

Rotarian Action Group against Slavery

(This RAG is not an agency of, or controlled by, Rotary International)

Website: www.ragas.online

12 Nov 2017

Issue No 79



Saiful Hasam



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

“All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing”

(Edmund Burke)



Good News: India criminalizes sex with underage girls

A ruling by India's top court criminalizing sex with underage brides could prevent thousands of girls being trafficked and sold on the pretext of marriage.

Last month, India's Supreme Court struck

down a decades old clause in the country's rape laws permitting a man to have sex with his wife if she is aged 15 to 18 years of age – ruling that it was rape and therefore a criminal offence. This has prompted anti-trafficking

charities in India to claim that the verdict should help to protect girls from under-age sex – be it with a husband, trafficker or paying client – and so extend their childhood.

Bad News: Exploited fruit pickers in Victoria, Australia

A Malaysian journalist who went undercover in Australia to expose exploitation in Victoria's fruit picking industry said migrant workers were being “brainwashed” with religion and trapped in debt to keep them on farms.

The journalist, Saiful Hasam, posed as a fruit picker and spoke to victims working on a farm in Swan Hill in Victoria where they recounted their stories of being lured to Australia by promises of decent jobs. Instead, they were paid derisory sums, kept in overcrowded homes with extortionate rents and effectively trapped in debt bondage.

Hasam himself was paid \$110 for 24 hours of work over four days. About \$80 went to pay the rent in a small home he shared with 11 other workers, mostly from Malaysia. He was short changed by \$10 by his contractor, leaving him with just \$20.

Giving evidence to a modern slavery inquiry a few weeks ago, Hasam stated that “based on my observations, they (the workers) are being brainwashed using religion. The house leader always says “OK, please be patient, this is your test, coming to Australia, and one fine day you will get enough money. This is normal

for everybody, and even me myself go through this process”

Editors Note: The inquiry's interim report advocated the creation of a Modern Slavery Act and recommended the creation of an independent anti-slavery commissioner, who would have the power to “consult, advise, report on and make recommendations”.

In August, the Justice Minister announced plans to impose a legal requirement for companies with a turnover larger than \$100 million to file a public slavery report each year.



Bad News: Exploitation of ASEAN domestic workers

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), domestic work is the top sector where forced labour is found. This is because domestic workers work in isolation and are dependent upon recruiters and employers.

A recent study by ILO showed that in ASEAN countries (ie Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia,

Brunei and Myanmar) 61% of all domestic workers were entirely excluded from the protection provided to other workers, such as social security benefits, minimum wage and limitation in working hours.

The ILO found that domestic workers labour for 14 hours a day and the vast majority are paid below the minimum wage.

Unfortunately, to date the

Philippines is the only ASEAN country that has passed ILO Convention 189 which recognizes domestic work as formal work which needs to be regulated by labour laws which protects workers from exploitation by their employers.



Flags of the ASEAN countries

Painful News: Activists still held in Mauritanian jail

For over a year Mauritanian anti-slavery activists Moussa Bilal Biram and Abdellahi Matal Saleck have been held in a Mauritanian prison, simply for speaking out against slavery. The prison is in a remote area some 1,200 kilometers away from their home in the capital city of Nouakchott. Reports indicate that they have been tortured and have injuries consistent with being bound in painful positions for hours at a time. It is clear that the Mauritanian authorities are targeting these two men merely because they are leading members of the Mauritanian anti-slavery organization which is known as "The Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement."

Freedom United has organized a petition asking everybody to call on the Mauritanian government to relocate Moussa and Abdellahi whilst awaiting their hearing by the Supreme Court – the body which has the power to order their immediate release.

Will you sign Freedom United's [Petition](#) ? International pressure is likely to make a real impact on activists' rights to speak out in Mauritania

Good News: Diplomatic immunity no longer a defence against a slavery charge

The UK Supreme Court has just ruled in favour of a Filipino domestic worker who claims to have been trafficked and treated like a slave by a Saudi diplomat in a landmark ruling that could pave the way for other victims to seek justice.

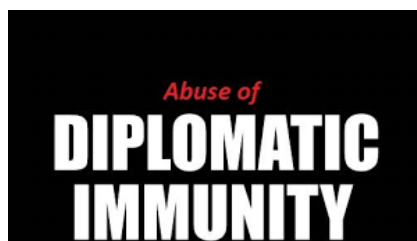
Cherrylyn Reyes went to an employment tribunal in 2011, claiming her former employers, Jarallah Al-Malki and his wife, had subjected her to racial abuse, taken her passport, and paid her less than the minimum wage.

The tribunal and the Court of Appeal refused to hear her claims because her employers had diplomatic immunity in Britain, which meant they could not be tried.

But Britain's Supreme Court last month ruled that the employment tribunal should hear Reyes's allegations of abuse because Al-Malki and his wife were no longer shielded by immunity because his posting in the UK had finished and because the employment of Ms Reyes was not in the course of his official functions.



Moussa Bilal Biram



Freedom from Slavery Forum

by Laura Dryjanska and Dave McCleary

Freedom from Slavery Forum in Palo Alto, California was a memorable event attended by two members of the Rotarian Action Group Against Slavery, Dave McCleary (Vice Chairman of the Group) and Laura Dryjanska (former Coordinator for Italy).

The Forum began with the presentation of a book by Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick, Assistant Professor of Political Sociology at the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego and a former employee of Free the Slaves. His volume, *What Slaveholders Think: How Contemporary Perpetrators Rationalize What They Do*, opened up a lively discussion from members of the public.

On the following day, participants met at Stanford University for the Plenary Opening by Maurice Middleberg, Executive Director of Free the Slaves, followed by a series of state-of-the art presentations on Prevalence Studies and Determinants of Slavery. The atmosphere promoted interaction, creativity, and networking of participants, with humility, honesty, and respect.

In the afternoon, the representatives of the Rotarian Action Group Against Slavery each chose to attend a different one of the two concurrent sessions: *Interventions: What Works?* and *Applications of Technology*. The dinner that followed has provided further opportunities to get to know one another, at the same time raising awareness concerning the Rotarian efforts to combat slavery. Numerous participants of the forum have spoken at Rotarian meetings, while several actually identified as members of the Action Group. Without doubt, the presence of Rotary members all over the world, leadership skills, cultural competence, and service-oriented attitude were recognized as assets that complement the anti-trafficking movement.

The last day of the Forum centered on the compelling, powerful session on Survivor Leadership and Inclusion. Great lessons and words of wisdom for those “trying to help” have come from the survivors. Network and Coalition Building concluded the event, leaving the participants better equipped, encouraged, and motivated to continue and improve their efforts.

Overall, the Forum has been a very positive experience, bringing together experts in research, representatives of international organizations, and large and small non-profits from five continents. High-level academic scholarship, evidenced by excellent presentations and background papers was paired with attention to insight from the civil society represented by NGOs working against slavery. It was encouraging to see Rotarians active in all these scenarios

London Trafficking Shelter requires funding support

Ever since it opened its doors to trafficked victims in June 2015, Bakhita House, based in London, has received the support of RAGAS members from as far afield as Australia. Run by a team of professionals and funded by Caritas Westminster, Bakhita House 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.

Specifically Bakhita House provides safe accommodation for up to 12 women, access to health care, professional support tailored to individual needs, counselling,



Above: Dr Laura Dryjanska and Dave McCleary

Below: A working session during the Forum



The delegates with Maurice Middleberg (Free the Slaves) seated in the front



London Trafficking Shelter requires funding support (cont'd)



Karen Anstiss,
Manager of Bakhita House

skills development, legal help and access to education and employment Since it opened in 2015, Bakhita House has accommodated 77 guests from thirty countries ranging from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

Karen Anstiss, who recently received an award for her work as the Manager of Bikhita House, has informed RAGAS that there is a desperate need for the acquisition of a wide range of household goods such as dressing gowns, toasters, cushions and covers, or if financial help was offered, *“we could put money into a reserve fund so it is only spent on certain things, for instance money for mother and babies, [there are two babies currently living with their mothers at Bakhita House] and money for guest emergencies etc”*

Editorial

It has been clear for some time now that traffickers in India have been using marriage with minors as an alibi to rape girls in the first instance, to break them before selling them to pimps and brothel owners. The first rape is a method to control the victim. By robbing the girls of all dignity, it is easier to trap them into sex work where they are shamed into submission.

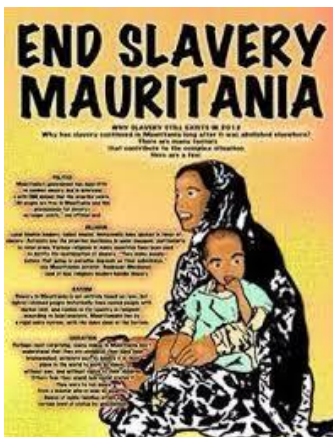
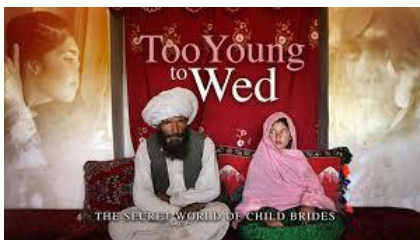
The Supreme Court’s judgement of criminalizing intercourse with minors, even under the pretext of marriage, will be a huge deterrent for traffickers. But of course, the key to the success of this ruling lies in a) raising awareness about the court ruling and b) enforcing the verdict. To date India’s track record on enforcement has not been very good.

The Mauritanian Government’s excuse for imprisoning Moussa and Abdellahi is based upon bogus charges of incitement of riots and violent rebellion against the government. However, no evidence of these crimes was provided at their subsequent trial. In reality we know that they in prison solely because they were speaking out against human rights abuses in the country. Sadly the laws against slavery have rarely been enforced and anti-slavery activists in Mauritania continue to live in fear that if they work openly, they will face the same persecution as Moussa and Abdellahi

This isn’t the first time that the Mauritanian government has tried to silence anti-slavery activists. In 2014 many of us supported Freedom United’s efforts to release anti-slavery activist Biram Dah Abeid. I understand nearly 400,000 Freedom United supporters took part in a campaign to revisit his case and to secure his release. The size of the support for Biram had a huge impact on the outcome because Mauritania’s Supreme Court ruled in Biram’s favour and he was eventually released in May 2016.

Signing Freedom United’s petition can have a similar impact on all activists’ rights to speak out against slavery in Mauritania. Leveraging global pressure to support Moussa and Abdellahi’s case will ensure that the Minister of Justice will know that the world is watching to see if justice will prevail in Mauritania. As Freedom United maintains, *“its more important now than ever that we stand up for Moussa and Abdellahi and get them relocated ahead of their Supreme Court hearing so that they have access to their lawyers and families and receive the care they need.*

The UK Supreme Court’s first ruling on a case involving a domestic worker represents a significant inroad into chipping away at the veil of immunity that has so far shielded diplomats who have enslaved their domestic workers. We believe



Editorial (Cont'd)

that at least 17,000 domestic workers are brought to the UK each year with many of them potentially trafficked into slavery. Many are exploited by employers who lock them up, beat and abuse them and withhold their pay, yet they often find it hard to escape ever since the UK imposed visa rules in 2012 which tie them to their employer - in an attempt to limit immigration

Human Rights Watch has documented cases of abuse where some domestic workers have accused their employers of torturing them.

Last month, the Indian Government ordered its embassy to find a Punjabi woman called Reena Rani who posted a video on Facebook where she claimed to have been tortured and starved by her Saudi employers.

Hundreds of female foreign workers in the Gulf have fled their employers after they faced physical and psychological abuse and many have taken sanctuary at their embassies.

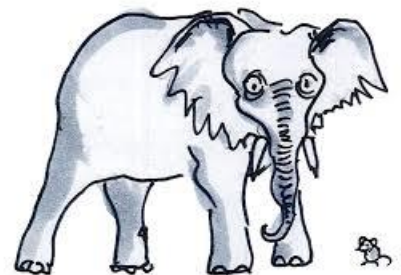
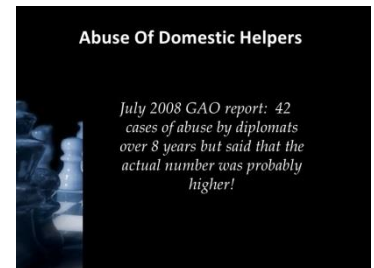
One of the objectives of the Newsletter is providing members and supporters with a) information on the nature and the extent of modern slavery and b) opportunities to participate in anti-slavery projects. Hence the articles on pages 1 and 2 informing the membership of up-to-date events in India, Australia, Mauritania, SE Asia and the UK and the articles on pages 3,4,6 and 7 highlighting project opportunities in the UK, Tanzania and India.

Professor Kevin Bales has already pointed out that *“the agencies and organizations in the developed world that will find and train freedom workers, trace the economic links of slave business, educate the public about the realities of modern slavery and press governments to uphold their own laws are caught in a vicious circle of ignorance and lack of support”*. The main groups working against slavery like Free the Slaves, Anti-Slavery International and the International Justice Mission have supporters and members listed in their thousands compared to organizations like Greenpeace or Amnesty International or even the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds which have millions of supporters worldwide. **The former are indeed like mice fighting a herd of elephants.**

This is where Rotary can make a real difference, ie by supporting the work of the few anti-slavery organizations that do exist. So when you read of project opportunities in this Newsletter do consider getting your club to participate in a suggested project.

The four letters in the Post Bag (see pages 8 and 9) are the only responses I have received commenting on to my reflections in the email accompanying the previous Newsletter. I had said that apart from raising awareness of the extent of modern slavery, most of the Action Group's projects relate to supporting the work of anti-slavery organizations in rehabilitating and reintegrating the survivors of slavery. The remaining projects are those which have offered rescue support to NGOs and grass root activists and those which have helped to prevent people being exploited into slavery.

I also said that it is possible for the Action Group to make an even great impact into combating this most heinous of crimes, which is why I commented that *“we are ever hopeful that there will come a time soon when Rotary International itself will embrace the struggle, partner with relevant anti-slavery NGOs and help to raise significant funds to help with the funding required to eradicate modern slavery, just like the partnerships which Rotary formed with organizations like UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the Gates Foundation, to raise billions of dollars to almost eradicate polio from the face of the globe”*.



“If you want to go fast,
go alone. If you want to
go far, go together.”

—AFRICAN PROVERB



Child Domestic Workers in Tanzania

by George Shelley, Anti-Slavery International



Mary (not her real name) is 17 now. She became a domestic worker at 15 and had to work 14 hrs a day. She was badly treated by her employer. She is now receiving training from ASI's project in Business Skills/Entrepreneurship



Domestic Workers in training group sessions at ASI's project in Tanzania

According to new estimates released recently by the International Labour Organisation, there are over 10 million children in slavery across the world, ie 25% of the total number of people enslaved globally. That is 10 million children who may never realise their potential, with no prospect of a different life in the future. We all have dreams and aspirations when we are young. But children in slavery are denied their freedom and denied the chance to pursue their ambitions.

With its roots in the original movement to end the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the 1830s, Anti-Slavery International understands the sustainable approach that is needed - not only to free children from their exploiters, but to support them to build lives away from slavery, as well as change the attitudes, customs and social norms that allow slavery to happen in the first place.

This is the approach we take in our project in Tanzania, which helps children who fall into domestic slavery. There are an estimated 1 million children doing domestic work in Tanzania, most of them girls. Poverty and hardship in rural areas are the key factors that force children to migrate to cities to find jobs, usually in private households, in order to support themselves and their families. This makes them extremely vulnerable.

Far from their families and vulnerable to exploitation, child workers are often made to work gruelling long hours where they have little chance of attending school and receiving an education. Employers refuse to pay them the salaries they initially promise and we know of many children who are subjected to physical and sexual abuse.

This is just one of the many forms that modern day slavery can take. Anti-Slavery works across the world in developed and developing economies, to tackle slavery in all of its forms.

In Tanzania, Anti-Slavery's projects provide shelter and support for individual victims whose safety is at risk. We know that ending child slavery is not merely about freeing children from their abusers. It also involves giving children the means to build their lives away from slavery, to ensure that the cycle is broken.

To ensure that children do not fall back into slavery we help to make child domestic workers aware of their rights and build their confidence. We help them to access education and vocational training, to give them a future away from exploitation. It costs £27 for us to send a child worker to a supportive session where they can meet other workers and learn about their rights.

As part of our holistic approach, we also engage with employers to instil the importance of paying their staff fairly and regularly, allowing them time off for education and ensuring they are free from violence and abuse. It costs £265 train a group of responsible employers in the rights of child workers. Our approach is proving so successful that the Tanzanian government is interested in scaling up the approaches we use. (continued on next page)



Child Domestic Workers in Tanzania (cont'd)

Rotarians can help free children around the world from slavery. By supporting Anti-Slavery International, your Club can help children to make a new life away from exploitation. If you would like information or promotional materials for your Club, or if you are in the UK and would like to request a speaker to attend a meeting, please let us know. We also welcome Districts to consider supporting people to escape slavery, and will be happy to speak with District Officers about this important work.

If you would like further information please contact us on supporter@antislavery.org or call 020 7737 9434. Also, if you would like to join the movement against slavery as an individual, please sign up to become a member of Anti-Slavery International at www.antislavery.org/membership, call 020 7737 9434 or write to Anti-Slavery International, The Stableyard, Broomgrove Road, London, SW9 9TL

Vehicle required URGENTLY by Anti-Slavery Organization in Mumbai

YouCanFreeUs is an anti-slavery organization based in Mumbai which rescues women and children who are trapped in slavery and commercial sexual exploitation. Once rescued they are brought to one of the two safe houses which the organization runs in the city, where they start their journey to freedom. During a rehabilitation period of 18 to 24 months, the organization provides each woman with 24/7 long-term psychosocial care, medical treatment, legal and financial advice, life skills and vocational training.

Each day, 35 women in their rehabilitation programme have to be taken from their safe houses to the NGO's training centre in Mumbai. At the moment the organization is using a 6 seater Toyota Innova which has to make multiple trips resulting in delays in classes and loss of efficiency. Alternative public transport brings security issues to these vulnerable women and is not recommended. The organization also has weekly trips planned which includes movies, industry visits, museums, parks etc. This is a necessary approach in their recovery process to enable them to fully re-enter society.

SOLUTION: YouCanFreeUs has identified a 26 Seater Force Traveller at a cost of INR 14,50,000: US\$ 22,000: £17,800.

So far funds totalling £3,320 have been donated by the Rotary Clubs of Norwich St Edmund, Ipswich Wolsey, Lowestoft South and Swaffham (District 1080), Croydon South (District 1145), Epping (District 1130) and by Norwich Friendship Group and St Fursey's Orthodox Community, Sea Palling, Norfolk, England.

Can you help with the funding of this urgently needed vehicle ? If you wish to donate in £ sterling contact Mark Little, RAGAS Chair at littlemark@gmail.com or Clarissa Anderson, Director of YouCanFreeUs UK at clarissa@youcanfree.us. If you wish to donate in US\$ contact Sujo John, Founder and Head of YouCanFreeUs in Texas, USA with a copy to Mark Little. Sujo John's email address is sujo@sujojohn.com. If you wish to donate in any other currency, please contact RAGAS Treasurer, Stephen Sypula at stephen@sgrc.org.uk or donate through the website which is www.ragas.online



Post Bag

From Valeria Galletti, PP of Rotary Club of Roma Cassia, Member of RAGAS
Coordinator of Shadow Children Project

"I do agree with every word of your [covering] letter. Time is come for Rotary to get involved and join the work of the most important organizations. It is a struggle far worse than the struggle against polio in which the enemy was above all "ignorance". Here the fight is against hundreds of people who are involved and get rich with the exploitation of slavery. Hope there are no Rotarians among them ! Behind this there are so many important industries. Just think about child exploitation in the chocolate, electronics and food components industries. How to fight if the enemy may be also among us ? When I was President of my Club I received the "Instructions for Presidents of Clubs". I was amazed when I read that President should kick off members who were condemned for sexual intercourse with children. If Rotary has more than a million members not all can be honest and nice people: there are so many reasons to become Rotarians. Never forget that often the wheel we wear has a social weight so not always means that we want "service above self". We should be more careful when admitting members!

Thanks for all your enormous work against so many horrible crimes.

From Matt Friedman, CEO, The Mekong Club

Great comments.

I continue to feel frustrated that something so big, so important, so relevant, so wrong continues to thrive in this world. Human trafficking is a major disaster affecting millions and millions of people. But because it is slow and hidden, we don't address it the way we do a hurricane, tsunami or earthquake – with an organized, concerted response. We should.

We need to change the way we look at this. We need to make it an urgent matter that requires immediate attention. People are suffering - every day!!! In horrible conditions. Where are we? Why is it so hard to get the world to wake up. Yes, I am frustrated. I wish I could find a way to help the world realize that we as human beings, we have a responsibility to "take care of our own." This is not someone else's problem, it is OUR collective problem.

Imagine a world where a global organization like Rotary decides to take on this issue (like polio). What would be the outcome? Millions would be saved out of bondage. The systems that foster this trade would be dismantled. We'd have a much, much better world.

Keep doing what you are doing Mark. Your leadership, perseverance and dedication can help to bring about this outcome. If there is anything I can do to help, don't ever hesitate to ask. I am ready to follow your down this path.

From Dr V Balambal, PP RC of Chennai KK Nagar, D 3230, India

Please don't compare, polio eradication with slavery. We deal with children & drops with polio. But in the case of slavery, it is a battle between the haves and have nots. The latter are helpless. Unless the so called masters feel that having slaves for household or for their factory or cultivation is a crime & change themselves, there is end for slavery. That only show a path for eradication

Post Bag continued on next page

Post Bag (Cont'd)

From Peter Banwell, RC of Leighton Lindslade, District 1260, UK

Thanks for this month's newsletter and your thought-provoking editorial.

It's time for us to see trafficking and slavery in a far wider context as it is rooted in poverty, ignorance and exploitation. There is no simple fix, even with the weight of the world behind us it will be generations before we make radical change, for many, it's hardly on the agenda.

I am very much from the 'prevention better than cure' camp and recognise it's a single piece in a much bigger jigsaw. I agree that 'projects do not reduce slavery' to be successful projects must become programmes. Education must be a cornerstone as it reduces poverty and increases opportunity for all.

Can Rotary make a difference? For many Rotarians slavery is well down their list of priorities preferring to follow the well-trodden route of foundation, aquabox, shelterbox and International short-term projects. (All make valuable contributions). The eradication of Polio has been our major contribution for more than a generation and will require the major part of our funds for at least five more years. We can certainly make a difference in the short term with ethical supply chains in our businesses and care in the employment of staff. We should change our policies on International projects and seek to make them long-term sustainable programmes.

It looks like RAGAS has the biggest role in increasing awareness and Interest throughout Rotary. We have to continue to lobby and to educate as RAGAS grows in strength its message will be more widely embraced

RAGAS Board for 2017/18

Chairman: Mark Little, RC of Norwich St Edmund (D1080), England. littlemark@gmail.com
Vice Chairman: Dave McCleary, RC of Roswell (D6900), USA dmcclary@fms-inc.us
Vice Chairman: Stephen Sypula, RC of Stevenage Grange (D1260), England. stephen@sgrc.org.uk
Secretary: Harry Payne, RC of Burnham on Crouch (D1240), England.
harrypayne1@btinternet.com
Treasurer and
Webmaster: Stephen Sypula, RC of Stevenage Grange (D1260), England. stephen@sgrc.org.uk
Board Member: Tony Stokes, RC Box Hill Central (D9810), Australia stokes9@optusnet.com.au
Board Member: Marleina Broadhurst, RC e francophone (D9920), marleina_broadhurst@yahoo.com
Board Member: Chuck Fitzgerald, RC of Peoria (D5495), USA chuckfitzgerald@gmail.com
Board Member: Nikki Young, RC of Diss & District (D1080), England nikyyoung.ny@gmail.com
Board Member: Judith Diment, RC of Maidenhead Thames (D1090), England judith@thediments.co.uk
Board Member: Gillian Booth-Yudleman, RC Bay View Claremont (D9455), Australia
shreveportgb@hotmail.com

RAGAS Website: www.ragas.online

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