



## Chairman's Report to RAGAS Board

This is the first annual Board Report after the change of the Action Group's name from the "RAG against Child Slavery" to the "RAG against Slavery" in August 2016. The report which covers the period from my last report dated 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to the current date, highlights the progress which has been made by the Action Group on the RAG's two main objectives, ie a) raising awareness of the existence and extent of global slavery and b) taking action by encouraging clubs to support the work of anti-slavery organizations in combating and alleviating the effects of human trafficking and slavery. Linking with the right anti-slavery organizations is still a key ingredient to success in the latter objective.

### Raising awareness

- a) Production of Newsletters.....Since the last report, 11 Newsletters (Nos 64-74) have been issued, providing up-to-date information on the activities of the Group and other anti-slavery organizations, global slavery issues and project opportunities for Clubs and Districts to consider. These Newsletters are currently being issued to over 1,700 supporters and members in 66 countries. Newsletters are also issued to other prominent Rotarians, eg current and past RI Directors, past RIBI Presidents, etc
- b) RAGAS Website.....The newly designed website is maintained by Stephen Sypula, RAGAS's Treasurer and Vice Chairman. It is a very important resource to help the Action Group achieve its twin objectives and we are truly indebted to Stephen for continuing to accept this responsibility as well as retaining his other significant RAGAS responsibilities. The website updates our members and supporters on modern slavery issues, provides resource material for members and supporters who wish to make presentations to other clubs, furnishes Rotarians and Clubs with project opportunities and provides links to relevant organizations combating all forms of slavery.
- c) RACSRAG Booth at Seoul RI Convention.....The booth at the Seoul Convention was the sixth booth which the Action Group has staffed since the initial Group was formed in 2009 at the Birmingham Convention. Bolstered by the amazing plenary session presentation by Gary Haugen of International Justice Mission, we received a plethora of visitors, some new members and 200 more Rotarians signed up as future recipients of the Newsletter. We are already looking forward to preparing plans and exhibits for the next RAGAS booth for the Atlanta RI Convention in June 2017. For the benefit of new members, the objective of the booth is to attract delegates to the stand, to tell them about the global issue of human trafficking and slavery and to encourage them to take action by joining the Action Group and participating in the project opportunities highlighted in the regular Newsletters and the website.
- d) RAGAS leaflets.....5,000 updated copies of the RAGAS leaflet have just been received from the printers. The significant portion of these will be available for the forthcoming Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. The leaflets provide a brief summary of the Action Group's main objectives, offer suggestions as to how Rotarians can help to end slavery and highlight examples of some of the successful projects achieved by the Action Group. In addition to the RI Conventions, they are usually distributed at Clubs, District Conferences and at many other public presentations and meetings relating to human trafficking and slavery.
- e) Breakout Session at RI Convention.....The second Action Group Breakout Session took place on 12 June 2016 at the Seoul RI Convention where the topic related specifically to "Child Slavery". The Venue was packed out and I understand the presentations were well received. The third Breakout Session on "Human Trafficking and Slavery" will be held on Monday 12 June in Atlanta.

Delegates attending the Session will learn about the extent of human exploitation, its root causes, how human trafficking and modern slavery affects us all, how to recognize the signs of trafficking within our communities, how each of us has to become part of the solution to end trafficking, how Rotarians are already taking action and how we can work together with other anti-slavery organizations to protect adults as well as children from slavery and its consequences. At least one third of the Session will be devoted to Questions (from the audience) and Answers (from the panel).

- f) Personal presentations.....on “Slavery and Human Trafficking” have been made by your Chairman at Rotary Club meetings, NHS and Friendship Groups, a Peace Conference, a District Conference, the Seoul Breakout Session and at a local United Nations Association meeting.
- g) Articles on Slavery.....have been written for the District 1080 Magazine and our website’s links have been included in several District Newsletters in England and elsewhere. An article on “The Impact of Slavery” has also been submitted for publication in “The Rotarian” which is the official magazine of Rotary International..
- h) Use of RAGAS Coordinators.....Since the Seoul RI Convention, new RAGAS Coordinators have been appointed for India, Pakistan and Southern Africa to add to the Coordinators already in place in Egypt, Italy, USA, Australia, the Philippines and Oceania.

## **Taking Action**

The Group takes action in a number of ways: promoting the work of anti-slavery organizations and activists, organizing fundraising events for specific projects, encouraging rotary clubs and districts, schools and other organizations to initiate and support anti-slavery projects, lobbying politicians and governments to promote and/or strengthen anti-slavery and anti-trafficking laws and sharing expertise and links with anti-slavery bodies and other relevant organizations.

Promoting the work of anti-slavery organizations.....This is a frequent activity involving NGOs such as Walk Free, Anti-Slavery International, Free the Slaves, Asha Nepal, Childreach International. By way of example, between November 2016 and March 2017, RAGAS agreed to help Childreach International to promote and organize the film “SOLD” in 12 different locations throughout the UK. The film, which has also been shown last year in the USA, tells the harrowing story of a young Nepalese girl who is sold from her home in Nepal to a brothel in India. Your Chairman was responsible for organizing the screening of the film and subsequent Q&A session in Norwich, England He also helped with the events held in Nottingham and Belfast. Another RAGAS Board member, Judith Diment, took a leading role in organizing the event in Oxford.

Promoting the work of activists.....A recent example of this activity relates to Matt Friedman's speaking tour of the USA last summer. Matt is a former UN anti-slavery activist whose objective was to deliver 100 presentations over a period of 70 days, to raise awareness of the extent of global human trafficking and slavery. In response to a plea from Matt, your Chairman agreed that the Action Group through its contacts in the USA, would help Matt to secure suitable venues and organizations to attend the events. This mission was successfully achieved. Matt and his wife Sylvia started their first presentation in Vancouver on 17<sup>th</sup> June and completed the final presentation 70 days later in Hartford, Connecticut. Matt subsequent report provides valuable information for all anti-slavery activists and US decision makers who aim to end human trafficking and slavery..

Organizing fund raising events.....During the last year, as in previous years, several of our RAG members and supporters were involved with fund raising events for anti-slavery projects. These are too numerous to list in this summary report. By way of an example, your Chairman personally organized a musical concert in the Cathedral in Norwich to raise funds for Bakhita House, a fairly new Trafficking Shelter in London to supplement the significant funding support received from South Australian Rotarians in the Adelaide area. As

noted below, raising funds for the operating costs of Bakhita House is an ongoing activity for members in the UK.

Project involvement.....There are several anti-slavery projects in progress. There are also, some like the proposed Greater Sacramento project on fighting human trafficking which are currently being developed and others which are already completed. Examples of completed and on-going projects during the period under review are outlined below, starting with a RAGAS organized team visit to two SE Asia countries which involved both hands on work and meetings with various anti-slavery organizations and NGOs.

Project Star Fish, Thailand.....In November 2016, RAGAS Coordinator for Oceania, David Black (RC of Dunedin Central, New Zealand) and a team of Rotaractors from New Zealand and England, completed a three week working trip to Thailand and Cambodia. In Thailand, they spent 10 days working at the Rescue Mission for Children Centre at Mai Suai, Northern Thailand, where, amongst other things, they transplanted banana trees, planted 800 guava trees to complete an orchard which will provide income for the Centre, carried out electrical work and general maintenance work as well as landscaping around the Centre. The team also purchased and donated items for the Centre such as musical instruments for the children, school uniforms, new shoes, blankets, portable irrigation systems and dental equipment. After a brief spell of a few days in Bangkok including attendance at the RC of Bangkok, the team next spent 5 days in Cambodia. This visit included meetings with several anti-slavery NGOs and a visit to a Trafficking Shelter in Phnom Penh. Also included on the itinerary were meetings with the Directors of the United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons in both Bangkok and Phnom Penh.

Kalimpong Project (Phase 1).....This Global Grant project, masterminded by a member of the Rotary Club of Dunbar, Scotland, was successfully completed in the spring of 2016 and officially opened on 16th September 2016. Seven Rotarians from Dunbar and two partners were at the official opening of the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) at Kalimpong in NE India. The Centre had been completed at a cost of \$69,000 and with the help of 14 Rotary Clubs. Work is in progress to design Phase 2 of the project which is the construction of a Shelter Home which is to be built above the VTC.

School4Freedom Project.....As noted in last year's report, this three year project's objective is to free an entire village from generational debt bondage. The project commenced in February 2016 when a sum of \$36,000 was successfully raised from many clubs and individuals by our Pennsylvania based RAGAS member, Carol Metzker. The budgeted sum is providing funds for facilities to start a school, a salary for 2 teachers for 3 years, lunches for the children, vocational and educational supplies and equipment and the costs of frontline workers to organize and educate parents about their rights as Indian citizens, teach livelihood skills and how to access government services.

According to a recent report from RAGAS's project partners MSEMVS and Voices4Freedom

- the school is up and running
- some community members have filed a grievance with government officials about their debt bondage slavery
- a women's self-help group has been formed (that later will lead to vocation training and income for self-sufficiency)
- although the slaveholder continues to push back with threats and ridicule, frontline workers continue conversations among the villagers and government leaders..

Kumudini Emergency Shelter Project .....In 2015 a small group of RAGAS members visited Nepal and met with a newly formed anti-slavery group called "Kumudini". We discovered that the group members' expertise had been based on their recent experience working for another well established anti-slavery organization called "Shakti Samuha", One of the new Group's initial projects has been the establishment of an Emergency Shelter for exploited/abused/trafficked girls which will accommodate at any one time up to 10 girls. The new premises which are being rented by the Group, requires significant refurbishment as detailed in an article in the September 2016 issue of the RAGAS Newsletter. This necessary refurbishment costs have now been funded by donations from the Rotary Club of Norwich St Edmund.

Asha Nepal – an anti-slavery organization in Kathmandu, Nepal.....has been visited on a couple of occasions by several members of the Action Group, the latest visit being in Feb/March 2015. In 2016, the

organization was given 6 month's notice by its landlord to vacate one of its rented premises which was being used as a Children's Transitional Centre, accommodating 15-20 children. The notice to depart provided the impetus for Asha Nepal to replace the existing Centre with 3 new foster homes (with a house mother in each home) which will have the benefit of providing a less institutionalised and a more family orientated environment for the children. The new foster homes required a substantial amount of new furniture and equipment. The required funding for these assets has been covered by contributions from the Rotary Clubs of Grantham (D 1070) and March (D1080), the Rotaract Club of Norwich and individual members of the RC of Norwich St Edmund (D1080).

Asha Nepal Seed Fund..... works rather like "micro credit". Asha Nepal gives an interest free loan to some of their former residents to help them set up a business (become independent) using the skills which they will have learnt at the Centre – skills like tailoring, candle making, jewellery making etc. The fund was running short of money, until the fund received a substantial donation from a group of RAGAS members in South Australia.

Maiti Nepal – the oldest and largest anti-slavery organization in Nepal.....Led by RAGAS Coordinator for Western Australia, Gillian Booth, there is a Global Grant proposal which is being developed which if successful, would utilise existing accommodation at Maiti Nepal to create a boutique hotel which would not only generate income for the organization but also provide opportunities to engage women vocationally in the operations of the hotel.

Bakhita House – a Trafficking Shelter in London.....There is on-going support for this Shelter which opened in June 2015 to accommodate young women who have been rescued from sex slavery. It is run by Caritas Westminster and funded by donations. The house, which provides accommodation for up to 12 women, offers practical help to the most vulnerable and traumatised victims of human trafficking with priority given to those who because of their immigration status, are unable to get help elsewhere.

#### Forging links with Anti-Slavery Organizations

Since the last report, in April 2016, meetings held between RACSRAG/RAGAS members include the following organizations :-

- Walk Free
- YouCanFreeUs
- Childreach International
- Free the Slaves
- Hagar
- Nvader

**I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Board and the regional Coordinators for their support during the last year. I am particularly grateful to Harry Payne (Secretary) and Stephen Sypula (Vice Chair, Treasurer and Webmaster), both of whose unwavering enthusiasm, wise counsel and energy for streamlining the operation of RACSRAG and now RAGAS is incalculable and very much appreciated by the Chairman. Without the support of these two activists, RAGAS would not be as an effective body as it is today.**

Mark Little  
Chairman  
Rotarian Action Group against Slavery

5 April 2017