

# Rotarian Action Group against Slavery

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Website [www.ragas.online](http://www.ragas.online)

28<sup>th</sup> Sept 2016

Issue No 69



Andy Hall after the Court hearing.

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

**“The mass movement against slavery will only work, if every single supporter performs simple acts of preventative abolition”**

(Ben Skinner – “A Crime so Monstrous”)



## A call to UK Rotarians

RAGAS members in the UK are being asked to take a lead in raising awareness of a film which is coming to Britain early next year.

“SOLD the Movie”, is being promoted by Childreach International and will be on a regional tour in January and February, after having had successful showings in the USA..

The film, which was

produced by Emma Thompson, tells the story of a young Nepalese girl who is hoodwinked into working in a brothel in India.

The film illustrates the brutality of child trafficking and the degradation suffered by the resident workers of the brothel. It is a must see for those who wish to learn more about the suffering endured by

those who have been trafficked for sexual purposes.

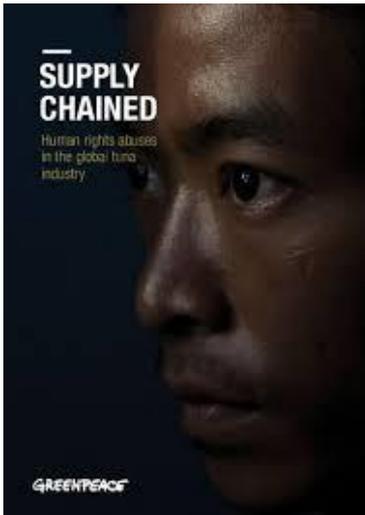
Editor’s Note: For further details of the regional tour and how you can get involved, please see article by Dan Ashcroft of Childreach International on page 3 of this Newsletter.

## Thai Court finds HR activist guilty of defamation

On 20<sup>th</sup> September, a Court in Thailand found Andy Hall, a Human Rights campaigner with a special focus on the rights of migrant workers, guilty of defamation and computer crimes. He was given a three year suspended jail term and fined 150,000 baht (£3,300, \$4,300).

Two years and a half years ago, Andy Hall undertook an investigation on behalf of Finnwatch into potential labour abuses at Natural Fruit, part of NatGroup, a Thai company that processes pineapples and supplies retailers around the world. Instead of addressing the allegation published in Finnwatch’s report, Natural Fruit decided to try and silence Andy with lawsuits and was subsequently indicted by a Bangkok Court (read editorial comment)





## Proposals to improve UK Supply Chain Regs ?

Baroness Young has introduced a Private Members Bill to the UK Parliament. The Bill seeks to amend the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015 in two key areas: by applying the reporting requirements under Section 54 (Transparency in Supply Chains) not only to businesses but also to public bodies procuring goods and services and to exclude companies which do not produce a satisfactory statement from bidding for public sector contracts. The Bill is currently being considered at Committee stage.

Early analysis of the Transparency in Supply Chains regulations shows that the majority of companies are not meeting the requirements laid down in the Act. For example out of 75 statements examined, only 22 were signed by a director or equivalent and available on the company's website homepage. Only nine company statements met the Acts requirements and addressed the six reporting areas suggested in the Act. (read editorial comment)

### Editorial

*“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere ”*

*(Dr Martin Luther King)*



Andy Hall with his supporters outside the Bangkok Court



The recent Thai court verdict referred to on the first page of this Newsletter is based on the publication of a report based on worker interviews which were carried out by Andy Hall in 2012 for Finnwatch. The report alleged confiscation of passports and identity papers, dangerous and unsanitary conditions, compulsory overtime of 5-10 hours per day and the payment of wages below the legal minimum by Natural Fruit, the subject of the investigation.

Andy Hall's indictment is puzzling because Sonja Vartiala, the Executive Director of Finnwatch, personally testified in court that it was her company which was responsible for both writing the report and publishing it – not Andy Hall.

It would appear that Andy Hall has been made a scapegoat in order to stifle other voices that speak out legitimately in support

of migrant worker rights to protect Thailand's labour-intensive export industries which contribute so much to the Thai GDP. As Amnesty International has already indicated, Thailand needs to take seriously its obligation to protect human rights activists rather than allowing its legal system to be hijacked by companies seeking to silence those exposing abusive practices.

Baroness Young's proposals concerning public procurement merit considerable attention. Firstly because all government supply chains are equally vulnerable to labour exploitation as those of business supply chains. For example a recent report showed that a third of the work force of a Bangladeshi factory, which produced licensed apparel for US military stores, were children. Also, plastic gloves bought by the Danish public health sector were shown to have contained

rubber from plantations which rely on forced labour.

Secondly, governments purchase significant quantities of goods and services from businesses and could use this purchasing power to improve socially responsible business practices. Globally, public procurement is estimated at about 1,000 billion Euros per annum, whilst across OECD countries it accounts for 12% of GDP on average. In the UK alone, £45 billion worth of contracts are awarded to private firms each year, excluding NHS procurement. Directing this capital only towards companies that are effectively tackling modern slavery, would realise governments' responsibilities under both UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Apart from a broad dictate



## Editorial (continued)

for all businesses to undertake due diligence on modern slavery, procurement is the strongest lever that governments have, to capture a large enough group of companies to ensure a critical mass are operating in this way.

In his recent book "Where Were You", Matt Friedman writes "*Most people to whom I speak know little about human slavery. Probably fewer than 10% of the people know even a quarter of the information I shared. If you don't know about a problem, you can't care about it. If you don't care, you will not act. If you don't act, how can we expect our results to improve? Thus, the world's awareness MUST become a major priority. Everyone must hear the urgent message: slavery is alive and flourishing today*".

Dan Ashcroft's plea for help below for all UK Rotarians to "step up to the plate" is a wonderful opportunity to personally help with publicizing the film **SOLD** and exploding the myth amongst UK residents that slavery and the slave trade is a thing of the past.

Matt Friedman has completed his amazing whistle stop tour of North America and shares his thoughts with us in a Youtube link (see page 4 of this issue).

Last year, I led a small team from my Rotary District to visit various anti-slavery NGOs in the Kathmandu area of Nepal. One of these NGOs is a fairly new organization, called Kumudini. It is still in its infancy and needs financial support to realize its objectives. One of these aims is to establish an Emergency Shelter for exploited/trafficked/abused young girls. The Kumudini team has found a building, but it is in desperate need of refurbishment. (see page 5 and 6 for further details)

## Your chance to launch an Anti-Slavery Film

(by Dan Ashcroft, Campaigns & Advocacy Manager, Childreach International)

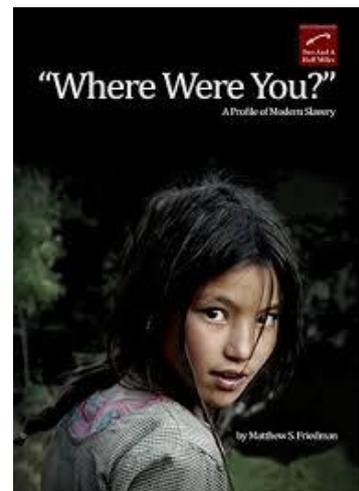
*SOLD The Movie* tells the harrowing story of Lakshmi, a thirteen-year-old Nepali girl who is sold from her home in Nepal to a brothel in India. Directed by Oscar-winner Jeffrey D. Brown, starring Gillian Anderson and executive produced by Emma Thompson, *SOLD* is an incredibly powerful film that helps to shine a light on modern day slavery.

Childreach International – a global child rights movement working in both Nepal and India – have partnered with the film as part of their *Taught, Not Trafficked* campaign. The charity's work in Nepal helps to prevent other Nepali girls following in Lakshmi's footsteps. Childreach are launching the campaign and UK tour of the film at the Trust Women Conference in November.

**In January and February 2017, *SOLD* will be on a regional tour of the UK and Childreach International are looking for Rotarians to help organise and lead the screenings. *SOLD* will be shown in Aberdeen, Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Southampton and York, with each screening followed by a panel discussion on anti-slavery.**

Childreach International is looking for a Rotarian in each of the above cities to volunteer their time and help organise the screening of the film. If you can help, please email Dan at [dan.ashcroft@childreach.org.uk](mailto:dan.ashcroft@childreach.org.uk). Alternatively, if you have a suggestion for a suitable panellist, or if you would like to be kept updated with the date and venue for the event nearest to you, we would love to hear from you.

For more information, please visit [www.TaughtNotTrafficked.com](http://www.TaughtNotTrafficked.com)





*“You may never know what results come from our actions, but if you do nothing, there will be no result”*

(Mahatma Gandhi)

## Matt Friedman’s 70 day US Speaking Tour

Most readers will be aware that Matt and Sylvia Friedman’s great anti-slavery speaking tour of North America, which started in Vancouver and finished in Hartford, Connecticut, was completed last month. The main aim of the tour, was to raise awareness of the slavery issue in order to “*spark abolitionist feelings amongst the participants*” In the youtube link below, Matt shares his observations about what he has learnt from speaking with the staff and members of corporations, rotary clubs, businesses, church groups and people he has met on the tour. These observations include: the low level of awareness of the slavery issue, the lack of a master plan to end slavery, the absence of a leadership structure at State or Federal level to tackle the problem, resistance to share relevant data, NGO’s working in isolation etc

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuOdsN69eNw>

Matt concludes that we need, inter alia, a collective plan we can all work from, more systematic collection and analysis of data, better collaboration and the private sector to be more involved, in a positive way.

## Progress Report on School4Freedom Project

by Rtn Carol Metzker, One World Rotary e-Club



Yet again thank you, Rotarians, individuals, clubs and districts, for supporting the School4Freedom (S4F) project. The process is in progress.

Highlights from this quarter include:

- \* Six children brought out of child slavery at the slaveholder's brick kiln - they're now at the school
- \* 29 villagers received health/medical exams
- \* 34 children are now registered to get help with the Integrated Child Development System.

The detailed Q2 2016 report about the S4F accompanies this Newsletter as a PDF file. It includes information on frontline workers' progress, a report from a teacher and two case studies (one child, one adult in the village). Rotarians, you'll recognize that this quarter the project touched three of the six focus areas:

- 1) basic education and literacy
- 2) disease treatment and prevention
- 3) maternal and child health care

Ahead: continuation of building groups, Community Vigilance and Self Help Groups to learn about rights and to address/discuss common issues; continuation of school; counseling for rescued victims; investigation into villagers who have been trafficked to other states where they are now enslaved.



## **Please help to refurbish a new Emergency Shelter for Exploited Girls in Nepal**

*(by Pooja Mahotra and the Kumudini Team)*

***Maya is an eleven year old girl from outside Kathmandu in Nepal. She has one elder sister and two brothers. Her father was an alcoholic and thus her parents used to fight all the time. She lost both of them a few months apart, which led to the separation of the siblings. The two sisters were sent to work in Kathmandu as domestic workers while the maternal family looked after her brothers.***

***From the age of nine, she started working as a domestic worker where she had to do all the household chores. Moreover, she was not fed well. Hence she was malnourished and looked much younger than her age. The only positive thing was that she was enrolled at one of the nearby school and she was very happy about it.***

***At the age of eleven, one of the relatives of the family, she was staying with, sexually abused her when there were no other family members at home. The abuser was a well-educated man. She was only able to share the incident after a few months in school.***

Kumudini is an organization set up by experts with an extensive experience of working with abused, exploited and trafficked children and we are opening an EMERGENCY SHELTER FOR EXPLOITED/ABUSED/TRAFFICKED GIRLS in Kathmandu, Nepal, from September 2016.

The new Shelter will provide services to girls like Maya who are subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation, especially from ten to fifteen years of age, or vulnerable to such situations. The young girls are subjected to such abuse mainly due to a dysfunctional family structure, a weak social protection mechanism, migration due to the 2015 earthquake, poverty, and being girls of single mothers. Apart from this, we will also cater services to the girls who have just entered the entertainment-based workplaces in/at high risk of prostitution.

Around **20** such girl children will receive care and protection annually. The capacity is 10 girls at any one time and the children can stay up to six months to one year, depending on their needs and situations.

Kumudini will coordinate with Police, OCMC and NGOs for the case referrals. We believe that the care and protection in the initial days are crucial for protection and the healing process as well as to help individuals become confident and self-reliant to start a new life on their own. We offer immediate services such as food, shelter, medical check-up, psychosocial counselling and legal counselling to prepare the victims. Along with those services, we will conduct risk assessment and support for reintegrating them back to their families with intensive follow up mechanism and necessary support.

Kumudini is renting a one storied house with a small garden allowing these children to play and reside. However, as most respectable home owners do not want troubled girls in their properties, it has been a struggle to find a house suitable to rent. We

## New Emergency Shelter – Kumudini (Cont'd)

have now found a house, but it requires significant refurbishment to come to a safe condition before operation, which is essential for the safety/security as well as to provide child-friendly space for the children. Please see photos of the house below



Kumudini's new Emergency Shelter building

Thank you so much for reading.

Pooja Mahotra and the Team

*Editor's Note: Attached in the Annex is a costed Wish List of the work which needs to be done at Kumudini's new Emergency Shelter.*

## How to help in the fight against Slavery

- **Join with others who have the same aim:** A good start would be to enrol in the Action Group of Rotarians against Slavery. You will learn about the issues of slavery and trafficking and how to help contribute towards its extinction. Encourage others to join the Group. Alternatively join one of the other anti-slavery or anti-trafficking organizations in your area.
- **Persuade your club to participate in a project:** Projects can be found either via the Group's website [www.ragas.online](http://www.ragas.online) or through its regular Newsletter.
- **Give a personal donation:** This is an option if your club shows no interest. The donation can be made to help fund one of the Action Group projects or to generally support the work of an anti-slavery organization.
- **Visit a rehabilitation centre:** You will learn why slavery exists in a particular district, how children become enslaved and what is required to effect a successful rehabilitation. Then share your experiences, knowledge and subsequent actions with others.

## How to help in the fight against Slavery (Cont'd)

- **Raise awareness in others:** Tell club members, friends or business colleague about the existence of modern slavery, the use of people (children as well as adults) as slaves and the numbers involved.
- **Obtain support at District Level:** Promote the work of the Action Group and anti-slavery organizations within the District through the District International Committee. Encourage your District Governor or District Executive to include the topic at a future District Conference or Council or Assembly.
- **Give or organize presentations:** This could be to your Rotary Club, other clubs or District Assembly/Conference. If you are not able to do it yourself find someone who can.
- **Visit local schools:** Inform them about modern day slavery and offer to provide a presentation on the subject.  
NB. In the United Kingdom, “citizenship” is now an imperative subject in a school’s key stage curriculum. The subject addresses issues relating to social justice and human rights and encourages pupils to challenge injustice, inequalities and discrimination. When school children learn about modern slavery, they become unstoppable in their determination to end it. Give them the opportunity to join the anti-slavery movement by sharing with them, and letting their teacher know about teaching packs which are available from some of the anti-slavery organizations
- **Write to your local political representative(s):** Ask him/her/them to prioritise ending all forms of slavery.
- **Contact your fund managers:** This could include your mutual, savings and retirement fund. Ask how is the investment of your money screened to exclude any profit from slavery.
- **Contact your local administrative authority:** Find out if they have a website which raises awareness of human trafficking and slavery. If not, encourage the authority to establish a website which includes relevant information, eg how to spot victims, information on the mind set of victims, information on help lines, etc.
- **Write to local retailers:** Ask them about their current purchasing policies, eg do they conduct social and ethical audits on their suppliers to weed out cases of slave produced goods ? If their organization has a turnover of £36 million are they completing a slavery and human trafficking statement which provides information about the efforts they have taken to ensure that slavery is not taking place in any of the company’s supply chains or in any part of its business. These statements are required for each financial year, signed off by the board of directors or partner and published prominently on their website.
- **Try to purchase only fair trade goods:** This is the best way to ensure that we are not contributing to the funds of the slavers. Fair traded goods empower vulnerable people, advance social justice, guarantee a fair wage and safe working conditions and ensures no child or sweatshop labour was used to make the item.
- **Widen your knowledge about slavery:** There are some excellent books, films, DVDs and anti-slavery websites that do spell out the full extent and horrors of modern slavery. If you cannot find any, ask your RAGAS officers and Coordinators.

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**NB** There are vacancies for Coordinators to cover Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed by the contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the RAGAS Board

**Note:** See Annex for Kumudini's Wish List

## Kumudini's Wish List

S.N.	What we need	Why	Number	Total Cost (NPR)	GBP
1	Painting, both interior and exterior	The house badly needs a coat of painting	Four rooms & the exterior walls, windows, doors, ceiling	65,000	£464.29
2	Door and window maintenance  False ceiling	Some of the windows and screen doors need to be replaced  The roof is made up of zinc sheet and thus false ceiling is required to ward off the heat as well as chill		40,000	£285.71
3	Wall around the house and wire on the wall	For the security of the resident children as the surrounding walls are low	Wall  Wire	170,000  30,000	£1214.29  £214.29
4	Small library	For information and engagement of children with books	One book shelf  Books and art materials	10,000  30,000	£71.48  £214.29
5	Laptop	For official purpose  (Desktop we have, will be used to teach the children)		65,000	£464.29
<b>Total</b>				<b>410,000</b>	<b>£2,928.64</b>

NB US dollar exchange rate is currently US\$ 1.30 Dollars = £1