



ROTARY ACTION GROUP AGAINST SLAVERY

RAGAS NEWSLETTER

RAGAS CHAIR'S MESSAGE

What an inspiring year it has been for the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery.

Across the world, we have seen incredible momentum—presenting at Rotary clubs, district conferences, and zone institutes, while also engaging with political leaders in Washington, D.C., Kenya, and beyond. We are also excited about our work in Vietnam with the Pacific Links Foundation and World Vision, featured in the article below. Everywhere we go, the commitment to protecting vulnerable people and ending human trafficking continues to grow stronger.



A special thank you to RAGAS Chair Emeritus Mark Little for his leadership and mentorship.

We are also working hard to showcase Rotary during the World Cup—details are included in this newsletter. RAGAS has been featured in several articles by Rotary International magazines in Great Britain, Mexico, and the RI Magazine, helping to amplify our mission and impact.

As we look ahead, we are especially excited for the RI Convention in Taipei this June. RAGAS will be present in the House of Friendship at Booth #844. We will host a major breakout session on Tuesday from 2:00–3:00 PM titled **“Combating Human Trafficking in Thailand and Cambodia,”** along with two additional breakout sessions featuring inspiring leaders from the region sharing their impactful work.

We are also thrilled to partner with the Rotary Action Group for Peace in a 725 sq. ft. Peace Hub, where we will offer six breakout sessions each day—creating a dynamic space for learning, collaboration, and action.

In addition, we are working with the RAGs Council to host a special reception for all Action Groups on Thursday, June 11 at 7:00 PM. More details can be found in the newsletter.

This year's progress would not be possible without the dedication of our board, coordinators, and each of you. Your commitment is truly changing lives and helping protect vulnerable people around the world.

[Rotary Blog](#)

[RI Magazine Great Britain & Ireland](#)

[World Cup and Vietnam Pacific Link Foundation, Project Dignity](#)

[Mexico](#)

With deep gratitude for all that you do,

Dave McCleary

RAGAS Chair

"Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed." — Martin Luther King Jr.

EXCITING NEWS FOR THE ROTARY ACTION GROUP AGAINST SLAVERY AT THE ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 2026 IN TAIPEI



I'm excited to share an update on our plans for the upcoming Rotary International Convention 2026 in Taipei. We have a full schedule of impactful activities planned and will need everyone's support to make them a success.

Key Events

June 11

We are helping organize a Reception for all Rotary Action Groups at the Courtyard by Marriott Taipei Downtown from 7:00–9:00 PM.

Friday, June 12 (6:00–8:00 PM)

RAGAS Reception hosted by Jones Day (details to follow).

Lance is organizing an outstanding panel discussion featuring several Taipei leaders.



Saturday, June 13

RAGAS is Excited to partner with RAG for Peace in the 750 sf. Peace Hub in the center of the House of Friendship open (10:00 – 6:00pm) Daily with six 20 min. presentations per day

10:00 AM – RAGAS House of Friendship Opens #844

- Our booth will be open daily from 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM
- Breakout Session at 11:30 AM (capacity: 100 attendees)
Location Coming soon

Monday, June 15

Breakout Session at 11:30 AM (capacity: 100 attendees; location TBD)

Tuesday, June 16

Large Breakout Session (capacity: 500 attendees)

Time: 2:00–3:00 PM (location TBD)

Session Title:

Combating Human Trafficking in Thailand and Cambodia

Session Description:

The Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS), led by Dave McCleary, in partnership with A21 and The Mekong Club, is working to combat human trafficking through prevention, protection, and strategic partnerships. In Thailand and Cambodia, A21 collaborates closely with law enforcement to support rescue operations, provide comprehensive care for survivors, and lead community-wide awareness initiatives. These efforts strengthen local communities and help survivors rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.



TOGETHER, WE CAN END HUMAN TRAFFICKING



By Joanne Serkeyn, District Governor Elect, Rotary District 7090

Human trafficking remains one of the gravest injustices of our time. It's happening in every part of the world — in cities, rural towns, and along our borders. It robs people of their freedom and dignity, often hiding in plain sight. As Rotarians, we are *people of action*. We refuse to stand by while lives are exploited for profit. Together, through compassion and cooperation, we can help restore freedom, dignity, and hope to victims and survivors.

A Vision Rooted in Rotary Values

In **District 7090**, which bridges **Western New York and Southern Ontario**, our vision is to **unite all clubs to prevent and combat human trafficking through awareness, education, and coordinated service.**

This cross-border collaboration mirrors the global nature of the problem and the Rotary spirit of unity beyond borders.



Our Mission and Action Plan

The **District 7090 Human Trafficking Initiative** is grounded in four key goals designed to guide clubs, empower communities, and spark cross-district cooperation.

1. Educate and Raise Awareness

Provide Rotarians and communities with the knowledge and tools to recognize and prevent trafficking. Awareness is often the first line of defence.

2. Support Survivors and Advocates

Collaborate with local shelters, survivor-led organizations, and community advocates to provide real-world support for recovery and reintegration.

3. Strengthen District Collaboration

Encourage clubs to participate in joint projects and grants that maximize impact. When resources and ideas are shared, outcomes multiply.

4. Share Resources and Expertise

Distribute educational materials, host expert speakers, and create a network where clubs learn from each other's successes and challenges.



TOGETHER, WE CAN END HUMAN TRAFFICKING



How Every Rotary District Can Take Action

Rotary districts can make a global difference — starting right where they are. Here are tangible steps to replicate and scale our initiative:

- **Host awareness events** featuring survivor stories, local law enforcement, and NGOs.
- **Create district task forces** focused on human trafficking outreach and prevention education.
- **Build partnerships** with shelters, schools, and regional agencies.
- **Involve youth clubs** — empower Interact and Rotaract to lead awareness projects.
- **Use Rotary’s global network** — including the *Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS)* and (RAGAS in Canada)— to access materials, training, and funding support.

When clubs unite under one mission, awareness turns into influence — and influence becomes life-changing action.

Cross-Border Collaboration: A Model for Change

District 7090’s unique geography allows clubs across the U.S.–Canada border to work seamlessly together. It demonstrates that fighting human trafficking requires international coordination, shared data, and mutual support. Rotary has the infrastructure, credibility, and global presence to lead this movement. Each partnership strengthens not only the fight against trafficking but also Rotary’s enduring legacy of peace and dignity for all.

The Power of Rotary in Action

Rotary’s motto, *Service Above Self*, captures the heart of this mission. It challenges us to use our collective compassion as a weapon against exploitation and injustice.

Every event, awareness campaign, and survivor-support initiative brings us closer to a world free from trafficking. Together, we are restoring hope — and rewriting the future for those who’ve been silenced.

Category	Canada	United States
Population (2026 est.)	42 million	344 million
Reported Cases (2023)	~550	50,000+
Primary Victims	Women aged 18–24	Women aged 14–20
Top Corridors	Hwy 401, QEW	I-95, I-10
Common Types	Sexual exploitation	Sexual & labor exploitation
High-Risk Groups	Indigenous women, immigrants, youth	Runaway youth, migrants, LGBTQ+ youth

Sources: [Statistics Canada](#), [Georank.org](#), [StatsPanda](#), [State.gov](#)

A Shared Call to Service

“No one chooses to be trafficked. But together, we can choose to see, to care, and to act.”

— Rotary District 7090 Human Trafficking Initiative



THE 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP™



2026 FIFA World Cup presents an extraordinary opportunity for Rotary International to play a visible and meaningful role in one of the world's largest global events. Taking place across North America from June 11 to July 19, 2026, the tournament will bring millions of visitors to host cities throughout the region.

As the world gathers, Rotarians have a powerful opportunity to demonstrate *Service Above Self* on a truly global stage.

Rotary's Focus Areas During the World Cup

Rotary districts, clubs, and members are working together to support Host City leadership in key areas aligned with Rotary's mission:

- Human trafficking awareness and prevention
- *(including the installation of a Peace Pole and a Candlelight Vigil)*
- Hospitality and visitor engagement
- Housing coordination and community support
- Event service initiatives
- Public image and media outreach

In coordination with PDG Stephanie Meyer (Kansas City), a one-page overview has been developed outlining subcommittee leadership and service opportunities for Rotarians across North America.

The goal is simple: ensure Rotary has a strong, unified presence in every World Cup host city—before and during the tournament. These efforts will bring together Rotarians, community leaders, and anti-trafficking partners to raise awareness, protect vulnerable populations, and coordinate meaningful local action.



Headline Initiative: Candlelight Vigil & Peace Pole

In partnership with Rotary Action Group Against Slavery, the City of Atlanta, and the Governor's Office, a Peace Pole will be installed alongside a candlelight vigil to shine a light on human trafficking.

This powerful event will serve as a visible symbol of Rotary's commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals and advocating for freedom worldwide.

Host a Rotary World Cup Watch Party in Your City

One of the easiest and most impactful ways to engage your community is by hosting a Rotary World Cup Watch Party.

A Rotary Watch Party can:

- Raise awareness about human trafficking prevention
- Highlight Rotary service projects
- Welcome visitors and build community spirit
- Serve as a fundraiser for local or global initiatives
- Promote Rotary membership and public image

Watch Party Ideas:

- Partner with a local restaurant, brewery, or community center
- Invite law enforcement or anti-trafficking organizations to speak briefly
- Share Rotary impact stories during the event
- Display Rotary banners and service information
- Use the event to recruit prospective members

This is a unique opportunity to combine fellowship, service, and community engagement—while celebrating the world's game.



THE 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP™



Leadership & Service Opportunities

Rotary clubs and individual Rotarians can contribute in many ways:

- Advocacy and education initiatives
- Volunteer coordination
- Hospitality support
- Community awareness campaigns
- Media outreach and storytelling
- Collaboration with local anti-trafficking organizations

Your leadership will help shape how Rotary is seen and experienced during this historic global event.

Get Involved

This is a powerful moment for Rotary to demonstrate “Service Above Self” on a global stage, and we hope you will join us in shaping this historic effort.

Please Fill out Google Form [World Cup Volunteer](#) if you would like to learn more or if you are interested in serving on the World Cup Host City Leadership Committee.

If you have any questions please reply to [Mary_Lyn](#) or [Dave McCleary](#).

Together, Rotary districts can demonstrate our impact, values, and commitment to protecting vulnerable populations—while welcoming the world with service and integrity.

With appreciation and Rotary fellowship,
Dave McCleary



A LIFE-CHANGING VISIT TO ECUADOR



Our trip to Ecuador was truly a life-changing experience. One of the most meaningful highlights was visiting the safe home we have supported for years. Being there in person and meeting the children's survivors with incredible strength was deeply inspiring. Witnessing their hope, resilience, and the joy on their faces was incredibly moving. It meant so much to them to know that Rotary is there to support and stand with them.

I left feeling both inspired and grateful, and I look forward to seeing how Rotary and RAGAS can continue to grow and expand this important work.



Building Partnerships and Inspiring the Next Generation



We had a wonderful visit with the Rotary Club of Manta, District 4400 - Ecuador an outstanding club and truly gracious hosts. A special thank you to PDG José Changkuon, the first District Governor from Manta city, for his leadership and warm welcome.

In Quito, we also met with the soon-to-be Interact Club RAGAS at Martim Cereré School. Their focus on education, prevention of human trafficking, and addressing the vulnerabilities facing young people today is both timely and inspiring. These students are already demonstrating incredible leadership and commitment to making a difference.

We even shared a fun moment talking about the World Cup I'll be cheering for Ecuador in their first match in Kansas City! ⚽ I am excited about the partnerships formed and all the meaningful work we will accomplish together.

“The Hidden War” – A Powerful Call to Action

We were honored to attend the premiere of Tim Ballard's documentary *The Hidden War*, which tells the true story of the global fight against human trafficking and shows that this fight is winnable.

During our visit to Canoa, we met with the mayor, local police, and community members, who expressed deep gratitude for the children who were rescued. We also visited the 20-room hotel that was shut down following the rescue of some children. Authorities shared that more than 200 children had been trafficked through that location, making the impact of this operation even more profound.

The screening was followed by a powerful Q&A with Tim Ballard and Dave McCleary, leaving many in the audience inspired and motivated to take action in their own communities.

Be on the lookout for the film's release in the coming months—this is a story the world needs to see.

Special thanks to RAGAS Latin America Coordinator Cinthia Chediak and Eduardo Esparza RAGAS Ambassador, and the Tim Ballard Foundation for their leadership and support.



1ST LADY OF KENYA



Very productive day in Washington, D.C., meeting with Rachel Chebet Ruto, First Lady of Kenya. We had a great conversation about how Rotary International can engage with her team in Kenya, including her initiative, Mama Doing Good, and her leadership as the founder of the Joyful Women Organization (JOYWO). Wonderful to meet in the beautiful Bible Museum.



She has truly been a pioneer in economic empowerment for rural women through table banking—transforming communities and inspiring hope. It was also great to learn that her Chief of Staff was a Rotary Youth Exchange student. Very impressive leader, and I look forward to exploring how we can partner together in her country.



Excited to see our next steps to partner with First Lady and President to help the people of Kenya



LANCE LUECK RAGAS DIRECTOR TRAINING IN THAILAND



Submitted by Lance Lueck

The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC), with support from the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP), conducted a four-day Victim-Centered Interviewing (VCI) training for members of the Indonesian National Police from 2–5 March 2026 in Jakarta. The program brought together investigators from cybercrime units, Women and Children Protection (PPA) units, and national police training institutions to strengthen investigative practices involving victims of child sexual abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence.

The training emphasized trauma-informed investigative approaches, ethical interviewing techniques, and the importance of protecting victims' dignity and psychological well-being during investigations. Sessions addressed emerging online exploitation trends, legal frameworks governing child protection, trauma impacts on victims, evidentiary processes, and multi-agency cooperation mechanisms necessary to effectively investigate and prosecute crimes involving child sexual exploitation and abuse.



International expert Lance Lueck, representing the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS), delivered three instructional sessions focused on victim identification, a critical early step in trafficking and child exploitation investigations. The sessions addressed the importance of rapid and accurate identification of victims, practical indicators used to recognize victims of child sexual abuse and trafficking, and the distinctions between behavioral, emotional, and physical indicators investigators may encounter.

Participants also discussed the challenge that many victims do not initially self-identify during police encounters and examined practical approaches for recognizing those indicators in real investigative situations. The instruction included a case-study-based discussion in which participants shared examples from their own experience and applied victim identification concepts to strengthen investigative awareness and practice.

BRIDGING CONTINENTS TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

DISTRICT 5300'S VTT MISSION TO PERTH



by Marilyn Diaz Walker
Rotary Club of Sierra Madre

From March 6 to April 2, 2025, a Vocational Training Team (VTT) from Rotary District 5300 traveled to Perth, Western Australia, to share expertise and build international partnerships in the fight against human trafficking. This dedicated team of professionals – representing law enforcement, survivor advocacy, prosecution, and education – delivered training and engaged in knowledge exchange with a wide range of Australian counterparts.

Their mission spanned Rotary District 9423, with a focus on the Perth metro area. The initiative was made possible through the generous donation of the late Herb Hezlet, a former Monrovia Rotarian and past Group Study Exchange leader to Perth, whose legacy continues to foster educational exchange between Districts 5300 and 9423.

The team was composed of LAPD Detective Jill Calhoun; lived experience expert Brittianna Robinson of Los Angeles; former prosecutor Russell Smith and his wife Allison Smith, Educational Outreach lead for Our Rescue; and June Haskell, Director of Survivor Engagement at Our Rescue in Utah. Marilyn Diaz Walker, a retired law enforcement professional, led the team.



Throughout their three-week stay, the team delivered presentations to approximately 800 people, including members of law enforcement, prosecutors, survivor organizations, universities, and Rotary clubs. They also spoke at a Rotary District Conference, making lasting impressions on audiences eager to deepen their engagement on this urgent global issue.

“Our Rotary hosts were incredibly generous and organized a packed and purposeful itinerary,” Marilyn Diaz Walker noted. “We were especially grateful to District 9423 District Governor Patricia Schraven, Rotarians David Uhe, Louise Hancock, and Rebecca Tolstoy, and above all, District 5300 Governor Michael Driebe whose vision and leadership made this mission possible.”

The team’s schedule involved two to three presentations most weekdays, prompting rich dialogue and encouraging ongoing collaboration---especially among academic institutions, survivor services, and prosecutors. By the final week, demand for additional presentations had outpaced the time remaining.

The impact of the VTT was profound. Audiences responded enthusiastically, with many expressing a strong desire to continue the partnerships forged during the visit. Connections with Our Rescue and other entities are already laying the groundwork for future training and joint research initiatives.



In true Rotary spirit, this VTT served as a powerful reminder of what is possible when professionals across the globe unite in service above self – turning shared concern into shared action.

RAGtime RICON 2026

Taipei RAGTime

at Courtyard by Marriott Nangang Station, Taipei

Thursday, June 11, 2026 • 7:00 - 9:00 PM

Rotary leaders and 26 Action Groups get-together

Share your experience and look for collaborations as we better serve clubs and districts in their impact, measurable, sustainable projects.

Early Bird By April 15th: **\$75.00**

2026: **\$100.00** After

Hors d'oeuvres • Beverages

Hosted by the **RAG Council Advisory Board**

Don't miss this important event!



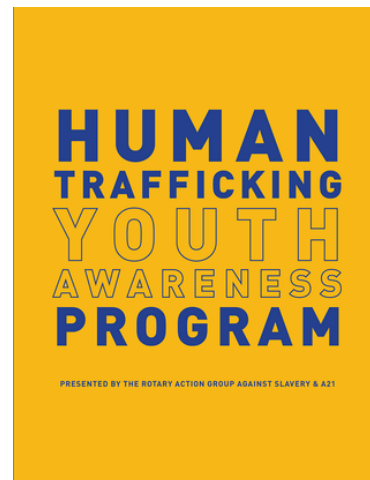
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The Youth Human Trafficking Awareness Program is a comprehensive awareness program designed to teach youth about exploitation and human trafficking and how to take action against it.

Download [Here](#)

TAKE ACTION

We are not defined by who we are, but by our actions. To contribute to ending modern slavery, you can:

- Become a RAGAS member from [here](#).
- Donate to RAGAS, or organisations working on ending modern slavery.
- [Contact your local Coordinator](#) to volunteer for RAGAS.
- Invite a RAGAS speaker to your local club meeting to talk about modern slavery.
- Initiate a Global Grant project to fight against modern slavery.

Engage with Rotary District and clubs that are dedicated to ending modern slavery, including:

- District 5950 [Rotary eClub to End Human Trafficking](#),
- District 5710 [Rotary eClub of Community Action Against Human Trafficking](#),
- District 5280 [Rotarians Fighting Human Trafficking](#).
- District 5810 [Rotary Satellite Club of Greenville to End Human Trafficking](#)
- District 1260 [Ware Rotary Satellite Club Rotary for Slave Free Communities](#)
- District 5030 [The Pacific Northwest Ending Sex Trafficking](#)
- District 5840 [To Combat Human Trafficking](#).
- District 5710 [Ending Forced Organ Harvesting RSC of CAAHT](#)
- District 6000 [Prevent Human Trafficking Action Team](#)
- District 6420 [Task Force Against Human Trafficking](#).

To submit a potential article for for an upcoming newsletter.

Please email the editor Mary fiadese at:

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