



Above: Health Studies students at the Christian Institute in Jos, Nigeria

Beacons of Hope

Featured in this issue:

- Reflections on a visit to Northern Nigeria
- Portraits of Rehabilitation – a photo essay
- Modern Slavery in HART's partner countries
- Nagorno-Karabakh: Frozen Conflict?
- What can you do for change?

HART was founded to provide Aid and Advocacy for victims of oppression and persecution who are 'off the radar screen' of major aid organisations for political or security reasons. We therefore spend much of our time with our valiant partners in some of the darkest and most challenging parts of the world.

This is inevitably stressful, but we always return from our visits inspired and humbled by their courage, dignity and what I can only call 'miracles of grace'.

This newsletter features visits to the historically Armenian land of Nagorno-Karabakh and northern Nigeria. There is also an article on human trafficking and, on a happier note, challenges of a different kind: a big 'Thank You' to our supporters for various arduous fund-raising initiatives!

First, please come with us in imagination to the little land of Nagorno-Karabakh: stunningly beautiful but still bearing the scars of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan in the early 1990s. During the war, 400 Grad missiles a day pounded onto the capital city of Stepanakert, and low-flying aerial bombardment targeted towns and villages. There is hardly a single

family who did not lose at least one loved one; some lost several, such as a grandmother whom I met in the village of Maraghar in April 1992. The Azeri forces perpetrated a massacre that day. When I visited, the survivors were burying family members who had been slaughtered – some with their heads sawn off; others burnt alive. Every home was torched and the ruins were still smouldering. I will never forget my encounter with one of the survivors, a grandmother, who told me through her tears that she had lost all four of her sons that morning. They had tried to defend the village, using hunting rifles against tanks, managing to hold them off just long enough for some villagers to escape. Her daughter-in-law had also been slaughtered: she would now have to care for the grandchildren, having lost every worldly possession as well as her family.

The scars of that war are still visible in ruins of buildings destroyed by the bombardment; less visible but much deeper are the scars left in hearts and lives of families who lost their loved ones.

But the Armenian people have an indomitable spirit. They have suffered so much over the centuries, including the genocide carried out by Turkey in which 1.5 million Armenians were murdered. All of Western Armenia is now Eastern Turkey, including Armenia's national symbol: Mount Ararat.



Above: A damaged building in Nagorno-Karabakh

With phenomenal courage, the Armenians managed to resist Azerbaijan's military offensives; a cease-fire was signed in 1994 which is still holding precariously. Now visitors to Karabakh can see the Spirit of Armenia in action. I always say that Armenians do not only survive – they create beauty from the ashes of destruction. One example is the Rehabilitation Centre in Stepanakert. Our hero of the peace, Vardan Tadevoysan, has transformed a bombed-out school building into an internationally recognised Centre of Excellence. The Soviet Union had no concept of 'Rehabilitation': people with disabilities were stigmatised, marginalised and 'warehoused' in institutions where they would typically die in two years from pressure sores and infections. Vardan and his dedicated team have created a place of hope and healing with a phenomenal therapeutic repertoire, including not only physiotherapy and speech therapies but also hydrotherapy in a splendid swimming pool, stunningly beautiful art and pottery (with a high quality kiln) and sporting activities to such a standard that some of the patients win gold medals in the Armenian Paralympics.



Above: A child in the Rehabilitation Centre's state of the art hydrotherapy pool

Visitors now come to the Centre to learn from the high quality standard of care and to make their own contributions – including some very dedicated professional colleagues from France who spend several months living with the centre's community.

Even more inspiring is the way in which Vardan is disseminating his therapeutic repertoire far beyond the scarred territory of Karabakh to many other lands in the South Caucasus including Georgia, Ossetia and Chechnya.

This small mountainous land (about the size of Wales), which used to be a place of such darkness, is now like a light on a hill, spreading hope and healing far beyond its own borders.

United Nations aid organisations such as UNICEF have consistently refused to provide aid to the people of Karabakh, even in their darkest days. The British Ambassador will still not enter this little land. VIPs intending to visit, such as Parliamentarians or the famous Opera Singer Montserrat Cabal receive menacing letters from Azerbaijan, threatening to put their names on a 'Black List'. Obviously, my name has been on that list for a long time. But I am in such good company, with other British MPs who care about human rights and a galaxy of international VIPs that I call it a Roll of Honour!

I know from experience that HART friends and supporters who have visited always return full of enthusiasm, delighted by their experience of the Spirit of Armenia, which shines like a light in the darkness in a very dark part of the world.

Now, please accompany us in imagination to northern Nigeria: another land of deep darkness where the escalation of the notorious Islamist terrorist organisation, Boko Haram, is creating a reign of terror. The widely publicised, horrific kidnapping of 273 schoolgirls from Chibok is, tragically, just one example of a series of atrocities. A HART team has just visited the region and as you will read in this Newsletter, found a deeply disturbing situation: in addition to the horrors of the abduction of the Chibok Schoolgirls, there had been already been 1800 previous abductions this year. Since then, at least 60 girls and 31 boys have been kidnapped. 173 teachers have been killed, and there are almost daily attacks on Christian villagers with frequent killings and burning of homes.

Particularly disturbing is the apparent lack of political will and military capability at Federal or State level to effectively withstand Boko Haram's escalating violence. Reports of support for Boko Haram from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Sudan raise serious anxieties about the international dimension of the conflict, suggesting an agenda of expansion for militant Islamism throughout Nigeria and beyond.

But here, too, there are lights in the darkness, including inspirational inter-faith initiatives. The Anglican Canon Hassan John has developed a programme bringing Muslim and Christian women and young people together. The women share enterprising activities such as bead-work, needlework and soap-making, which provide means of making a livelihood, dignity and friendship. The youth – both girls and boys – enjoy sports activities, as well as developing mutual trust and friendships.

Such initiatives have great potential for much-needed reconciliation between communities fractured by violence and can serve as confidence-building measures to reduce tensions and the propensity to further violence. We met participants in this programme during our visits. Their radiant smiles, reflecting a sense of achievement, affirmation and mutual acceptance contrast the deep darkness which has fallen on many parts of Nigeria today.

A final note on challenges: we are deeply grateful to many of our supporters who undertake gruelling feats of endurance to raise funds for HART. Sometimes, we can feel dismayed by the enormity of the suffering of the people whom our partners strive so hard to serve. When we feel overwhelmed by the scale of need, we are cheered, inspired and encouraged by the costly gifts and courageous initiatives of our supporters. Like our partners, they shine like beacons of hope and love on the dark horizons of the wars, conflicts and man's inhumanity to man which we confront every day.

So this Newsletter celebrates all who shine as lights in the darkness whether on frontlines of faith and freedom far away or here in our own country, with a big 'Thank You' for all your inspiration, friendship and support.

Caroline Cox



The Government Secondary School in Chibok, burnt by Boko Haram.

Photo: Hassan John

Do you have a *HART* for Change?

On Saturday 21st June Andy Thomson became the latest HART supporter to take up the *HART for Change* challenge – this time in the form of a 124 mile cycle ride across the North and South Downs.

Created by the sports retailer Wiggle and aptly called 'the Long One', this epic bicycle event was classed as a 'Super Sportive' and it promised to challenge entrants with nine major climbs and five other significant climbs between the start and finish lines.

Andy successfully completed the challenge in good time but was modest about his success:

"It was a great day. It was quite a relentlessly hilly course – very scenic – and it was quite hot, but there were some light winds, which helped. I felt as though

I had done enough training to enjoy it even though it was a bit painful in the last few miles."

Andy raised over £300.00 in support of HART's worldwide work.

"I wanted to take up this challenge to highlight the much greater challenge facing HART in its humanitarian aid effort across the world. I heard Baroness Cox speak on a few occasions and felt very moved by the amazing stories of the people working to bring relief in many troubled parts of the world."

If you wish to sponsor Andy, send your donation to the HART office clearly marked 'Andy Thomson's Cycle for Change', or visit www.justgiving.com/AndyThomson73/



Above: Intern Erika ran a half-marathon to raise sponsorship

CAN YOU PADDLE FOR CHANGE?

HART's Fundraising Director, Rob Chidley, is **not** an experienced canoeist. The last time he got into anything resembling a canoe was kayaking back in his Sea Scout days on the south coast of England, which seem a *very long time ago*.

Nevertheless, this has not stopped him for signing up for the HART *Paddle for Change* team to take part in 6-day **Witney to Westminster Canoe Challenge 2015** (Saturday 25th April – Thursday 30th April). The 127-mile route will take him and all the teams over six days, through locks, under bridges and past the rolling Cotswold countryside, down the Thames, into Richmond and finally to a celebration at Westminster Bridge – all at the Thames' stately pace.

The event was set up to raise funds solely for the outdoor adventure charity Adventure Plus, but HART has been allowed to enter its own team and split the funds raised by its team 50:50 with Adventure Plus. This means every donation to the HART team will support life-saving aid and advocacy programmes worldwide, as well as enabling the life-changing outdoor adventures organised for people including some of the UK's most vulnerable young people and adults.

Participants can sign up for between one and six days, enabling people of all levels of fitness and ability to join in, and friends and family can cycle or walk most of the route on the river bank. The fundraising target varies with the number of days signed up for: one day's canoeing comes with sponsorship of £250.00; six days' canoeing comes with an £850.00 target.

Will you take up the paddle and take part in Witney to Westminster 2015? Please visit www.hart-uk.org/w2w to find out more. When signing up, please specify that you're part of the HART team.



Photos used with the permission of Adventure Plus

What can you do for Change? Please get in touch with Rob Chidley on rob.chidley@hart-uk.org to tell us what you're doing or if you have any questions or ideas!

Reflections on a visit to Northern Nigeria

By Alice Robinson, HART Advocacy and Communications Manager

“As a first-time visitor to Nigeria, I found it an eye-opening and challenging experience.”

At the end of June, a delegation from HART travelled to northern Nigeria. For my colleagues, who have been visiting the region for many years, this visit stood out as giving particular cause for concern. While inter-communal conflict and attacks on Christian communities have been common in northern Nigeria for many years, the situation has deteriorated significantly in the past six months. Levels of fear and violence are worse than they have ever seen before in the region. The Islamist militant group Boko Haram killed at least 2,053 civilians in the first half of 2014, compared to an estimated 3,600 over the first four years of the insurgency (though both of these numbers may be much higher). Hundreds of women have been abducted and abused, including 276 girls taken from a school in Chibok in April – who are still missing. In the words of a partner in Jos: *“Boko Haram has dominated in the last 6 months – in the brazenness of attacks, the style and approach. The fear is so strong... it is almost tangible”*.

As a first-time visitor to Nigeria, I found it an eye-opening and challenging experience. I was struck by two things: firstly, the overwhelming regularity and brutality of Boko Haram’s violence, which the Government and Security Forces are near-powerless to prevent, and secondly, the bravery and determination of the many Nigerians, including our partners, who risk their lives to support the victims of violence, tell their stories and rebuild their communities. The visit provided a remarkable insight into the resilience of the human spirit – particularly from those who, in the face of extreme violence, remain committed to peace, dialogue and the development of their communities.

Below: A village in Tafa Balewa, where HART is supporting the development of a clinic. In the past year, they have suffered a number of attacks by Boko Haram



Communities under siege

A visit to the region reveals an aspect of the violence that the headlines – which report only the most egregious of incidents – do not show. An unrelenting flow of smaller-scale incidents is creating a climate of fear which permeates every aspect of life in northern Nigeria. Attacks and abductions are a daily occurrence. Our partners’ phones ring constantly with news of fresh violence and further casualties.

These attacks target the fabric of everyday life, making schools, marketplaces, churches and residential neighbourhoods into the loci of the violence. A recent bomb blast in Jos ripped through a market at the busiest time of day, just after school had finished, killing 120 people. Churches – which are targeted with grim regularity – have constructed barricades around their compounds and sentries stand guard outside during services. There are daily attacks on villages, which are often razed to the ground. Some villagers now sleep outside their homes, so that they can hear attackers coming and run more easily. However, this also makes them more vulnerable to illness, including malaria.

Frequent attacks on schools have made education a particularly dangerous pursuit. Since 2012, Boko Haram has burned more than 300 schools in the north of the country and has deprived more than 10,000 children of their education.¹ An estimated 173 teachers have been killed so far this year.

Students determined to continue their education must walk further and further to find a school which is still open. This brings additional dangers, particularly for girls, who face a high risk of sexual violence on their long journeys. Despite this, there is an impressive determination to keep learning, studying and teaching: *“you cannot stop going to school for what is happening,”* explained one of our partners in Bauchi. *“Life must continue”*.

“We are in a very dangerous time”

The trauma and tension of life under constant threat of attack cannot be underestimated. One man in Bauchi said to us: *“Everyone is suspicious of everyone. The battle has changed. Everywhere is a battleground, and everyone you see is an enemy – because you don’t know who the enemy is. We are in a very dangerous time”*.

The fear is exacerbated by the police and security forces, who are not only failing to protect civilians and curb the insurgency, but are themselves committing atrocities, including extra-judicial killings, arbitrary detention and torture.



Left: A checkpoint on the road to Jos, one of the most visible signs of the insurgency

Unable to rely upon the security forces, vigilante groups are forming to defend their communities. Local people feel that “they [the vigilantes] are the best army against Boko Haram”. However, they are not accountable to anyone, and create problems of their own: “if you don’t like somebody, you just say they are Boko Haram, and they get killed.”

Intense frustration with a corrupt and ineffective government, which is failing to protect civilians, is felt across the country. Nigeria is a country riven with inequality, and the poverty of most Nigerians stands in stark contrast to an extremely wealthy minority. The vast majority of the population (85%) survives on less than \$2 a day.

These problems are magnified in northern Nigeria, which has long been at the sharp end of a dramatically skewed distribution of wealth, power and resources. 71.5% of the population in the north-east live in absolute poverty, and more than half are malnourished. Opportunities for young people to access education, develop skills and earn a living are severely limited.

Government corruption, extreme inequality, a security vacuum, a lack of justice and accountability and deeply entrenched poverty have created fertile conditions for the rise of extremism, and Boko Haram – bolstered by international networks of support and funding – is flourishing.

Breaking the cycle of violence

As Boko Haram tightens its grip and the Government flounders, northern Nigeria is becoming a place where chaos and fear reign. Despite this, we encountered on our visit a number of powerful sources of hope. These include local reporters who risk so much to tell people’s stories; communities and organisations who mobilise to support those affected by the violence; individuals who, despite constant attacks, return to their schools and churches to learn and worship; and our partners, who continue to appeal against retaliation and to support those in need.

“Nobody that has gone for revenge has produced any positive result”, explained one of our partners. “The only way is to forgive, and that is how we can live in peace with one another”.

There is one image that stands out as a particularly powerful sign of hope. We visited an interfaith project

in Jos, set up by the Anglican Diocese in 2012. It brings together Christian and Muslim women and youths to learn skills and open small enterprises, in an area deeply affected by the violence.

Two years on, the success of this initiative is deeply encouraging. There are now around 150 participants, who work in small groups to learn skills, including IT and literacy, and run income generation projects. In the words of our partner, “their working together every week has created a platform for interaction and understanding which has eroded most of the animosity previously existing between the Christian and Muslim groups.” One of the participants said:

“I thank God for the opportunity that has come – both Muslims and Christians talking together, sitting together, working together all the time. It has removed the anxieties. There used to be this massive divide and distrust, so nobody entered anybody else’s community. Now both Christians and Muslims must pray that this is over and unity is re-established.”

Such projects hold great potential to reduce the tension between communities, alleviate poverty and, in doing so, eliminate the conditions in which Boko Haram flourish. But they must be complemented with action on all levels, including a robust national and international response to curb the insurgency. Boko Haram’s systematic attacks against the civilian population are destroying lives and communities, and may amount to crimes against humanity – for which they must be held accountable.

¹Human Rights Watch 2014



Above & right: The HART team meet participants in an interfaith project in Jos

Read the HART Visit Report at www.hart-uk.org/locations/nigeria

Portraits of R

→ 16 year old Arsen has been coming to the Rehabilitation Centre since he was two. He receives physical and occupational therapies which help him to manage his Cerebral Palsy. Without them, he would be confined to a wheelchair. He is very active in sport and art classes, and has recently made good progress at both swimming and computer literacy.



Arsen Agadjanyan

The pioneering Rehabilitation Centre in Nagorno-Karabakh was emerging ago, as Nagorno-Karabakh was emerging from a devastating war with Azerbaijan. Despite the heart of a 'frozen conflict', it has become a facility, spreading hope and inspiration through the region.

This photo essay is designed to give you a glimpse into the work of the centre, and the people whose lives it has transformed.

Without the Centre, the individuals introduced here would have little or no access to rehabilitative therapies. They may have been stigmatised, isolated and even institutionalised. Instead, they are able to rebuild their strength and gain new hope for the future.

Visit www.hart-uk.org/locations/ about the centre and watch



Laura Gabrielyan

← The Centre's staff have been working with four year old Laura, who has Cerebral Palsy, since she was a few months old. She attends the Day Care Centre and receives speech therapy, physical therapy and psychological support every day. The Day Care Centre is open to children under seven, both with and without disabilities. According to Vardan, *"the biggest benefit is that they are playing with the children who have no disability. This is good education for all of them"*.



Amalya Sandryan

→ After suffering a spinal cord injury at the age of 15, Arpine was paralysed from the chest down. Now 20, she is a student at Artsakh State University and lives independently. This is only possible because she has received so much support from the centre, including years of physical therapy.



Arpine Harutunyan

↑ Following a stroke, 63 year old Amalya was unable to walk and lost the use of her left arm. The Centre is the only place in the country where stroke patients can be referred for rehabilitation. After a year and a half of physical therapy, Amalya has regained the use of her left arm, and is able to walk again.

Rehabilitation

Stepanakert opened its doors 16 years ago from decades of Soviet control and a the challenges of being located at the edge of an internationally recognised medical centre throughout the region.

“Rehabilitation is a new concept in our medicine, so people with disabilities may be ignored in their communities” explains Vardan, the centre’s director. *“We give people with disabilities the chance to understand their abilities and their rights, and to feel there is not any shame.”* Thanks to the work of the centre and its staff, communities are increasingly inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities.

Yerevan, Nagorno-karabakh to learn more about a short film about its work.

↓ Camilla is 4. She was born with the syndrome RETA, a severe, life-long neurological disorder. She attends the Day Care Centre where she learns and plays with the other children, and receives regular speech therapy and physical therapy. Vardan reports that *“Camilla greatly enjoys her therapy and her friends.”*



Camilla Gevondyan

→ Ten year old Armen was born with Cerebral Palsy. He has been receiving treatment at the rehabilitation centre his whole life. He attended the Day Care Centre until he was seven, and now comes regularly for treatment from the speech therapist and psychologist. *“Armen is able to walk and to be independent,”* reports Vardan, *“but still we have to do a lot to develop his communication skills.”*



Armen Allahverdyan



Tatevik Khachatryan

← Ten year old Tatevik lives in a remote village, but has travelled regularly to the centre for treatment since suffering a broken elbow. She receives a range of physical therapies which help to increase her range of motion and strengthen her muscles. Without this treatment, her arm could be constricted for the rest of her life.

→ 34 year old Vanya has Cerebral Palsy. The Rehabilitation Centre provides him electric and manual wheelchairs and all the necessary medical equipment that is needed to live at home with his family. Staff from the centre visit him regularly.



Vanya Lazaryan



Above: Photo found on a linked Bazaar Velvet or Axis of Logic (<http://axisoflogic.com>)

MODERN SLAVERY IN HART'S PARTNER COUNTRIES

By Charlotte Trefusis

Over 27 million people in the world face the daily reality that their freedom has been stolen from them. This includes victims of human trafficking, the most common forms of which are forced labour and sexual exploitation.

William Wilberforce triumphed on 22 February 1807 with the abolition of the slave trade. His success was in the face of *legal* and *visible* slavery. Now in the 21st century we face a tougher opponent, as we stand for those in *illegal* and often *invisible* slavery all over the world.

The poverty found in the countries where we work dramatically increases the vulnerability of the population, and in each location, systems of human trafficking lurk just below the surface, largely hidden from view.

India is home to approximately half of the world's slaves, between 13,300,000–14,700,000 people (Global Slavery Index). 90% of human trafficking in India occurs within the country, subjecting millions of people to horrific conditions. Forced labour is extremely common, with victims forced to work for little or no pay in rice mills, embroidery factories, brick kilns and agricultural work. Many are recruited with the promise of work and a brighter future in cities, but they are then tricked, exploited and often trapped by debt that serves as a means of control.

Victims of sex trafficking in India are alarmingly young, averaging between 10 and 12 years old. Some are forced to have sex with 10–25 clients a day (Dalit Freedom Network UK). If they do not comply, they risk being beaten, drugged or forced to drink enough alcohol to incapacitate them. The Indian government has claimed that there are 3 million prostitutes in India, with 1.2 million of these being children, and an alarming proportion have been trafficked into the horror of forced prostitution (DFN UK).

The Indian Government is striving to tackle the problem through a range of initiatives including their *Ujjwala Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Reintegration*; training for officials and law enforcers; and the creation of Anti-Human Trafficking Units. However, there are reports of corrupt officials in India who accept bribes and work with traffickers, even handing back and assaulting victims themselves. Support for victims of sex trafficking is severely limited, and the conditions are inadequate, leaving those in their care vulnerable to repeated trafficking.

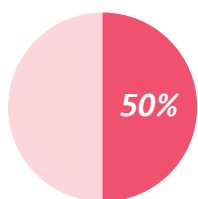
Burma is another country with a staggering prevalence of human trafficking. There are at least 360,000 people enslaved in Burma (Global Slavery Index), with many more trapped in exploitation overseas. Countless refugees from Burma have fled to countries such as China and Thailand, pursuing protection and a better life. However, when they arrive, they lack legal and political protection. Many who accept promising job offers find that their passport is taken away and they are physically and sexually abused, subjected to long hours of work – as prostitutes or forced labourers – and receive threats, further violence and intimidation.

Trafficking in Shan and Kachin states, in northern Burma, is increasing due to the rise in military activity. The Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN), one of our partners, provides healthcare and medical supplies to vulnerable communities in Shan state, and to refugees in Thailand. This is vital in order to protect those who are seen as easy targets to traffickers. They train women as health workers to help people in Shan state, and also challenge the behaviour of the military who systematically abuse human rights. The military employ forced labour as a tool to control local populations, making them act as human minesweepers, human shields and porters:

"They take about 3 or 5 days, depending on the journey. Sometimes even a week or two weeks. People do still disappear. It is their strategy, if they ask the villagers to carry their things, the ethnic army won't shoot them. It is for their cover. Sometimes they take women, if the men aren't in the village."

Citizens do not have any power when faced with corrupt authority. Children are defenceless, with girls repeatedly attacked, raped and assaulted by the military, and boys recruited as child soldiers. According to the Global Slavery Index, there are currently over 5,000 children illegally forced to serve in the Burmese Army.

These staggering facts and figures unfortunately are only a crude indication of the atrocities taking place in the countries where we work.



India

is home to approximately half of the world's slaves

3m

the number of prostitutes in India

1.2m

of whom are children

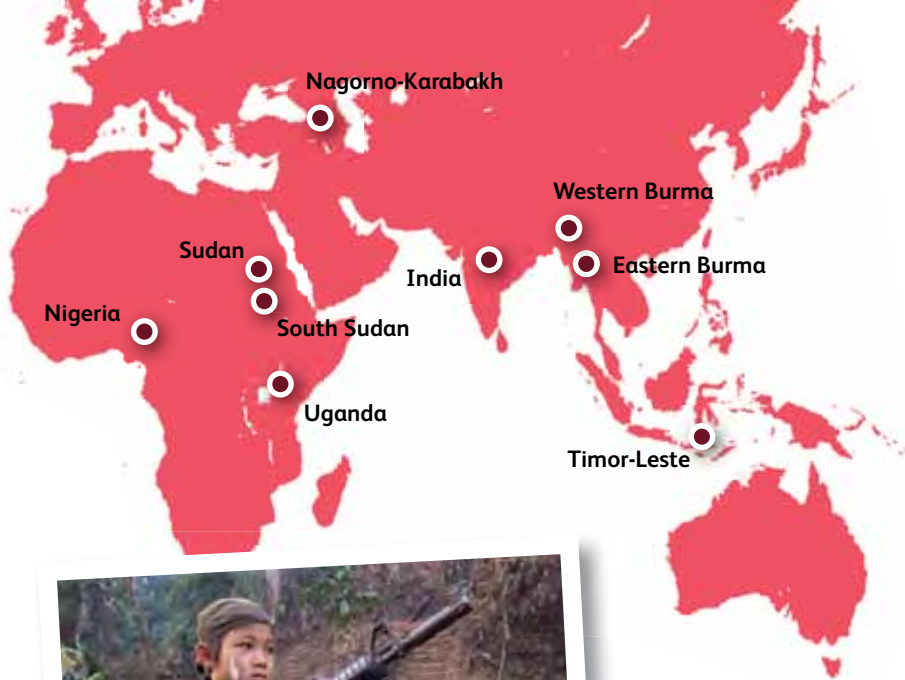
360,000

the number of people enslaved in

Burma

5,000

the number of children illegally forced to serve in the Burmese army



www.instablogs.com

*William Wilberforce triumphed on 22 February 1807 with the abolition of the slave trade. His success was in the face of **legal and visible** slavery. Now in the 21st century we face a tougher opponent, as we stand for those in **illegal and often invisible** slavery all over the world.*



Above: Samboo, a 12-year-old soldier in the Karen rebel army fighting against Myanmar's military government, poses with his gun in a jungle camp near the border with Thailand in this photo from 2000. (REUTERS/Jason Reed)

The government and law enforcement agencies are failing victims, often leaving them helpless and defenceless against trafficking. Modern slavery thrives on poverty and corruption. Even recognition and awareness by the authorities of where slavery is taking place does little to curb the incidence, due to the influence of the traffickers and the authority's own perceived lack of power against an ingrained cultural and social phenomenon. For example, in Uganda, the Industrial Court that is responsible for assessing cases of child labour is not actually operating, thus leaving a complete void of ethical accountability.

How close is this problem to where you are sitting right now? If you are in London at the moment, you are estimated to never be more than a few hundred yards away from a victim of trafficking at any given location (Voice of Russia UK). The problem of slavery in the countries where we work does not stay neatly within their borders, and people are commodified all over the world. We urge you to take action and stand with us in protecting those who are oppressed and persecuted against human trafficking.

What can I do?

Speak out. In June, the Modern Slavery Bill was introduced to Parliament. When passed, this will be a historic moment for the UK, as it will increase support for victims and strengthen powers to prevent human trafficking. In their report on the draft bill, the Centre of Social Justice have called for more support for victims to claim compensation, victims not to be prosecuted for crimes committed whilst enslaved, an amendment to visa rules for domestic workers, an independent anti-slavery commissioner, and for companies to report on their efforts to eradicate slavery from their supply chains. The full report can be read at www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk.

It is this last suggestion, the transparency of companies on slavery in their supply chains, which would have the greatest impact for the victims of trafficking in the countries where we work, as companies would have to declare how they strive to prevent the practice of slavery in the manufacture of their products. Anti-Slavery International released a report stating an alarming link between top UK high street shops and the use of slave labour in southern India. Included in this list were Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Next and Primark. It is likely that we, as consumers, often buy clothes made by victims trapped in horrific conditions of slavery, and this must stop. Forced labour exists all over the world, and consumers should be made aware of which companies are linked to slavery in their supply chains. Check www.thegoodshoppingguide.com/high-street-fashion to see which shops are ethical.

A clause about the disclosure of human rights in supply chains would make a monumental difference, as transparency would lead to a just and much needed regulation of slavery-linked products into the UK.

If this clause is not added (and it won't be without greater public support) consumers will unknowingly continue to endorse the abuse of modern slavery victims. You can help by writing to your local MP today, and asking for them to support an amendment to the Companies Act within the Modern Slavery Bill.



Nagorno-Karabakh: Frozen Conflict?



A storm brews over
the monastery at
Gandzasar

“This is not a sleeping conflict – it can explode at any time” – Ashot Ghoulyan, Chair of the Assembly of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR).

If you are a long-term HART supporter, you may well be familiar with Nagorno-Karabakh, the small, unrecognised enclave deep in the Caucasus. In 1994, a brutal war with Azerbaijan – including the attempted ethnic cleansing of the Armenian population – gave way to a fragile ceasefire, creating a relative peace but leaving Nagorno-Karabakh unrecognised and the situation unresolved.

Baroness Cox has visited Nagorno-Karabakh 81 times, resolutely ignoring all Foreign Office advice to the contrary. She has championed the cause of this small nation for two decades, bringing it to the attention of the international community, and supporting Vardan in setting up a pioneering Rehabilitation Centre for people with disabilities.

Below: Baroness
Cox with a group of
Karabakh Armenians



In much of the world, however, Nagorno-Karabakh is overlooked, forgotten or completely unknown. It continues to exist in a state of economic and political isolation. When it is discussed, it is often referred to as a ‘frozen conflict’, which deflects attention from the shifting dynamics and growing threats to peace in the region, and pre-empts more concerted international engagement.

If this conflict ever was ‘frozen’, it is now thawing. Recent months have seen growing tensions between the two sides and increasingly divisive and aggressive rhetoric, particularly from Azerbaijan. International Crisis Group reported in September 2013 that *“terms like “Blitzkrieg”, “pre-emptive strike” and “total war” have gained currency with both sides’ planners”*¹.

Clashes and casualties along the Line of Contact – the 160km front line, where opposing military forces are permanently situated in close proximity – kill 30-40 people every year. These clashes pose the most serious threat to peace, and have increased in the last six months. *“If you keep the situation tense, you don’t give people the chance to feel the peace,”* said Ashot Ghoulyan. *“If people always keep their guns ready, it is much harder to think about and to keep or build the peace.”*

Every clash along the Line of Contact carries the potential for escalation, with regional implications. Clear measures are needed to prevent further casualties, including the withdrawal of snipers by both sides, as advocated by the NKR Government, and a stronger presence on the ground for international monitors.

¹ International Crisis Group, 2013

Event Information

There are a number of confidence-building initiatives underway which aim to promote cross-border dialogue between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh and, ultimately, move towards a sustainable peace. However, Azerbaijan's harassment of individuals who have participated in such projects serves as a strong deterrent to contact between Azerbaijanis and Armenians.

A huge proliferation of arms, particularly by Azerbaijan, means that a return to conflict promises to be even more devastating than the previous war. Azerbaijan's defence expenditure for 2013 was officially set at \$3.7 billion, more than Armenia's entire \$2.8 billion national budget. Without Azerbaijan's oil reserves and suffering from economic isolation, Armenia's defence budget lags far behind.

All the while, a constant process of change is underway within Karabakh itself. The indomitable Karabakh Armenians are striving to develop their institutions, cultures and communities, despite the constant threat of a return to war. Each time we return to the region, we see further evidence of this transformation – in new buildings, infrastructure, schools and hospitals. The Government of NKR are working to achieve a high standard in terms of political culture, civil society and freedom of speech.

Far from being a 'frozen conflict', the story of Nagorno-Karabakh is rapidly evolving. Now, more than ever, there is a need for international engagement and for more people to familiarise themselves with the situation. This could take many forms, including economic support to tackle enduring poverty in the region, and diplomatic engagement to prevent confrontation and de-escalate tensions. Above all, Nagorno-Karabakh needs people to hear and to tell its story. On our most recent visit, the President of NKR said to Lady Cox: *"you've contributed many things to Nagorno-Karabakh, but the most important thing is not the material side, but that you have given us part of your soul and your heart."*

HART has two upcoming visits to the region – in September 2014 and Summer 2015. We are inviting anyone who is interested in learning more about Karabakh to join us on one of these visits. You will hear – and become a part of – the story of Nagorno-Karabakh, and will return wanting to share the story of this extraordinary place and its extraordinary people.

For more information about upcoming visits, please contact office@hart-uk.org.

You can download the report from our most recent visit to Karabakh at www.hart-uk.org/locations/nagorno-karabakh



A young girl in the Rehabilitation Centre paints one of Karabakh's many churches

HART Christmas Carol Concert 2014

An evening of music and readings from around the world, in aid of HART's partners and projects

- Thursday 4th December 2014
- 7pm – 9pm
- Admission Free

A collection will be taken at the end of the service to cover costs and to support our work with oppressed and persecuted people around the world.

St Cyprian's Church
Clarence Gate
Glentworth Street
London
NW1 6AX

www.stcyprians.org.uk



HART Volunteers' Reception

Wednesday 15th October 2014 • 7pm

Fielden House, 13 Little College Street, London, SW1P 3SH

Our **Volunteers' Receptions** are a chance to find out more about HART, and about how you can help to make a difference to the work of our partners and many people around the world.

The role played by HART volunteers is invaluable – with their time, ideas and enthusiasm, they **multiply our small efforts many times over**.

- **Interested in volunteering?** HART volunteers contribute to our work in diverse ways, from blogging to bucket-shaking to sponsored bike rides. Whatever your skills and interests, there will be a way for you to get involved. Come along and chat to a member of the team to find out more.
- **Already a volunteer?** We would love to see you – come along to catch up and hear about our current activities.

There will of course be refreshments, so pop the date in your diary and do come along!

For more information, or to RSVP, please contact alice.robinson@hart-uk.org

For more information about all upcoming events, please visit www.hart-uk.org/events

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust



HART works to provide lasting change through aid and advocacy for those suffering oppression and persecution, who are often neglected by other organisations, or are largely out of sight of the world's media. Founded in 2003 by Baroness Cox, a human rights activist, HART makes every endeavour to be a 'Voice for the Voiceless' for those who may be unreachable, unhelped and unheard.

HART relies on first-hand evidence of human rights violations as a basis for powerful twin-track programmes of international advocacy and aid. We believe that advocacy, combined with aid, is vital if we are to achieve sustainable community development, local ownership and empowerment for oppressed peoples.



YES!

I want to make a difference and be a Voice for the Voiceless!

At HART we see all the time how a little goes a long way – both in the way our partners abroad use the funds we provide and the difference our volunteers can make. There are many ways to support the work we do.

If you would like to donate to our work, you can do so in a number of ways:

I would like to make a one off payment towards the work of HART. A cheque is enclosed for £.....

I pledge to help HART's partners and their grassroot organisations on a regular basis with a

monthly quarterly annual gift of £..... (please tick one)

Please send me a standing order mandate.

**Text HART00
£10 to 70070
to make a £10
donation!**

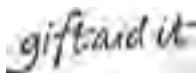
Title.....First Name.....Surname.....

Address

City.....County.....Postcode.....

E-mail address.....

Phone



I am a UK taxpayer. Please treat as Gift Aid all qualifying donations made:

Today In the past 4 years In the future (please tick all boxes you wish to apply)

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/ or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equivalent to the amount of tax that all the charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand that the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I gave on or after 6 April 2008 (28p) of tax on every £1 that I gave up to 5 April 2008).

**Please return to:
HART-UK, 3 Arnellan House, 146 Slough Lane, London, NW9 8XJ.
Tel: 020 8204 7336**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

For more information about HART or to make an online donation, go to
www.hart-uk.org