

# Rotarian Action Group against Child Slavery

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

Website [www.racsrag.org](http://www.racsrag.org)

16 Feb 2014

Issue No 46



To contact RAG Board Members or Co-ordinators, please see email addresses on page 8 of this Newsletter



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

"It's easier to be ignorant and say I don't know about the problem. But once you know, once you've seen it in their eyes, then you have a responsibility to do something. There is strength in numbers, and if we all work together as a team, we can be unstoppable."

Craig Kielburger, Free the Children



## RAG Breakout Session at Sydney Convention

For those of you who will be attending the RI Convention in Sydney next June, please make a note in your diary that there will be a Breakout Session entitled "Rotarians Combating Child Slavery" on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June between 13.00 pm and 14.30 pm.

The aims of the session are to raise awareness that children are being used

and exploited as slaves on a global basis and to encourage more Rotarians to take positive action against this evil practice.

Delegates attending will learn about the extent of child exploitation, its root causes, how human trafficking and modern slavery affects us all, how Rotarians are already taking action and how we

can work together with anti-slavery organizations to protect children from slavery and its consequences.

Panelists will be members of the RAG who have initiated several successful anti-slavery projects and who have volunteered with victims of modern slavery.

## Recent Board changes at RACSRAG

PDG Bob Christie (RC of Dalkeith, Scotland) is stepping down as Vice Chair of the RAG. Thankfully he will be remaining as a Board member and will continue to actively promote the work of the Action Group.

The RAG Board has taken the opportunity of creating two posts of Vice Chairman. Our current Treasurer, Stephen Sypula has agreed to take on the post of Vice Chairman (Operations). The Board is delighted that PDG Marcus (Mark) Doyle, who is currently RACSRAG's Coordinator for Africa, has agreed to be the Vice Chairman for Marketing and Development.

Mark, a member of the RC of Pretoria West, South Africa, has had an extremely distinguished Rotary career which has included the Presidency of two clubs in South Africa, various District appointments culminating in his appointment as DG of District 9250 in 1996/97, Zone and Area Coordinator and RI President's Personal Representative to Nigeria, Zambia, Ethiopia, South Africa and Sweden. He is also the recipient of several citations and awards including the Service above Self Award.

Mark has been a member of the Rotarian Action Group against Aids (RFFA) since 2006 and was Global Chair of RFFA between 2008 and 2011.



## Nepal visit by RACSRAG



Earlier this month a small team of RAG members from the UK and the USA visited trafficking shelters in Nepal to investigate Nepalese programmes which aid survivors and fight child slavery, to spread the word about RACSRAG and to find out how Rotarians can

help to protect children from slavery and its consequences.

One of the team members, Carol Metzker, from Pennsylvania, USA, provides readers of this Newsletter with details of the team's visit (see page 3 and 4) as well as case

studies of two of the survivors they met in the trafficking shelters. (see page 5)

## Zimbabwe joins fight against traffickers

We have been informed by RAG supporter Julie Bonett of the RC of Bulawayo that President Mugabe has invoked his Presidential Powers to push through the Trafficking in Persons Act — a new anti-human trafficking statute in Zimbabwe which will see offenders facing life imprisonment while a high-powered 15-member inter-ministerial committee will be appointed to fight the crime.

According to a Government Gazette, the new law seeks *“to provide for the prohibition, prevention and prosecution of the crime of trafficking in persons and protection of victims of trafficking in persons, to establish an Anti-Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee and provide for its composition and functions, to establish centres for victims of trafficking in persons and to provide for matters connected with or incidental to the foregoing.”*

This legislation will curb human trafficking which had become rampant as the country was touted to be one of the major routes where victims were transported to South Africa through the borders. Now under the new legislation, any person guilty of human trafficking *“shall be liable to imprisonment for life or any other definite period of imprisonment of not less than 10 years”* while properties and proceeds derived from the crime will be forfeited to the State.

## Global Grant bid - Kalimpong Project, India

On 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014, the Kalimpong Project, masterminded by the RC of Dunbar (District 1020) and financed by 15 rotary clubs and one individual, was submitted to Rotary Foundation for Global Grant support. We are all keeping our fingers crossed.

The project, which has previously been featured in this Newsletter (see No 41), is aiming to complete a Vocational Training Centre (VTC) for the survivors of slavery in the town of Kalimpong which is in West Bengal, India. The project is estimated to cost \$68,760 and a RF grant of \$30,920 is being sought.

The Rotary Clubs which are supporting this project are: Kalimpong (India), Dunbar, Eyemouth, North Berwick, Esk Valley, Portobello, Longniddrie, Haddington, Dalkeith, Tranent, Falkirk, Musselborough, (District 1020, Scotland), Wiveliscombe & District (District 1200, England), Norwich St Edmund (District 1080, England) and Hluboka nad Vltavou (District 2240, Czech Republic). Funding support has also been received from Pat Hinkins who lives in Norfolk, England.

*“Human trafficking is smuggling plus coercion or deception at the beginning of the process and enslavement at the end” (Kevin Bales)*



The Kalimpong VTC project under construction during 2013.



## Namaste from Nepal

(by Carol Metzker, One World Rotary E-Club)

Ten days, two cities, four Rotary club meetings and multiple project visits added up to one invaluable trip to Nepal for three members of the Rotarian Action Group Against Child Slavery (RACSRAG)!

This February, Mike Korengel (Longwood Rotary Club, USA), Stephen Sypula (Rotary Club of Stevenage Grange, UK) and I (Carol Metzker, One World Rotary e-Club, USA) spent a meaningful week-and-a-half in Kathmandu and Pokhara, Nepal. Our purpose was to learn more about Nepalese programs that aid survivors and fight child slavery; spread the word about RACSRAG; and determine how Rotarians can effectively work together to help victims and survivors.

Nepal is a country that is a source, transit and destination for victims of human trafficking, according to the worldwide Trafficking in Persons Report 2013. Boys are often enslaved in brick and textile factories; girls are found in domestic servitude and brothels. Bonded laborers are exploited in agriculture, brick kilns, the stone-breaking industry and domestic servitude. Most vulnerable to exploitation are lower caste groups and migrant workers and families.

Slavery is an issue that is related to economic development and poverty, and lack of education and literacy. Slaves do not get the healthcare they need and, therefore, affect public health. Rotarians—committed to helping our fellow humans in six areas of focus and experienced in solving challenges—are the ideal individuals to fight this injustice.

**Highlights of our trip** (in addition to seeing beautiful countryside, colorful towns and ancient temples, and meeting friendly people!):

- Visiting the facilities of Asha Nepal—a non-profit working for the social and economic improvement of women and children affected by human trafficking/modern slavery in Nepal—and a partnering organization, Shakti Samuha, in Kathmandu.
- Touring Children-Nepal and Suryamukhi Handicraft Workshop in Pokhara.
- Meeting Rotarians at the Rotary Clubs of Pokhara Midtown, Himalayan Patan, New Road City and Kathmandu North.

*Editors Note: To learn a little more about some of the organizations which the team visited and to read the stories of a couple of the survivors they met, please see the next two pages penned again by Carol Metzker.*



*Beads made by the girls at Shakti Kendra, Asha Nepal's Home for survivors*





*“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world”*

(Harriet Tubman – Survivor and abolitionist)



At a vocational training workshop at Shakti Kendra, a survivor of human trafficking weaves a scarf

## Children’s Reintegration Center in Kathmandu (by Carol Metzker)

Colorful toothbrushes hang on the wall. Rows of bright shoes line several shelves. The sound of bouncing balls echoes in the courtyard and laughter rings from a common room where children gather around a table.

Asha Nepal’s Children’s Reintegration Centre is a cheery residence for as many as 17 children whose mothers have been rescued from human trafficking. While the mothers receive rehabilitation, the children receive an education, medical care and counseling, and lots of love. When everyone is ready, the families will be reunited and reintegrated carefully and safely into the community.

Thanks to the Rotary Clubs of West Chester Downtown (USA) and Stevenage Grange (UK), Mike, Stephen and I delivered fleece blankets, chocolates and bubbles to the young and energetic residents of the center.

## Shakti Samuha: The Power of the Survivor by Carol Metzker

In 1996, hundreds of Nepalese girls and women were rescued during a raid on brothels in India. After enduring kidnapping, deception and brutal violence as sex slaves, they were returned to their native country. But instead of being welcomed back with open arms, they were pelted with rocks and outcries that they were “prostitutes, the reservoir of AIDS from India who will spread the disease in Nepal.”

To overcome hardship, fifteen of the rescued females self-organized into a group whose aim was to help survivors of sex trafficking and to create a society that would grant them dignity. In 2000, it became a registered NGO.

Today, the organization with greater numbers of survivor-members has helped change laws in Nepal; has raised awareness of the crime; and runs Shakti Kendra, Asha Nepal’s home for survivors of trafficked girls and women where they receive medical and psychological treatment, education and vocational training, legal assistance and the help they need to become self-reliant. In 2013, Shakti Samuha was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award—the Asian Nobel Prize.



## Case Studies of Survivors from Nepal

### **Alina's\* Story**

When Alina's husband died, her world was turned upside down. Temporarily supported by her father-in-law, after his death her mother-in-law forced Alina and her two young children to sleep in the cow shed. When that was deemed too much support, her husband's family tricked her into signing a consent form to place her children in a temporary home in Kathmandu—in reality telling the orphanage that the father was dead, that Alina was mentally ill and taking away her children permanently.

Alina left the village to find work near her children's new home. Deceived by a man who promised to help her find work, Alina was on her way to India to be sold into the sex trade when she and her trafficker were discovered by the police. Alina was taken to Shakti Samuha. While working with Shakti Samuha and living at Shakti Kendra, she receive medical care, counseling and legal assistance.

Today Alina is self-sufficient and reunited with her children. She runs a nurturing foster home for children of survivors of human trafficking who are preparing to be reintegrated with their mothers into the community.

### **Kalika's\* Story**

After her father died and her mother became ill, Kalika's aunt offered to take in and educate Kalika and her sisters for a small fee. Within months, however, Kalika was enslaved in her aunt's house—taking care of seven children in a tiny room, working long hours, and not allowed to go to school or leave.

Rescued by Shakti Samuha and taken to Shakti Kendra, Kalika learned her ABC's at the residence and rehabilitation center for females rescued from human trafficking. She was so shy that she made no eye contact with humans for more than year. In three months, she entered school. Within three years, the hard-working enthusiastic girl was studying science, math and English; she gained self-confidence. In 2011, she graduated from school with high marks.

Today she is studying college-level English with aspirations to become a journalist. Putting her leadership skills and engaging personality to work, she is training for certification to become a trekking guide in Nepal. Reunited with her mother, Kalika looks forward to a positive future and credits the education she received through Asha Nepal in creating a new life for herself.

\*names changed for privacy and protection

## **India has more slaves than any other country: 14.7 million**

**(Article by Monique Villa, CEO, Thomson Reuters Foundation)**

How many slaves work for you? Paradoxically, in 2013, the question is still relevant, and the answer, surprising. Depending on where you live, what you buy and what your lifestyle is, you have almost certainly been touched by slavery. Modern-day slavery takes many forms: human trafficking, forced and bonded labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and forced marriage.

What these crimes have in common is the evil intention to strip human beings of their freedom, then control and exploit them. Slavery is a global issue. In some parts of the world, people are still born into hereditary slavery, in others, people are trafficked from one state to another, stripped of their passports and enslaved. Slaves walk among us. You might tip one at a hotel or speak to them at your nail salon. They look like regular workers but they are not.

### **Obscene, Profit**

There are currently 29.6 million slaves around the world, more than ever before, about equal to the populations of Australia and Denmark combined. Slavery is a fast-growing industry worth \$32 billion a year, equal to the profit of McDonald's and Wal-Mart combined. It's a story of debt, fraud and coercion.

An estimated 14,500-17,500 people are trafficked into the US every year. Some enter legally, with a visa and a job. But that job is subcontracted, hiding the harsh reality of abuse and exploitation behind a clean uniform. Those trafficked are forced to repay recruitment fees, travel costs and accommodation bills. They work long hours, seven days a week, without pay, in the impossible attempt to repay a debt that will never be settled. Modern-day slaves are found in unexpected places. Washington DC, was rocked a few years ago by allegations of human trafficking by diplomats working at embassies and international institutions.

### **Women Most Affected**

There are currently 880,000 people engaged in forced labour across the EU. Of them, 58% are women, the majority victims of sexual exploitation — the most lucrative form of slavery. There are believed to be 4,600 slaves in the UK, mostly trafficked from Africa and most of them entering the UK illegally. Slavery is justified by reference to custom, ethnicity and even religion.

In Mauritania, 20% of the population is born into slavery and owned, largely, by the White Moors, one of the country's three ethnic groups. Only victims can file a complaint, yet the slaves are illiterate and do not know their rights. India, with a population of over 1.2 billion, has more slaves than any other country: 14.7 million. With extreme poverty culturally tolerated, caste and debt bondage are endemic. Sexual exploitation of women and children is widespread. Law enforcement is sporadic and weak. Slavery is a silent crime.

Its victims don't complain in most instances. In the EU, the number of convictions for human trafficking has dropped by 13% in the last few years; the latest US data shows that only 7,705 prosecutions took place in 2012, though the number of identified victims reached 46,570. Some victims don't see themselves as such, especially victims of sexual exploitation, who tend to develop a psychological dependence on their abuser. Victims of domestic slavery are often foreigners who cannot leave the house or do not speak the local language. Others are simply afraid to seek help.

### **You can Help**

Each of us has a role to play in the battle against human trafficking. Individuals who encounter slaves have a moral responsibility to come forward. Businesses must demand real transparency from subcontractors. The State of California recently adopted the innovative approach of fining the hiring firms for violations of national employment laws committed by their subcontractors.

Governments must treat slavery as a crime, not an immigration issue. In the US, a victory has been won as victims of human trafficking now have the right to stay in the country while suing the perpetrators, using US law. Lawyers must work to ensure that all victims of human trafficking have access to free legal representation and restitution for unpaid work. Governments must also end the culture of impunity for the traffickers and the offenders and fight slavery on an international basis. We cannot afford to lose the fight against human trafficking. Slavery should belong to the history books.

## **UK. Modern Slavery Bill: Has it got teeth ?**

(Report of a meeting attended by Harry Payne, RACSRAG Secretary)

The anti-slavery group 'Stop The Traffik' held a meeting in London recently inviting guests to ask a question of Frank Field MP regarding the UK Modern Slavery Bill, the question being.... Has it got teeth? Frank Field is chairing the Modern Slavery Bill Evidence Review. The result was a fascinating evening of frank and meaningful discussion. RACSRAG had a representative at the meeting.

Frank Field was clear in his mind of the importance of the Bill when he said, it is a blueprint for a new Act that will establish Britain, once again, as a world leader in the fight against slavery. Today there is a different kind of slavery than at the time of Wilberforce. Then slavery was accepted as a legitimate and legal business enterprise. Modern Slavery is a criminal act that is occurring in the UK, and all over the world. He began by selecting and expanding on five points considered paramount in the prevention of Slavery.

1. Victims, they really need protection rather than at present, the chance of persecution. Sadly at the present time under the existing way of dealing with things, there are in prison, individuals convicted of crimes committed under duress. This issue needs examination and a fresh approach.
2. Children, they need extra protection as well as rehabilitation and careful counselling. A 'guardianship' scheme is being suggested, whereby trained adults would be tasked with looking after child victims, ensuring they access the support that is and will be available to them, and act in the child's best interests.
3. An Independent Commissioner is needed, but will possibly be the most difficult position to fill. A Commissioner who will act as the victim's voice in government and beyond, drive through the government's anti-slavery strategy, with the power to suggest further legal and policy changes. Ideally he/she should have no political bias.
4. First Responders. It is recognized that the role here is very important. They need to get the trust of the victims immediately. Very often there is not a second chance, if handled badly. There appeared to be criticism of the workings of the Border Agency who are pressured to get results rather than solutions. This was highlighted in 1. above.
5. Serious consideration needs to be given to the best way of removing slave labour from the country's supply chains of products and supplies. It is acknowledged that there is a moral as well as a legal need for companies to have a transparent and clean supply chain. Sadly at the present time this is not so. To achieve this, would in turn undermine the work of the traffickers.

Frank Field felt sure that if twelve months ago you had asked him, if it were possible within a year to be on the cusp of a huge historic opportunity such as this, he would have had to say no. We have momentum at present to move forward, he felt and voiced the opinion the Prime Minister has a duty to see that companies do not break the law, knowingly or unwittingly. The law is clear. At present enforcement is the difficulty.

Harry Payne  
Rotary Club of Burnham-on-Crouch  
District 1240, England

### RAG Board

Chairman: Mark Little, RC of Norwich St Edmund (D1080), England. [mark@racstrag.org](mailto:mark@racstrag.org)  
Vice Chairman: Mark Doyle, RC of Pretoria West (9400), South Africa. [mpdoyle@mweb.co.za](mailto:mpdoyle@mweb.co.za)  
Vice Chairman: Stephen Sypula, RC of Stevenage Grange (D1260), England. [stephen@racstrag.org](mailto:stephen@racstrag.org)  
Secretary: Harry Payne, RC of Burnham on Crouch (D1240), England. [harry@racstrag.org](mailto:harry@racstrag.org)  
Treasurer and  
Webmaster: Stephen Sypula, RC of Stevenage Grange (D1260), England. [stephen@racstrag.org](mailto:stephen@racstrag.org)  
Board Member: Bob Christie, RC of Dalkeith (D1020), Scotland. [bob@racstrag.org](mailto:bob@racstrag.org)

Board Member: Dave McCleary, RC of Roswell (D6900), USA [dmcleary@fms-inc.us](mailto:dmcleary@fms-inc.us)  
Board Member: Dorothy Pulsford-Harris, RC of Swaffham (D1080), England. [dorothy@racstrag.org](mailto:dorothy@racstrag.org).  
Board Member: Girish Mittal, RC of Mumbai Boravali East (D3140), India [girish@racstrag.org](mailto:girish@racstrag.org)

### RAG Coordinators

Americas: Dave McCleary (For contact details see above)  
Africa: Mark Doyle, RC of Pretoria West (D9400), South Africa. [mpdoyle@mweb.co.za](mailto:mpdoyle@mweb.co.za)  
Oceania and parts of SE Asia: David Black, RC of Dunedin Central (D9980), New Zealand  
[dblack@mainlandpoultry.co.nz](mailto:dblack@mainlandpoultry.co.nz)  
India: Girish Mittal (For contact details see above)  
Italy: Laura Dryjanska, RC of Roma Centenario (D2080), Italy.  
[Laura.dry@windowslive.com](mailto:Laura.dry@windowslive.com)

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