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People are NOT for sale

Let's Make a Change

Welcome to 2021. Last year is one we won't forget because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is still causing death and suffering around the world.

The new year gives us a chance to think of where we can make a change in our own lives that will impact others. We encourage schools to make their staffrooms slavery-free and can support them in this work. We ask consumers to buy only slavery-free chocolate, particularly in the lead up to Easter and we ask people to consider buying Fairtrade clothing.

We can make a difference. For three years ACRATH has been part of a global campaign advocating for changes to the production of rubber gloves, used in hospitals globally. In October 2020 the Malaysian rubber glove manufacturer Top Glove announced that it will reimburse recruitment fees to migrant workers from Nepal and Bangladesh. The mandatory recruitment fees are seen as unethical because they trap impoverished workers in debt even before they begin their employment. The reimbursements amount to a repayment package of roughly US\$40 million. Change is possible!

February 8 is a great way to mark our new year. Join ACRATH and Talitha Kum in a pioneering global online prayer marathon against human trafficking on 8 February 2021 to mark the feast of St Josephine Bakhita. Pope Francis has declared this day an International Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action against Human Trafficking. Be part of the change.

As a new year begins and we know that the many dimensions of human trafficking and slavery have escalated in the ongoing pandemic, each of us can contribute to changing this reality for someone. Together we can make a difference. As the anthropologist Margaret Mead encouraged us, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Louise Cleary csb (President) and Christine Carolan (EO)



Find this St Bakhita poster at: <https://acrath.org.au/take-action/world-day-of-prayer/>

ACRATH and Pope Francis kick off global Bakhita Day prayer marathon

Join ACRATH and *Talitha Kum in a pioneering global online prayer marathon against human trafficking on 8 February 2021.

Pope Francis has declared the feast of St Josephine Bakhita on February 8 the International Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action against Human Trafficking. Mark this day by sharing information, joining the world community in prayer and committing to do something in your own life to end slavery.

Josephine Bakhita was born in Southern Sudan in 1869, and during her life experienced kidnapping and slavery in both Sudan and Italy. After gaining her freedom Josephine dedicated her life to sharing her story and to supporting the poor and suffering.

To mark this year's International Day ACRATH is part of a special international seven-hour Marathon of Prayer moving around the globe and including a prayer and address from Pope Francis. In fact a group of ACRATH members and a participant from New Zealand, will kick off the event in the first hour.

To join the online Marathon of Prayer against human trafficking, go to: <https://preghieracontrotratta.org>. The marathon begins on February 8 at 8pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time. For 15 minutes, during the first hour ACRATH members from across Australia will pray the ACRATH song, **Can You See Me?** by Margaret Scharf OP. Pope Francis will join the Marathon at 11.30pm AEST.

ACRATH member Sr Colleen Jackson rsc, Talitha Kum's regional representative for Oceania, is coordinating the Oceania 'leg' of the marathon and wants people to join in for as long as they can.

Colleen said the prayer marathon was a highlight of the day, and a study, prayer and action package, on the theme of the day, **"An economy without human trafficking"**, has also been developed by Talitha Kum.

ACRATH has also developed Bakhita Day resources, including a poster developed by Heather McNaught, from ACRATH in WA, for use in your school, parish, community or workplace. Find all Bakhita Day material, including a poster and prayers of intercession, and prayer marathon material at: <https://acrath.org.au/take-action/world-day-of-prayer/>

*Talitha Kum is the International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons, begun by the International Union of Superiors General.

Change to slavery-free chocolate

Ash Wednesday on February 17 announces the beginning of Lent and of ACRATH's slavery-free Easter chocolate campaign.

Millions of children pick the cocoa beans used in the production of chocolate. This year is the UN declared Year of the Elimination of Child Labour, so we shine the spotlight on chocolate and how we can ensure our chocolate is not produced using child or forced labour.

ACRATH has developed many resources for use in your school, parish, community and workplace, including a poster, prayers and articles about the issue. For resources go to: <https://acrath.org.au/take-action/slavery-free-easter/>

In December, Macquarie University published an article, **Not so sweet: chocolate, slavery and complicit corporations**. In the article, Professor John Dumay from Macquarie Business School, says some chocolate producers buy cocoa from Ivory Coast, the world's single largest cocoa producer, where child labour and modern-day slavery is still endemic.

The article states that despite pledges to address child labour over the past two decades, the industry has not resolved the issue. Read the article [here](#).

These children work long hours in dangerous environments, carrying heavy loads, exposed to agro-chemicals, clearing land and using sharp tools. "They are overstating good news and understating bad news."

Consumers, regulators and investors are increasingly demanding businesses respect the rights of workers in their supply chains and ensure the ways their products are produced are environmentally and socially sustainable....

Professor Dumay's paper states that, "More than two million children under the age of 15 years old work in the cocoa industry in Ivory Coast and Ghana. Many are the children of farm labourers, but others are also sold to farms as bonded labourers from neighbouring Burkina Faso and Mali.

While it is an important document to read, it does not identify some of the key makers and sellers of slavery-free chocolate including Haighs and ALDI.



A sweet story from a school in WA

Janeen Murphy doesn't like making too big a deal of the efforts at her school to ensure only slavery-free chocolate is consumed. But she should!

"We try to make sure that there's only slavery-free chocolate at the school for raffles and other events, but sometimes we don't get it right. But we keep trying," said Janeen, the Director of Faith and Mission at John XXIII College at Mount Claremont in WA.

Slavery-free chocolates appear at the college several times throughout the year and Janeen sees each event as an opportunity to educate staff, parents and students about the justice issues surrounding slavery.



Students Olive and Chloe showcasing the Fair Trade Chocolate Raffle.

A report published by Sydney's Macquarie University in December stated more than two million children under the age of 15 work in the cocoa industry in Ivory Coast and Ghana.

Teachers and students at John XXIII College were no sooner back at school this year and preparations for the slavery-free chocolate raffle had begun. ACRATH posters and other resources are used around the college to explain the importance of buying and eating slavery-free chocolate and the certification labels to look for. The raffle is also a Project Compassion initiative raising money for the work of CARITAS.

"Last year because of COVID we didn't do much, but the year before our students went to a Woolworths supermarket and explained to the manager what they were doing, and to encourage them to stock more slavery-free chocolate. The store kindly donated UTZ chocolate for the raffle," Janeen said.

In the lead up to Easter there's a few Golden tickets hidden around the school and the lucky students who find the tickets, are rewarded with slavery-free chocolate. The college's Open Day to be held on 6 March will also be an opportunity to tell people about the school's slavery-free initiatives.

"We try to inform the parents about why we only want slavery-free chocolate in the school and each year we have new parents and students to reach," Janeen said. "We are always trying, but we don't always get it right. We have to keep up the awareness raising and hope that each year some of our students are committed to slavery-free chocolate and they then spread the word to others."

To find slavery-free chocolate Easter resources go to: <https://acrath.org.au/take-action/slavery-free-easter/>

The United Nations has proclaimed 2021 as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.

Young people can lead the change to slavery-free

Jess Brady wants young people to get the message about human trafficking so they become lifelong advocates for change.

“I was late to the party on this one. Even though I had always been involved in social justice, the issues around human trafficking and modern day slavery weren’t on my radar,” said Jess, a Project Officer with Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS).

All that changed in 2019 when Paul Sharkey, MACS Director of Catholic Leadership and Governance, asked Jess to work with ACRATH on promoting slavery-free chocolate in schools during Easter.

“The more I learnt, the more I wanted to share that information in schools and try to influence younger people,” said Jess, who now only buys slavery-free certified tea, coffee and chocolate in her own home.

Within a few months Jess was working with ACRATH and Fairtrade Australia New Zealand to produce the [Make Your School Slavery-Free](#) kit which was launched in Melbourne in February 2020 to help students, teachers and staff eliminate slavery from Catholic schools by only buying slavery-free certified tea, coffee and chocolate.

COVID19 meant many schools were unable to implement plans to make their schools slavery-free and Jess is keen to make the kit a priority for Catholic schools in 2021, particularly in the lead up to Easter.

“If young people learn about human trafficking at school, they will start making changes to what they buy and do better at only consuming goods that are slavery-free. And they will influence others. The Modern Slavery Act looks at compliance, but we also need people to understand why change is necessary,” Jess said.

“An important first step in 2021 is to only allow slavery-free chocolate in any fundraising. Lots of schools run raffles for CARITAS during Lent, which is fantastic, but let’s make sure the chocolate is slavery-free.”

Jess is currently working to expand the kit to include slavery-free certified school uniforms and sports equipment.

The [kit](#), available online on the MACS website, contains a comprehensive guide to making your school slavery-free as well as a sourcing guide. Make the change today; pick a product and go slavery-free.

This is an edited version of an article which first appeared during the 16 Days of Activism campaign in late 2020.



Jess Brady and Simon Stevens – Education Officer, Catholic Leadership and Governance celebrating International Coffee Day with an ethically sourced brew.

The *unhealthy* production of our PPE (personal protection equipment) rubber gloves

For about three years ACRATH has been following a developing global issue. Informed by colleagues overseas, the physical, emotional and economic wellbeing of people who make millions of rubber gloves for global distribution to homes and hospitals has emerged as requiring immediate action.

The manufacturers of rubber gloves

Production of rubber gloves largely happens in Malaysia. Top Glove, the largest manufacturer of rubber gloves globally, tripled its income in 2020. They distribute their products all over the world, including hospitals, businesses, schools and homes in Australia. It's very possible that most of us have purchased their products.

The people who make our PPE and their working conditions

Recruited from Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and other low-income countries, workers have been attracted by rubber glove manufacturers with promises of good pay, living and working conditions. They may have sold land or borrowed money at home to pay a recruiter an illegal recruitment fee; they do this because they are searching for a better income to support their families. In reality, many in the workforce at Top Glove and other producers, suffer appalling, unhealthy and unsafe working conditions.

The Top Glove website describes 'best practice' working conditions for their production line workers, but all is not as it seems.



Advocates for the workers have discovered that

- Workers are frequently underpaid
- COVID protocols are not always implemented in many factories – no masks, gloves, social distancing or sanitizing on the production line have resulted in a recent COVID outbreak involving almost 6,000 workers in Malaysia
- Workers live in often challenging living conditions – sleeping in overcrowded dormitories where social distancing is impossible, and with inadequate bathroom facilities
- Some very severe workplace injuries occurred during 2020
- Many workers are now subject to debt bondage as it can take years to work off the debt they incurred in paying the illegal recruitment fee
- Most workers remain silenced for fear of repercussions in the workplace or for their families in their home country.

View this from the Canadian news clip about the current challenges in rubber glove manufacturing in Malaysia: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/marketplace-overseas-personal-protective-equipment-manufacturing-working-conditions-1.5873213>

ACRATH has been raising awareness amongst its membership and partner organisations in Catholic Health to pressure rubber glove manufacturers to provide safe and just working conditions to their workers and to abolish recruitment fees. There has been an exciting development in this area. In October 2020 Top Glove announced that it would reimburse recruitment fees to migrant workers from Nepal and Bangladesh. The mandatory recruitment fees are seen as unethical because they trap impoverished workers in debt even before they begin their employment. The reimbursements amount to a repayment package of roughly US\$40 million.

Change is possible!

Out to Sea and out of sight

Be Slavery Free (formerly Stop the Traffik) is focusing on the Taiwan fishing industry in 2021 and is asking people to join the current campaign.

“Fishing industry is inherently high-risk for modern slavery. Vessels can stay out at sea for months or even years at a time. No easy means of communication with the outside world for fishers. Little-to-no oversight by authorities. All of the above creates conditions conducive for horrific human rights abuses,” according to the Be Slavery Free website.



Be Slavery Free has written to the Minister for Department of Foreign Affairs, Marise Payne, asking the Australian Government to raise concerns about the Taiwan fishing industry with the Taiwanese government. You can read the letter, and Be Slavery Free’s specific requests [here](#). Be Slavery Free is asking people to email Marise Payne, letting her know that you endorse the content of Be Slavery Free’s letter!

ACRATH’s Fr Peter O’Neill ssc supports the campaign and the letter, based on his deep understanding of the abuses faced by the fishermen.

“When I was the Executive Director of our Columban Hope Workers’ Centre in Taiwan, I worked with Andy Shen from Greenpeace US on a case of a group of Cambodian fishermen who were victims of labour exploitation on a long-haul Taiwanese fishing vessel,” Peter said.

“Every week I visited a local detention centre where I met international migrant fishermen who had jumped ship in Taiwan ports and were arrested for undocumented work. At that time international fishers working on Taiwan flagged fishing vessels were not protected by the Taiwan Labour Standards Law. All of them were too scared to pursue a case against their traffickers and wanted to return home as quickly as possible.”

For more information go to: <https://beslaveryfree.com/slaveryfreeseafood>

Join ACRATH’s education webinars this year

Support webinars on the **Modern Slavery: A Kit for Senior Secondary Students** are planned this year. Join ACRATH on:

Monday 22 February 2021 at 4.30pm (Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra time), and Tuesday 10 August 2021 at 4.30pm.

For information or to register for a webinar contact: office@acrath.org.au

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