

SOROPTIMIST CALL TO ACTION - To campaign for greater activity and positive action by Government in fighting modern day slavery, via local constituency MPs/MSPs

RATIONALE: We believe that the time is right for us to take this campaign to a higher level by raising our concerns with MPs. We think it is necessary as, according to recently published reports, including the Centre for Social Justice's report "[It Happens Here](#)" (March 2013), current Government strategy is not being implemented effectively and legislation needs more coherence and refocusing, witness:

The number of victims of modern day slavery is increasing (946 victims were found in the UK in 2011 and 1186 in 2012, and SOCA estimated a minimum of 2000 victims in the UK in 2011). However, this is just the tip of the iceberg as statistics are taken from victims accepted into the National Referral Mechanism, not those who are refused help or who choose not to take this route.

Convictions are decreasing; UK has among the lowest conviction rates in Europe (16 convictions for trafficking in 2010 and 8 in 2011, compared to 128 and 203 in Italy and Spain respectively).

It will continue to be an increasing problem, evidence newspaper articles on grooming, sexual exploitation of girls and children etc., NRM statistics.

With the current high media focus, now is the time for us to show a united and focused approach to constituency MPs and MSPs throughout the country, before Parliament sits for the next session.

If you agree with us, please consider the following action:

STEP 1 – Discuss and agree participation

By end June/early July: Soroptimist Programme Action Officers (PAOs) to discuss the Call to Action with their members, to agree in principle whether or not to take action as outlined. Identify local MPs/MSPs to contact, and the constituency office telephone number.

(For background information see Anthony Steen's speech to MPs, and the Prime Minister's response, at the time of the Human Trafficking Exhibition in April, which was opened by the Prime Minister, and which over 100 MPs and Lords attended).

Please let us know whether **or not** your Club is willing to take this action, so that we can gauge the level of intended action.

STEP 2 - Contact MP/MSP Office

By mid July: Call the constituency office clerk to arrange a 20 minute meeting with the local Member at her/his surgery. Focus: To talk about Modern Day Slavery. Be insistent that it is happening in every constituency (this issue is non-contentious, not party political, all parties are concerned about Human Trafficking). We suggest planning the meeting within the last two weeks of August or the first week in September to catch MPs/MSPs in their constituencies after their August holiday and before they go back to the House. Then send a letter (template provided) giving the MP/MSP the background to the issue. It is important that you put your address and postcode on the letter so that they can identify that you are from his or her constituency.

STEP 3 – Meet with MP/MSP

(2 or 3 Soroptimists) who should all be from the constituency. Put forward your concerns, (Key Concerns with rationale provided if you need guidance), ie, that human trafficking is increasing, that the government implementation of strategy does not appear to be being implemented successfully, that many children accommodated by local authorities subsequently go missing from care. At the meeting, ask the Member to write a letter to the Home Secretary enquiring what new initiatives the Government is taking to improve the effectiveness of their Human Trafficking Strategy, ask to receive a copy of the letter, and for a press release to be circulated.

STEP 4 - CHECKING ON PROGRESS/SUCCESS

- ☺ Soroptimist clubs to let PTC know which MP/MSP, which constituency, what meeting date.
- ☺ Agree with him or her to send Soroptimist club a copy of the letter written to Home Secretary. Club to chase if not received within an agreed timescale.
- ☺ Soroptimist Club and/or MP, to do a Press Release for circulation, showing her/his support for Government action in reducing Modern Day Slavery, and convicting perpetrators.
- ☺ Send us (PTC) any Home Secretary response for collation and dissemination
- ☺ Publish a further Press Release showing Home Sec response and complimenting MP on action.

Fighting Modern Day Slavery Key Card

The table below sets out the areas in which greater efforts are needed to fight human trafficking successfully. Soroptimists may wish to raise **2-3 areas** of concern with their MP/MSP when they meet.

	Area of Concern	Rationale / Action Needed
1.	Data collection – Lack of reliable statistical information	Data builds up a picture of trafficking networks so that policy and operational responses can be properly targeted.
2.	Training – No mandatory training for police and inconsistent training for other frontline officials	Officials working on the frontline – such as police, social workers, teachers, prison staff, UKBA staff and airline staff - often do not recognise trafficking and therefore fail to take the appropriate action when faced with a victim. Mandatory training for police and social workers is particularly important.
3.	Policing – The absence of a national policing policy results in an inconsistent response by police across the UK and lack of awareness of their responsibilities in tackling the problem	Trafficking should be made a priority and included among police targets and specialist units developed. Police, including front desk staff, are the frontline - they need to be able to spot victims of trafficking, initiate investigations and gather appropriate evidence. They also need to be aware that victims may have been compelled to commit crimes as a result of having been trafficked.
4.	Legislation – a Modern Slavery Bill There is a disproportionately low number of convictions for trafficking (16 in 2011) in comparison to the number of potential trafficked persons (946). Many criminal justice practitioners are unaware of trafficking legislation altogether or uncertain as to how it applies. Further, it does not articulate protection rights for victims prosecuted for crimes they have been compelled to commit by their traffickers.	In addition to raising awareness, a Modern Slavery Bill – as recommended by The Centre For Social Justice and the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group – would consolidate and simplify existing legislation, making it easier for practitioners to locate and reference, and promote the use of trafficking offences as the principle offence in trafficking cases. In addition, a Bill would include a provision for non-prosecution of victims and outline of the role of the UK Anti-Slavery Commissioner. Other provisions, such as a duty to trace and confiscate traffickers' assets, could also be included. [ENGLAND AND WALES ONLY]
5.	Victim aftercare – Victims are entitled to a 45 day 'reflection period' but, following this, care provision for victims is virtually non-existent.	A consistent model of care would give victims the practical help and support they need to recover, begin their integration into UK society and move into employment. Victims also need help to return safely to their country of origin, if they so wish, receiving support from an established NGO there.
6.	Children – Trafficked children often go missing from local authority care and are re-trafficked.	Social workers need to be able to spot trafficked children and identify the particular risk they face from going missing and subsequently being re-trafficked. More specialist foster care placements and secure children's homes would help prevent children from being re-trafficked.
7.	A UK Anti-Slavery Commissioner – The Interdepartmental Ministerial Group on HT claims to fulfil this role but lacks independence and capacity - the group meets only every 6 months and attendance is poor as Ministers obviously have many other duties to which they must attend.	A Commissioner would drive forward the UK's response to human trafficking, much like the Children's Commissioner does for children's issues. It would engage with NGOs to share information and intelligence, monitor and report on the UK's response, examine trends and recommend strategy. [CAN APPLY TO ENGLAND, WALES SCOTLAND AND NI]

Outline MP letter

This template letter provides a framework with which to write to your MP or MSP in advance of your meeting. Please amend, remove or add to the paragraphs to reflect your main concerns, (The Key Card may help you decide). A single handwritten letter, sent to the right person and followed up by a face to face meeting is most effective in ensuring activity and involvement of your local Member.

You may already know your local MP/MSP and may have made contact previously. If you do not know who he or she is, or the address of the constituency office, the easiest way to find out is to use the "locata" service on the Parliament website at: <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/commons/> This service also links to contact details and biographical information about MPs/MSPs.

Your Name

Your address or your Club name and address (inc postcode)
or your President's name and address

Date

[MP/ADDRESS]

[July 2013]

Dear[XXX] MP/MSP

Soroptimists Fighting Modern Day Slavery

We write as constituents and members of Soroptimist International, in partnership with the Purple Teardrop Campaign, campaigning for greater activity by Government in fighting modern day slavery in this country, the EU and further afield.

We have made arrangements through your constituency office to [come to your surgery/meet you] on [XXX] to learn what you can do to raise this issue both with the Prime Minister, who states this is a coalition priority, and other Cabinet Ministers, for example the Home Secretary, whose departments are responsible for various aspects of tackling this evil crime.

We would like to call for more effective implementation of the government's Human Trafficking Strategy (published 2011) and the subsequent first report.

Among other things, we would like to see greater activity by the police, greater sensitivity in the UK Border Agency, better arrangements for victims when they leave shelters and new initiatives to ensure that more traffickers are arrested and convicted, their assets seized and victims better compensated for their suffering.

No doubt part of the solution is greater awareness by the general public, as well as greater involvement by public officials. In this connection, there needs to be widespread recognition that the number of victims of modern day slavery is growing and that it is not on the agenda of the Big Society which has become seemingly lethargic and indifferent. It's not just sex trafficking but domestic servitude, child trafficking and forced labour, and recent reports show that internal trafficking (grooming of vulnerable young people for sexual exploitation within the UK) is growing.

We were greatly encouraged that the Prime Minister said recently that he "looked forward to leading a government that would stamp out slavery" and, hopefully, with your help, we can ensure that some positive action follows.

Yours sincerely

**Anthony D. Steen's speech
Opening of the exhibition "The Hidden Agenda"
Upper Waiting Hall, House of Commons
22 April 2013**

I'm grateful to you, Prime Minister for agreeing to open this exhibition on Modern Day Slavery. You may ask why the title is **The Hidden Agenda?**

When the Slave Trade was abolished in 1807, slaves were paraded **in public**. Today things are very different.

Today it is the second largest and most lucrative criminal activity in the world -netting 36 billion dollars a year. Human beings are traded like commodities. **But secretly.**

Through fear of their traffickers, victims remain silent so no one knows they exist. No one looks for them. We don't know where to find them.

What is the scale of slavery here?

There is little reliable information. What we do know: -

- **In the last 18 months**, slaves from **95 different countries** were found in the UK. And their numbers are increasing.
- The number of **traffickers** convicted is falling.
- A **child a day** is found trafficked in the UK
- The Serious Organised Crime Agency counted over **2000 victims** last year but concluded that this was the tip of the iceberg.
- The common consensus is that for **every 1 victim found, another 10 remain hidden**. This makes it **20,000 people in slavery in Britain today**.

Who are they?

Look around this room. Can you spot the people who recently escaped from slavery? I doubt it, they look like anyone else.

However, one girl here was sold into the sex industry at 16 by her mother. After her rescue, and placement in a local authority care home, her traffickers tried to snatch her back. That's how hundreds of trafficked children go missing from care each year.

Then there's a Chinese girl, who at 15, was drugged, put into a container together with 8 other girls trafficked by ship from Beijing to Britain. She was then imprisoned in a brothel for 5 years before escaping via the roof of the house in which she was held.

And men, duped by jobs advertised in their home country, forced to work without pay, compelled to open bank and credit card accounts operated by their slave master, and claiming benefits for non-existent children.

My thanks to you all and your NGOs open-minded enough to understand that many survivors want to tell their stories, be part of the action, and not continuously be hidden away.

So, where are slaves today?

It's not just **cities**, but **market towns**, like Banbury - as Tony Baldry knows only too well. On our **high streets**, there are Fagin's children shoplifting, pick-pocketing and involved in ATM theft.

In the **backstreets**, and increasingly in suburban residential areas, sex trafficking.

In countless '**ordinary homes**', domestic slavery.

In virtually every constituency, hidden behind the façade of suburban homes, are cannabis farms where Vietnamese children are imprisoned to tend crops – often treated as common criminals by police and prosecution, rather than as victims as they are.

800 farms in 2007 became **nearly 8,000** last year. What a growth industry.

Congratulations to Norfolk, Suffolk and Bedfordshire constabularies for naming individual villages where cannabis farms were found.

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Prime Minister, there are two things you could do which would immediately make a difference.

First, take personal charge of the Interdepartmental Ministerial Group on Human Trafficking. If you were to do this, it would give **additional impetus** to the government's 2011 Human Trafficking Strategy. Every one of the 17 Ministers would attend and things would start happening. No doubt, you would wish to discuss the principal recommendations of the Centre for Social Justice's recent perceptive report on fighting modern day slavery.

The second thing, Prime Minister, is through your leadership and communication channels, you could take the cause of slavery from a hidden agenda to an open one. Raising awareness with the support of the media and MPs in whose constituencies slaves have been found will expose modern day slavery. And, **once exposed, it will start to wither**.

My thanks to some amazing people who've helped make this exhibition possible – detailed on the flags over there – a special mention to the Central St Martin's College of Art team who designed and built the exhibition and our talented photographers.

A **special thanks** to the joint chairmen of the All Party Group Peter Bone, the sponsor of the exhibition, and Baroness Butler-Sloss. And **to Lord Glendonbrook**. Through the Michael Bishop Foundation, he was willing to back an entirely new venture. I'm indebted to him for his belief in me personally and recognising the importance of tackling this evil.

Prime Minister, your being here today could begin the abolition of modern day slavery, just as this country led the world in abolishing the old Slave Trade 207 years ago.