

International Matters

Combating Human Trafficking and Child Slavery



Home Office, is between 10,000 and 13,000.

The Traffickers and Slave Masters are getting away with it. Over the past decade, there has been no significant improvement in the overall criminal justice response to these crimes against humanity. According to the UN's latest Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, some 40% of countries reported fewer than 10 convictions a year, whilst 15% of countries reported no convictions at all.

What can an individual do about an entrenched and pervasive crime like human trafficking and slavery? As a first step, we can educate ourselves about modern slavery and help others to become aware of the problem. We can urge our political representatives to promote and strengthen anti-slavery and anti-trafficking laws. We can urge businesses to check their supply chains for slave produced goods. We can provide anti-slavery bodies with funds to support their work. As consumers we can restrict our purchases to fairly traded goods. As Rotarians we can become members of the Rotarian Action Group against Child Slavery (RACSRAG), which provides its members with opportunities to participate in anti-slavery projects.

The main objectives of RACSRAG, which currently has about 1500 supporters in 63 countries and which originated in District 1080, are to raise awareness that millions

of children are held captive and forced to work for commercial gain and to encourage Rotarians to participate with anti-slavery organizations and grass roots activists in projects that help to protect children from slavery and its consequences.

How can Rotary and RACSRAG help in the fight against modern slavery? In my view this objective can be achieved in the following ways:

a) Slavery is a global problem which can best be combated on a global basis. Rotary International is a global organization of 1.2 million members.

b) This global organization has been hugely instrumental in almost eradicating polio from the face of the globe. If we Rotarians can achieve the impossible here, we can surely make a significant contribution to the eradication of modern slavery.

c) The Action Group raises awareness by producing regular Newsletters which are issued out to members in over 60 countries, organizing an anti-slavery booth at RI Conventions and District Conferences, maintaining a website which provides resource materials and project opportunities for clubs to consider and organizing human trafficking and slavery conferences. The last major Conference on Human Trafficking was held last May at the Carter Centre in Atlanta, Georgia. The Conference was opened and closed by former US President Jimmy Carter.

d) Slave liberators can be likened to emergency aid workers fighting an epidemic, but they need moral and financial support to obtain the required resources. Rotarians can make sure that these activists have the tools they need by giving our time, effort and money.



These activists and their organizations know how to set slaves free, they know how to rehabilitate the survivors, how to teach them about their rights, how to ensure that they do not return to enslavement and how to reintegrate them back into their homes. What they find difficult, is mobilizing funds that will help extend their work further.

e) The Rotarian Action Group is currently working to develop partnerships with other anti-slavery bodies to provide global cohesion and impact. This is being achieved through initiating, participating in and helping to fund anti-slavery projects at home and abroad. Further details of some of these projects can be viewed on the Action Group's website at www.racsrag.org.

f) The Action Group operates on the premise that the more we can increase the intelligence and decibel level of the global conversation deploring the evils of slavery, the more likely we are able to reach the ears and hearts of the stakeholders and decision makers as well as the slave masters, traffickers and men on the street buying the girls.

As Rotarians, we each have a responsibility to end this obnoxious crime against humanity once and for all. If you think that you are too small to make an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room. But our individual actions, however small, can be magnified if they are coordinated with the actions of others. One person jumping up and down, won't cause an earthquake, but if everyone jumps together, the effect would be impossible to ignore. So let's start jumping together as members of the Rotarian Action Group against Child Slavery and engulf the world with the message, "Let's put an end to Slavery".

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