exchange for housework. However, many *restavecs* live in grinding poverty, receive no education and are enslaved by their "hosts".

Anti-slavery organisations based in Haiti like "Limye

Lavi" and "KOVAVIV" have been fighting an uneven battle against this entrenched system of child slavery, but sadly the earthquake has severely damaged their capability. I have been informed that all of Limyè Lavi staffers survived the earthquake, but KOFAVIV's staff have not been so lucky. Both groups have reported that their homes and in some cases their offices have been destroyed and that staff, like many Haitians are living in the streets. In such circumstances it is difficult for them to go to work when they know that their remaining families and children who they are caring for, are in the street with nothing over their heads.

Fortunately the staff of Limye Liva and KOVAVIV are still in contact with, and are being supported by, **Free the Slaves**, an anti-slavery organisation based in the USA. Free the Slaves, in consultation with the two grassroots anti-slavery organizations in Haiti, are currently helping to mobilize emergency child protection and trafficking-

prevention programs; two experts from Free the Slaves are now in Haiti to ensure that the UN's new child registration & tracing system is effective. Roughly 10 percent of Haiti's children were in domestic slavery before the earthquake and there is a risk that they will be sent back into slavery now. Free the Slaves has also started the task to rebuild their partners' work by increasing assistance for Limye Lavi's efforts to reach remote regions that remain cut off. They know that a key school that helps prevent children from falling into slavery has been destroyed and will need to be rebuilt.

You can help Free the Slaves in their work of assisting the two grassroots anti-slavery organizations by making a donation online through Free the Slaves website ie www.freetheslaves.net. On the first page you will see a section headed "Emergency Projects in Haiti". Clicking onto that section will bring you to "Donate to the Haiti Fund"

For pity's sake help them in their task

RI Board's view on Action Groups

In my last Newsletter I reported that the RI President had created an Ad Hoc Committee to look into and report on the whole scenario of Action Groups.

The Committee met on

14th January in San Diego, but all I can report from one of the members of that Ad Hoc Committee is that "the reported outcome of the RAG's committee meeting did not find the Board's favour and the

matter has been referred back to the committee for reconsideration. The moratorium (on RAGs) still applies until 30th June.

An email from a member



After the publication of the last Newsletter, I received an email from a US member of the Action Group which I thought that I would share with you. She wrote "Your mention of comments from Canada, England and

Colorado (US) made me realize that the Group really is worldwide and larger than it sometimes feels when I'm alone behind my computer. I'd love to see even more articles and names of other Rotarians in future issues in

order to strengthen the feeling of community in the Action Group"

So, how about taking a lead from this email and pen me a few thoughts for publication in this Newsletter.

7th World Congress on Child Labour

Another member of the Action Group recently provided me with a copy of an open invite to the 7th World Congress on Child Labour which is to be held this month first in New York and then in Dakar-Senegal. The invite is reproduced in full below. Do attend if you can.

Dear Friend

We cordially invite you to participate in the 7th World Congress, on child labour and Child exploitation. We are concerned about the position of children in countries where economic boom conditions has created an enormous demand for labour and particularly cheap labour, which children can provide. These and many other issues will be addressed in this forth coming conference.

The 7th World Congress, on child labour and Child exploitation is been organized by the International Child Welfare Organization (ICWO) supported by United Nation (UN) in collaboration with other NGO's and our benevolent donors. The event takes place from 17th – 20th February 2010 in New York, U.S.A, and 23rd – 26th February 2010 in DAKAR-SENEGAL.

The second part of the conference in Senegal was fixed because Senegal has been the base, where traffickers, traffic children and mostly young girls into Europe, where about 5 to 6 thousand victims were rescued between January to October 2009.

If you are interested to participate and represent your country, you may contact the secretariat for details and more information. Below you will find the contact email address of the conference secretariat by email: (conference_secretary2010@mynet.com)

You may get back to me via my email address below: [paul_rebecca@ymail.com] Children are our future. Their future is in your hands.

Regards,

Ms. rebecca paul

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Action Group's Website: www.racsrag.org