

Ricky Martin Foundation campaigns to end child trafficking

by Bibiana Ferraiuoli Suárez

The foundation set up by Puerto Rican superstar, Ricky Martin, is working to raise awareness on ways to prevent child trafficking and to assist its victims.

More than half of trafficking victims worldwide are children, forced into pornography, prostitution and labour servitude. Human trafficking is an unscrupulous market that generates around \$10 billion annually. "In order to combat one of the cruelest problems in the world today, we must create alliances," says Ricky Martin, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador¹ and twice Grammy Winner.

In 2004 the Foundation established 'People for Children' – a global anti-child trafficking initiative to raise public awareness and influence public policy. A year into the campaign, the Foundation and the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)² worked together to run a public awareness campaign, in Spanish and English, promoting a free phone service for victims of human trafficking in the US and Puerto Rico. This offers support for victims and enables members of the public to provide information against traffickers. In March 2006 the Foundation, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Colombia and Colombia's Inter-Institutional Committee against Trafficking in Persons launched a new campaign, 'Don't Let Anyone Shatter Your Dreams'.

This encourages the media to raise public awareness and provides advice hotlines. A similar campaign is being run in Ecuador. The hotlines have received more than 14,800 calls from people seeking advice or information or reporting a case of human trafficking.

The Foundation is also working with Microsoft on a campaign promoting child internet safety, featuring Ricky Martin in two educational videos in English, Spanish and Portuguese. As Angel Saltos, President of the Foundation, explains: "The videos will initially serve teachers, parents and children across Latin America but our commitment is global." In 2006 the Foundation is launching a new campaign, called 'Call and Live!', in collaboration with the InterAmerican Development Bank and IOM to undertake awareness raising and protection in several countries in the Americas.

The Foundation has seen some promising results of its advocacy work. In late 2005 Ricky Martin and CNN International Reporter Christiane Amanpour denounced trafficking on the US prime-time show, Oprah. Viewers were exhorted to urge their congressional representatives to prioritise eradication of child trafficking. Three months later the US passed a new law, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act.

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1. www.unicef.org/protection/index_23840.html
2. www.hhs.gov

Ricky Martin, Carolina Aranha (General Manager, Microsoft-Brazil) and Angel Saltos (President, Ricky Martin Foundation) announce partnership to combat child safety online in Latin America, December 2005.



Ricky Martin Foundation