

Former Rotary Peace Fellow a defender of children

Rotary News -- 13 September 2012

Katia de Mello Dantas is helping to stop sexual abuse of children, including pornography, human trafficking, and abduction. In the past year, she has worked especially on protecting children from sexual predators on the Internet.

Dantas is policy director for Latin America and the Caribbean for the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children in Brasília, Brazil. Every day, at least 22,000 children worldwide are reported missing, and 5,000 are victimized through commercial sexual exploitation, according to the center.

Based in Virginia, USA, the center has trained more than 3,200 law enforcement officers from over 110 countries and is drafting model child protection legislation for use by governments around the world. Dantas travels throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, drafting uniform laws and training officers in how to collect evidence and file charges effectively.

Previously, Dantas worked for USAID in Brazil and, during her studies as a 2007-09 Rotary Peace Fellow, completed fieldwork with the International Organization for Migration, where she researched the impact of cross-border movement on HIV/AIDS transmission and other public health concerns. Through the Paul F. and Carolyn C. Rizza Endowed Rotary Peace Fellowship, Dantas studied at the Rotary Peace Center at Duke University and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA. She was also a member of a Group Study Exchange team from District 4530 (part of Goiás, Tocantins & Distrito Federal, Brazil) to District 7890 (parts of Connecticut and Massachusetts, USA) in 2005-06.

“My network of contacts significantly expanded with the fellowship, and that certainly helps me tremendously in pushing forward in combating child sexual exploitation, abuse, and abduction,” says Dantas. “The tools and techniques I’ve learned from Duke -- from a simple stakeholder analysis to the much more complex dynamics of international aid -- are all applied on a daily basis to my job . . . And I cannot forget to mention the importance of Rotary’s motto, ‘Service Above Self.’ This saying alone gives me the strength to continue when I feel ready to give up.”



Former Rotary Peace Fellow Katia de Mello Dantas takes part in a panel at a Caribbean regional meeting on protecting children from sexual exploitation. *Photo courtesy of Katia de Mello Dantas*

Most of all, Dantas says, it is gratifying to know that her work is reducing the number of children being victimized by sexual predators.

“Little by little I believe we can get to a point where all children of the world will be able to be just that: children. Not toys in the hands of adults, not mini workers, not victims; just children, with their full array of rights guaranteed,” she says.

- [Read more about the Rotary Peace Centers](#)
- [Learn more about the three Rotary Global Peace Forums](#)

8 Comments:

At 2:41PM on 3 October 2012, **paul rizza** wrote:

We are very proud of your accomplishments and enjoy reading about your success. Please continue your good work in the world. With love, Paul&arolyn Rizza

At 11:16AM on 21 September 2012, **Kunchithapathan** wrote:

Dear Kaita, We are proud of your brave effort to save children from all sort of menace unleashed by the cruel hands. We Rotarians will stand up for your good effort from all parts of the world. Srilankan kids too are affected badly by this evil sins. We work hard to minimize same.

At 4:02PM on 18 September 2012, **David Black** wrote:

Congratulations Katia on your amazing work. Please know that your work and your passion is shared around the Rotary world. I am the President of the RC of Dunedin Central in District 9980. I am also the NZ Project Co-ordinator for Rescue Mission for Children. We operate a centre in Mae Suai, Northern Thailand, where we care for and protect over 200 children from the Akha hill tribes. These precious children are abducted into brothels as child sex slaves. The "statelessness" of these children makes them so much more vulnerable to exploitation. If you have any suggestions as to how we can work with the local authorities to combat the sex traffickers who are taking our youngest generation into situations where the most horrific atrocities are committed against them, I would welcome the chance to work with you. Thank you for your dedication to our children. Kindest Regards, David

At 10:34AM on 18 September 2012, **Rotn Henry T. Roberts** wrote:

i, as the Director of New Generation in my club Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Central: district 9140 Nigeria, shall share this message in my fellowship. its a good thought n vision. So, how do we make it a purpolar progarm? Tht is, taking it to the grass root n making the beneficiary respond?

At 2:59PM on 17 September 2012, **Mark Little** wrote:

Katia please note that Rotarians around the world have joined an Action Group of Rotarians against Child Slavery. Please visit the website of the Action Group, ie www.racsrag.org or contact me and I will send you a copy of the last Newsletter which gives a glimpse of what clubs are trying to do to fight child slavery and trafficking.

At 2:59PM on 17 September 2012, **Rachael Blair** wrote:

There is a proposed Rotarian Action Group that deals with these issues, "Rotarians Against Child Slavery". Their website is www.racsrag.org. I urge all Rotarians to visit the website and share this

information with their clubs.

At 12:46PM on 17 September 2012, **janet storti** wrote:

Excellent work! Please tell me how my daughter and I can offer time and service to the work that you do. Thank you. Janet Storti

At 10:40AM on 17 September 2012, **Redefining Refuge** wrote:

I was so happy to see this article and actually shared it with our local Rotary here in Tampa. Our organization is dedicated to fighting for women and children who have been victims of depraved injustices such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse, with a prevailing emphasis on the abolition of the commercial sex trafficking industry and we are getting ready to open our first specialized Housing and Rehab program especially for victims of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking. If you have any guidance on how we could potentially get involved with our local Rotary, please let me know. Thanks so much, Natasha Nascimento

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