



Photos courtesy of Ryan Gawn

Ryan Gawn visits a girls' school in Balkh Province, Afghanistan.

Front-line advocate for peace

At a time when the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan make frequent news headlines, young men like Ryan Gawn, 29, head for such countries to teach effective lobbying, strengthen civil society, and help create a peaceful and stable social order.

Gawn, a former Rotary World Peace Fellow, is international external relations coordinator for Save the Children UK, a branch of the global nongovernmental organization. In April 2008, he traveled to Kabul, Afghanistan, to provide advocacy and media training to senior national staff and visit the organization's schools, clinics, and hospitals.

Independently, Gawn was also head of liaison for track 2 peace negotiations, known as the Iraq Project, supported by the University of Massachusetts, during which several Iraqi parliamentarians negotiated in Helsinki, Finland, which led to the Helsinki Agreement in 2008.

Gawn's path toward his current position with Save the Children UK, where he supports the director of international operations in his external relations and lobbying, is marked by a long résumé of political and media-oriented activities.

Born outside of Belfast, Northern Ireland, Gawn studied politics at the University of Stirling in Scotland. His first internship with Northern Ireland's first government relations consultancy, working under Quintin Oliver, organizer of the successful "YES" referendum campaign that endorsed the country's Good Friday Peace Agreement.

Gawn won the Arthur D. Tripp Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, which



Gawn at the Save the Children UK compound in Mazr-i-Sharif, Afghanistan

sent him to Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, to study at the Graduate Center for Social and Public Policy. After learning Spanish, French, and German in school, he edited the *Santiago News Review* in Santiago, Chile. He went on to study as a 2003-05 Rotary World Peace Fellow at the Universidad del Salvador in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he earned a master's degree in international relations.

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Ryan Gawn

“The experience gave me better understanding of international development as well as cultural understanding. I now have friends and colleagues all over the world that I can draw upon,” said Gawn. The highlight of his fellowship, he added, was assisting in policy development, research, and intergovernmental negotiations at the United Nations and working on Kofi Annan's 2005 reform proposal, “In Larger Freedom.”

Since his peace fellowship, Gawn has continued working in similar political public-affairs roles and still considers Oliver a personal mentor. He is heavily involved in the international affairs arena in London, having been recently elected council member of Chatham House and treasurer of the United Nations Association of the United Kingdom's Westminster Branch. Gawn has also introduced Rotary to Save the Children UK for potential partnership. In addition, he has taken part in Rotary conferences in the United Kingdom, Tokyo, and Utah, USA, and he will be a panelist at the Rotary World Peace Symposium in Birmingham, England, on 18-19 June.

As for the Helsinki Agreement and future peace prospects in Iraq, Gawn is hopeful. “We recently gave evidence to a U.S. congressional hearing and hope that the new administration will use this example of success to inform their thinking on potential new approaches to the situation.”