

Qualitative feedback from community participants, NGOs and external stakeholders on Freedom Fund interventions to reduce the prevalence of bonded labour in Tamil Nadu

Institute of Development Studies, UK in partnership with Praxis

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Purpose of report

This report was produced by the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and Praxis, for the Freedom Fund and the C&A Foundation. It is an output of the programme 'Planning, learning, monitoring and evaluation activities for the Southern India hotspot located in Tamil Nadu. This programme was initiated in 2015 with an annual budget of US\$667,863 rising to an estimated spend of US\$1,716,300 in 2019. The programme operates in the four districts of Dindigul, Erode, Namakkal and Virudhunagar.

The IDS–Praxis research and evaluation project aims to support learning about the most effective community and non-governmental organisation activities in combating bonded labour in the Freedom Fund Northern India hotspot. The research project is funded through the Freedom Fund and directed by IDS.

This feedback is part of an overall independent assessment of the hotspots, particularly with regard to the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the hotspot model in reducing bonded labour in the area, and the sustainability of the hotspot model.

Team

The review has been conducted by an international, multi-disciplinary, gender-balanced team of researchers from IDS, Brighton, UK, in partnership with Praxis – Institute of Participatory Practices. IDS has a global reputation for its work on international development (www.ids.ac.uk). Praxis is known across India and South Asia for its work on participatory practice.

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Great effort has gone into producing an accurate and balanced report. We apologise for inaccuracies, should there be any, and would be pleased to rectify them.

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List of acronyms

ABG	Adolescent boys' group
AGG	Adolescent girls' group
ARG	Action Research Group
CRC	Community resource centre
CSG	Community support group
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DLSA	District Legal Services Authority
FBC	Film-based curriculum
HR	Human resources
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ICC	Internal complaints committee
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ILO	International Labour Organization
SC	Scheduled caste
VLCP	Village-level children's parliament
WG	Workers' group

Note: The Freedom Fund often refers to community freedom groups, which is a catch-all phrase for community support groups, as well as adolescent girls' groups and adolescent boys' groups, workers' groups and self-help groups.

1 Structure of this report

We have structured this report by key activity. This was because structuring by question in India led to some analytical duplication, where critical commentary on some questions was contained in answers to others. We did an initial analysis against Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria – relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability – to get a feel for the data. However, after an initial write-up, we felt that organising the data this way fragmented the assessment of non-governmental organisation (NGO)-supported activities, which was key to this report, and broke the flow of the argument. As a result, we decided to develop the analysis by theme. We reflect on the DAC criteria in the conclusions, but more substantively in the evaluation report.

2 Evaluation questions

Key evaluation questions for this research have been structured with relation to relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability as follows.

Relevance

- Do the design and activities of the hotspot reflect the current needs and priorities of community members and local government? Are they relevant to the objectives of the hotspot?
- What are the views of relevant stakeholders (primarily programme participants, with selected inputs from community leaders, government representatives and private sector employers) towards the programme? For example, do they consider it an opportunity, a threat or are they indifferent?

Effectiveness

- To what extent has the programme achieved its aim of reducing bonded labour in the target communities? Do the effects of the programme vary between different groups? (Note: this will mostly be answered from the prevalence study findings.)
- Based on the qualitative feedback from the community and NGOs:
 - (1) how has the programme contributed towards the measured change; and
 - (2) what are the observable links between programme activities and wider changes in socioeconomic wellbeing, community attitudes and actions, government policies and workplace practices?

Efficiency

- Based on the type of programme activities that seem to be most impactful within the programme's duration, to what extent do these align with the way the Freedom Fund is financing NGO partners' time and resources?

Sustainability

- To what extent has the programme influenced the approach, organisational capability and quality of activities (including monitoring and evaluation) of the NGO partners?
- What have the NGO partners undertaken together that they might not have done outside of the hotspot model, especially in terms of systems change?
- What are the key knowledge and skills that NGOs have learnt from programme interventions and can they give examples of how this can be applied elsewhere?
- What can the community members and adolescents now do for themselves?

We reflect on these under the four headings of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability in the conclusions to each section. A more detailed analysis by sub-question is provided in the summary evaluation, a report which brings together the different methods.

Box 2.1: Definition of forced and bonded labour

According to the International Labour Organization, the definition of forced labour has been consistent since the passage of the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). However, the focus on particular types of forced labour have shifted as new forms of exploitation of labour have emerged; similarly, the indicators of forced labour have evolved over time (ILO 2014). The ILO (2014) indicators of forced labour are aimed at providing guidance in identifying situations of forced labour. These include: abuse of vulnerability; deception; restriction of movement; isolation; physical and sexual violence; intimidation and threats; retention of identity documents; withholding wages; debt bondage; abusive working and living conditions; and excessive overtime (ILO 2014). The indicators helped local stakeholders to recognise and use the conceptions of forced and bonded labour.

Bonded labour is generally described as a type of forced labour and is also known as debt bondage or debt labour. It occurs when people are forced to use their physical labour to pay off a debt acquired by them or their family, or inherited from their antecedents. They are forced into working for little or no pay, with no control over their debt, and the value of their work invariably becomes greater than the original sum of money borrowed.

Within this evaluation, and throughout IDS' body of research on the Freedom Fund's Southern India hotspot programme, we use the following definition as developed for the participatory statistics based on the life story analysis (Oosterhoff *et al.* 2017).¹

- The presence of an advance or agreement. An advance, whether completely or partly in cash or in kind, made by one person who is also demanding the labour of the borrower as a means of repayment for a loan.
- Plus at least one of these remaining four:
- No freedom of movement – physically constrained or has restrictions placed on his/her freedom of movement.
- Paid less than the minimum wage – a remuneration which is less than the current notified minimum wage under the minimum wages act.
- No freedom of employment – absence of freedom to choose one's employment or other means of livelihood.
- No freedom of marketplace – loss of freedom to sell one's labour in an open market.

3 Methodology

This report is based on qualitative interviews undertaken by 20 staff from six NGOs; with 60 community members from six intervention villages; and 20 stakeholders from different government departments, mill management, and educational institutions such as the village panchayat, District Social Welfare Board, National Child Labour Prevention Programme, tutorials, revenue inspector, Childline, mill human resource (HR) manager, Block Development Office and District Legal Service Authority. The interviews reflect the experience of the communities and NGO staff of the hotspot model of intervention, as well as

¹ Some respondents argued that the migration of poor illiterate rural people is always risky or even that it always involves a form of bonded labour because people need to borrow money for the journey. But others pointed out that there are also success stories. Agreement was reached that somebody could only be marked as a case of 'risky migration' if he/she had gone overseas with false documents; or he/she was treated contrary to his/her agreement with an agent; or if he/she was paid less than the agreed salary; or if he/she is given other work than was agreed on.

impressions about the work of the NGOs and the broader landscape, which impacts on bonded labour, over the past three years.

The IDS team randomly selected six of NGOs as possible respondents. Of these, four of the partners had been part of the action-research process.² Of the six villages in which partner organisations were operating, the IDS team randomly assigned two villages to each partner: one was the main village interviewees were selected from and the other was provisional. The timeline was as follows:

- Training researchers: March 2019
- Data collection: April–May 2019
- Data entry and translation: June–July 2019
- Analysis and report writing: July 2019–January 2020.

² NGOs 1, 3, 5 and 6.

Table 3.1 Profile of Respondents

S. No.	Age	Gender	Caste	Micro-enterprise/ vocational ³	Rehabilitation	Legal aid	Reintegration	Provided information	Non-CSG ⁴	NGO-supported group
NGO 2										
1	12	Male	DNC					Yes		Yes
2	29	Female	MBC					Yes		Yes
3	34	Female	MBC					Yes		Yes
4	16	Female	MBC					Yes		Yes
5	15	Female	MBC					Yes		Yes
6	30	Female	MBC					Yes		Yes
7	35	Female	MBC					Yes		Yes
8	28	Female	SC			Yes		Yes		
9	33	Female	MBC	Yes				Yes		
10	21	Male	MBC		Yes		Yes	Yes		
11	20	Male	MBC		Yes		Yes	Yes		
NGO 3										
12	14	Male	MBC					Yes		Yes
13	20	Female	MBC					Yes		Yes
14	18	Female	MBC					Yes		Yes
15	15	Female	MBC					Yes		Yes
16	30	Female	MBC					Yes		Yes
17	37	Female	BC					Yes		Yes
18	45	Female	BC					Yes		Yes
19	36	Female	BC					Yes	Yes	
20	35	Male	MBC					Yes	Yes	
NGO 1										
21	17	Male	SC					Yes		Yes
22	14	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
23	18	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
24	38	Male	SC					Yes		Yes
25	28	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
26	39	Male	SC			Yes		Yes		
27	45	Female	SC	Yes				Yes		
28	43	Male	SC					Yes	Yes	
29	36	Female	BC					Yes	Yes	
30	18	Female	SC		Yes		Yes	Yes		
NGO 4										
31	13	Male	SC					Yes		Yes

32	13	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
33	11	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
34	33	Female	SC				Yes	Yes		Yes
35	36	Male	SC					Yes		Yes
36	35	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
37	30	Female	SC			Yes		Yes		
38	17	Male	SC	Yes				Yes		
39	42	Female	Inter-caste marriage Muslim + Hindu (SC)					Yes	Yes	
40	33	Female	SC		Yes			Yes		
NGO 5										
41	22	Male	SC					Yes		Yes
42	14	Female	Hindu, did not want to state caste					Yes		Yes
43	18	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
44	18	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
45	18	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
46	28	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
47	39	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
48	26	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
49	41	Male	SC					Yes	Yes	
50	9	Female	SC					Yes		Yes/VLCP member
NGO 6										
51	18	Male	SC					Yes		Yes
52	20	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
53	17	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
54	14	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
55	42	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
56	44	Male	SC					Yes		Yes
57	32	Female	SC					Yes		Yes
58	34	Male	SC					Yes	Yes	
59	19	Female	SC		Yes		Yes	Yes		
60	34	Female	SC					Yes		Yes/SHG member

Key: BC = ; DNC = ; MBC = ; SC = scheduled caste; SHG = self-help group; VLCP = Village-level children's parliament

Source: Author's own.

³ Some people were supported with a small amount of seed money or given access to resources to start small businesses (i.e. micro-enterprises); others were provided with training/skills building needed for particular types of employment.

⁴ A person living in a beneficiary village who was not part of the CSG at that particular point of time.

3.1 The respondent recruitment process

To recruit community respondents, five categories of community participants were identified:

- Category 1: NGO-supported groups (community support groups, adolescent boys' and girls' groups).
- Category 2: people who have been assisted with micro-enterprises and/or access to vocational training or group-based income generation.
- Category 3: people who have had legal help (we are focusing on cases with prosecutions).
- Category 4: people who have received information only (further desegregated by whether they were a member of an NGO-supported group).
- Category 5: people who have had rehabilitation and reintegration support or parents whose children were reintegrated.

Randomly selecting within these categories meant that a higher proportion of participants were directly affected by bonded labour than the proportion established in the endline of the prevalence study. Bonded labour reduced dramatically in the intervention communities in the period between the base- and endline surveys from 56.1% to 11.1% (Oosterhoff *et al.* 2019). These respondents may therefore have had particular difficulties or characteristics. Several of the interviewees overlapped categories. For example, one interviewee may have belonged to categories 1 and 2, or 3 and 5, or more. Not all respondents were meant to have family members in bonded labour. Five of the respondents had received rehabilitation support for their relatives or had experienced bonded labour, child labour or trafficking.

To recruit the interviewees, the NGOs prepared a list of the staff in managerial or senior positions and of those in community engagement or fieldwork positions. Project heads were selected for interview and subordinate staff were randomly selected, up to a total of 20 NGO staff. To recruit external stakeholders, the IDS and Praxis teams initially came up with an exhaustive list of external stakeholders whose views might be relevant to the interview process. Of these, Praxis shortlisted 20, based on feedback from the Freedom Fund. The external stakeholders included a mix of government officials, mill management and sector experts.

Table 3.2 Respondents the team spoke to in external stakeholder interviews

Panchayat representative
District social welfare officer
National Child Labour Protection
Best Tutorials (organisation)
Revenue inspector
Mental health professional
Anganwadi coordinator
Child Welfare Committee
Childline officer
Mill HR manager
Central Social Welfare Board
Block development officer
District Legal Services Authority

Source: Author's own.

In the text that follows we refer to community members, NGO staff members and the stakeholders defined in Table 3.2.

3.2 Data quality and translation control

IDS validated the data quality in July and August. This showed that there was duplication of some answers in some of the interviews. An investigation was carried out and the source of the problem was identified as the translation. The translator, who had been externally sourced, cut and pasted the same answers where they thought the meaning was similar. Following this, it was agreed that all of the interviews would be re-translated directly by the Praxis team to ensure that no information was lost in translation. Final translated interviews were then re-checked by a second native Tamil speaker at IDS. This review confirmed the quality of the Praxis re-translations.

3.3 Ethical considerations

This study is part of a larger research project, which includes scoping visits, life stories, Action Research, participatory statistics and an evaluation. The research project has been reviewed and approved by the IDS Ethical Review Board.

All interviews were carried out in a common but not secluded place and interviewees were given a brief introduction about the interview. When interviewing minors, two interviewers were present, one of whom was always female. The interviewer created a conducive environment by conversing in the interviewee's local language. During interviews, the local supporting NGO was always on location and available to provide support should it be necessary.

4 Analysis

The Praxis team carried out a collective analysis of the interviews, identifying critical factors and themes. The first step to this was for the team to go through all the interviews and document these in Excel sheets disaggregated by NGO and responses to questions. Following this, the team used the DAC criteria to look at the themes according to the indicators of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability, supporting the analysis with quotes from the interviews.

The IDS team carried out a parallel analysis and coded the interviews using NVivo software. In both cases, analysis was carried out in English after the interviews had been translated. Themes were identified as all the interviews were read and analysed. Interviews were then re-read and coding additions were made to ensure that the early interviews were also coded to pick up later emergent themes.

Having assessed the interviews for main themes, we carried out a more systematic word search and then checked the selections to establish that they were actually referencing the word in relation to an important change, eliminating references that were used in another context. The IDS and Praxis teams discussed their respective first draft analyses, identifying any points of overlap and or gaps, and any differences in interpretation. These were discussed and agreed on, then refined through iterations of the report.

4.1 Limitations

There were times when the interviewees quoted percentages (e.g. there has been a 50% reduction in school dropouts, or even a 50% reduction in caste discrimination). These statements should be taken as a 'manner of speaking' and conveying an impression of the

extent of change. Prevalence data and other numerical indicators of change have been collected in a separate base- and endline study (ibid.).

The evaluation team did not carry out interviews with mill owners or residents of mill hostels. People did not always respond directly to the questions. Even with follow-up questions, it was not always easy to get as clean a correlation between the questions and answers as we would have liked. This was particularly the case for the external stakeholders. More generally, it was difficult to get the external stakeholders to give up their time. These interviews tended to be much shorter and, while providing some additional insights, are generally less robust than the community and NGO interviews.

The sample sizes for the collection of feedback from various key stakeholders in the qualitative feedback process (52 interviews) enabled the team to gain insights into how and why changes were happening, but we did not continue to interview with each category of respondents until saturation was reached and no new information emerged. The views expressed and claims made by both community members and NGO staff have not been independently verified.

The study focus was at community level and specifically on intervention areas. It was not looking at the whole sector or the whole state. The sample is wide and contains a great deal of diversity. Although the sample – especially for community respondents – is reasonably large for a qualitative interview data set, allowing us to credibly assert how and why change might be happening, the absolute numbers in relation to the overall population are small and should be seen in that light.

Sometimes, the physical space to conduct the interviews was a constraint, where disturbances from household members meant the interviews had to be conducted over more time than others.

4.2 The programme

The Freedom Fund is working with local NGOs in five hotspots in India and Nepal. The Southern India hotspot in Tamil Nadu is the subject of this report. Hotspots are areas where there are high concentrations of bonded labour. In Tamil Nadu, there is a high concentration of young women who work in cotton mills. Often, young women workers are sourced directly from local villages. Initially, many of these came through the Sumangali scheme, which was a method by which women were convinced to work in bonded conditions so that they could earn enough to cover their wedding expenses.

The living and working conditions of those who come from the local villages to work in the mills are more visible and easier to assess. Others who come from outside Tamil Nadu often live in hostels. These are carefully guarded; access is restricted and it is very difficult to find out what happens inside. What is known, however, is that conditions for these workers are often considerably worse than those for the village-based workers. They often, for example, have to cover multiple shifts each day. An emerging phenomenon is a more transient workforce of migrants who are forced to change mills every month or so to avoid being recorded and traced.

The hotspot model claims to help frontline organisations lead the fight against modern forms of bonded labour. The Freedom Fund invests in organisations and not just projects; concentrates resources by investing in a range of interventions that reinforce each other to achieve outsized impact; builds powerful coalitions; prioritises data and research; and amplifies frontline voices on the global stage. This is one element of an evaluation with multiple components that assesses the extent to which these claims can be substantiated. These include scoping visits, an analysis of 300 life story narratives, a participatory prevalence study and an action-research process (see Annexe 2).

Some of the key interventions provided by the NGOs are: awareness raising; group formation and development (enabling villagers to identify issues of shared concern and helping them to take action to bring about improvements); rescue and rehabilitation; livelihood work and links to low-interest loans; linking people to government services; prevention of school dropouts and improvement of education; as well as policy and advocacy work of various sorts. Some support for basic service provision, such as health camps, has been provided, although this is not the focus of the work.

More detail on the programme's general approach can be found on the Freedom Fund website.⁵

Over the next sections we look at the evidence from the interviews on these different interventions.

4.3 Findings

In the sections that follow we discuss some of the key activities in detail. Before this, we give a brief overarching assessment of the most dominant themes to emerge from a simple word search in response to questions 1 and 2 for the communities:

Question 1 – Thinking about the situation of [bonded labour and child labour and trafficking], can you tell us about a few significant changes that have happened in your community over the last three years? (Community)

Question 2 – Over the last three years, what do you think are the most significant impacts on bonded labour/child labour/trafficking in the communities that you work in? (NGOs)

As indicated in the methods section, the word search of themes gave us a feel for the biggest perceived changes and priorities. Table 4.1 relates to the number of individual interviews that refer to particular keywords (not the number of citations).

⁵ www.freedomfund.org

Table 4.1 Key word search (number of interviews that referred to key words)

	Community	%	NGO	%
Awareness	49/60	82	18/20	95
Group	45/60	75	15/20	75
Education	38/60	63	11/20	55
Rights	35/60	58	5/20	25
Skill training NOT life skills	24/60	40	6/20	30
Community support group OR CSG	15/60	25	14/20	70
Rescue	17/60	28	5/20	25
Call me Priya OR FBC	14/60	23	9/20	45
Livelihood	12/60	20	5/20	25
Pay OR Salary OR Wage increase	12/60	20	0/20	0
Dropouts	11/60	18	10/20	50
'Adolescent girls group' 'adolescent boys group' OR ABG OR AGG	10/60	17	7/20	35
Government schemes	8/60	13	1/20	5
Scholarship	6/60	10	0/20	0
ICC	0/60	0	4/20	20

Source: Author's own.

The table shows that increased awareness and group development are very prominent in the minds of both community participants and NGO staff members, with more than 75 per cent in both categories citing this as a significant change. Notably, from the perspective of community respondents, skill training is mentioned more than livelihoods. NGOs mentioned independent complaints committees (ICCs) much more than community participants (19 out of 20 NGOs mentioned ICCs across all questions compared to zero community participants). Other activities seem to have focused on particular beneficiaries and may not have had the same universal impact. It is worth noting that 50 per cent of NGO respondents felt that the work on school dropouts was very significant.

4.4 Awareness raising

Awareness raising has largely been carried out through the community groups formed by NGOs within communities. These included community support groups (CSGs) – which can be considered the 'anchor' group in each community – adolescents girls' groups (AGGs) and adolescent boys' groups (ABGs), as well as self-help groups (SHGs), worker support groups (WGs) and Action Research Groups (ARGs), which were introduced as part of the IDS–Praxis programme of work.

Respondents listed a variety of different types of awareness, including the following: rights; pay and minimum wages for different occupations, working conditions, safety and labour law; definitions of bonded labour; warning signs of trafficking and middlemen, and how people are exploited by moneylenders; the importance of education; government schemes and labour; sexual harassment ('good touch, bad touch'); health, personal hygiene and menstrual hygiene, open defecation; property rights for women; drinking, pan intake and ganja awareness; police complaints process; and child marriage and child labour.

Following awareness raising on the nature, signs and dangers of bonded labour, child labour and trafficking, the interviews show that people had a clear understanding of what was exploitative labour, and they understood the exploitative nature of child labour and child marriage. Perhaps the most important factor as far as bonded labour is concerned is that

they were able to connect it to the provision of financial advances made by a person who is also demanding the labour of the borrower as a means of repayment for a loan.

They now saw the offering of advances as a danger signal. Community members also spoke about becoming aware of what should be considered excessively long work hours, and the ploys used by employers to push them to work under poor conditions with 'sweet talk'. From the prevalence process and findings, we know the importance of being rigorous in asking questions to establish differences between bonded labour versus other forms of (extreme) labour exploitation. However, it is interesting to note that, unsolicited, people used the term bonded labour to indicate various different types of labour exploitation during the interviews, which suggest that people are still not satisfied with the way labour is organised.

One respondent (NGO 1-COM-AGG-05) said, 'according to me, bonded labour means low wages and more working hours'. Another community respondent (NGO 5-COM-AGG-28) defined bonded labour as working after having given up one's freedom and one's rights. The advance issue is important because it is one of the factors that enables community members to turn their 'awareness' into action. By not taking advances they reduce the risk of bondage.

Other descriptions included:

- 'More work, less salary'
- Characterised by 'false promises'
- 'Without time breaks, no time for lunch'
- 'Forcing to do the work'
- 'When we are sick they make us work'
- 'Working hours nearly 15 hours' over time'
- 'When she work and is not given adequate rest, food breaks and drinks'
- 'It means Sumangali scheme', 'no freedom'
- 'When money is given in an emergency and then they ask us to work'
- 'Whenever they call for work we have to go and work without timings'
- 'In the workplace the manager cold and sometimes the people get advanced'
- 'Long working hours', 'sexual torture', 'no safety equipment', ' more than 8 hours'
- '322-70/- must not get salary lower than, it's called bonded labour'
- 'No hygienic conditions'
- 'Rs30,000 and Rs40,000 are given to us through sweet words and getting them to work'
- 'Unsafe work'
- 'You have to work until you return the advance'
- 'Getting advance and working in a company'.

As we can see, while most people associated bonded labour with getting an advance, they also seemed to associate it with every other form of labour exploitation, which may or may not have to do with bonded labour: labour rights; better working conditions and facilities; welfare measures; minimum wages; gender equity; gender rights and dignity; the right to education; the right to labour; the right to speech; the right to information; children's rights; child abuse; health hazards in mill work; use of safety equipment; and sexual harassment and sexual abuse in the workplace. One community member (NGO 2-COM-CSG-14) talked about poor working conditions and said they included, 'no proper sleep, no proper food on time and no health facilities'. One of the respondents from the AGG noted that she had learned that the daily wage should be Rs314.10 and that one could complain to higher officials if harassed in the workplace.

Awareness of the meaning of trafficking was not nuanced within this respondent group and largely focused on the most dramatic examples:

- 'Giving sweets and kidnapping for sexual abuse and organs'
- 'Girl children kidnapped and killed for organs'
- 'Small children organs removed and making them take to beggary and children subjected to sexual abuse'
- 'Given sweets, kidnapped and killed'
- 'If advance not paid they sell the organs'.

On the definition of child labour, while the majority of respondents talked about children aged less than 18 years, there were at least one or two respondents in every community who gave varying definitions, such as children aged under 13 years, aged under 15 years, or aged between 15 and 18 years.

A significant proportion of respondents (as indicated above) explicitly mentioned the role of the film *Call me Priya* in building awareness on various issues around bonded labour in the context of adolescent girls working in mills. The film was used in the groups to discuss and analyse issues that resonated with the real experience of those watching. One community respondent (NGO 4-COM-NCSG-45) said, 'Through the *Call me Priya* awareness movie the awareness was given for the mill workers. Now I have learnt about the tailoring and doing the work as a livelihood opportunity taught by the NGO.' One NGO staff member now uses videos to show to children on various topics, since she found the film-based curriculum discussions to be impactful. Most community respondents were able to recollect scenes and messages they had imbibed from the movies, and could articulate their awareness of the issues raised in them when the interviews were conducted. One respondent noted that drama and campaigns also helped build awareness of issues.

NGOs also have explicit programmes for raising awareness of and linking people to government schemes that could supplement funding. This initially involved more intensive support by the NGOs, but over time NGOs transferred knowledge to the groups, which have in turn passed it down to communities regarding accessing bank loans, knowledge of government schemes and establishing rapport with the government officials: 'they told us whom to approach in the government office' said a community member (NGO 6-COM-CSG-38). One ABG member noted that he was responsible for sharing what he was learning among other boys in his village. NGO 5-COM-ABG-26 mentioned that college students were made aware of quotas for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students to enrol in private colleges. Linking people to mainstream government initiatives is a way to ensure that impacts will be sustainable.

Although some of the issues covered in the awareness-raising process, such as alcoholism, might not at first appear to relate to bonded and child labour, the narrative analysis and Action Research elements of this programme have demonstrated how they are directly related. For example, it has been demonstrated through community Action Research that high-interest loans are taken out expressly for alcohol. There were also widespread claims by women in the narrative analysis that alcohol has stopped men working and that this is the reason women now need to go to the mills to work. This is a complex argument, as a general shift by mills towards the cheaper labour of women led to many men being laid off and, as a result, turning to alcohol.

With respect to sexual harassment, respondents spoke about the importance of understanding good touch and bad touch. One respondent (NGO 2-COM-AGG-18) described an exercise in which a black ribbon was used to understand foul language and harassment so vividly that it seemed she had been part of the exercise just the day before.

All respondents spoke of their increased awareness about the importance of education and of identifying child dropouts. While adolescents saw education as a pathway to their dream profession – such as nursing – and an opportunity to learn new things, develop discipline and

distinguish between good and bad, parents were more likely to see it as a route to a government job. Parents also hoped that education would enable their children not to have to do the jobs they themselves were doing. Some also noted that it would help their children interact with others and become worthy of respect.

Through sponsorship and tuition support, building awareness, collective action and reintegration into schools, the programme appears to have shifted attitudes and behaviour in relation to education. This has resulted in:

- Reinforcing the norm of parents sending their children to school.
- Establishing and reinforcing the norm that going to mills rather than attending school is not a good thing.
- Monitoring and vigilance activity by CSGs to actively identify and link dropouts to the programme.

Similarly, it appears that the programme has contributed to creating a narrative around the issue of child marriage, whereby community members feel that it is wrong to marry off their daughters before the age of 18. The NGO initiative has helped to stop or delay marriages of some girls. Clearly, there have been government and other campaigns on this issue, so the interviews can do no more than suggest a contribution.

Another area of change is the language of rights that the people in the community speak about. Children as young as 13 or 14 are also aware about their rights as workers and are able to list them, whether in relation to eight hours of work, proper wages, sexual harassment in the workplace or occupational safety. While some community members still talk about what benefits they can draw from the NGO in terms of capital for alternative livelihoods or college fees, many are talking specifically about their right to education and a safe livelihood, and about the entitlements due to them from the government.

Health was mentioned by a significant number of community members. The local *anganwadī*⁶ and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) staff provided knowledge on iron deficiency, menstrual pad usage instead of cloths, and eating locally grown food to increase haemoglobin count. One respondent talked about how pregnant women and lactating mothers were given awareness training on immunisation, low weight babies and healthy food habits. NGOs organised health awareness camps. Respondents recounted their learning on menstrual hygiene, the dangers of open defaecation and the importance of iron tablets and nutritious food. Self-grooming was mentioned by community members, as were personal hygiene measures such as taking a bath every day and wearing washed clothes.

The awareness-raising process seems to have been effective. Respondents reported this directly. Furthermore, virtually all of the community respondents could give a clear account of the dangers that they faced from bonded situations and the reasons why child marriage and child labour were not a good idea. There was some confusion on the nuances of the definition, but the core message has clearly been transferred. Similarly, the benefits of education and good health-seeking behaviour have got through. The main vehicles for this are the groups and the film *Call me Priya*. As we see in the next section on groups, there is evidence that the increased awareness has led to action, which might have contributed to the reduction in prevalence.

⁶ *Anganwadi* is a type of rural childcare centre in India, started by the government in 1975 as part of the ICDS.

4.5 Group formation and development

The collective organisation of villagers is manifested in the formation and functioning of various groups such as CSGs, ABGs, AGGs, WGs, SHGs, child resource centres, village-level children's parliaments (VLCPs) and ARGs. All the above groups are relevant in terms of dealing with the specific problems of various age groups and population categories. These groups have provided support, built confidence and acted as motivators to escape from the clutches of bonded or child labour, identification of school dropouts and reintegration into schools. Collectivisation has reportedly helped boys to 'respect women and girls' and helped community members learn how to approach government officials for various entitlements. Organising collectively is important to addressing bonded and child labour, as these are not issues that affect only one family in a community.

It initially took some time for the groups to form and build confidence because of the expectation that they were just vehicles for getting direct benefits from NGOs. In some cases, this prevented the groups developing as quickly the NGOs had hoped: 'Initially, when the groups were formed, people asked us what benefit we will get? Will you give us money? Because of these expectations some groups have not evolved,' one NGO staff member said.

This focus on the expected benefits from the NGOs was also a characteristic of the first phase of the ARGs. But most of the groups seem to have got past this after a few meetings. Respondents said that they had gained immense information and knowledge by being part of these groups. They were able to convince their family members, including parents, about the exploitation involved in bonded and child labour, and got support to look for other options. Group members mentioned that they have discussions and take decisions together: 'I used to be in a lot of struggling situations and now my siblings are all educated. The group helps all of us to make decisions' (NGO 1-COM-CSG-03); 'Decisions were made by consulting all the members of the group (NGO 5-COM-CSG-23).

As facilitators of the community resources centre, children and adolescents have a close connection with community volunteers and facilitators. If there are any issues with child protection in the village, they immediately communicate with the community volunteers. The community volunteers in turn get support from field coordinators as and when needed.

The groups reportedly took up local actions such as construction of bridges and roads, and persuaded local governments to create drinking water facilities and sanitation facilities, and to improve government services including regularising the supply of rationed food materials in the villages. One of the group members stated, 'Now we can ask questions in ration shop and also we can give complaints'. They discussed the problems women face in the villages and responded to the issue of alcoholism among men in the villages.

The groups have mostly grown to the level that they have developed good local leadership, meet regularly, facilitate the process of discussion, raise awareness and take their own decisions independent of NGO inducements. The SHGs support the members with money for their minor requirements. Group members said that the groups had helped them to learn life skills and that they had gained the ability to handle issues themselves.

In order to strengthen the intervention in the mills, the NGOs facilitated WGs at village level, as well as within the mills (see section 4.14). This collectivisation has also facilitated engagement with some mill owners to increase wages, reduce working hours, and improve working conditions and facilities in hostels. The community is in the process of gaining collective bargaining power, and demanding rights and entitlements from mills and public institutions (see section 4.16 on mills below).

The ARGs have been notable both for the evidence they generate and the action they have taken:

*Through action research group, a base line survey was conducted on livelihood activities among 271 mill workers in 40 project villages. These 271 beneficiaries are linked with VPRC and given financial assistance to start up their livelihood activities like goat rearing, petty shop, milch animals, and poultry farm etc.
(NGO 1-NGO-FC-01)*

As well as holding discussions and taking action, the groups celebrate important days, such as women's day, art and music festivals, and environment days.

The model of group development and the film can be regarded as effective ways of delivering and getting traction on awareness raising. The fact that learning is translating into action on a significant scale, across a range of issues, is an indication of its effectiveness. It is our view that this model is sustainable in two ways. Firstly, awareness once attained cannot be unlearned. Secondly, many of the groups are now autonomous or semi-autonomous and are clearly 'owned' by the communities.

4.5.1 Autonomy and sustainability

According to NGO staff, *autonomy and sustainability* can be seen in the ability of groups to conduct meetings on their own without staff guidance and in creating a community group structure that will act for its own needs. Community groups often mobilise their own group members for the meetings and some maintain attendance records and records of decisions without the support of the NGO. In most of the villages, there was initial hesitation on the part of the community to engage with the issue of bonded and child labour and child marriages. But continued interactions and awareness creation by the project team has generated confidence and trust within the community and its leaders to take up the issues that they need to.

Many of NGO staff members reported that more than half of their groups organised independently from them, kept records, and were able to make decisions and take autonomous actions. One NGO respondent said, 'when the people come to the groups each member is honoured and given the roles so that they feel proud to be part of the group'. We have noted in other contexts that when people have roles and feel ownership they are more likely to act autonomously.

The balance of responsibility between community and NGO has changed in some groups. Several respondents mentioned that they identify dropouts or migrant children or instances of child marriage and inform the NGO. NGO 6-COM-AGG-32 noted that she had informed the NGO about the impending child marriage of a girl in her village. This marriage was stopped and the girl is now continuing her education.

Community groups are able to identify issues and link people to appropriate services. Examples include: informing Childline when there was a teacher who used corporal punishment; informing the police about child marriage or boys entering the school to drink alcohol; an AGG speaking to boys when the boys had teased a girl in the community; and members asking for a bridge to be rebuilt because it was not constructed properly. There are also examples of cooperation between different types of groups. For example, AGG and ABG members inform CSG group members about potential child marriages and school dropouts in villages. 'An adolescent girl called the Childline helpline number and then she informed the community support group leader,' an NGO staff member said.

One of the key factors in taking steps towards making these groups autonomous has been that they have been given leeway to set their own agenda, which initially may or may not relate directly to bonded labour. This has often meant that they have started working on issues such as drainage, sanitation, roads, facilities in schools and quality of education. Improvements in facilities and quality of services can be seen as preventative measures to control bonded and child labour and child marriages in villages; but, critically, in this context this work on practical issues has motivated local community members and mobilised them. This in turn has led to trust in the groups and ownership by the group communities. Once this has been achieved, the groups start to develop more targeted action against bonded labour. A high proportion of groups still need NGO support, but their progression to semi-independence in some cases is encouraging.

5 Does awareness lead to action?

A critical question is whether awareness raising has led to action that might explain the reduction in prevalence. For people to change their behaviour based on information, they need to be able to act upon it. There is clear reported evidence in the interviews that awareness raising through and with groups has led directly to action to prevent school dropouts. Some CSG and adolescent group members listed the specific activities undertaken to identify dropouts and integrate them into schools or classes.

This can lead to reductions in child labour because education can lead to jobs and if children are in school they are not in bonded labour. A 14-year-old member of an AGG (NGO 5-COM-AGG-28) said she had helped identify four dropout children in her village. As a group, we identified school dropouts who were now able to pursue their education with support from NGO 5:

*But an initiative taken by the NGO was to connect the school management with the groups so that in cases where children who are absent for more than 3 to 4 days the school is accountable to inform the group, so that the group would contact the parents immediately and reach out to the child on the reason for the absence.
(NGO 2-NGO-FC-05)*

One of the members said that they now knew that the minimum wage was Rs322.70 and no one went for mill work if they were paid less or were not given safety equipment (NGO 3-COM-AGG-58). They also gained knowledge about the Employees' State Insurance scheme and Provident Fund, and now knew that the component was supposed to be deducted from their salary. They are involved in stitching nighties at a piece rate (NGO 3-COM-NCSG-56). It was reported that no adolescent girl now goes for the Sumangali scheme work and that they now work for only eight hours per day (NGO 3-COM-CSG-52).

After becoming aware of the people who were or are in bonded labour, groups have acted in two ways. Firstly, they try to prevent people getting into bonded labour. Many community members mentioned that they no longer go for mill work, which was previously the most preferred type of livelihood. The following are some examples:

*In 2015, more than 30 persons were going for the mill work and they were working in the power loom and cotton mill. In 2019 people in the village know about the consequences and so they do not go for the mill work. People now go for the 100 days programme and they also work in the garments – paid piece per rate.
(NGO 3-COM-NCSG-56)*

In 2016 there was more than 10% of child labourers in the mill but now it is only 2% after the implementation of the intervention.

(NGO 6-NGO-PM-10)

Secondly, where people are working in the mill, the group acts to support their welfare; for example, meeting with mill authorities and pushing them to make changes. One example given was of a girl who cut her finger. She was admitted to the government hospital, which did not have proper services, so she was moved to a private hospital and the expenses were borne by the mill management.

There are display boards mentioning that child marriages and child labour are not seen in villages; NGO 3 and NGO 5 staff said that these had been put up by the CSGs. Eight community members referenced the '1098' Childline number. Various respondents talked about child marriage:

In the community now the adolescent girls are not married early. Now they go to college they learn some skills like tailoring or do a computer course and they are educated but they are not working. Also some of them get ITI education from the Peace college in the village. (NGO 1-COM-CSG-03)

Child marriages are stopped and we get information through the AGG and they support us at the community level. (NGO 5-NGO-FC-07)

Through these groups 8 child marriages were prevented and then educational support was given to them by joining them in school again. (NGO 4-COM-CSG-50)

In the village at schools even if the girls were dropping out of the school, the school principal as a mentor did not intervene with their decisions which was later brought into light by NGO 2 as they were the party that intervened and stopped the school dropout and also saved the child from child marriage. (NGO 2-NGO-FC-05)

No child marriage prevails in the community after FBC. (NGO 2-NGO-FC-05)

There was a girl who was almost supposed to be married she was stopped from getting married. She was rescued from Coimbatore mill and she escaped from there and came back. We gave her vocational training in tailoring and after that she started to be a part of volunteer in the NGO studied under graduation and now she is a role model for other adolescents who have been affected like her she went back safely to her home. (NGO 6-NGO-FC-12)

Some community members are also able to identify brokers or agents in the community and prevent them from entering the community. NGO 3-COM-ABG-54, NGO 3-COM-CSG-57, NGO 2-COM-ACSG-11 noted that they were capable of identifying if newcomers in the village were brokers who aimed to recruit children and adults for work and taking precautions accordingly.

5.1 Discussion of issues in the community and engagement of the panchayats

Generally, respondents felt that there was much more discussion of issues within the communities than before the hotspot initiative. However, views on interactions with panchayats have been very mixed. Some reported 'interface meetings with panchayat were helpful', while others said that 'sometimes Panchayat leaders do not work for the issues'. Many stated that women are not listened to at all in these spaces. In some villages, Gram

Sabha (village assembly) members function as brokers and agents for the mill management, so community members and NGO staff have difficulty in speaking in the common meetings, as mentioned by NGO staff.

These are some of the different perspectives that were expressed in different NGO intervention areas:

- 'only some talk', 'women don't talk', 'there is no community participation', 'only men speak', 'the women only talk in the wellness group'.
- 'People are talking, girls speak, adolescent girls talk at the Gram Sabha', 'the NGO talks, but the villagers are bound by rules so they can't speak'.
- 'There is no hinderance and people talk in the Gram Sabha', 'some politicians come out and speak about issues but not all', 'Child related issues are only spoken in the last segment of meetings'.
- People talk, but in Gram Sabha 'we cannot talk about labour issues'; 'from the NGO staff there are many who talk about the issues'; 'People are talking boldly in all meetings and gram sabha meetings'; 'They talk, but only youngsters, not the elderly' 'so we talk freely'; 'There was a time when SC people were not allowed to talk in the village'; 'Gram Sabha, only basic needs discussed'; 'In general meetings they talk, but don't talk about bonded *slavery* since no issues are there now'; 'there's no opportunity to talk' and no-one hinders to talk'
- 'All groups talk, but in Gram Sabha meetings they do not talk because the company owners are also members' 'people don't talk in meetings because most of the people's in the Gram Sabha meetings are one mill owners and it is not easy to identify them by looks, so people keep quiet, and there is no alternative livelihood so they do not talk in the groups. More generally outside of the Gram Sabha 'women talk'. One community member in contrasts says there is no hinderance to talking.

5.2 Engagement and empowerment of women

The interviews make clear that there is a much higher level of awareness of labour exploitation and rights among women workers, and women are much more likely to speak out and talk to each other within their communities. In most cases, NGO respondents indicated that they thought that women now got equal educational support, and a number of interviewees reported a trend towards equal pay. A lot of the interviewees said that women did not used to come out of the house but 'now they are able to solve the problems and take decisions in the group fully'.

Talking about awareness of sexual harassment issues, one respondent said:

In 2015 women where very reluctant to join the meetings of the NGO, they had to convince us a lot and talked to us individually to make us come for the group meetings. Then I understood the importance of the group and then we learnt to talk bravely and freely and now we all participate in the group much.
(NGO 5-COM-CSG-22)

Women and girls are able to move outside their homes, 'speak bravely' and are learning new skills. They are taking part in functions and in Gram Sabha meetings and speak boldly: 'Three years before I was scared to even step out of my house. Now, after NGOs interference, I am exhibiting my skills.'
(NGO 5-COM-AGG-28).

NGO 3-COM-CSG-53, NGO 3-Com-NCSG-56 and NGO 3-COM-ABG-54 took part in the women's day celebration on 8 March and took part in most of the events held. One spoke with the local member of the Legislative Assembly. Women reported that they were now able to participate without shyness in all community meetings: 'After all these awareness has

been given the women who were shy are speaking boldly,' (NGO 4-COM-AGG-42). They also go to the police station to assert their rights when a child marriage is about to take place (NGO 3-COM-ABG-54 and NGO 3-COM-AGG-60).

Some counter-arguments were expressed:

*Girls during the menstrual days have been given separate plates and dishes for eating and are also not allowed inside the house.
(NGO 2-NGO-FC-05R)*

*Earlier in the communities even if women were educated they were not sent to work by the husbands as they doubt their wives. And the other reason was that they might earn more than them which explicitly showcased their superiority complex.
(NGO 4-NGO-FC-15R)*

It is not entirely clear how much this has changed. It is worth reflecting on some of the context-specific dimensions of gender:

*Females are more affected by the bonded labour than the men in the power loom industry we find that the advance is got by the men around 50,000 rupees and one lakh rupees and they are not able to repay and so the men will run away, but the women cannot go so the women are more affected by the bonded labour issues they cannot go to the relatives and they feel threatened. So for returning the money the women are given sexual torture.
(NGO 6-NGO-PM-10)*

Some NGO respondents argued that women's increasing economic independence as a result of their engagement in micro-enterprises, such as tailoring and work as beauticians, has led to their taking more decisions in the family and in some cases they now have equal status to men. One respondent highlighted the case of a girl who completed her MBA and has become a motivational speaker within her community.

5.3 Caste

Looking more broadly at the underlying societal factors that contribute to the maintenance of bonded labour, caste remains a major issue. Generally it is reported that day-to-day issues have changed, such as: 'sharing space'; wearing slippers; 'drinking from different tea glasses'; 'people do talk to each other'; 'all castes are able to speak and school children are no longer separated but there is still a resistance to major change particularly amongst the older generation'.

The greatest resistance relates to the question of inter-caste marriage. The lack of support for inter-caste marriage is still widespread within communities:

*We do not support the inter-caste marriages and even if someone gets married they are not allowed to enter the village and only monetary support is provided without the knowledge of the other villagers by the parents of the couple. (NGO 2-COM-AGG-21)
In 2014 only certain caste people can enter the temple now the situation is that we can also sit in the temple premises. there are no inter-caste marriages in the village the Government support Centre caste marriage by giving free mangalsutra⁷ – thali, vessels and there are no expenses with their families.
(NGO 1-COM-CSG-03)*

⁷ A neckpiece worn by married women among some Hindu communities in India, also called *thali* in Tamil.

NGO 3 reports that there is still '[caste] discrimination amongst boys but not girls'. One respondent in the same NGO said they had noticed no difference over three years. NGO 4 says there is still a problem in 10–13 villages, indicating that this is a very locally contextual issue. One village needed two community support groups (now merged). There is also a fairly widespread view that this has not been a significant focus of the NGOs, which have not worked on this other than reiterating that all castes are equal:

Caste intervention we have not done any. Some of the caste issues that are seen the public toilets cannot be used by the lower caste community and in certain places we find that ration shop can be only for a particular committee of people.
(NGO 6-NGO-PM-10)

However, there are some examples from the interviews of indirect work:

Caste issues in 2015 there were lot of caste issues, no resource centre, no food and water or streetlights. In 2016 we developed volunteers to work in the marginalised communities and we chose volunteers from the lower caste. There was agitation from the upper caste people. In 2017 then we find out the upper caste community people did not send the children for tuitions to the CRC. After seeing the success in the educational level of the lower caste people in the CRC they started to send their children. (NGO 3-NGO-PM-16)

Caste issues in the villages are still a big challenge for us in 10 to 13 villages at least we find that there is 50% of the caste discrimination seen where we work. Where we have succeeded is that in the child resource centres, we have not been able to succeed with regard to the community support groups. The success in the child resource centres all caste children are coming together for the educational facilities
(NGO 4-NGO-FC-13)

In one area, it was reported that there was some questioning of why a medical camp was needed in a lower-caste area. It was also reported that burial spots for lower-caste people are still not provided. A selection of quotes below illustrate the nature of some of the ongoing issues:

The Arunthathiyar community I engaged in Chakli making and they are the targeted group is the community as they are from the lower caste. (NGO 2-NGO-FC-05)
30 percentage of the caste issues are still prevalent people from one caste believe that Yadav caste people use black magic and when the other caste people Cross or Walk to the another community people street they complain that they get sores in the foot.
(NGO 2-NGO-FC-06)

Eradication of caste-based discrimination is an area where there is at least awareness among the community. Caste-based issues exist in terms of using public facilities and spaces such as burial grounds, tea shops, *anganwadi*, schools, group meetings, etc. Further initiatives, such as advocacy, awareness creation, coalition building, networking and convergence building are to be started to address caste-based discrimination on a long-term basis:

In our village there was a lot of stigma and discrimination in 2015; there was separate glasses for drinking tea and water, in the schools the children were separated and asked to be seated away from the different castes.

(NGO 5/ COM/ CSG/ 22)

During temple festivals there are clashes seen between the upper caste and lower caste people in our village.
(NGO 5 / COM/ CSG/ 22)

5.4 Rescue and rehabilitation

Many interviewees reported rescue and rehabilitation processes in their villages and thereby reductions in bonded labour, child labour and child marriages:

In 2014, there were many bonded labourers in our village. Adolescent girls and boys had to work in the mills for their livelihoods. At present both the adolescence boys and girls are educated, and we are able to see a difference.
(PT-COM-CSG-03)

At present, I have a job. I was in millwork when I completed my 10th standard. I attended a computer and tailoring skill class. I joined Girls Group and supported others to continue the higher education, and prevented early marriages and advised girls to cultivate the habit of saving.
(NGO 1-COM-CSG-03)

A girl who had completed 9th standard in my village was going to mill. After rescuing they continued their study in the school. Anusuya was rescued from bonded labour and given Rs. 5000/- to start self-employment
(NGO 1-COM-LEG-06)

Neela was rescued in my village and now she got married
(NGO 1-COM-REH-01)

A number of respondents reported that the NGOs have been able to follow up with people who are brought out of bonded labour (especially children) to ensure they do not slip back into the labour market. Rescued people have been supported through activities to prevent their return (e.g. temporary monetary support, provision of meals/food, etc. from villages) and longer-term measures such as skill training (e.g. tailoring and machine work).

NGOs have supported rescued bonded labourers by linking them to NGO and government financial support, and by giving them skill training such as tailoring, computing and beautician courses; or providing financial support for micro-enterprise activities such as goat rearing, and providing grinders for *idli*, *dosa* batter making and masala powder. Guidance related to livelihood choices has been provided, especially for adolescent girls. Other support has included renting covering sets for marriages in the community – this is done where young women do not want to continue the studies, or are older than others at school because they had previously stopped or interrupted their schooling.

There are instances of rescued liberated bonded labourers starting micro-enterprises, but the success of such business enterprises has yet to be assessed:

There is still slavery in the community. Even if the office staff come and say they are not ready to accept, and keep going for the bonded work in power loom. If we can talk to the people who get advance and work we can prevent the bonded labour. We have to create that only when people are there to get the advance and work people are there to give money and make them bonded labourers – so this awareness has to be made. The NGO has not done any activities. It is happy to rescue the bonded people, but alternative livelihood should be given to them. I have spoken but they have not listened and still people go for bonded work. I have good relationship with the staff and they always support us and guide us. They follow up the services only 70% of the times.
(NGO 6-COM-NCSG-35)

It is important to note, however, that examples were given of successful interventions that have provided a longer-term solution. This includes stitching clothes at home and engaging in comparatively low-income activities, such as threading flowers.

There are still respondents who see the NGOs in a traditional provider role, particularly in relation to livelihood support. One community member (NGO 2-COM-ME-15), for example, mentioned that the NGO could have found suitable jobs for rescued people. Another said they could give books and guidance to young people who wanted to get government jobs.

There were requests for support for people to set up their own handlooms at home. Some of the interviews highlighted the importance of providing skill training for young people working in the mills. Similarly, tailoring skill training and the provision of tailoring machines were mentioned. Nevertheless, as indicated above, more people are now talking about the rights and entitlements that they should be getting from the government and the measures that they can take for themselves.

5.5 Loans

Community and NGO respondents observed that people are saving more – 26 respondents specifically mentioned this – and that they think this has contributed to their ability to avoid or come out of bondage.

The prevalence study found that the overall pattern of borrowing has slightly changed. Both at baseline and endline, households without members in bonded labour have better access to savings groups and banks, which are relatively safe compared to moneylenders, mill owners and pawnbrokers. Households with at least one or all members in bondage still mostly borrow from moneylenders, while only 1 per cent of households without bonded labour, which includes people who escaped bondage, have taken loans from moneylenders at endline. The interviews confirmed these findings and were more optimistic in tone.

A savings habit has been initiated by CSG group members. Also, an awareness not to get loans from moneylenders was mentioned by community members. NGO staff mentioned that villagers have been told how to approach banks and get low-interest loans. But, no examples of people who had actually done this were given, except among SHG members, so this area remains a challenge. Awareness raising about loans by the CSGs has had a direct effect and this has been amplified in some communities by Action Research, which assessed household expenses across whole villages. The following are examples of respondent responses to the question of loans:

In the community people have started the savings habit and got cows for their livelihood.
(NGO 1-COM-ME-09-29)

After joining the group I have got two-wheeler and we are able to get some jewels as a result of the savings habit learned from groups.
(NGO 1-COM-NCSG-02)

With the help of the group, we learned many good things like savings, understanding in Call me Priya, Luxurious expenses.
(NGO 5-COM-AGG)

Through savings they are able to repay and come out of the bonded situation. Through the small savings the collected amount can be given to rescue other bonded labourers in the village. When someone repays, that amount can be used to help others.
(NGO 5-COM-CSG-24)

Debt borrowed by the people was very high and it was taken for unnecessary expenses and now the people are able to do planning for the financial expense and there is huge change is seen

(NGO 5-NGO-FC-09)

Earlier, the members had loans and now 50% of them have reduced their loans because of the increased savings.

(NGO 3-NGO-FC-18)

Women involved in community are very bold; they now have awareness on savings, which helped them to come out of debt and little economic improvement can be seen among them.

(NGO 3-COM-CSG-52)

In my family there was no savings and they used to spend lavishly and without any understanding of the children, people used to go for mill work.

(NGO 4-COM-AGG-42)

I have bank savings, and I have learnt to spend wisely.

(NGO 6-COM-REH-40)

5.6 Livelihood and skill training initiatives

The interviews seem to suggest that there are a significant number of people who have benefited from the livelihood programmes. While a very small proportion of respondents were actual beneficiaries of micro-enterprises or livelihood support, many mentioned that they knew of others in the village who had received support. For example, one respondent mentioned that she had learned how to make masala powder for cooking and was now making it regularly. Another mentioned that a neighbour had received a grinder, which she used to supplement her income by making and selling batter. NGOs have claimed a number of successes:

Skill training for women has been established and 86 women have been provided with tailoring skill. In textile park there was a requirement and these skilled women were connected with the offer. And now they earn up to Rs. 300 to 400 every day. The women also make apron and cloth bags with group loans that they get.

(NGO 2-NGO-DIR-04)

While there are many accounts of skill training, there are fewer about how these were turned into livelihoods. Nevertheless there is some supporting evidence:

Earlier my husband was working as a mechanic and he had to do both the day and night shift though the salary was less. He wouldn't have time to have his lunch too. Now we are able to take care of the family and also the group activities. Now we are having sufficient food and also we have dresses earlier it was insufficient. The medical facilities are also improved we used to go to the government hospital for testing and we did not wear any slippers now we wear a slipper and uniform and we are able to take new dresses thrice a year.

(NGO 1-COM-CSG-03)

We are able to have better economic status after joining the group.

(NGO 1-COM-ME-09)

Personally, she had got 57 people work in the garment industry and now supervises them. We have become independent. I have learnt tailoring and do stitching work along with my garment work as supervisor. I was able to come out of my home and move freely. Most of the households in the village have increased financially and get loans. Awareness about the interest rate and how people are exploited by loan sharks in the community for high interest rates.

(NGO 1-COM-NCSG-08)

Changes that were got – I left the mill work and joined tailoring, I can take care of my father and also repaying the loans little by little. When I was working in the company I earned 120/- per day and now I am earning 250 if I stitch two blouses a day and I have lots of rest at home The family members have good trust with me. In my family since all of us were going for work we could not take care of my father and now since I am working from home I can take care of my father.

(NGO 3-COM-AGG-55)

X was rescued and was given basket weaving skill training was which helped her to establish her livelihood.

(NGO 4-COM-ME-44)

I got vocational training for masala powder making and selling it to my relatives, I get low interest loan and able to run my family and able to be free without going for the mill work. (NGO 4-COM-REH-43)

Some respondents felt that it would be better to focus on linking people to private employment rather than supporting them with entrepreneurial work. One said that permanent employment, with a regular salary, would be most useful for survivors. It is clear that several of those who got livelihood support were able to use it to supplement or replace their income from other work. However, there is not enough evidence to say exactly how many people benefited from this.

5.7 Children's education and school dropouts

Community members noted that children's education has gained importance within communities and that fewer children are going for work now. Some members mentioned that education provides children with knowledge about: what is happening outside their village; how to interact effectively with others; how unwanted habits such as alcoholism can be prevented; how to be self-reliant; and how to go for government jobs (NGO 3-COM-CSG-57). One NGO mentioned that children's knowledge of English can improve with education and they can get permanent government jobs.

It was reported that prior to 2014, girls were only educated up to the 10th standard. NGO staff supported dropouts in enrolling in colleges. One respondent (NGO 5-COM-CSG-23) mentioned how 3–4 years ago, most children would drop out after class 10 or 12. Now, three girls have enrolled in college and several more are waiting to start college once the results of their class 12 examinations are out. 'The NGO provides scholarship and reintegration of school dropouts,' a respondent (NGO 5-COM-CSG-24) said, adding that two dropout students had been supported in enrolling in a private college. Similarly, a respondent from NGO 3 noted that community members had recognised the importance of compulsorily educating their children.

One community member observed that school dropouts are still seen after children have been integrated into school (NGO 3-COM-CSG-52). Another mentioned that when schoolteachers reprimand children for not studying well, the children do not want to go to school. There are also additional challenges during the school holidays. One NGO staff member said, 'during the holidays we have to conduct some summer camps or else they go for the mill work during the school holidays' (NGO 3-NGO-PM-16).

The likelihood of school dropouts is very context specific. Respondents in one location identified flower companies as places where children worked. Respondents in another area said that there are 'more school dropouts children in the power loom' (NGO 6-NGO-DIR-12).

Clearly, this residual group of dropouts do not go to school for a mixture of reasons, but they are primarily economic ones:

*There is still a 20% of school dropouts prevailing in the community and the reason is due to financial reasons of the family. There is also Low self-esteem among children due to their financial state and family background.
(NGO 4-COM-FC-15)*

The community resource centre in NGO 3 has shown that the students' academic performance has improved and they pass their exams. The average mark is 61 per cent for those who have attended the centre. In NGO 5, scholarships have been provided as support measures for young people to continue their education. Vocational training has mostly been provided by NGO 1 for young people who do not wish to continue their school education. But, according to the interviewees, although this project has developed a few initiatives to support higher education by providing scholarships and tuition facilities to get admission to higher education, it is not seen as a priority.

Over time, the messages have spread beyond the community groups. Non-community group members send the children for tuition now, an NGO staff member noted: 'these people initially did not allow us to their streets. Now the situation has changed'.

Education of children and young people – including higher and technical education – opens up opportunities for better employment. Measures such as linking children to scholarships also encourages parents to withdraw their children from labour and push them towards education, technical or regular. Education also helped the community gain confidence. Especially among girls, it was seen as a marker for increased self-esteem, along with participation in NGOs' activities:

*Women were having insecure feelings and low self-esteem because of no education but now women participate and NGO 3 supports us completely (NGO 3-COM-ICDS-59)
In my village now more than boys, girls are studying more (Girls 85% more than Boys) now. In the past three years, the girls and boys have received almost 85% of skill training for youth like sports, communication and self-confidence from the NGO 5.
(NGO 5-COM-ABG-26)*

For adolescent boys it was more about self-discipline and education:

*I am studying because I can learn discipline and to respect and speak softly to get along with others and learn new habits from outsiders
(NGO 6-COM-ABG-33)*

Education contributes to building awareness of the negative impacts of bonded and child labour, as well as of early marriage and early parenthood in life. Throughout the interviews, there were examples of girls who had dropped out or had been on the threshold of marriage starting their education and continuing it.

5.8 Middlemen and brokers

Respondents raised many issues in relation to middlemen and brokers. They pointed out that they are difficult to identify because they work on a rotating basis: 'they go from one mill to another'.

People have various perceptions of who are traffickers. For example, some are ex-millworkers; others are mill van drivers: 'they are mostly incognito in the form of relatives'. For the most part, it was felt that agents were not there in the village.

Mill workers have to give money to the agents out of what they are paid. Often, there is deception: 'the broker says 300–400 but later it is less'. There were some noted changes in the way that middlemen are operating:

The slavery forms have been changed in the village such as the change in middleman. Widows and certain groups are targeted specifically and how they target is by providing loans for children's education and target such groups.
(NGO 1-NGO-PM-03)

It was noted that agents constantly rotate workers who come from the north (see also below):

The agents give the mill management 10 to 20 workers and get Commission under an agent. 75 mill workers are in charge by an agent. The agents function as middlemen and also earn money for the resources provided by them. The mill workers have to give part of the pay around 40 rupees to these agents. Insurance is not done and also provident fund is not given. The agents are able to function very well because they have a rotational system where they keep changing the mill and supply the mill workers two different mill after 6 months mostly in migrants are affected and they become bonded labourers.
(NGO 1-NGO-FC-01)

There were reports of villagers not allowing brokers to operate in their village. They train people to look out for newcomers: 'if someone comes to our village, we ask who they are and what is the nature of their work because we don't want our children to be going for mill work' (NGO 4-COM-CSG-50). In general, there seems to be a much greater awareness of who the middlemen are and what they do. This links to villagers' perception that they will be trapped in bonded labour if they take an advance: I am a painter in the mill since 2014 joined through an agent. Agents used to take a hundred rupees from my daily wage. Now I get the full wage 350/- per day. (NGO 1-COM-NCSG-02).

Sometimes a very direct response is initiated:

The brokers are not functioning in four villages we have seen that the people have kicked out the brokers from the village.
(NGO 3-NGO-PM-16)

We are able to avoid the loan borrowing from loan sharks and not get harassed. Earlier we used to struggle and repay the loan got from the loan sharks and pay high interest rates like 1000/- for 10,000 rupees loan borrowing. Now we are able to get loan from the group with low interest rate and everybody is accountable to repay because of this.
(NGO 1-COM-NCSG-08)

5.9 Engagement with mills

Mobilisation to set up ICCs in mills and support other activities to improve conditions has been carried out efficiently. It has taken time and a lot of perseverance for the NGOs to get access to the mills. It was not clear at the beginning of the programme whether it would be possible to do so: 'entering the mill premises was very difficult' (NGO 1-NGO-FC-01R); 'it took us nearly one year to enter into the mill and it took for a single meeting with the head 6 to 8 months. We started the process in 2016 and only in 2017 were we able to enter the mill premises' (NGO 3-NGO-PM-16).

Typically NGOs have gained entry by opening up discussions on less controversial issues such as 'stress management', 'mental health', 'counselling' or '[saying] you are going to conduct medical camps' (NGO 2-NGO-FC-06). This is then used to progress towards the creation of an ICC.

In order to strengthen the intervention in the mills, the NGOs facilitated WGs at the village level, as well as within the mills. In the village-level WGs, workers from different mills across the block and district discuss working conditions in different mills. This gives them a comparative analysis of different mills, which allows them to become aware of different positive things happening in other mills.

In one village, WG meetings take place once a month and the workers and liberated bonded labourers discuss the Provident Fund, Employees' State Insurance scheme, benefits, social schemes, etc. The same members who are part of WG in the village have become members of WGs within the mills. They are able to take a leadership role in facilitating meetings, providing information about labour laws, working conditions, etc. Management and HR representative take part in the WG meetings. They take note of the discussion points and try to resolve the issues over a period of time.

The WGs within the mills discuss different issues in meetings, including:

- Toilet facilities
- Health and hygiene
- Lunch break time
- Overtime issues
- Workers stress
- Shift changing options
- No night shifts for apprentices aged 14–18
- Leave facilities.

Previously, mill management never engaged with outsiders to facilitate meetings or sessions. They engaged with workers through trade unions or job agents or brokers, but now the mills find engagement with WGs to be a constructive mechanism, both to address issues raised by workers and to strengthen the management system, which creates an enabling environment for workers. In one NGO area, the management has asked NGOs to provide different types of training to workers, such as stress management, health and hygiene, time management, etc.

There is a widespread feeling from the interviews that there have been significant positive changes in the mills:

- '60% of the work burden is not there for the workers who work in the mill now'
- 'restrictions relaxed'
- 'safety materials distributed'
- 'minimum wages' introduced
- 'more toilets'
- 'no forced overtime'
- 'The mill stops the young women going to work and recommends them to study'
- 'more respect from supervisors'
- a reduction in 'abusive language'
- compensation for accidents.

Other examples of change include the following:

Safety equipments to be given in the mill, another mill rest room time was only 8 minutes to the workers and after the NGO spoke to the mill management and then they are allowed to use the restroom for 15 minutes and a place for eating and also tea time was given and more toilets were which closed were opened. Removing the cotton from

*the dress hand machine was done after the day's work from the mill workers clothes.
(NGO 3-COM-NCSG-56)*

*In a mill through ICC interaction there was a toilet issues and we talked to the HR manager and now the mill workers have more number of toilets to use during the rest breaks. ... now no body forces the workers for over time. In certain mill basic equipment were not given and now the workers are not using it now because they had been not used to working worth the safety equipment and now they are counselled by us to use the safety equipment and they are doing it now it took some time to bring that change.
(NGO 3-NGO-FC-18)*

Some NGOs have been very successful in setting up ICCs. Others have had more difficulty and had to take it slowly. While the Freedom Fund's 2018 annual report records that ten of their implementing partners supported 98 ICCs in the second half of 2018, these were not distributed evenly. In the interviews, NGO 1 reported ICCs in 25 mills, with 15–18 members in each. NGO 6 reported ICCs in 39 mills. NGO 3, while focusing on nine mills, managed to set up ICCs in four, but had difficulty getting access to the mills. Similarly, NGO 4 has set up ICCs in three mills:

- The ICC went 'together as a group and spoke to the mill owners for a wage increase'; 'through group action it was done' (NGO 1).
- They have focused on nine mills on issues of minimum wages, toilets, no forced overtime, safety equipment, medical leave and skill training but 'can't talk about minimum wages' (NGO 3).
- The challenge is to get access because of the legal work they are doing; they have managed to get compensation in one death case (NGO 4).
- 38 child labourers were rescued; they have ICCs in 39 mills, with their staff on 32, focused on toilets, food, workload, health access; they have initiated hostel registration in 19 mills and safety measures in 19 mills; they have training for women in 12 mills; they say 80 spinning mill owners have applied for hostel registration to be done – 35–40 have applied under the hostel registration act (NGO 6).

Even though wages are the hardest part to negotiate, there is some evidence of change in some places: '3 years before we only got Rs.150 as wage now we are getting Rs.250. Earlier we used to work at the demanded time and place, now we work at our convenience,' (NGO 5-COM-CSG-24); 'After the NGO stepped inside our community they helped to promote awareness among the people. Now any person below the age of 18 does not go to work and we get Rs.314 salary per day,' (NGO 4-COM-CSG-48).

The mill interventions are strategic and tactical in nature, and each NGO partner differs in engaging with mills. Some NGOs were highly successful in engaging with mills, while other NGOs started building rapport; others need to go a long way to connect with the mills. It is interesting to see the engagement from the perspective of three mill HR managers:

*The NGO has helped in the ICC formation and support for the mill workers within the mills was given. They have organized and attend regularly the ICC meeting in the mills. For our mill, there are more people working from external states(migrant). Due to the language problem, it is difficult to make them participate in such meetings.
(Mill HR manager)*

The NGO staff have helped in the ICC formation within the mills. They are now organizing and attending regularly conduct the ICC meeting. The NGO also supports to fulfil certain demands, you can fulfil them by writing letter to the district government department. Whenever any training is shown through the film, the content will be

reached for the workers like the FBC that was shown in the villagers. At present there is a shortage of workers in all mill industries. Thus they are coming to work more and more from external states so migrants are more now. The NGOs can further create an awareness of the lack of labour in the factories and there is a possibility of migrant reduces. For migrant workers, women are more likely to work than men. The migrant workers are issued a year after they join work, the ID card because they go to another job.

(Mill HR manager)

We came to know about the NGO through the ICC formation which was done in our mill prior to NGO intervention. Now we have a woman employee from the NGO who is in the ICC committee team. Migrant issues have been focussed by us through the support of the NGO and have support by us. We take migrants with identification so as to avoid people who might have been having some legal cases behind them. Apart from the ICC committee complaint box we also have a general complaint box and I only have the keys to the box and weekly once address the issues of the complaints. In the mill also of us eat the same food that is been served to the workers of our mill, even our managing director eats the same food to ensure that it is a quality one. We have CCTV installed in our premises but not within the workplace so as to not disturb the works of the employees since they might feel monitored. ICC board has been kept in the mill premises.

(Mill HR manager)

5.10 Migration

There was a lot of discussion in the interviews about migration. Migrants are much more vulnerable to poor pay and conditions and to becoming bonded:

For the immigrant labourers for men it is 150-200 for an hour which is less than the natives people.

(NGO 1-NGO-PM-03)

They get rice for 2 rupees and eat. The food is very horrible.

(NGO 4-NGO-FC-15)

Safety is a problem because of language.

(NGO 1-NGO-FC-02)

Migrant data is being taken now we see the in migrants now no intervention without no data is collected for the people who come from other states like Bihar and Orissa and they are not staying in the mill hostel they are not working we work for 40 days in one particular mill and then they work in another mill so we are not able to establish the exact number of migrants in the mill.

(NGO 3-NGO-PM-16)

The role of the middlemen is crucial in this:

The migrants do not have a proper housing where they live in small households with asbestos sheets and they are also suffering with middlemen problems were Rs. 100 has been cheated by the middlemen from Rs. 200 to Rs 300 of their earnings. The natives function as the middlemen and cheat the migrants for money. Because the migrants have a rotational workplace hence tracking their personal information for their performance is difficult.

(NGO 2-NGO-DIR-04)

What emerges from the interviews is that a decrease in bonded labour in local villages may be accompanied by an increase in bonded labour of migrants, which is harder to trace: Migrants get the advance and work, native villagers do not get the advance and work,' (NGO 6-NGO-PM-10). This should be considered an urgent priority for the next phase. There is a limit to the effectiveness of the programme if local workers are simply being replaced with migrant workers who face the same or worse conditions.

5.11 Policy, advocacy and liaison with government departments

Success in developing change within government seems to have been more limited. All NGOs mentioned that they had regular meetings with government officials and call them for their meetings with the villagers. Government representatives are called on for awareness creation. Generally, however, this is not perhaps the strongest area of local NGOs' work. One NGO said that 'approaching government officials was tough'. Another said they had 'a good relationship with government officials'. There seem to be strong links with district welfare committees across the board. Other partner NGOs are working with the Arunodayam Trust and district-level labour department in monitoring the mill-related environment.

Some NGOs carried out a lot of advocacy with the district social welfare officer to get entry into mills to form mill worker groups and legally mandated committees. Based on this, the welfare officer issued official letters to the NGOs to enter the mill for formation and training of ICCs in the mills.

Additionally, the NGOs have good links with the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA). The DLSA takes up issues on pro bono basis and the NGOs use their services and link them with the communities. The NGOs also bring DLSA lawyers and advocates as experts during awareness sessions that they organise for police and government officials at block and district levels. Two NGO representatives mentioned that they had received legal training and are working with International Justice Mission on children's rights issues.

The NGOs have been closely involved with the development of the Tamil Nadu Alliance, a network of organisations in the state, to fight trafficking and bonded labour. They also facilitated a migrant workers' resource centre and helpline at state and district levels through the Tamil Nadu Alliance. The NGOs have created linkages with the National Skill Development Corporation and organised youth skill training in collaboration with district-level government skill development programme units, providing young people with different types of training such as mobile repair, jewel polishing, etc.

Another area where the NGOs were able to capitalise on their engagement with the different child protection units at the district and block levels was on activating village-level child protection committees. These committees are mandated under the Indian Child Protection Scheme. These committees have the potential to create sustainability in this work by embedding a statutory body for child protection in villages, but reported evidence has suggested that most of these only really exist on paper.

5.12 Alcohol

Alcohol is considered by many in the communities to be a major problem that directly contributes to bonded labour. At least 16 interviewees out of 60 spoke about alcoholism. Of them, at least three mentioned their personal experiences of challenges. Women in communities argue that it contributes to loans and also results in men working less, which means that women have to work in the mills, as illustrated by this story:

When I was married and when children were born we were in financial crisis and have two girl and my husband was addicted to alcohol and there was loan problem and so I went for the mill work. I worked in Arumugam mill for 2 years. Then NGO came and

was giving awareness for the mill work, I wanted my husband to stop the alcoholic problem and so I went and got money and sent my husband to abroad – Dubai for a year. Now my husband is working in a private company and I work in the mill.
(NGO 3-COM-CSG-52)

In response to the alcohol problem, some women have taken direct action, both in the CSGs and through the ARGs. This has in some instances led to the closure of shops selling alcohol: 'There was a village where alcohol was sold and the CSG group went to that village and stopped the problem by closing the shop,' (NGO 2-NGO-FC-05). It is unclear if the shops opened up elsewhere.

Dealing with this issue through collective action has been effective, but has its dangers. For example, blaming men for not working as a result of alcohol could be getting the problem back to front: some men may be drinking because their labour has been replaced by cheaper women workers and they no longer see a role for themselves in society. NGOs can support more nuanced, evidence-based interventions around what is a very emotive issue. Nevertheless, dealing with alcoholism is one strategy that will help to make the others more sustainable.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Awareness raising

Groups have provided a space within which awareness of bonded labour, child labour and child marriage can be built, as well as the confidence to take action against them. The groups also provide the foundation for collective action, which is necessary in order to create pressure for change. While at times communities are unsure which group is which, broadly speaking the creation of a variety of groups for different purposes and constituencies has worked. It is important that girls, for example, have a space of their own within which to build confidence. Groups are the engine that has enabled awareness to be transformed into action. Similarly, SHGs, which focus on loans, ARGs, which have generated innovative solutions, and WGs, which have been able to generate changes within the mills, have all contributed to a tapestry of collective organisation.

6.2 Group formation

Communities would not engage with and own these groups if they did not think they were pertinent to their concerns. In short, the group-building strategy demonstrates considerable *relevance*. Reported evidence shows that action has been taken on conditions and wages in the mills; alcohol; spending and savings within households and villages; health-seeking behaviour; preventing school dropouts, etc. The strategy of implementation through groups has been *effective*. There is also reported evidence that around half of the groups are operating independently and act without the direct support of the NGOs, which is a strong sign of *sustainability*.

The reported reflection on the ARGs also indicates how NGOs are going beyond the initial very local use of Action Research and potentially adopting the method in a bigger way (e.g. in 40 project villages). This complements what we know from the action-research process reports, which indicated how household income assessments, which led to multiple changes in villages – ranging from action to reduce alcohol intake; renegotiation of money donated to the temple and for festivals; a complete village-level reappraisal of marriage expenses; and action to prevent moneylenders ensnaring the most vulnerable with high-interest loans – spread first from one to eight villages and are now a strategy being considered for much wider adoption by NGOs.

While community members are clearly much more confident and able to speak within the groups, it is evident that power still plays a major part when it comes to voices being heard in formal structures. There is some reported evidence that panchayats in their own right are discussing the issues more, but this discussion is not necessarily rooted in the communities' experience. We are not convinced that the NGOs have developed an effective strategy for connecting panchayat leaders and members with communities or dealing with underlying power issues, and as a result this part of their work has not been as effective as it could have been. This is important because the long-term sustainability of this work will depend on democratising formal local structures.

6.3 Women's agency

There is a noticeable trend within the data towards greater engagement and agency of women within these local communities. This is reflected in their expressed levels of confidence; their ability to make decisions about household spending; their engagement in local groups; and increasing attention on their own and their families' health. Some were more substantively empowered through livelihood initiatives that changed their economic status and gave them greater autonomy.

The respondents also confirm the findings that the prevalence of child marriage is decreasing,⁸ the wage gap is narrowing, and girls are increasingly likely to get the same educational opportunities as boys. There remain some taboos in some communities. We have seen that girls – many with mental health issues – returning from bondage are often 'married off'; women are not able to be heard in formal panchayat meetings; menstrual issues still need to be addressed; and sexual harassment, although reduced, remains a problem. The wider questions of the balance of women's work in the household may be largely unaddressed. So, we see a mixed picture here, although significant progress has been made.

6.4 Caste

There is strong reported evidence that a great deal of the more superficial manifestations of casteism have significantly diminished or disappeared. The deeper ones and those in private rather than public areas, such as resistance to inter-caste marriage, are still very much alive. Similarly, it is clear that the lowest castes remain the ones most likely to be trapped in bondage. NGOs are clearly sending positive messages that speak to caste equality, but the interviews suggest that there is no specific strategy relating to caste.

Interventions might therefore be considered ineffective in this regard, although some progress has been made. It is our view that long-term sustainable change for the hardest-to-reach bonded labourers will require substantive shifts in casteism. By organising primarily Dalit groups to access their socioeconomic and educational rights in an equal way to others, a foundation is being laid, but more specific strategy is needed.

6.5 Livelihoods

Both preventative and remedial livelihood support is reported by respondents. A number of respondents identify cases of people who have transformed their lives economically through this support. The training seems to be targeted towards livelihoods that can actually generate an income in the local market context. While important as a contribution to countering bondage, the numbers involved here cannot account for the significant drops in prevalence.

⁸ The numbers were already low at baseline and are still decreasing (Oosterhoff *et al.* 2019).

What is not clear from the interviews is the ratio of training given to successful livelihood opportunities, or whether they are reaching the most vulnerable people.

Generally, the training appears to be delivered efficiently and a number of cases of how it has led to an alternative to bondage have been reported. Ultimately, a combination of replacing mill jobs with other jobs and improving working conditions in the mills – the latter is not unconnected to the former – is what will make the strategy sustainable, although as we shall see below, this raises the question of whether the workforce will just be replaced by migrant labour from the north.

6.6 Education

Education contributes to building awareness about the negative impacts of bonded and child labour, as well as of early marriage and early parenthood in life. Additionally, it also gives communities – parents as well as children – the option of an alternative livelihood for the next generation and provides them with a way to fulfil their aspirations. While it is too early to see whether any have actually been able to achieve their ambitions, education is seen as holding out new possibilities and a better future. Throughout the interviews, there were examples of girls who had dropped out or had been on the threshold of marriage starting their education and continuing it. Supporting students with scholarships and extra classes has been seen to contribute to these changes.

6.7 Alcohol

The alcohol problem is widely reported and its relationship to bonded labour is well understood by communities. The ARGs have modelled good responses to this problem, which could be extended to other communities. All NGOs have contributed to alcohol awareness. It is significant that people have spoken about alcoholism, even if they did not mention personal experience of alcoholism.

6.8 Middlemen and brokers

It is encouraging to see action being taken against exploitative middlemen. There is often a great deal of fear of their connections and resultant reprisals. We would expect that with a number of villages reporting successful action on this front, confidence is likely to increase and other villages may well take action. These seem to be promising first steps. Work on middlemen is relevant because they are the ones who usually draw people into bondage through promises of advances.

The relevance is evidenced from a community perspective because community members are taking action. The most important learning from this is that in order to be effective, local people have to be collectively organised. Middlemen and brokers cannot usually be successfully challenged individually. With support from the NGOs, which could help to spread success stories, we think this has a chance of sustainable growth in the same way as happened with the household expenses process.

6.9 Engagement with the mills

This is another example of promising early success. NGOs that we talked to in the initial scoping discussions were not even sure that they would get access to mills. The fact that a growing number now have ICCs and a dialogue with mill owners on conditions and wages demonstrates the persistence of the NGOs and, again, the power of collective organisation. This work needs to be consolidated, developed and expanded. Work could be extended to other villages where mills that are already engaged in dialogue are operating. It will be necessary to ensure that the work done in the mills also benefits those staying in hostels, especially migrant workers who are not Tamil speakers

One very specific issue that needs further attention relates to transport: 'The mill management target the villagers where there are no bus facilities and send buses for the mill workers,' (NGO 2-NGO-FC-06). This issue also emerged in the scoping and narrative phases of the research. There are few options for workers who live in communities whose only potential transport to work is the bus from the mill.

6.10 New migrant workers

The influx of migrant workers from outside Tamil Nadu into the mills is an increasingly problematic area that NGOs are aware of but have not yet got to grips with. There is a real danger that, as fewer local villagers go to the mills and conditions improve for those who do, the worst work will go to migrants from Orissa, Bihar and other states. Middlemen have developed new strategies to move migrant workers about in ways that make them difficult to trace. Movement also makes it very hard for migrant workers to collectivise and organise.

The extent of the issue needs to be researched and priority should be given to this issue in any next phase of work. One might argue that the good work of the NGOs to date and its sustainability could be undermined if local workers are simply replaced by even more exploited workers. Some policy work is being done to support the setting up of government migrant centres and to push for the registration of migrant workers. But this work is inevitably less direct and therefore slower to have an impact than direct community interventions.

6.11 Policy initiatives

There are good examples of policy initiatives. Strategies for liaising with government officials were not extensively reported in these interviews. The NGOs have been able to strengthen existing government mechanisms, such as the village-level child protection committees, and also facilitate greater engagement with mechanisms such as the DLSA. Often, these institutions are ignored because communities are not aware that there are such authorities who are vested with the power to support them. Our view is that the sustainability of change in this arena depends on pressure from the ground up and the modelling of new norms that over time government officials feel obliged to adopt.

A major postcard campaign focused on the anti-trafficking bill was reported as being successful. As part of this, 97,000 handwritten letters were sent to the prime minister and around 30,000 letters were sent to Rajya Sabha parliamentarians. A signature campaign that generated 6,000 signatures of support were sent to actor and politician Kamal Hassan. These letters expressed support for the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation) Bill 2016 in parliament and demanded that it be passed. There are also examples of raids on mills, which have been supported by government officials.

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Annexe 1: Initial and final terms of reference

Proposal to C&A and the Freedom Fund for Phase 2 of the Participatory Research, planning and evaluation process in the Tamil Nadu Hotspot

Applicant Institution:

Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

At the University of Sussex,

Brighton, BN1 9RE

Background

The work carried out by IDS sits within a family of projects funded by the Freedom Fund and their partners in the bonded labour hotspots. The focus of this particular project is bonded labour and child labour arising from work in the spinning mills in Tamil Nadu. While the work in the North India and Nepal hotspots were funded for three years, the Tamil Nadu hotspot was funded for 18 months with a view to funding a second phase. This proposal relates to phase 2.

Summary of Activities Carried Out To Date

A detailed account of the work carried out to date as well as key findings can be found in the mid-term report. For the purposes of this document progress with activities can be summarized as follows:

The life story collection process, collective analysis of stories including system map, and report on this analysis are complete.

The first-round prevalence and participatory statistics study, including validation has been completed, analyzed and reported on.

Across all projects we identified a need for a greater resource than previously anticipated on the prevalence study. Consequently, in North India Freedom Fund provided an additional resource. In South India, we agreed to redistribute some of the funds allocated for action research as this would start later with a view to building these days back into the phase two work. As a result, this proposal includes these costs.

Next phase of work

The next phase of work will include outstanding Action Research, the follow up participatory statistics baseline and an evaluation of the hotspot model. Ethical approval will be obtained from IDS' Ethical Review Board before the start of the work of the activities in the work streams:

Work stream 1: Action Research (continued)

Objectives: Trial a participatory approach for diagnosing and addressing underlying causes of bonded labour in the community. Document the actions taken and lessons learnt for sharing with other peer NGOs.

Key research questions to be answered for each priority topic identified & shortlisted in prior phase:

- What was the key learning from the group – including background to the problem; theory of change; summary of local data collected
- What actions were devised by the groups, and why?
- Of the actions devised, which of them were subsequently implemented – by whom and where? Which actions were the easiest and most difficult to implement?
- Of the actions that were implemented, what were the effects?
- Reflecting on the actions that were taken, what are the recommendations for future efforts?

With guidance from IDS/Praxis, each partner will select one to two issues around which they will set up locally based action research groups bringing together diverse perspectives on addressing the specific problem. The main focal issues for action research were identified through the life story research. After mapping of causal relationships and the existing hotspot interventions, NGOs and mill worker participants identified around eight key issues where enhanced strategies are needed e.g. tackling the need for very large loans; alcohol; and school dropout. The action research groups (being started in January 2017) will consider and try out different approaches, usually on a small scale, to identify promising ways forward, at the same time documenting their reasons for actions and what results are gained.

Local groups need to develop their own solutions that are realistic from their perspectives and that address power imbalances within their immediate environment. Strengthening of community facilitation skills among the partners will help local groups to develop solutions.

Following our learning from North India, IDS will support the different necessary stages of one enquiry stream process per NGO. If during this enquiry stream or after completion of the first enquiry an NGO wants to start another one they should be free to do so. If they are able to do a second round by themselves before September 2019 and write it up –perhaps with the help of NGO staff.

This process will start from April 2017 till September 2018. The activities are:

- One joint visit by IDS and Praxis to support the 6 NGOs with minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12 AR groups as part of the action research process.⁹
- Feedback/capacitation visits to be made by Praxis facilitator to all the NGOs / AR Groups during five different stages of the action research.
- Review meeting will be held led by Geneva Global during 2017 and 2018 to bring the AR group facilitators (NGO & Community) and review the progress made so far and provide learning for the annual NGO programming.
- Review workshop will be held in India to discuss findings and implications with NGO partners

Proposed schedule of deliverables:

⁹ It will require a minimum of 4-6 visits by Praxis during the process, spread out over the engagement phase, the development of theory of change and tools, data collection/action and a joint analysis for the final report of the inquiry stream by Praxis together with the action research group.

Memo summarizing the launch of the Action Research, including the topics chosen, participating NGOs and proposed timeline of action research phases	July 2017
Regular updates (preferably via call) with the Freedom Fund to highlight progress of AR groups during the 5 different stages, including actions taken in the community and lessons learnt thus far.	Every four months
During the regular meetings of NGO that are held by GG NGO partners will share the results of the enquiry streams offering an opportunity for amendments and feedback from other NGO.	As advised by Geneva Global
Review workshop to discuss findings and implications with NGO partners	May 2018
Presentation of preliminary findings on the five key research questions to C&A Foundation and the Freedom Fund.	July 2018
Workshop/ Synthesis report (4-6 Pages) shared with the C&A Foundation and the Freedom Fund.	September 2018

Work stream 2: Follow-up prevalence study using participatory statistics

Objective: Measure the change in prevalence of bonded labour across the southern India hotspot and identify socio-economic factors that make households more susceptible or resilient to bonded labour.

Key research questions:

- What is the prevalence of bonded labour across the southern India hotspot? How does this vary between districts and NGO partners?
- What has been the change in prevalence between baseline and endline? In which locations / with which partners have there been the greatest change?
- Has the nature and forms of bonded labor changed over the project period?
- Have there been modifications in the areas of most significant change identified by people living and working in context of bonded labor?
- What are the future implications for programs that aim to eradicate bonded labour?

We will repeat the baseline study that was conducted with the same design. The design has sufficient statistical power and confidence interval to detect <5 percent changes in prevalence across the hotspot. We will also do a validation as part of this repeat study for quality control as was done in the first study. There will be a feedback session-organized by GG and FF- for the NGO partners to discuss the results and a session with FF and C&A

This process will be between December 2017 and May 2019. The activities are;

- Preparatory work (Methods, Tools, and Translation, obtaining ethical approval etc.)
- Orientation to NGO / Training of Researchers
- Data collection, and spot check visit (11 NGOs)
- Data entry and quality check
- Preliminary data analysis
- Joint analysis and feedback from NGO and FF and C&A
- Draft reporting

Proposed schedule of deliverables:

Research design (including sampling protocol and field instruments) for a repeat study finalized, incorporating feedback from the Freedom Fund.	December 2017/January 2018
Note confirming completion of field work, with data gathered on at least 2,900 households between August-December 2018.	December 2018/January 2019
Data cleaning and data analysis.	January/February 2019
Presentation of preliminary findings to the key research questions, for NGO partners.	February/ March 2019
Presentation of preliminary findings to the key research questions, for C&A Foundation and the Freedom Fund.	February/March 2019
Draft technical report shared with C&A Foundation and the Freedom Fund. ¹⁰	April 2019
Final technical report and summary report (2 – 4 pages) for sharing with external stakeholders.	May 2019
Supplementary files shared with the Freedom Fund, including: Cleaned, anonymised data files Final version of survey instruments, in English and Tamil. Final version of field guide for data collectors.	May 2019

Work stream 3: Overall evaluation of the southern India hotspot as a whole

Objective: Provide an overall, independent assessment of the southern India hotspot, particularly in regards to the relevance, effectiveness & efficiency of the hotspot model in reducing bonded labour in the area, and the sustainability of the hotspot model.

Key evaluation questions

Relevance

- Are the design and activities of the hotspot reflect the current needs and priorities of the community members and local government? Are they relevant to the objectives of the hotspot?
- What are the views of relevant stakeholders (primarily program participants, with selected inputs from community leaders, government representatives & private sector employers) towards the program? For example, do they consider it an opportunity, a threat, or are they indifferent?

¹⁰ For one round of joint review and comments.

Effectiveness

- To what extent has the program achieved its aim of reducing bonded labour in the target communities? Do the effects of the program vary between different groups? (note: this will mostly be answered from the prevalence study findings)
- Based on the qualitative feedback from the community and NGOs: (i) how has the program contributed towards the measured change, and (ii) what are the observable links between program activities, and wider changes in socio-economic wellbeing, community attitudes and actions, government policies and workplace practices?

Efficiency

- Based on the type of program activities which seem to be most impactful within the program duration, to what extent do these align with the way the Freedom Fund is financing the NGO partner's time and resources?

Sustainability

- To what extent has the program influenced the approach, organizational capability and quality of activities (including monitoring and evaluation) of the NGO partners
- What have the NGO partners undertaken together that they might not have done outside of the hotspot model, especially in terms of systems change?
- What is the key knowledge and skills that NGO's have learned from program interventions and can they give examples of how this can be applied elsewhere?
- What can the community members and adolescents now do for themselves?

Note: These evaluation questions will be reviewed before the final evaluation is undertaken.

Activities

The IDS team will use three main sources of information to triangulate and formulate insights relating to the key research questions. This process of the different activities listed below will be between April-July 2019. The information sources are:

- Desk-review; pertinent programme documents from NGO, Geneva Global and Freedom Fund reports and materials.
- Qualitative feedback from community participants and NGO partners. This would roughly include:
- 60 interviews with program participants/survivors (from 6 NGO partners, all randomly selected).
 - 20 interviews with NGO, Geneva Global & Freedom Fund staff.(Feedback on the hotspot model)
 - 20 key informant interviews, with individuals who are not program participants but possess firsthand knowledge or expertise on bonded labour in the community, for example government representatives & private sector employers

These semi-structured interviews in India will be conducted by Praxis staff in Tamil, and respondents' anonymity will be emphasised to ensure we solicit candid feedback, as much as possible. IDS conducts the international interviews in English.

Feedback from 60 participants/survivors

This work will involve qualitative interviews with people (including survivors and members of Community Support Groups) who are or should be beneficiaries of Freedom Fund

programmes and will focus on their experience of engaging with the services provided by the NGO's the Freedom Fund.

Questions will relate to their prior circumstances (not intended to get them to tell all their story again, but so we have basic information on whether they were mill workers, whether they were at risk etc); What assistance they have had (including group-based benefits); whether they got training or other assistance to improve their economic well-being; whether they got improved income as a result and if so, how; open ended feedback about what participation in the program has meant to them - what's been valuable, what's been missing; how they see their participation in future. And so on.

We propose to take a sample of 10 people from each of 6 NGO areas = 60. These could be randomly sampled based on NGO listing of participants and/or the prevalence data in the first round (households that have reported bonded labour). We will discuss with FF what makes most sense at a later stage.

The activities are:

- Preparation of Instrument (IDS and Praxis team)
- Translation of tools and guide
- Collecting and translating interviews
- Analysis of 60 interviews by IDS team
- Incorporating comments and feedback
- Finalizing by IDS team

Interviews with program staff and key stakeholders

Interviews with NGO's Geneva Global and Freedom Fund staff.

- How has it made a difference for the NGOs to be part of a hotspot rather than just an individual grantee?
- In particular, what involvement in collective advocacy have they had, and can they identify ways that that has led to influence on government and any real changes?

It is proposed to carry out 2 interviews in 7 NGOs = 14 (Praxis) plus 3 interviews each with representatives from Geneva Global and the Freedom Fund (IDS) (total 20)

Interviews with stakeholders not directly related to the programme such as government officials; people working in the garment industry etc.

The aim is to get their insight into how the activities of the programme align with their analysis of the problem

The activities are:

- Preparation of interview schedule by IDS team and Praxis.
- Finalization and logistic
- Field process – 20 interviews.
- Document, Analyze and report on the hotspot model (IDS team)

Proposed schedule of deliverables:

Revisit the terms of reference and making adjustments as necessary	December 2018
Review of proposed list of target interviewees/focus groups presented by FF and Geneva Global by IDS.	December 2018 /January- 2019
Interview list and discussion guides finalized	December 2018 /January- 2019
Draft report shared with Freedom Fund and C&A Foundation.	Aug 2019
Presentation to Freedom Fund and C&A Foundation to discuss findings, implications and next steps.	Aug 2019
Final report and summary report (2 – 4 pages) for sharing with external stakeholders.	Sep 2019

The format of the final report will be written in English and be maximum of 75 pages (without annexes). It should include:

- Executive summary
- Background to the evaluation, including key research questions
- Description of the FF program in the hotspots
- Methodology
- including discussion of the nature and quality of the information used and limitations for each component
- Research/findings directly responding to the key research questions
- Analysis/Conclusions
- Lessons learned
- Practical, feasible and strategic
- At different levels: programme partners and beneficiaries and other stakeholders
- Recommendations
- Annexes:
- Initial and final terms of reference
- *Additional components will be described

Annexe 2: Links to core research reports

Participatory Statistics to Measure Prevalence in Bonded Labour Hotspots in Tamil Nadu: Findings of the Base and Endline Study

Published on 13 August 2019

<https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/participatory-statistics-to-measure-prevalence-in-bonded-labour-hotspots-in-tamil-nadu-findings-of-the-base-and-endline-studyh/>

Patterns and Dynamics of Bonded Labour and Child Labour in the Spinning Mills of Tamil Nadu: Findings From Life Story Analysis

Published on 1 September 2016

<https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/patterns-and-dynamics-of-bonded-labour-and-child-labour-in-the-spinning-mills-of-tamil-nadu-findings-from-life-story-analysis/>

Annexe 3: 300418/Interview questions S India/ Community participants

Categories of community participant – interviewees will be drawn from the following groups:

- NGO supported groups
- People who have been assisted with micro enterprises and /or access to vocational training or group based income generation
- People who have had legal help (we are focusing on cases with prosecutions)
- People who have received information only (further de-segregate by either is a member of an NGO supported group)
- People who have had rehabilitation and reintegration support or parents whose children were reintegrated
- Girls and boys groups

Ideally a good mix of people from each of the above groups will be interviewed in each village. NGOS will provide lists of people representing all of the above groups (including 15-18 year olds).

Interview Guidance

Interviews will take place across one / two or three hamlets per NGO

Six NGOS will be selected in South India

30 interviews will be conducted in total (5 in each location)

Interviewees are expected to be individuals who are either actively participating in Freedom Fund programmes (e.g., survivors and members of Community Support Groups).

Interviews with program participants will be approximately 60 minutes in length and will follow the below prepared structure

Instructions for interviewing

Try to interview in a private space where no other individuals can interrupted or overhear.

Please make sure that no NGO reps are present when you are interviewing community members

At the beginning of the interview you will need to introduce yourself and explain what this study is for

You should let people know that they do not have to be interviewed, and that they will not be able to be identified from their answers or from any data that we publish

Then the person nominated for the interview should give his/her prior informed consent for the interview (and also take consent for audio recording)

You should collect their personal details. Each interview should have a code number, which is both on the interview transcript and on a separate sheet that holds their personal details. Personal details should be kept in secure storage and should not be stored in the same place as the interviews. These details should include: Name, village, caste, if they are in a group and if so which group they are part of, mobile phone – if they have one etc.

We will also want to know whether they, as an individual, are bonded or not - or if anyone in their family is bonded. This direct question is scheduled for later in the interview (question 10). Disclosure of their personal status may come before reaching question 10 but if they seem uncomfortable disclosing it early on the questions have been designed to be broad and community focused until question 10.

In addition to writing what the person says you should also record any important observations such as '*she seemed uncomfortable when talking about the landlord*'

Try to ask the questions in as open a way as possible and to record as much as possible. We advise where possible for audio recordings to be made as back up, but not as the primary source of data as they tend to go wrong. The focus of the interviews should be trying to understand if and how the NGOS or CVCs have made progress towards reducing or ending bonded labour. Prevalence facts will be captured through other mechanisms e.g. participatory statistics data collation.

For each question ask people how things have changed in the last 3 - 4 years

Try to get people to give examples and to indicate what the evidence is that they are drawing on in their answers

Pre-Interview Information (After Obtaining Consent From Interviewee)

Village/location ID:

NGO ID:

Interviewer ID:

Interviewee ID:

Date of interview:

Start time of interview:

QUESTIONS

Personal details: Tell us your name, age, caste, sex. Have you been participating in some of [insert NGO name / prompt if they don't know the name of the local relevant NGO/s]'s activities?

Note to interviewer: Ideally castes cited will match census castes

1. Thinking about the situation of [bonded labour and child labour and trafficking] can you tell us about a few significant changes that have happened in your community over the last 3 years?

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Thinking about the activities and efforts to improve things in your community that the group and /or the NGO have been involved in here, what are some of the ones (if any) that you feel have made the most difference – for you and your family?
- For others in the community?

- If you could select three NGO interventions that had the most significant impact on you and your family / community-which would these be?
- Do you feel you have more information and knowledge than you had 3 years ago, that is helping you and your family?
- Can you give any examples of the kinds of information you have gained?
- What new information, knowledge do you have (Compared to before) in relation to: Local health services? Legal frameworks and rights? How to secure land rights? Take action against coercion from landlords? Identifying bonded labour in your community? (What are the signs, what would you advise them and why?) Identify when trafficking might be happening?
- What new skills do you now have? What can you do now that you could not do before? Has this helped improve your family's income?
- In the past three years, have you gained access to new government services or entitlements? Which of those have been most helpful to your family?
- Have you been involved directly in working for a particular improvement or to protect others – can you tell us about it?

Note to interviewer – this is about teasing out how the NGO activities have helped people to avoid or escape bonded labour – i.e. becoming less dependent on loans from the landlord etc.

2. Thinking about the activities and services that are offered by [insert NGO name], what group/s have you been involved with? What have the groups been doing? What has the group helped you with?

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- If respondent is unable to answer what groups they've been involved with, prompt with examples:

3. Why do you keep going to the group/s? Has it been worth the time and effort that you have put in?

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Have the groups helped you or/and other people to become involved in other local committees/ decision-making groups

4. Have children been helped with their education? How? Tell us about your children or other local children you know. Do you think [NGO name] has played a role in this?

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Why do you send your children to school?
- Are the opportunities for education girls different to the opportunities for boys?
- Children who are still not in school – why are they not in school?
- What do you think your child would be able to do with an education that they would not have been able to do without it? (Note to interviewers: If they say 'a job' ask what kind of job – and do those jobs exist locally? Has the community group or NGO tried to improve the quality of the village school?)

- 5. Compared to three years ago, do you think there is now more, less, or maybe a different kind of caste discrimination? Could you give some examples? Do you think the NGO has played a role in this – if so- How? If not, why?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Tell us about it. Are people more ready to challenge abusive caste behaviour?
- 6. Compared to three years ago, are women and girls now treated differently in the community? Could you give some examples? Do you think [insert NGO name] has played a role in this - if so, how?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Can you give examples of things that women and girls can do and achieve which they could not do three years ago?
- Have NGO and group activities helped women and girls to have more say in the community?
- How?

- 7. How has your access to essential services changed over the last few years? Can you give some examples? Who has helped you to get these services?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Which services are you now accessing to support yourself / support your family which you did not access before?
- Do you know who provides these services (government or NGO) how did you find out about them? Who helped you?
- What is the quality of the services?

- 8. For families in your community that are in bonded labour / child labour / have been trafficked what else should be done to a) help improve their situation b) help get out of bondage? Can you give some examples of activities that the [insert NGO name] could have done but didn't, or could have done better? How did [insert NGO name] involve you in deciding on what activities to carry out?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- What do you think the programme should have done differently?
- Referring to NGO staff - are they helpful?
- Are they trustworthy (do they do what they say they will do)?
- Are they friendly?
- Are they on time?

Note to interviewer - Please record a separate response for each of the above.

Further explore and prompt suggestions:

- Do the NGO staff help you communicate together about the activities that might be useful and beneficial?
 - Do they communicate the purpose and benefits of activities clearly to you?
 - Do they help you follow up after meetings, or after providing advice or support?
- 9. Compared to 3 or 4 years ago are community members more or less willing to talk about bonded labour / Child labour / trafficking? Do you think community**

members are more or less able to protect each other from bonded labour / Child labour / trafficking

Explore and prompt suggestions

- Do you think local politicians are more, or less, willing to discuss the problem?
- 10. In the last three to four years, has anyone in your family or community been in bonded labour / Child labour / trafficking? What sort of work were they doing? Has their situation changed, are they still in bonded labour / Child labour / trafficking.**

Note to interviewer: Do not ask for identifying or sensitive details about the person in bonded labour.

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- What types of problems did this person face? (eg, tricked into a low wage, forced to work excessive hours, tricked into a large debt, physical or sexual abuse)
- 11. Has anyone in your family or community been able to leave a situation of forced labour in the last 3 to 4 years? Are they still free?**

Note to interviewer – people may need prompts about what being ‘free’ means – e.g escaping a situation of enforced labour

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Do you know of people who were brought back to the village after being taken away to work? When did they leave / come back to the village?
- How did they leave bonded labour / Child labour / trafficking? Who or what helped them? Are they still out of bonded labour / Child labour / trafficking or did they have to go back? Are they still in the village? Are they accepted back into the community?
- What kind of problems you think people who return to the village face – including emotional problems?
- Are you aware of any support specifically around trauma and depression being made available to these people? Are you aware of any support specifically around stigma being made available to these people?

PLEASE ALSO NOTE

- End time of interview
- Was the entire interview conducted in a private space?
- What was the interviewee’s mood during the interview? Did they seem relaxed / anxious?
- Was the interview disrupted in any way? Was anyone else present during part of the interview?
- During the interview, did the respondent:
- Mention experiencing serious abuse (physical, sexual, verbal, psychological)?
- Request help from the interviewer relating to their safety or potential abuse?

(IF yes to either of the above, the case should be recorded and referred as per ethical protocol which interviewer will have a copy of and will be familiar with).

- Anything else worth noting?

Annexe 4: 300418/Questions for NGOs/S India

Categories of participant

Interviewees will be drawn from the following groups:

NGOs (individuals from across the NGOs involved in the study) Ideally, a mixture of senior staff member and field level staff will be interviewed

Instructions for interviewing

- At the beginning of the interview you will need to introduce yourself and explain what this study is for
- You should let people know that they do not have to be interviewed, and that they will not be able to be identified from their answers or from any data that we publish
- Then the person nominated for the interview should give his/her prior informed consent for the interview (and also take consent for audio recording)
- Try to interview in a private space where no other individuals can interrupt or overhear
- You should collect their personal details i.e. name, sex, employer, job role (what they do and what their personal position is). Each interview should have a code number, which is both on the interview transcript and on a separate sheet, which holds their personal details. Personal details should be kept in secure storage and should not be stored in the same place as the interviews.
- In addition to recording what the person says you should also record any important observations such as *'the participant seemed uncomfortable when discussing x'*
- Try to ask the questions in as open a way as possible and to record as much as possible. We advise where possible for audio recordings to be made as back up, but not as the primary source of data as they tend to go wrong. The focus of the interviews should be trying to understand if and how the NGOs or CVCs have made towards reducing or ending bonded labour. Prevalence facts will be captured through other mechanisms e.g. participatory statistics data collation.
- For each question ask people how things have changed in the last 3-5 years

Pre-Interview Information (After Obtaining Consent From Interviewee)

Village/location ID:

NGO ID:

Interviewer ID:

Interviewee ID:

Date of interview:

Start time of interview:

Questions

1. **Over the last three years, what do you think are the most significant impacts on bonded labour/ child labour / trafficking in the communities that you work in?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- How has your NGO contributed to this change, can you give us some examples?
- If you could select three NGO interventions that had the most significant impact on the communities you work in -which would these be?
- What have you personally learned in the last 3 years that is helping the NGO to work more effectively?
- What do you think the NGO learnings have been (staff team/ management)?
- What data have you collected in order to verify your most significant impacts?

Note to interviewer – this is about teasing out how the NGO activities have helped people to avoid or escape bonded labour – i.e. becoming less dependent on loans from the landlord etc.

2. What community group/s have you helped to set up? How effectively do you think the groups are functioning? Do you feel that the leadership and responsibility for the older groups falls to you or have community members started to take on responsibilities?

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Can you give some examples?
 - Do you normally facilitate the meetings or do Community members facilitate the meetings?
- 3. Why do you think community members come to these groups and what makes them keep coming to the group/s? When they drop out why do they drop out?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Do you have any examples of how people involved in these groups have taken action or leaderships roles because of the skills and /or confidence they have gained?
- 4. Thinking about the members in the community group that you support, have they become more able to seek help or take action independently? Can you tell us which are the areas they are able to take care of on their own and in which areas they are dependent upon you partially/completely?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- For example do you go to get entitlements and issues sorted on behalf of community members, or do they come with you, or do they now go on their own in some cases?
- 5. Is there any evidence that children from bonded labour families are able to maintain their attendance in schools? If they are not attending schools regularly, what are the reasons? E.g., are the financial pressures too strong / are they quickly forced back to work?**
- 6. Compared to three years ago, do you think there is now more, less, or maybe a different kind of caste discrimination? Could you give some examples? What specific things have the NGO done to help with this – if so- How?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- What other forms of caste discrimination still exist? How do you think your NGO could help address these?
7. **Have any community actions / NGO actions been delivered that have led to improved conditions in the mills or clothing factories? Or not? Can you give examples?**
 8. **Do you think bonded labour/child labour/ trafficking affects women and men differently? If so, how? Have you / the NGO taken any specific action to enable women and girls to avoid or leave these situations? What actions have been taken and Can you give examples of these actions and their impact?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Can you give examples of things that bonded women and girls can do and achieve which they could not do three years ago?
9. **Compared to three years ago, what do you think is the one public service that is most important for reducing bonded labour / child labour/ trafficking in your community? What has your NGO done to widen people's access to, or improve the quality of this important public service? Could you give some examples?**
 10. **Despite the work of the NGOs, bonded labour/ child labour/ trafficking still exist in this region. What else could be done to improve the situation of these families? Are there other activities that your NGO could be doing, but isn't currently, to tackle the issues?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- What do you think you could do differently (as an NGO)? What should the hotspot programme should have done differently? How does the NGO and programme need to adapt in the future?
11. **Compared to 3 or 4 years ago are community members more or less willing to talk about bonded labour / child labour / trafficking? Who do they talk to, could you give some examples?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Do you think local politicians are more or less willing to discuss the problem?
12. **Thinking about people who have exited from bonded labour / child labour / trafficking, do you think they are typically accepted back into the community and are able to stay out of bondage? Why do you think this is or is not the case?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- What specific type of bonded labour were they in? (Going to the city with the middleman, trafficked overseas, mills, sex work etc) When did they leave / come back to the village?
 - How did they leave bonded labour - Who or what helped them?
 - Are they still out of bonded labour or did they have to go back? As a result of lack alternative employment (for example) Are they still in the village?
 - Are they accepted back into the community? What kind of problems you think people who return to the village face – including emotional problems?
13. **Can you give any examples of the ways in which your activities as an NGO influence higher-level decision making and implementation (at district, state or**

national levels) on bonded labour / child labour / trafficking? Can you give examples of what you have done in partnership with other NGOs funded by the Freedom Fund (within the Human Liberty Network)? Has it brought any changes?

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Do you think the Human Liberty Network is an effective way to influence policy, why or why not? What are ways to make this network more influential?
- Are there activities performed by the Human Liberty Network that you don't find useful, why?

14. What do you know now about what does and does not work in relation to advocacy with local and regional /national policy makers and media – that you did not know 3 or 4 years ago?

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- What messages do you think they are most likely to engage with and what kind of policy response do you think they might display? (E.g. budgetary response, legislation change, enforcement etc.)

15. Thinking about the hotspot model, which brings NGOs together to tackle bonded labour / child labour / trafficking, What are the biggest benefits of working in this hotspot model, could you give some examples? What are the drawbacks of working in this hotspot model, could you give some examples? Have you worked with any of the specialist organisations supported by the hotspot (e.g. on livelihoods, legal work or use of community maturity tool) – and if yes, was it helpful in building your organisation's skills?

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Before the hotspot, how did NGOs share knowledge and advice to inform each other's work? How has this changed since being part of the hotspot?
- How has being part of the hotspot has shaped what your organisation is doing to address bonded labour, could you give some examples?

16. Can you provide any examples of how local institutions have been strengthened to provide support / services at a future point when FF funding might end?

PLEASE ALSO NOTE

- End time of interview
- Was the entire interview conducted in a private space?
- What was the interviewee's mood during the interview? Did they seem relaxed / anxious?
- Was the interview disrupted in any way? Was anyone else present during part of the interview?
- Anything else worth noting?

Annexe 5: 300418/Questions for others/S India

Categories of participant – interviewees will be drawn from the following groups:

10 interviewees in total will be drawn from the following groups:

- District level officials such as Labour officials, CWC, DCPU, senior police
- Local teachers
- Local health workers
- Local government members
- Representatives from civil society groups/policy advisors working on similar issues
- Other technical experts who have occasionally been paid by FF to provide advice/training to our hotspot NGO partners
- National / regional government officials

Instructions for interviewing

- At the beginning of the interview you will need to introduce yourself and explain what this study is for
- You should let people know that they do not have to be interviewed, and that they will not be able to be identified from their answers or from any data that we publish
- Then the person nominated for the interview should give his/her prior informed consent for the interview (and also take consent for audio recording)
- Try to interview in a private space where no other individuals can interrupt or overhear
- You should collect their personal details i.e. name, sex, employer, job role (what they do and what their personal position is). Each interview should have a code number, which is both on the interview transcript and on a separate sheet that holds their personal details. Personal details should be kept in secure storage and should not be stored in the same place as the interviews.
- In addition to recording what the person says you should also record any important observations such as *'the participant seemed uncomfortable when discussing x'*
- Try to ask the questions in as open a way as possible and to record as much as possible. We advise where possible for audio recordings to be made as back up, but not as the primary source of data as they tend to go wrong. The focus of the interviews should be trying to understand if and how the NGOs or CVCs have made towards reducing or ending bonded labour/ Child labour / trafficking. Prevalence facts will be captured through other mechanisms e.g. participatory statistics data collation.
- For each question ask people how things have changed in the last 3-5 years

Note to interviewers – adapt the interview questions when necessary. If the respondent denies the existence of Bonded Labour then continue the interview using alternative phrasing such as:

Bonded Labour => rural workers vulnerable to debt bondage

QUESTIONS

1. **What is your role within the organisation and how have you come to know the (insert name of local NGO)/s work? What have your interactions been with them and are there any particular activities or issues where you have closely connected?**

2. **Thinking about the issue of bonded labour/ Child labour / trafficking in this region, do you think the situation has changed over the past few years? What changes have you observed, could you please give some examples? Do you think, bonded labour, trafficking, child labour etc. still exists in this region? If yes, what might be the reasons behind it?)**
3. **Do you know what the NGO/s are doing to tackle this issue? Do you think their work has led to a change to the lives of people affected by bonded labour/ Child labour / trafficking in your region? Which activities (that the NGO/s are carrying out) are most effective?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- List 5 things the NGO does – ask for reflections on these interventions and what is working well and what is not?

Notes to interviewer:

- Please specifically check if interviewee (or their colleagues) participated in training sessions organised by the NGO
 - This question is about teasing out how the NGO activities have helped people to avoid or escape bonded labour – i.e. becoming less dependent on loans from the landlord etc.
4. **Compared to three years ago, have you observed a change in the level of activities in the community to protect villagers from bonded labour/ Child labour / trafficking? Why do you think this has occurred?**

Note to interviewer:

- This question may not be relevant to those working at district level

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- From your observation is there a higher level of community led activity or do you still think the community is very dependent on the NGO?
5. **Do you think any community actions / NGO actions been delivered that have led to improved conditions in the mills or clothing factories? Or not? Can you give examples?**
 6. **Compared to three years ago, do you think there is now more, less, or maybe a different kind of caste discrimination? Could you give some examples? Do you think NGOs have played a role in this – if so- How? If not, why?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Is there less or more or maybe a different kind of caste discrimination? Tell us about it
7. **Compared to three years ago, are women and girls now treated differently in the communities that you work in? Could you give some examples? Do you think NGOs have played a role in this - if so, how? If not, why?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Can you give examples of things that women and girls can do and achieve which they could not do three years ago?
- 8. Over the past three years, what are the public services that have improved the most? Are there more, or less villagers now accessing this service? Do you think the NGOs have played a role in this - if so, how? If not, why?**
- 9. For families in your community that are in bonded labour/ Child labour / trafficking what else should be done to help improve their situation? What do you think the NGOs could be doing but aren't, or could do better?**

Explore and prompt suggestion:

- What do you think the NGOS should have done differently? And how does the programme need to adapt in the future?
- 10. Compared to 3 or 4 years ago, do you think organisations like yours are more or less willing to talk about and act on bonded labour/ Child labour / trafficking?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- Do you think local politicians are more or less willing to discuss the problem? Is there more discussion in political and professional circles?
- 11. Do you think NGO services to help trafficking and bonded labour / child labour survivors to recover are helpful - or would you put a greater focus on work in the village to stop the supply of bonded labour?**

Explore and prompt suggestions:

- With people who are rescued – do you think they are accepted back into the community and are able to stay out of bonded labour/trafficking?
- Or are local labour and family relationships such that they will be forced back into bonded labour?
- What else could be done to help people stay out of bonded labour/ Child labour / trafficking?
- 12. Do you think NGOs are accountable and transparent towards communities? Do they involve community members and stakeholders in planning process?**
- 13. Can you give any examples of the ways in which NGO activities have influenced higher-level policy making /decision making and implementation of schemes (e.g. at district or state level) on bonded labour/ Child labour / trafficking?**

PLEASE ALSO NOTE

- End time of interview
- Was the interview completed in one visit, or multiple visits?
- Was the entire interview conducted in a private space?
- What was the interviewee's mood during the interview? Did they seem relaxed / anxious?
- Was the interview disrupted in any way? Was anyone else present during part of the interview?
- Anything else worth noting?

