

What Can Rotarians Do to Help Alleviate Modern Slavery ?

By Malcolm Baird, RC Brighton North

This is Part 2 of an article which appeared in Networker Issue 16, March 2017.

1/ Create Awareness in Rotarian circles and within the wider public, of the plight of millions who are physically and mentally held in servitude as slaves for commercial gain.

www.globalsslaveryindex.org

2/ Elevate, “Basic Education and Literacy” One of the world’s biggest challenges is the extent of poverty and inequality across the globe and certainly within many developing and 3rd world countries.

3/ Elevate “Economic and Community Development “ - Help Create and Develop more Viable Communities. Let’s promote more projects and their funding.

4 / Rotarians to Influence Corporations, Governments and Consumers – Supply Chain Ethics & Legislation Enforcement . Rotarians are Consumers, Community and Industry Leaders, Employees, Investors and Voters. So, Rotarians do have considerable influence with a Corporations reputation and with Governments, in their operational management and statutory compliance and enforcement practices. We Rotarians can hold such institutions and organizations to account to ensure ethics and transparency in supply chain management. Slavery is illegal in every country and Governments and politicians need encouragement to enforce laws. Rotarians in each country are in a unique and very strong Community position to influence, speak out and lead, to help alleviate this evil practice. Corporations can review <https://knowthechain.org/> and <http://www.sourcingnetwork.org/anti-slavery-resources/> Support the International Labour Organization <http://50forfreedom.org/> campaign to end modern slavery via governments. Refer - The UK, The Modern Slavery Act <http://www.gov.uk/government/.../transparency-in-supply-chains-a-practical-guide> www.gov.uk/government/publications/transparency-in-supply-chains-a-practical-guide. Similar legislation in other major developed economies would certainly be beneficial.



For my last view or Idea - Can I be a little controversial: Could Rotary International address this major humanitarian and moral issue, by looking at it from a slightly different direction ?

5/ Put the subject of Modern Slavery on the Rotary International Agenda - and Develop a long term Strategy.

Call for ideas and potential action plans from within the top 10 - 12 Slavery Index Countries, Rotary family countries, with a Modern Slavery Issue, from Rotary Clubs and Districts operating in those countries. (From the Global Slavery Index that is, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Indonesia, Egypt, Turkey, Thailand, Philippines, Mexico, Japan, Cambodia.) (Approx 8300 clubs and 280,000 Rotarians). Don’t wait for project submissions or grant requests, from Rotary Clubs in developed countries to tackle poverty, basic education and literacy and economic development projects in those countries, - Ask the local Rotary Clubs, District Governors and DG’s elect, in developing countries as to how the Rotary International Family can help support them, with project support, to alleviate slavery and human trafficking in their country. **-continued:-**



March 2017- Edition 17

page 8

Modern Slavery - Continued

Where can Rotary International and other Rotary Clubs and member countries help to Influence and support their Communities, their Government, their Corporations, with specific areas of focus projects, with legislation developments around employment conditions for domestic and foreign workers, recruitment agents registration, with law enforcement training, and corporate supply chain ethical procedures? The Rotary Foundation team in Evanston Illinois, has a very strong and skilled team that could help lead this process along with the Cadre of Technical Advisers who could assist to draw up 5 – 10yr strategic action plans - to tackle modern slavery in the major, 10 to 15 countries, country by country action plans, (different as per each country requirements), just like for Polio. With 160 plus member countries, 530+ Districts, 33,000+ Clubs, and 1.2m members Rotary International could start a wave of change in Regions of poverty and modern slavery over the next decade and ongoing.



My thoughts are a slightly controversial approach and I would welcome feedback and particularly others thoughts and action plans on the best way forward for the Rotary International Board to help alleviate modern slavery.

My desire: **The Rotary International Board and the Foundation to lead and encourage a long term “Strategy”, with action Plans for all Rotarians to assist to alleviate the extent of poverty and modern slavery in our world.**

I can envisage many non Rotarians, individual philanthropists and many international education foundation organizations supporting and financially contributing to such a Rotary International “Strategy”. Rotarians can and do have a wide range of skills, expertise and influence and do deliver.

Check out the following funding opportunity: **Mac Arthur Foundation**

www.macfound.org/programs/100change

Challenge, “100 and Change” is a current competition to secure a \$100M foundation grant -- “ to fund a single proposal that promises real and measurable progress in solving a critical problem of our time”. Could a Rotary International Foundation, Walk Free, Free the Slaves and the International Justice Mission cooperative Team make an application, with a Strategy project submission in the 2nd round competition in 2019 ? A combined submission would certainly focus and crystallise thinking and achieve world attention to alleviating modern slavery. (Alternative sources of funding may subsequently unfold after such a public airing of the modern slavery issue and the developed R I strategy).

An articulated Strategy would demonstrate and enhance the reality of what Rotary International stands for, by changing opportunity in communities in greatest need. Rotary International would truly be revitalised, enhance and retain its reputation from its actions of being the leading Humanitarian Organization in the world.

If people do nothing, if we Rotarians do nothing, there will be little change and the scale of Modern Slavery will live on. Let’s be the Rotarians that speak up and lead an abolition movement as part of our humanitarian endeavours.



Read about **The Rotarian Action Group Against Slavery** <http://ragas.online/>

Malcolm Baird is available for Club presentations.

March 2017- Edition 17

page 9