

Join ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans) and the international community for 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.



November 25 is the start of the United Nations-declared 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence Campaign, finishing on December 10 – Human Rights Day. This year's theme is, 'From peace in the home to peace in the world: make education safe for all!'

Modern day slavery exists throughout the world and in Australia today. It has a different face to what many people may imagine, but the outcome for most is very similar. They are often trapped in poverty and have little chance of education.

Modern Day Slavery

The following six snapshots show the contemporary face of human trafficking and slavery here and overseas. (Names have been changed to protect identities.)

Rani is 17 and attends high school in Melbourne. When her parents said they were taking her overseas to marry a man she had never met, she thought she had no option but to comply. When ACRATH spoke at her school, she learnt about her legal right to choose her own husband and to avoid a forced marriage.

Fatima was a housekeeper at a consulate in Sydney. She fled after being enslaved in the consulate for months. She received no wages. ACRATH is linking her with a pro bono lawyer to explore her legal options.

Han is a construction worker who worked on a building site in Canberra for many months. His trafficker disappeared with the wages owed to Han and his co-workers. ACRATH is working with unions to address this.

Lin is a woman trafficked into sexual exploitation who thought she would earn a lot of money working in Australia. Instead when she arrived she was told she owed her trafficker \$50,000. An ACRATH member is offering companionship to Lin as she recovers.

Manu is a young teenager who was trafficked from his home country into a cocoa plantation in west Africa, the source of about 75% of the world's cocoa. ACRATH actively promotes slavery-free chocolate, tea and coffee, especially through the slavery-free Easter chocolate campaign.

Samreen was badly injured when in April 2013 the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh collapsed, killing 1,136 poorly paid garment workers, mostly female, and injuring more than 2,500. Workers from Rana Plaza have told media that they had pointed out large cracks the day before, and that clothing subcontractors insisted the workers re-enter the cracked building or lose their jobs. The subcontractors had agreements with Australian and other global companies to make garments to be sold cheaply in countries like Australia. Australian clothing labels were found in the debris of the collapsed building. ACRATH is part of a network that is having some success as it campaigns to ensure Australian companies importing clothing from Bangladesh sign the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety accord.

As can be seen from these stories, modern slavery usually does not resemble slavery in (for example) the US before the Civil War or in the Caribbean of the 18th or 19th centuries. Instead, people are often restrained by violence or the threat of violence or by manipulation and lies.