



Evaluation report on the results of the interventions to reduce the Prevalence of bonded labour in Tamil Nadu

Institute of Development Studies, UK in partnership with Praxis India

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Purpose of the report

This evaluation was produced by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Praxis India for the Freedom Fund initiative and funded by the C&A Foundation.

The objective of the evaluation was to provide an overall assessment of Freedom Fund interventions to prevent bonded labour in Tamil Nadu. Freedom Fund activities are concentrated in four districts where there is a high prevalence of bonded labour. This location is known as the Southern India hotspot. The evaluation assesses the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of and the sustainability of the hotspot model. The evaluation process has also been designed to support learning about the most effective community and non-governmental organisation (NGO) activities to combat bonded labour in the Southern India hotspot. While it offers important evaluative findings – particularly with regards to prevalence – the IDS programme was rooted in a participatory research approach. This report uses the findings of the scoping visits; an analysis of life stories of bonded labourers and the collective analysis of them by bonded labourers; a participatory statistical analysis of prevalence and other indicators; 100 interviews to obtain qualitative feedback from community participants; NGO staff and other stakeholders; and a light desk review of key programme documents. It also draws on the progress report of 12 Action Research Groups annexed at the end (although we do not summarise the results for the purposes of this evaluation report, as in many respects this can be considered to be a parallel intervention).

This final evaluation follows a mid-term evaluation which was produced in October 2016.

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List of Acronyms

CSG	Community Support Group
ETI	Ethical Trading Initiative
FBC	Film based curriculum
FF	Freedom Fund
GG	Geneva Global
HR	Human resources
ICC	Internal Complaints Committee
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
JLG	Joint Liability Group
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RTI	Right to information
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

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.

Executive summary

Background

Since 2015, the Freedom Fund has been working with frontline non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Tamil Nadu, in Southern India, to combat bonded labour and labour exploitation within the textile sector through community organisation, as well as government and business engagement.

Using a “hotspot” model of concentrating resources in communities with high prevalence of bonded labour, often subject to intense socioeconomic deprivation and marginalisation, the Freedom Fund and its partners have provided community-based, policy and business interventions to achieve the following objectives:

1. Increase community capacity to prevent bonded, forced and child labour
2. Support survivors in rehabilitation, and attainment of viable livelihoods
3. Improve brand and supplier practices in deterring bonded, forced and child labour
4. Improve the policy environment to support the advancement of women’s rights and labour rights
5. Increase community, government and industry awareness of labour exploitation and improve accountability

In Tamil Nadu, local employment is centred on the textile industry. Local spinning mills, power looms and handloom units employ thousands of low-wage workers and produce for domestic and international markets. Employees in spinning mills, a large proportion of which are young women and girls aged 14 to 20, can end up in conditions of bonded labour and suffer harassment, abuse and infringement of rights. Dalit or other lower-caste communities are at increased risk of exploitation.

The hotspot programme has focused on supporting lower-caste households to exit conditions of debt bondage and guard against exploitation in the textile industry. Local NGOs have been supported to conduct a range of interventions at the community level through awareness raising on workers’ rights, poverty alleviation, education promotion and collective action, while also engaging with government, businesses and other powerholders to address reform of the textile industry.

To evaluate and inform this programme, the Freedom Fund commissioned the Institute of Development Studies and Praxis India in 2015 to design and implement a parallel, longitudinal participatory research programme. This research project generated real time learning for continuous development as well evaluating the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of activities. This report summarises the findings and recommendations of that research.

Evaluation methods

This evaluation utilised the following methods:

- Collection and joint analysis of more than 300 life stories.
- A baseline and endline quantitative study to measure prevalence of bonded labour in the hotspot through participatory statistics. The prevalence study surveyed 2,670 households at baseline and 2,697 at endline.
- Action research with 12 community based multi-stakeholder groups, focused on systemic drivers of debt bondage.

- Qualitative interviews with 60 community members, 20 NGO staff and 20 external stakeholders, as well as interviews with Freedom Fund staff at the local, national and headquarters level.

Key research findings

- Overall prevalence of bonded labour reduced from 56.1% in intervention communities at baseline to 11.1% at endline. The prevalence of children in bonded labour reduced from 13.0% at baseline to 1.1% at endline. Though initially low, reductions were also observed in child marriage and school dropouts.
- Affected communities are often geographically isolated, with poor access to transport infrastructure. This combined with buses operated by the mills for employees effectively makes the mills the only practical employment option for local workers and excludes opportunities for alternative employment.
- Communities identified employer advances as well as high-interest loans to cover health expenses as major causes of bonded labour. Overall poverty and financial instability of communities often lead to households availing of predatory lending and ending up in cycles of debt. Other key expenditures that could lead to debt were marriages, education costs and excessive alcohol consumption.
- Girls and young women in mills were regularly subject to forced overtime, especially to cover for sick leave or absence by other co-workers. Mills were also characterised by poor sanitation and safety, infrequent breaks and regular verbal and sexual harassment as well as gendered discrimination.
- Awareness raising on predatory lending and trafficking into mills have been effective in leading to normative change in target communities. The organisation of workers groups and better functioning of internal complaints committees has also facilitated collective requests for better workplace conditions.
- Women in local communities have demonstrated greater engagement and agency in decision making processes such as household spending, family and personal health decisions, and participation in local groups.
- As local communities in the programme areas become more protective of workers' rights and legal entitlements, NGOs expressed concerns that local workers are being substituted by migrants. Migrant groups from other parts of India, who often do not speak the local language, are at increasing risk of labour exploitation and abuse.

Evaluating the hotspot model in Tamil Nadu

Relevance of design and implementation

- The model of targeting high prevalence communities through investment in community-based NGOs has been justified as these community interventions have significantly contributed to the large reductions in bonded labour observed.
- Use of awareness and empowerment strategies on labour rights, rights to education and women's rights enabled NGOs to provide specific support to communities in accessing government schemes and services, and along with collective action drove reductions in bonded labour. This success has been reliant on the implementation of multiple parallel interventions.
- The activities carried out by the NGOs are all relevant to issues of labour exploitation. They include awareness raising, group formation, linking to services, psychosocial support, legal support, rescue, engagement with mill owners and dialogues to inform people about government policies. Greater emphasis in the future on health may be beneficial in continuing to reduce bonded labour and exploitation in these communities.
- The successes of this programme are driven by the high-quality work of local NGOs. Their professionalism and commitment to the programme has secured them a trusted

standing with local communities. A number of external stakeholders interviewed acknowledged that their work has been enhanced by the local NGOs.

- Poverty alleviation will continue to be central in future work in order to address the most marginalised families who remain trapped in bonded labour.

Effectiveness

- The programme has made a major contribution to reducing the prevalence of bonded labour in the target locations. While it is difficult to identify which Freedom Fund intervention has been specifically responsible, our view is that a bottom-up approach that stimulates collective organisation and local action, combined with a variety of NGO interventions that allow for a flexible response to specific household problems, is effective in reducing the prevalence of bonded labour in the programme areas.
- The two most consistently beneficial activities have been awareness raising and mobilisation interventions such as creation of self-help groups, including women's and workers' groups. The "Call Me Priya" film was frequently cited by interviewees as being particularly effective. These have effected change by shifting individual, family and collective norms and behaviours.
- While many hotspot interventions deliver substantial change for targeted communities, future work will likely need to extend the scope of these interventions to migrants as well as neighbouring communities.
- Engagement of mill ownership through internal complaints committees, and dialogues with government through networks such as Tamil Nadu Alliance, are examples of effective vertical and horizontal scaling to mobilise actors beyond the intervention areas.
- The last groups remaining in bonded labour will likely be the poorest and most entrenched in cycles of exploitation. These groups, who may be dependent on exploitative work for survival, may be resistant to some interventions and will likely require a dedicated focus. The Freedom Fund may need to balance goals of geographical expansion by spreading the model to other settings, with eradication, which will take long-term local commitment.

Efficiency

- The delivery of multiple interventions through community groups has mostly been efficient. However, as the programme progresses the risk of bonded labour in these communities has also fallen, leading to diminishing returns as the same programme activities are now reaching a lower number of individuals that are still in bonded labour. After significant progress has been observed within communities, it may be useful to re-concentrate resources to the very poorest of households.
- Engaging in dialogue with mill owners, despite the inherent difficulties and the necessary persistence of NGOs, has been an efficient use of resources as it led to improved working conditions and anecdotal reports of improved pay.
- Freedom Fund advisors on the ground have been particularly effective, facilitated by their credibility with local NGOs and links to larger institutions. Throughout this four-year research project, Program Advisors have demonstrated strong professional management skills and their drive for continued learning have impressed the evaluation team.

Sustainability

- The programme has potential for real long-term sustainability through its combination of awareness raising and community organisation. However, true sustainability will require continued expansion of the model to migrant workers. Likewise, successes working with mill owners may need to be supported with monitoring of internal complaints resolution.

- NGOs have diversified their activities to create a multi-pronged intervention. This has led to the development of new skills, including informing government policies and implementation. NGOs have also shifted their understanding of their own role as facilitating community-driven change.
- Notable changes in customary practices and norms have been observed, for example, child labour is no longer accepted in many villages. This change was initiated through an awareness campaign, and importantly, complemented by community empowerment strategies. This way, communities were able to learn as well as act upon their new understanding of gender and labour rights.
- Community groups are largely autonomous and have been able to widen their scope of interest, including making demands to the government for better service provision and collectively monitoring and taking actions against school dropouts and child marriages.

Recommendations

- The hotspot programme had a demonstrable impact on reducing the prevalence of bonded labour in target local communities, and modelled a successful, large-scale, community-based, systemic change process. Community-based programmes on this scale are few and far between. The success of this model is significant not just to the anti-trafficking field, but to the wider development sector. These results should prompt continued investment into extensive community-level work.
- Engagement with business and government representatives, while important, will likely only be an efficient and effective use of resources when combined with community level activism for reform. Industry-level interventions have a narrow evidence base and require greater investment in research.
- In villages where Freedom Fund is currently working, we recommend investing in converting community groups to autonomous mutual aid organisations which can initiate, create and sustain change. Movement building should be bolstered through further inter-group networking. Initiatives such as the Tamil Nadu Alliance are a strong foundation for future policy work and are a promising target for investment.
- Expand to new communities using a staged model, where resources can be shifted between activities and from community to community as they mature. This will facilitate horizontal scaling of successes and allow greater labour organisation against workplace exploitation.
- Develop a more coherent theory of change and scaling rooted in the learning from how community learning scales out, and how modelling of effective community level change can influence policy.
- A more deliberate strategy to engage and mobilise migrant workers will be essential to reducing the prevalence of bonded labour in the program areas. These workers are particularly vulnerable and also more difficult for NGOs to engage with, and the Freedom Fund's community-based model will need to be adapted to suit the needs of a transient and fragmented population of migrants.
- Continue to work on poverty alleviation through the support and development of public health initiatives and promotion of health care access. This will help build household and community resilience to health shocks.

1 Context and approach

1.1 Background and contextual factors relevant to bonded labour in Tamil Nadu, India

General background – The hotspot area in the state of Tamil Nadu, India, is located in a complex and dynamic setting where bonded labour co-exists with many other types of labour exploitation and social, economic and political inequality. The garment industry has existed in this region for many years, and bonded, forced and child labour are not uncommon, particularly in the spinning mills.

Tamil Nadu plays an important role both for the Indian domestic textile industry and for global brands and retailers. Many of the country's spinning, power loom and handloom units are located in the state. In Tamil Nadu, there is a high concentration of young women who work in the cotton mills. While there are young women who work in the factories and return home to the villages at night, a large proportion of workers also live in hostels on the factory campus.

According to Delaney and Tate (2015):

In general, Tamil Nadu has been industrialising rapidly over the last 20 years and agriculture has declined rapidly. This has led to many of those with small landholdings no longer being able to survive from subsistence work. Sometimes whole families have responded by migrating to industrialised areas to find work, at other times only young women go to work in factories and mills whilst living in provided hostels. The feminisation of the workforce in the sector came about because poor rural women were identified as a potential pool of workers in the late 1990s to meet the textile mill employers' objectives to recruit more manageable workers (Narayanaswamy & Sachithanandam, 2010) – this has become known as the sumangali scheme. The term 'sumangali' is a Tamil word meaning happily married woman and the employment scheme was portrayed as an opportunity for young single women to earn a living at the same time as saving up for their marriage expenses, while living away from their families in company-controlled hostels. The reality, however, is that thousands of young women and girls, most of whom are between 14 and 20 years old, have been recruited to work in conditions that amount to forced or bonded labour.

Coimbatore in the west of Tamil Nadu is one of the traditional areas for the production of cotton and yarn in India. In the past, when most textile production took place in spinning mills and was for national markets, the workforce was mainly male and strongly unionised. A significant increase in the proportion of young women and migrant workers has occurred at the same time as the shift to garments and export-focused production (Tewari 2004). A key aspect of efforts to gain a greater share of export markets is competition on price, which is impacted by the underlying costs of production. If these are low, then prices and margins are more competitive and profitable

According to the Freedom Fund, the following contextual factors affected the programme during the implementation phase:¹

- State level elections in 2016, which delayed programme activities for partner organisations.
- New draft legislation aiming to address bonded labour and trafficking, the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation) Bill 2016.

¹ Reported directly by the Freedom Fund in mid- year progress reports and annual reviews.

- Proposals to revise the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and the Bonded Labour System Abolition (BLSA) Act, which have created opportunities for partners in Southern India to have their voices heard at national level and provide informed feedback to officials, with the potential to impact the future operating context of the Southern India hotspot programme (Geneva Global 2016).
- Delays in holding local elections, which meant government officials did not have the additional accountability associated with the presence of elected representatives (Geneva Global 2017).
- Cyclone Gaja, which in November 2018 hit Tamil Nadu bringing severe winds, rain and flooding. Rural and tribal populations were most negatively affected by this storm. Parts of Dindigul district were severely damaged. Partners working in the district were heavily involved in relief efforts, which included helping people seek temporary shelter and food assistance and linking them with government-supported aid. State elections took place and caused some delay to programme activities (Freedom Fund 2018b).
- Continued delay in the municipal elections, which means there are still no active operational local government bodies. This has affected the speed of implementation of government development schemes. Community support groups are helping identify beneficiaries, but the process of receiving statutory benefits is very slow. Block development officers should still function in the absence of elected body leaders, but they are often overloaded with other administrative work (Freedom Fund 2018a).

The evaluation team notes that in comparison to the other hotspot it has evaluated in India (Bihar and Uttar Pradesh), Tamil Nadu has a much better education and health-care system.

1.2 Aims and activities of the Freedom Fund programme

With funding from the C&A Foundation and the Freedom Fund, the Southern India hotspot was launched in September 2015, with the goal of reducing bonded labour in the textile industry in the state of Tamil Nadu, particularly among girls and young women working in the spinning mills. The Southern India hotspot was initiated in four districts of Tamil Nadu (there is one recent new source area, Ramanathapuram district).

The Freedom Fund and its local partner organisations² in Tamil Nadu at the time of baseline focused their interventions in hotspots and locations where forms of bonded labour were more prevalent (see table of implementing partners in Annexe 3). The four core hub locations are the districts of Dindigul, Erode, Namakkal and Virudhunagar.

The Freedom Fund hotspot model aims to help frontline organisations combat modern forms of bonded labour, investing in organisations, and interventions that reinforce one another.³ The main interventions provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Tamil Nadu are:

- Awareness raising on exploitation, bonded labour and labour rights.
- Group formation and development to build both knowledge and solidarity.
- Helping to bring people out of bonded situations and supporting their rehabilitation;
- Livelihood work and connecting people to low-interest loans (for village members in or vulnerable to bonded labour).
- Linking people to government schemes (such as housing assistance, old age pension, maternity benefits, and government food assistance).
- Prevention of school dropouts and improvement of education.
- Policy and public dialogues to support new laws and enforcement.

² This report evaluates the performance of the partners who have been in the programme during the whole intervention period.

³ www.freedomfund.org

- Support for basic service provision – such as health camps – has been provided, although this is not the focus of the work.
- Work with mills and workers on conditions of work and employment in the mills. This has included setting up and providing support to workers’ groups and internal complaints committees (ICCs).
- Creation of the Tamil Nadu Alliance.

Other activities such as work with brands and with journalists do not lie within the IDS evaluation brief.

Many groups have been formed by NGOs that partner with the Freedom Fund, ranging from adolescent groups to community support groups, self-help groups and child parliament groups. These mostly remain active, have been the locus of awareness raising and have also provided a foundation for solutions-oriented work carried out by Action Research Groups and workers’ groups inside the mills.

It is worth noting that the way in which Freedom Fund framed the key objectives of the Southern India hotspot changed significantly during the period of the evaluation. In 2016, the goals and objectives were articulated as (Baumann n.d.):

Goal: To reduce forms of bonded labour, especially focused on spinning mills in Tamil Nadu.

Objective 1. Increase community capacity to prevent bonded labour, especially through community support groups, adolescent groups and economic self-help groups taking action against the causes of vulnerability for young workers.

Objective 2. Enable increased action by officials to uphold worker rights and protections, through supporting partner organisations and concerned businesses to liaise with local officials.

Objective 3. Improve working conditions and worker rights within spinning mills through development of workers’ groups and supervisor and management training.

By 2018, under new reporting frameworks from the C&A Foundation, the targets had expanded (Freedom Fund 2018):

Target Outcome 1: Increased community capacity to prevent forced and child labour

Target Outcome 2: Survivors are rehabilitated and attain viable livelihoods

Target Outcome 3: Improved brand and supplier practices deter forced and child labour

Target Outcome 4: Improved policy environment advancing women’s rights and labour rights

Target Outcome 5: Increased awareness and knowledge for accountability.

In 2015, the focus was on community action, local enforcement and work with the mill owners. By 2017, the emphasis had shifted slightly towards work in the mills and preventative work in the community. And by 2018, while outcomes 1 and 2 were still strongly focused on the community, the new targets increasingly focused on brands, government policy, and accountability and public awareness. The justification for this from the C&A Foundation is that they wanted to address sector-wide systemic issues that perpetuate the issues of bonded and child labour in the Southern India hotspot.

According to the Freedom Fund, 411 community support groups set up by the programme were active in 2018 (the logframe target was 370) (Freedom Fund 2018). By the second half of 2018, the NGO had set up and provided facilitation and support to 675 adolescent girls’ groups (logframe target 510), with 11,731 members; and 438 adolescent boys’ groups (logframe target 350), with 6,812 members.

The aim of these groups is to enable children to understand the risks and protect themselves from entering work situations and also to build confidence and skills. The aim of the adolescent boys' groups is in part to help them to understand the risks to girls and to support them. They are also a vehicle for articulating wider needs, and can support young people to study and or continue their studies.

The annual spend on the hotspot was US\$667,863 in 2015; US\$1,756,670 in 2016, US\$1,495,099 in 2017; and US\$1,231,016 in 2018; with a projected spend of \$1,716,300 in 2019 (Freedom Fund 2018). This amounts to a total of US\$6,866,948.4

1.3 The evaluation approach and methodology

Team

The evaluation has been conducted by an international multidisciplinary and gender-balanced team of researchers from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Brighton, UK,⁵ in partnership with Praxis, India.⁶ IDS has a global reputation for its work on international development and has been globally ranked number one for development studies in the QS global ranking of International Development Schools (with the University of Sussex). Praxis India is a not-for-profit organisation with one of the longest track records for participatory work in India and across Asia, and a long and productive relationship with IDS.

Methods

This external evaluation used a hybrid methodology, combining quantitative and qualitative data, field visits and observations with a review of reported programme. Participatory methods and collective stakeholder analysis processes were woven throughout the programme. The team closely linked the research and monitoring, evaluation and learning processes to programme cycles and planning.

From the start, it was agreed with the Freedom Fund that the primary driver of our work was a formative learning process within the context of an adaptive management framework. The Freedom Fund explicitly commissioned two specialist participatory methods teams to carry out the work. The agreement was to pioneer rigorous participatory evaluation methods, while at the same time offering evaluative reflections on how and why change was happening based on qualitative interviews.

We will not explain the detailed methods associated with each component in this document, as our main purpose here is to triangulate the findings, analyse them across the components and draw out critical recommendations for future phases and work. Interview data were triangulated with data from the prevalence focus groups in the same villages to ensure consistency of findings and report on any divergences. Findings of all studies were triangulated before drawing evaluation conclusions. Detailed accounts of the methods can be found in the core research reports linked in the annexes to this document.

The evaluation has been conducted alongside the Freedom Fund interventions using an accompaniment approach focused on organisational learning and capacity building. In this way, the evaluators have supported an evolving and adaptive learning process, and have as such been part of the intervention. Learning at each stage has also fed into NGO programming. Review meetings were held before the annual budgeting process to assess lessons learned.

⁴ This represents Freedom Fund's total allocation to the Southern India hotspot, including grants to partners, consultancy fees (e.g. for technical assistance), plus in-country and headquarters staff costs.

⁵ www.ids.ac.uk

⁶ www.praxisindia.org

The evaluators have worked closely with Freedom Fund, C&A Foundation and Indian NGOs in the development of tools, collection of data and the analysis of findings. The evaluators received assistance from staff at the Freedom Fund, notably the programme advisors, managers, and monitoring and evaluation specialists, to collect programme documentation. The following methods were used in the different components of this evaluation (these can be explored in more detail in the research reports linked to this document in Annexe 2):

- **A ten-day scoping visit**, with visits to villages to understand the programme context. Scoping interviews were written up and used as the basis for research design.
- **Collection and joint analysis of more than 300 life stories**. Data produced included the life stories; a cluster map of key themes recorded on Post-It notes and then transferred to Excel where each note was linked back to its source story; and a very large-scale system map.
- **Baseline and endline surveys**. These measured the prevalence of different forms of bonded labour in the hotspot and the most significant indicators of change as identified by people directly affected by bonded labour. The methodology of participatory statistics to measure impact is described separately and in the reports by Oosterhoff *et al.* (2016, 2019) linked to in Annexe 2. The prevalence study used a pictorial self-assessment tool to generate detailed information about certain households in the villages, which served as the baseline data. Ten to 15 individuals from randomly selected households provided the information for the survey in a safe space facilitated by NGO staff. Respondents indicated the appropriate answers to the questions for themselves and their two adjacent neighbours on the survey sheets (one set of sheets per household, giving a total of three households per respondent). The advantage for non-literate community members was that all questions were depicted. They could also clarify with other respondents in case they were unsure. In each village, after the data collection had been completed and compiled there was a village-level discussion on the results of the survey and the pathways into and out of bonded labour. Data produced included the numbers recorded for all villages at baseline and endline; aggregated spreadsheets with summary tables; and write-ups of group discussions about the numbers at village level.
- **Twelve Action Research Groups supported by six NGOs**. These were groups of bonded labourers who met regularly to collect evidence, analyse the causes of their bondage, generate innovative solutions and enact them. Data generated included records of local evidence gathering (e.g. household expenditure data; flip charts or recorded notebook records of discussions of action-research meetings).
- **Individual qualitative interviews**. These were held with 60 community members, 20 NGO staff and 20 external stakeholders on the usefulness of the NGO activities. These were supported by interviews with Freedom Fund local and national programme officers, and headquarters senior management and research staff. These interviews provided corroborative evidence and help to build an understanding of how and why changes have happened. The data include these 100 interviews. The stakeholder interviewees included: the District Child Protection Unit; District Legal Authority Services; panchayat clerk; human resources (HR) manager at a textiles company in Dindigul; HR managers at mills; Raghupathy Government College; Central Social Welfare Board, Erode; child protection officer; Childline officer; Child Welfare Committee members; integrated child development scheme; non-governmental organisation representatives; 'Best Tutorials' representative; National Child Labour Project; an officer for the Integrated Child Development Scheme.
- **A review of key internal programme documents and reports**. These included biannual reports to review the planned and achieved outputs and outcomes of the programme, as well as NGOs' self-assessments.

The team evaluated relevance from the life story analysis, prevalence work and qualitative interviews. To the extent that it was possible to assess efficiency, conclusions have been largely derived from the documentary evidence and the qualitative interviews. Effectiveness has been assessed through the prevalence study and the qualitative interviews. Sustainability has been assessed through the interviews and the Action Research.

There are always trade-offs between evaluation as accountability and evaluation as learning. The IDS team has always placed a strong emphasis on learning in the programme, but also recognises the need for evidence-based summative evaluation. The IDS Ethical Review Board approved the research underpinning this evaluation in line with the IDS Research Ethics Policy.⁷ This summary evaluation also builds on a mid-term evaluation conducted by the same organisations, and the programme has made adjustments based on that review.

Limitations of the review

The Southern India hotspot programme is ambitious, large and complex. The review team has identified a number of limitations to the review:

- Cost-efficiency/-effectiveness fell outside the mandate of the review.
- The evaluation team did not carry out any internal organisational review or organisational capacity review of either Freedom Fund field staff or the NGOs. This means, for example, that quantitative claims made by Freedom Fund in its annual reports based on its own monitoring data have not been independently verified.
- Freedom Fund was unable to provide a breakdown of funding by activity, so it is not possible to determine whether spending aligns with the domains that these constituencies see as most important.
- The evaluators met staff from all organisations, but did not interview senior management in all cases. Managers were present at some of the meetings and we spoke with some of them separately. We were working for collaborative learning, rather than coming in as auditors of each NGO's performance.
- The sample sizes for the collection of feedback from various key stakeholders in the qualitative feedback process (100 interviews) were large enough to draw conclusions about how and why changes were happening, but we did not continue to interview each category of respondents until saturation was reached and no new information emerged.
- The programme's work with garment brands and journalists lies outside the scope of the IDS-Praxis remit.
- The study looks at the NGOs that have been part of the programme for the whole period. NGOs that dropped out or were added later have been excluded.
- The IDS-Praxis team cannot claim that its analysis is fully independent, as we were facilitating a formative learning process that contributed to the adaptive implementation of the programme, as well as a formal endline assessment. The action-research process was a direct intervention of the IDS-Praxis team. Reports both from community members and NGOs also suggest that the prevalence study made a significant contribution to community understandings of bonded labour and so on. So, while every attempt has been made to justify all our observations and analysis with evidence, we would not claim 'independence'. The evaluative process was set up to prioritise collaborative learning. This means that the evaluators should be seen both as insiders and outsiders. Our role has primarily been as critical friends who have accompanied the implementation of the programme.

The review focused on contribution not attribution because:

⁷ www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Research_Ethics_Policy.pdf

- There are multiple organisations and institutions in the hotspot working towards similar goals. There is a history of activism, including Dalit activism in these hotspots prior to the Freedom Fund interventions.
- The Indian government has many relevant poverty-alleviation and socio-political inclusion programmes in the area.
- NGOs working on other issues, such as health or water supplies, may have a direct impact on bonded labour (e.g. by reducing the need for high-interest loans).

Scope of work

The aim of the work described above was two-fold:

- Firstly, to generate real-time learning for the continuous development and improvement of the programme (formative evaluation).
- Secondly, to provide credible evidence of the relevance, efficiency (a limited focus in this study – see below), effectiveness and sustainability of the activities that have been implemented by local NGOs through the Freedom Fund programme (recognising the insider/outsider relationship of IDS to the programme).

Key evaluation questions and findings for this research have been structured in relation to relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. The specific focus areas under these headings were agreed with the Freedom Fund and are specified in italics under the section headings in chapter 3 of this report.

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 concepts 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 a person is 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.

To identify whether or not a person was in bonded labour, we used the following criteria, as developed for the participatory statistics based on the life story analysis (Oosterhoff *et al.* 2016):

- 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 four:
 - No freedom of movement – physical constraint or restrictions placed on one's freedom of movement.
 - Paid less than the minimum wage – remuneration that 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.

These criteria and guidance on questions are detailed in the prevalence survey instrument and guidelines. They evolved through a number of meetings with community members and NGO staff in the early stages of the process, based on the collective analysis of the life stories and international and national definitions and policies.

2 Summary findings

For the purpose of this evaluation, we draw out the key findings from three of the four core research reports, relating to life story analysis, prevalence and qualitative interviews. We highlight some of the outcomes of the action-research process in Chapter 2.3. We do not detail the evidence here. Links to the full reports are in Annexe 2.

2.1 Main findings from the life story analysis and scoping

In this section we outline the main findings of the life story analysis. This includes summary findings from the scoping interviews and focus groups that we carried out before launching these studies. Life stories are personal accounts of events and key markers in a person's life. They have been used in this study to enable members of communities living with bondage to analyse the causes and consequences of the factors depicted within these narratives. The findings from the life story analysis were used at an early stage to feed into ongoing planning decisions of the programme. The full report is linked to this document in Annexe 2. The findings of the life story analysis are summarised for the purposes of this evaluation because they give a strong indication of the relevance of the programme's activities. The aim of collecting life stories and analysing them collectively was to:

- Enable community members and NGO researchers to arrive at a collective understanding of contemporary bonded labour issues in the Southern India hotspot.
- Understand the different forms that modern bonded labour takes and agree on the categories and definitions that should be used in a prevalence study using participatory statistics; and to develop key indicators for the prevalence study through an analysis of the key dynamics of change identified.
- Inform critical issues and drivers of bonded labour to be explored in the Action Research.
- Reflect on how the individual NGO programmes can most effectively respond to the issues and dynamics identified and how the whole programme can meet the needs identified; and identify possible gaps and reflect on if and how these might be addressed.
- Stimulate and inspire NGOs about how to make their programmes and the hotspot approach more effective and relevant.

The life stories enabled participants to build a comprehensive picture of how people in the hotspot perceived their lives and the options they have had in the context of bonded labour in Tamil Nadu. An important advantage of this use of life stories is that they allow people to speak about what is important to them, rather than provide information in categories that researchers have pre-constructed. This means their analysis can generate unanticipated insights into challenges and options in the lives of the communities living with bonded labour, which helps to understand the relevance of interventions in these communities (although they cannot be extrapolated across all of the Tamil Nadu spinning mill contexts).

Pay

It is worth noting by way of background that during the scoping we collected a lot of information on pay to get a feel for what spinning mill workers were getting paid from location to location. We learned that 'girls get paid Rs.180–210'.⁸ We recorded 23 people in the scoping study between 13 and 18 years old who were paid between Rs190 and Rs230 per day. One group participant reported that the most experienced women could get Rs250 per day.

Age of entry into bonded labour

We noted:

it is evident from the scoping visit that most of the girls start around ages 14–15. Quite a few start as early as 12. While some underage girls were reluctant to say their ages, those who were older told us what age they had started at. The Mills employ girls from 12 years up to 25 years. Only about 20 per cent of the workers are over age 25. As parents are above 25 they usually don't get jobs in the mills so the children have to go. (Burns, D., Oosterhoff, P. and Joseph, S 2016)

At the beginning of this study, while this practice had already reduced, a lot of young women were still working in the mills in order to pay for the expenses they needed for their marriages.

Drivers of bonded labour

While the wider economic context for the mills is a low-wage economy driven by supply chain requirements for low-cost production, the life story analysis identified critical local factors and drivers where it might be possible to make local interventions.

People are driven into the mills because of extreme poverty. In most localities there are few alternative jobs. In many of the villages, buses run by the mills are the only means of transport. This means that villagers cannot get to alternative workplaces even if work is available. Within these communities, it is common practice to take high-interest loans from moneylenders. They typically cover major life events, but can also be taken to cover day-to-day expenses. The inability to repay these loans and consequent inability to make ends meet often results in bonded employment. The life story analysis provided a clear exposition of the primary drivers of the loans, which were health crises, death and accidents, marriage, alcohol and education.

These factors were triangulated by being built into the participatory statistics. Mills offer advances, which people take up to pay for health expenses, etc. Once taken, it is hard to break out of the cycle of bondage. Community members highlighted a significant rise in alcoholism among men. This needs to be seen within a wider trend of men being laid off and replaced by cheaper female labour at a time when alcohol became more easily available.⁹ This indeed could be a further cause of male alcoholism. Women pointed out that money was being borrowed directly from high-interest money lenders to pay for alcohol, and that alcoholism was preventing men from working and generating an income, which meant that women had to get work in the mills. It was reported in the scoping that some young women go to the mills to escape the boredom of life at home in the villages. They can be attracted by love, the idea of something different or even the prospect of material goods such as mobile (cell)phones.

⁸ The value of these amounts changes over time with inflation.

⁹ Revenue from liquor and the annual licences bars need to sell it are a major source of revenue for the state of Tamil Nadu.

Working hours

Girls are regularly forced to do extra shifts. Young women typically do shifts of 8–9 hours per day, but often these shifts are actually ten hours once they have finished cleaning up. Forced overtime is a big problem. Sometimes they do one shift after another (17 or 18 hours) when the timing of their shift pattern is changed or if they have to cover for someone. Because they get so exhausted from double shifts, they cannot eat when they get home and become undernourished. Some children aged 14–15 years old look much older due to tiredness and malnourishment.

We were told in scoping interviews that many girls use substances and get addicted, although it is not clear what they were. Sometimes this is to enable them to cope with harassment from supervisors and boys, and sometimes because they simply need to stay awake. The mill owners often provide substances to the women to keep them awake. They put tablets into the 7UP the women drank. One peer researcher reported that in her mill nearly everyone uses substances. Community members also told of women – including themselves – who deliberately burn themselves on the hot machines in order to stay awake. The workers are forced to work six days a week and if they take leave – or are sick – in between, they have to do overtime. If they do overtime, they are not paid properly and suffer the problems outlined above. Sometimes they may even have to do three shifts (i.e. 24 hours) in succession. If a day-worker misses a shift, then it is likely that a hostel resident will have to work day and night to cover for their absence. Community-based day-workers may also have to do this at times.

Physical conditions in the mills

The mills are characterised by poor sanitation, workers not being allowed to go to the toilet, very short breaks and insufficient or bad food. Verbal abuse and sexual harassment from supervisors is common. Accidents are rife, and safety equipment and procedures are poor to non-existent in most mills.

Health impacts

The analysis identified a huge range of health issues that the young women perceive to be directly caused by the heat and cotton dust in the mills. These include: menstrual problems and missed periods; miscarriages; breathing problems; fever and boils on the head; infertility; irritation in the eyes; white discharge; mental health issues; fainting from heat; malnutrition and respiratory problems. Many of the women get so ill that they do not last more than ten years in the mills. As a result, they stop working and send their children there instead. As indicated above, it is difficult in any case for them to work in the mills once they have children.

Intervention needs

Community participants who analysed their own data identified the following as key needs for intervention: alcohol; gender; situations in which families do not prioritise the well-being or outcomes of their children; loans that relate to illness; accidents and marriage; health issues in the community; buses and transport; and more focused work on the high levels of suicides and accidents. These priorities were used to reshape programme priorities and structure the Action Research Groups.

2.2 Main findings from the prevalence study

Study scope

The prevalence study collected data from 970 respondents relating to 2,670 households across 66 hamlets in locations covered by 11 NGOs in the baseline; and for the endline survey, data for 2,697 households were collected by interacting with 900 respondents across 60 hamlets in locations covered by ten NGOs.¹⁰

Overall prevalence of bonded labour

Bonded labour reduced dramatically in the intervention communities in the period between the baseline and endline surveys, from 56.1 per cent to 11.1 per cent. The percentage of those bonded in mill work reduced from 45 per cent to 7 per cent at endline, and in other work from 65 per cent to 15 per cent.

It should be noted that there are substantial geographical variations within the sample. In Virudhunagar, three out of four NGOs recorded no decrease in prevalence in these localities. All participating NGOs attributed this to the ban on fireworks, on 13 November 2018, to reduce barium and nitrate pollution, and the resulting economic vulnerability of households, which pushed people out of jobs into vulnerable situations.

Bondage among children who were working remains higher among girls (15%) and boys (6%) compared to adults, where the figures for women and men are 1 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively.

Comparing the outcomes of the baseline and endline data, it is clear that more people in the intervention areas were able to choose where they worked since the intervention had taken place. For instance, 11 per cent of boys who chose where they worked at baseline increased to 80 per cent at endline, followed by 7 per cent of girls to 79 per cent. Similarly, 51 per cent of adult males who chose where they worked increased to 90 per cent, and 55 per cent of adult females increased to 90 per cent.

Child labour

The data show a large reduction in the number of children under 18 working at all. Among boys, the study found 179 male child labourers out of 2,670 households at baseline, which reduced to 84 male child labourers out of 2,697 households at endline. Among girls, the study found 214 female child labourers out of 2,670 households at baseline, which reduced to 82 female child labourers out of 2,697 households at endline. Among workers in households, the reduction in levels of bonded labour is higher for males and females below the age of 18 than for adults.

Child marriage

There is also a low incidence of early marriage recorded among the sample households. The proportion of early marriage among boys both at baseline (1.1%) and endline (0.7%) remains slightly higher than the incidence among girls. This looks to have been reinforced by the awareness-raising activities of the NGOs, but was already low at baseline.

¹⁰ Selected people in villages provided data for themselves, and for the family that lived to the left and to the right of them.

Membership of self-help groups

We cannot say that being part of a self-help group by itself is correlated to significant change in the prevalence of bonded labour. However, the proportion of households belonging to groups increased significantly and many of these households came out of bonded labour.

Land ownership

This has not changed dramatically and is likely to have played a very minor role, if any, in the observed reduction in prevalence.

MGNREGA cards

Through focus group discussions among respondents during the study, respondents noted that although many households have MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) cards, very few benefit as a result. They shared that card holders do not get work on a regular basis, the days guaranteed under this scheme do not suffice their needs and they receive less than the guaranteed number of days. The amount of money they receive per day (around Rs120) makes it difficult for them to meet daily expenses. Respondents also shared that when they get work under the scheme, they generally do not get payment on time, which is an issue that has been recognised by the government but has not yet been fully addressed. The delay in payment results in card holders taking out loans, which then increases the risks of bondage.

Bank accounts

No correlation between having a bank account and the bonded labour status of a household was found in this study.

Middlemen

Recognition of the potentially harmful role of agents in trafficking workers into mills and other forms of work has increased from 13 per cent at baseline to 39 per cent at endline among the households in the hotspot. This suggests that awareness campaigns about the mechanisms of getting people into bonded labour have been effective.

Household borrowing patterns

Patterns have changed significantly from baseline to endline. Those who have no bonded labourers in their households have mostly eradicated higher-interest loans from moneylenders, whereas the proportion of those who have exclusively bonded labourers in their families has significantly increased, suggesting that there is a relationship between the reduction in prevalence and a reduced dependence on high-interest loans.

Access to safe loans – such as through banks and self-help groups – has increased slightly since baseline, but among households with at least one or all members in bondage, moneylenders remain the main source of credit. Nevertheless, for households exclusively in bonded labour, access to loans from savings groups has increased from 26 per cent to 39 per cent. Households without a member in bondage, many of whom only very recently emerged from bondage, did not take loans from moneylenders. This suggests that the grip of moneylenders over people's labour has weakened.

Health expenses

Emergency health expenses, in particular, were the main reason why people took out high-risk loans that could trap them in bonded labour and are still the main reason for taking out a loan among all households in the intervention areas. The health-care system in Tamil Nadu consists of a mix of public and private sectors. Research suggests people prefer private sector treatment for certain services (Kanmony 2018), but there is a scarcity of data relating

to private sector health services. Some progress has been made in terms of access to public health services and the number of government health facilities has increased, reflecting public investments in building and upgrading health facilities. Whether the quality of the services or beneficiaries' perception of this quality has improved is a different question and has not been covered under this evaluation.

Loans for marriage

Of households that took out loans, the number that took out loans for marriage actually increased from 34 per cent to 45 per cent. The percentage of household income paid for festivals increased from 16 per cent to 39 per cent. Similarly, the percentage of households with loans for dowries increased from 6 per cent to 23 per cent.

Loans for education

Of households that took out loans, the number of households that took out loans for education substantively increased from 28 per cent to 58 per cent. Similarly, 19 per cent were paying for higher education at baseline compared to 27 per cent at endline. Whether it is a good thing that loans have to be taken out for education may be very contextually specific, but the data indicate a shift in family priorities for loans.

NGO analysis of prevalence reduction

Within the prevalence study, we consulted the NGOs to get their views on change. In Dindigul district, NGO C and NGO G thought that the community-based awareness activities by the community support group and the Action Research Group on issues such as vulnerability of girls resulted in a reduction of bonded labour. They found that the adolescent action group actively increased awareness and reported suspected cases of bonded labour to NGOs, which helped the NGOs to intervene. They also found that, where rescued persons had skill training, they were less likely to return to bondage.

During the focus group discussions, respondents also reported that in their view initiatives to increase school attendance decreased the prevalence of bonded labour. NGOs' efforts in linking women with self-help groups and banks reduced women's dependency on taking loans from mill owners. At the same time, NGO staff found that their activities with mill owners and farmers increased their awareness of several legal provisions governing issues of bonded labour.

As a result of better legal knowledge, some workers prefer to be paid daily wages rather than taking an advance that might get them in a situation of bonded labour. However, in some parts of Dindigul, getting an advance was reported as being a condition for employment. Similarly, in Namakkal district NGO P staff thought that increased awareness through community-based action groups about the risks of taking advances had reduced the prevalence of bonded labour. In some parts of Namakkal, all employed persons work in mills or do other work without getting an advance that has bonded labour strings attached. If they need a loan, they look for other sources of money rather than taking an advance.

In Erode district, one of the intervention areas of NGO I reported a higher prevalence (86%) at baseline and a lower prevalence (4%) at endline. NGO I staff felt that community-based campaigns against bonded labour through community action groups that aimed to raise awareness about advance payments was an important factor in reducing prevalence. In general, the NGOs felt that increased knowledge resulted in behavioural change that led to reduced prevalence. As we will see, these explanations are consistent with the qualitative interviews.

2.3 Main findings from the qualitative interviews

Qualitative interview process

Having established that prevalence has been substantively reduced, and having eliminated some potential explanatory variables such as land ownership, access to MGNREGA, bank accounts, etc. it is important to establish what it is about the interventions that has led to the reductions in prevalence. The qualitative interviews help us to do this.

The conclusions here are based on interviews with 60 members of the community, 20 NGO staff members and 20 other stakeholders. The qualitative interviews focused on the work of the NGOs to reduce bonded and child labour and were therefore structured around the key intervention activities. It is worth noting that because we observed little difference between the perceptions of staff and those of the communities, we have integrated their statements into the conclusions. Where appropriate, we also draw here on relevant Freedom Fund documentation to contextualise the findings.

Awareness raising and linking people to opportunities to make alternative choices

The awareness-raising process has been carried out successfully. Analysis of the 60 qualitative interviews using NVivo software showed that almost all of those interviewed understood what exploitative labour was and that being paid an advance was a warning sign of bonded labour situations, as well as the reasons why child marriage and child labour were not a good idea. Similarly, messages about the benefits of education and good health-seeking behaviour have got through. Awareness raising in this programme is directly linked to opportunities to make life changes by supporting mutual aid initiatives and linking people to loans, scholarships and other educational benefits offered by the programme and government public services.

Group formation and development

Groups have provided a space within which awareness of bonded labour and confidence to take action against bonded labour, child marriage, etc. can be built. They also provide the foundation for collective action, which is necessary in order to put knowledge into action and 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.

To maintain a group – any group – it is important that members have enough in common to want to be together. It is important that girls, for example, have a space of their own within which to build confidence. Self-help groups, which focus on loans, and Action Research Groups, which have generated innovative solutions both to the causes and consequences of bonded labour, and workers' groups, which have been able to generate changes within the mills, have all contributed to a tapestry of collective organisation. 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. As we have seen, groups have been the mechanism that has allowed awareness raising to turn into action. Evidence shows that groups have organised collectively to improve conditions – such as securing toilet breaks, reducing harassment and making safety equipment available – and wages in the mills; addressing alcohol abuse / banning the sale of alcohol; increasing spending and savings within households and villages; encouraging health-seeking behaviour; and prevent school dropouts, etc. The strategy of implementation through groups has been effective.

A number of interview respondents reported that some groups are now taking their own actions without the direct support of the NGOs. This is a strong sign of sustainability.

Examples from the Action Research Groups in the box below illustrate the kinds of actions being taken, but autonomous action was also reported by interviewees in other groups.

Box 2.1: The action research process in the Southern India hotspot

The action-research process in the Southern India hotspot involved 12 Action Research Groups, two each supported by six of the Tamil Nadu NGOs, using a systemic action research approach. This action has led to the spread of autonomous community action and the incorporation of innovation into the NGOs' programmes. The following list outlines the innovations that started in the village and were picked up by other villages and NGOs. Some of the most exciting innovations were:

Household and village income and expenditure analysis – Detailed village surveys of income and expenditure patterns (initiated by one village) revealed that villagers were spending up to 20 per cent of their income on festivals, marriage gifts and money to the temple; a further 10 per cent on alcohol; and nearly 20 per cent on paying back high-interest loans taken from moneylenders. This led to: (a) villagers negotiating dramatic reductions in the amount they gave to the temple; and (b) mutual agreements across villages to reduce the amount they spent on gifts to each other. This demonstrated that customs that have been in place for decades – and even centuries – could be shifted if people had the knowledge they needed. Across all six of the NGOs, eight out of 12 of the Action Research Groups adopted and adapted this process.

Alcohol – Removal of alcohol shops from the villages, leading to a significant reduction in drinking and alcohol-related expenditure and to an increase in men working. This in turn contributed to a reduction in household expenses and associated high-interest loans. Seven out of the 12 groups took substantial action on alcohol. These groups were particularly successful at taking collective action to reduce their household expenses, thereby reducing the need for high-interest loans from middlemen.

Water, sanitation and health – A wide range of actions on water, sanitation and health, again leading to a reduction in health expenses and high-interest loans.

Moneylenders – The successful banning of moneylenders from a number of villages; agreements with middlemen in one village that women were not responsible for men's debts; and agreement in another that only women could take out loans.

School dropouts – Extensive mapping of children who were not in school followed by household-specific support from the action research groups so that families could keep girls and boys under 18 in school.

A large number of groups have been set up. If the 230 self-help groups are included, the target number of groups in the logframe was 1,830 and the 2018 aggregated monitoring data show 2,534, indicating that the target for group set-up has been exceeded. It is worth noting though that this cumulative total breaks down as follows: 746 (2015), 1,013 (2016), 659 (2017) and 116 (2018). This indicates that, once all of the villages have the appropriate number of groups, it then make sense to shift the local programme focus either to target the 10–15 per cent hardest to reach, or to extend the programme to new villages where the impact may be as high as it has been in the original village, or both.

Confidence to speak out and challenge exploitation

Community members reported increased confidence and ability to speak within the groups. The evaluators also witnessed people speaking out openly in the groups. However, it is evident that power still plays a major part when it comes to voices being heard in formal

political structures. Some interviewees reported that panchayats in their own right are discussing the issues more, but this discussion is not necessarily rooted in communities' experience.

Real and perceived political exclusion is obviously not unique or specific to people living in communities affected by bondage. But we are not convinced that the NGOs have developed an effective strategy for really engaging panchayat leaders and members on community issues, or dealing with the underlying power issues. As a result, this part of their work has not been effective.

This has been complicated by the fact that the local panchayats have not yet held an election in over two years, meaning that essentially the meetings are being run by *de facto* officials who are not fully accountable to the communities. This is important because the long-term sustainability of this work will depend on democratising the formal local structures.

Engagement and empowerment of women

There is definitely 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; ability to make decisions about household spending; 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.

However, it is important to note that livelihood initiatives can also increase the amount of work women do and that the programme has not made specific efforts to reduce the burdens of unpaid care on women. It is also clear that child marriage is decreasing, and girls are increasingly likely to get the same educational opportunities as boys. However, girls' school performance does not directly translate into increased or even equal pay.

Girls outperform boys in many countries without this having a clear impact on their income, political participation or unpaid care duties. Taboos remain in some communities. There are reported cases of girls – many with mental health issues – who are 'married off' by their families when they return from bonded labour; of women not being able to make themselves heard in formal panchayat meetings; and of sexual harassment, both in the home and the workplace. Wider questions of the balance of women's work in the household may be largely unaddressed. So, while significant progress is being made, the overall picture is mixed.

Caste

Repeated evidence from the interviews indicated that a great deal of the more superficial manifestations of casteism have significantly diminished. Deeper ones, 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 and organise in villages that are almost by definition mostly composed of lower-caste households, but the interviews suggest there is no specific strategy relating to caste

Rescue and rehabilitation

NGO work on rescue and more generally bringing people out of bonded labour appeared to be widely accepted by community interview respondents. In most cases, 'rescue' means enabling girls to decide to leave a mill; working with their families to change their circumstances and mindset, so that leaving is possible; and ensuring community mobilisation to sustain the effort to bring the girls out. There is rarely a physical rescue involving police.

There is generally a strong belief that follow-up is happening, and that families are being supported with effective financial and livelihood strategies. On the other hand, there is room for improvement. One external stakeholder suggested the need for more monitoring, and there is a worrying trend of simply marrying off women who have been brought out of bondage, which can take them out of sight of NGOs, meaning they do not receive post-trauma aftercare.

Livelihoods and skill training initiatives

Both preventative and remedial livelihood support are reported by respondents. A number of respondents identified cases of people who had transformed their lives economically through this support and of people now working in sustainable businesses. This suggests that training is being targeted at actual economic opportunities. What was not clear from the interviews was the ratio of training given to successful livelihood opportunities, or whether they were reaching the most vulnerable people. If the last 10–20 per cent of bonded labourers are to be reached, then these issues will need to be addressed.

Training and livelihoods work is highly relevant in this case, but only if the training is for jobs that can actually exist. Generally, the training appears to be delivered efficiently and respondents reported cases in which it has led to effective outcomes for families that now have an alternative to bondage. Ultimately, replacing mill jobs with better jobs and or improving conditions within the mills is what will make the strategy sustainable. However, as we see below, concern remains about how to extend the gains made in local communities to new migrant labour from the north.

While the 2018 impact monitoring data show the number of enterprises started (1,647 by the end of 2018), there are no data on how many of these survived. It is very important that these data are collected and that the outcomes are further researched.

Children's education and school dropouts

There has clearly been a concerted effort by NGOs to communicate the value of education, combined with concrete material and practical support to enable families to act. Community participants consistently express a view that education will be the 'magic bullet' that pulls their children out of poverty. While the message is important and access to education is a right for all children, it is also unrealistic for many, as livelihoods that profit from education simply do not exist in the short term for very many people.

However, education is a child's right and has many immaterial benefits. Also, while children are in school, they are not in full-time child labour. This area of work is perhaps the clearest example of the ways in which the NGOs, community support groups, and adolescent girls' and boys' groups have worked together to monitor dropouts and take action to support families to keep their children in school. Overall, the qualitative interviews appear to support the view that work preventing school dropouts has been widespread and effective at community level. The critical issue that remains is the quality of the education itself.

Middlemen and brokers

It is very encouraging to see serious action being taken on abusive middlemen. While labour intermediaries can provide useful services, work to reduce the power of abusive middlemen is relevant because they are the ones who usually draw people into bondage through promises of advances. An important learning from this is that in order to be effective local people have to be collectively organised. Individuals usually cannot successfully challenge abusive middlemen and brokers. With support from NGOs that could help spread success stories, we think this has a chance of sustainable growth in the same way as the household expenses process did. This can be considered as extremely promising early work.

Engagement with the mills

This is another example of promising early success. NGOs we talked to in the initial scoping discussions were not even sure that they would get access to the mills. Yet some of the NGOs have managed to be very successful in setting up ICCs. Others have had more difficulty and had to take it slowly. The Freedom Fund's 2018 Southern India Annual Report records that '10 of our partners supported 98 ICCs' in the second half of 2018. By mid-2019 this had increased to 193 ICCs.

These are not distributed evenly. In interviews, NGO G reported ICCs in 25 mills with 15–18 members in each and NGO P reported ICCs in 39 mills. NGO L, while focusing on nine mills has, set up ICCs in four mills, but has had difficulty getting access to them. Similarly, NGO M has set up ICCs in three mills. Nevertheless, the fact that so much progress has been made on establishing ICCs and wider dialogue with mill owners on conditions and wages demonstrates the persistence of the NGOs and, again, the power of collective organisation. There appears to be strong external recognition of the achievements of NGOs in engaging with the mills. An external stakeholder with specialist knowledge of child labour reported that NGOs have supported ICC formation. NGO programmes have raised mill workers' awareness of their rights and helped them form questions for the mill survey. NGOs have helped migrant workers to get identity papers. And they have identified problems at grassroots level and given us information about child labour and migrant-related issues. At district level, NGOs are members of the committee that works on children's issues. At mill level, NGOs maintain records and provide follow-up support. They identify defaulting companies and support monitoring activities. Health and hygiene issues in the company are identified by NGOs and verified photographically. This provides evidence to support action. Children who are rescued are followed up on. One child has become a doctor after such constant follow-up by NGOs.

The extent to which relationships have been built up with mills, and their wider knowledge of the transfer process within villages, are indicated by these reflections from Mill HR representatives:

*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.
(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 [film-based curriculum] 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.
(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 person] 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)

Migration

Many interviewees reported an influx of migrants from other parts of India. Migrants can be vulnerable to the offer of advances. As one external stakeholder said: 'Regarding the child labour we thought it has reduced that we had worked much but with the migrants coming in the problem is that we need to focus on the migrants.'

NGOs are interested to work with migrants, but reportedly struggle to track them. Migrants can move from mill to mill every few weeks or months, facilitated through labour intermediaries. Movement also makes it very hard for them to collectivise and organise, or to build any sort of solidarity-based relationships with local workers. As conditions improve for the village workers, the mill owners may shift their efforts to recruiting a more exploitable migrant workforce, much as local girls replaced men in the late 1980s.

This is an increasingly problematic area that NGOs are aware of, but have not yet got to grips with. The extent of the issue needs to be researched and priority should be given to this issue in the next phase of any work. Improving the pay and conditions of local workers sets a baseline and helps establish a set of new norms. These need to be embedded for all workers, otherwise village workers will simply be replaced by even more exploited migrant workers. Our view is that establishing new norms for the local workforce lays the foundations for extending them to new migrant workers, but this needs to be a deliberate focus.

Policy, public dialogues and liaison with government departments

The interviews with NGOs reported evidence of functional linkages with government departments including police and child protection agencies. Most comments by stakeholders in the interviews related to the ways in which NGOs are working with government agencies:

Overall most of the welfare programmes have been supported by the NGO especially the ICC formation and hostel registration support; identification of child labour, child marriage and other child related information is passed to us and we are given awareness of their works; district level officers meeting was done with the mill owners, collector, all government officers participated in the importance of the ICC and resource person was arranged by the NGO fully.

(Member of Social Welfare Board)

We have been able to enter difficult to enter villages because of the NGO's prior interaction with the villages and their rapport within the community.

(External stakeholder)

Sexual abuse cases are referred to the CSC. (Child Welfare Committee members) Because of the association with the NGO, our workload has been reduced because they are able to address the issues such as bonded labour, child abuse and school dropouts.

(Childline officer)

NGOs act as a bridge to the government and village people... they serve as a guide for the people to get the benefits offered by government departments... They are very helpful for our work and we also support them.

(Block development officer, NGO M)

The clear message that came through from these interviews is that these links are valued. What was also clear, however, is that it has been easier to engage at the district than the state level. There are examples of higher-level activities such as the postcard campaign in support of the Trafficking in Persons Bill; and programme staff interviewed saw the Tamil Nadu Alliance as a very important vehicle both for public dialogues with policymakers, as well as more direct feedback and provision of information by the organisations. Nevertheless, it seems that NGOs have found it harder to gain traction here.

Alcohol

Alcoholism is perceived to be a widespread and growing problem, which is directly contributing to bonded labour. It leads to loans directly for alcohol, and reportedly results in men not working to their full capacity or potential. This therefore limits families' income, leading women to take low-paid, bonded roles in the mills. Successful action was modelled in the Action Research Groups. This included establishing the amounts of money spent on alcohol within household budgets and various approaches to either closing down liquor stores or moving them further away to lower alcohol consumption.

As the discussions evolved, greater emphasis was placed on harm reduction than on eradication. This community-rooted approach can be considered successful, although care needs to be taken to ensure that men are not scapegoated and blamed for structural changes that have replaced male labour in the workforce with cheaper women's labour, damaging self-esteem and leading to mental health crises to which the response can be alcohol.

3 Evaluation findings

3.1 Relevance of design and implementation

Do 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?

Overall, the focus of the hotspot and the activities that have been carried out within the hotspot are relevant.

The hotspot approach

The hotspot approach focuses interventions on areas of high prevalence where there is potential for significant impact. The hotspot approach was appropriate. It allowed a geographical concentration of resources, enabling NGOs to provide specific support to individuals and households to access services needed once awareness about various issues – such as labour violations and labour rights, the right to education and women's rights – had been achieved.

The programmatic focus

The focus on community-based activities in (source) communities was justified as the awareness and mobilisation that was achieved through local group development was cited in the interviews as being the catalyst for change, both at the community level and in the mills. This motivation for alternative practices can be acted upon in the affected communities through a referral system that links a range of services through the community-based groups.

The intervention model

The core of the model is a preventative approach rooted in a combination of awareness, empowerment and support strategies. Awareness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for individual behaviour change and/or collective action. But there is strong reported evidence from the interviews that awareness has led to action. It has only been possible because people are also linked to other forms of support. A multi-activity strategy is particularly important to successful interventions in the poorest and most marginalised communities, which cannot, for example, benefit from available education unless they have livelihood support and finance to access it. We attribute much of the success of this programme to the implementation of multiple parallel interventions, including work with the mill owners.

Activities

The activities NGOs support are all relevant, though to varying degrees. They include awareness raising, group formation, linking to services, psychosocial support, legal support, rescue, engagement with mill owners and dialogues to inform people about government policies.

Some issues remain, such as health, which still need greater attention. Adolescent girls' groups discussed receiving of information on personal hygiene, vaccinations, infant care, etc.; health awareness camps, etc. were reported. To a lesser extent, the problem of high-interest loans comes when families face a health crisis. The prevalence figures show that health remains the biggest reason for getting these loans.

The one issue that appears time and again on communities' agendas, but which is not substantively built into NGOs' work programmes, is alcoholism. The Action Research showed that a harm reduction approach driven by local communities can work well. There is a need for increased attention on the poor conditions endured by incoming migrants, both for the immigrants themselves and because of the effect they can have on the collective bargaining power of labour.

A resurgence of organ trafficking in power loom locations was reported in the interviews. The extent of this re-emergence and its particular relationship to the organisation of labour in the power loom locations needs to be researched.

Ownership

Almost all community respondents were happy with their local NGOs, noting that staff members were cordial and on time and had provided good information. There is acknowledgement by external stakeholders of the quality of the work of the NGOs, with some explicitly stating that their work was enhanced by that of the NGOs. They are informed by the NGOs and they can refer to them. This suggests that stakeholders consider the work of the NGOs on these issues to be relevant.

It is not at all clear that panchayats are fully buying into the agenda, or that they feel 'ownership' of the hotspot or local NGO agenda. Perhaps understandably, there is greater buy-in to the idea of challenging bonded labour than active community engagement of the poorest members in a community, especially if this is in a large, mixed-caste village.

Phasing of interventions

Relevance is highly dynamic. What may be relevant in a community at one time, may not be relevant a few years later. It is our view that the Southern India hotspot needs a nuanced approach to phasing (see Recommendations), taking into account the stage of development of a community and the particular constituencies the hotspot is targeting. For example,

communities that have strong groups with autonomous local champions could be supported to develop Action Research Groups.

Similarly, communities that have already made some serious ground with ICCs in mills can be supported to develop workers' groups. New intervention communities on the other hand can focus on awareness and group set-up activities. Relevance also needs to be differentiated between groups. A programme to identify school dropouts is not going to be relevant to the very poorest, whose children must work if the family is to eat. Similarly, while some might be able to get out of bondage by accessing public services and changing their spending and borrowing habits, others will get nowhere without a meaningful alternative livelihood.

3.2 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?

Overall, the programme has been effective.

Prevalence reduction

The very large reduction in the prevalence of bonded labour in the intervention villages – from 56 per cent of households to 11 per cent between the 2016 baseline and 2018 endline – suggests that the interventions have made a major contribution to prevalence reduction. While some of this reduction could be associated with national trends, this is unlikely to have accounted for a drop of this magnitude. This suggests a major contribution from the Freedom Fund interventions. It is the view of the evaluation team that the bottom-up evidence generated by the research shows how interventions targeted at communities /households/ individuals affected by bonded labour have contributed to a reduction in bonded labour prevalence in this geographical hotspot.

Multiple intervention strategy

The way in which multiple types of interventions combine – often at the same time – enables a concerted yet flexible response to different problems that contribute to bondage in these communities. This rich diversity of interventions means that we cannot say which intervention is the magic bullet that can be scaled up to ensure universal success. What we can say is that a bottom-up approach that stimulates and facilitates collective organisation and local action, combined with a variety of NGO interventions that allow for a flexible response to specific household problems, is effective in reducing the prevalence of bonded labour in the intervention communities. The interventions are targeted at communities directly affected by the problem, which can be a subsection of a village.

Intervention effectiveness

Interviews suggest that **awareness raising and group mobilisation interventions have been effective** in generating the motivation to change individual, family and collective behaviours in intervention communities. There is reported evidence that awareness raising has led to greater knowledge of dangers and confidence to speak out. It has also led directly to action to combat bonded labour. For example, people have made different spending

choices; mobilised around school dropouts; shifted social norms on child labour and child marriage; acted with caution towards traffickers and middlemen (and in some cases acted against them); requested improvements in wages and conditions based on knowledge of their rights; and taken autonomous action on a range of bondage-related issues. These interventions and activities, which link people to services, entitlements and safe loans, are the only interventions that have reached the numbers that might account for the reduction in prevalence.

There is reported evidence from the interviews that people's economic circumstances have improved as a result of livelihood programmes.

Tackling the symptoms or the systemic drivers?

Bringing individuals out of bondage will usually provide long-term benefits to those individuals, although there was reported evidence from the qualitative interviews: (a) of some people brought out of bondage re-entering bonded relationships later; and (b) of those who leave being replaced by migrants from other parts of India. This has the danger of undermining the programme's systemic effectiveness. However, in the long term it sets new norms and expectations that over time are likely to extend to migrants and other workers.

Improving conditions in the mills

Most of the NGOs interviewed claim to have set up a significant number of ICCs in mills: Freedom Fund reports a total of 188 committees established across the hotspot. Both community and NGO interviewees reported improvements in conditions, which included reductions in the level of sexual harassment; provision of safety equipment; proper toilet breaks; a reduction in the numbers of people required to do long shifts (this may not be the case for migrants); and, in some cases, increases in pay can be considered to be promising.

The work of the Tamil Nadu Alliance

Its work in engaging the government for change and support behind the scenes on policy implementation is also promising. It is a good example of the way in which effective network development has been able to mobilise multiple actors beyond the intervention areas.

Wages

Reported data on wage levels (unverified) given to the research team during the scoping and in the life story analysis, and two and a half years later in the qualitative interviews, suggest a significant improvement. In the former, reported wages ranged between Rs150 and Rs250 per day. In the latter, there were many reports of people getting well over Rs300. Interviewees attributed this to the way in which awareness training told them what they should expect, which appears to have given them a stronger bargaining position.

Residual bondage

While there has clearly been a marked reduction in prevalence as a result of the hotspot approach, the evidence both from the prevalence research and the qualitative interviews shows that there remains a hardcore of 10–15 per cent which will not shift as a result either of greater awareness or managing household finances and loans better. The key question that remains unanswered is the extent to which the livelihood initiatives are targeted at the very poorest, who depend on child labour to survive, and whether wrap-around packages of support are being provided to these people.

One might argue that this also gets to the heart of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda. While the Millennium Development Goals targeted the low-hanging fruit, the SDGs have been more explicitly aimed at those hardest to reach. Of course, all bonded labourers

and child labourers might be included in this category, but there is a harder-to-reach group within this category that probably requires a different focus of activity.

Is the priority for Freedom Fund to spread this successful model to other villages and radically reduce prevalence in the same way as has been achieved in the first phase? Or is it to eradicate the worst and most resistant forms of bondage, which will take a different focus? It is important to be realistic about what NGOs can do for the poorest people, as in every society there are groups who need lifelong state support. This suggests that the best strategy for the Freedom Fund may be to continue to engage with officials for effective government provisions for the very poorest, while developing programmes to keep the wider local population out of bondage.

Follow-up

Some concern was expressed about the monitoring of and follow-up on people who have been supported by NGO interventions. In particular, there is a need to ensure that women who come out of bondage have effective mental health support; that women are not assumed to be OK if they are married off; and that government loans are actually going towards livelihood development, rather than paying off previous loans or for marriage, housing costs, etc.

3.3 Efficiency

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

Overall, the programme has been moderately efficient.

Community-level work

The interventions community respondents mentioned most often were awareness-raising activities and the groups. NGOs identified these two activities as the most important ones, but they also stressed the importance of work on preventing school dropouts and on setting up ICCs and other work in the mills. These activities align closely with the strategy articulated in the Freedom Fund logframe (Annexe 4). Logframe indicators have been exceeded, although this may in part be because the level of bonded labour was underestimated prior to the participatory statistics exercise. We were unable to get a breakdown of hotspot budget by activity so cannot determine whether spending aligns with the domains that these constituencies see as most important.

The Freedom Fund's Mid-2019 Monitoring Summary indicates that a number of the interventions have experienced **diminishing returns** over the years. This is clearly depicted in a key table from the report (Table 3.3).

Table 3.1: Summary of Freedom Fund interventions (2015–mid 2019)

Global indicator	Southern India					Cumulative total at mid-2019
	Cumulative total at end-2015	2016 total new	2017 total new	2018 total new	Mid-2019 total new	
1 Lives impacted	13,345	32,344	22,981	24,911	7,886	101,467
2 Victims liberated	32	634	1,676	1,176	332	3,850
3 Individuals accessing social & legal services	24	3,417	24,638	28,270	13,545	69,894
3a Survivors accessing social & legal services	24	1,078	2,146	3,603	1,293	8,144
4 Community freedom groups supported	746	1,013	659	116	118	2,652
4a Members of community freedom groups	11,288	15,252	11,683	2,567	3,318	44,108
5 At-risk children in school	169	456	1,447	789	276	3,137
6 Graduates of vocational training	68	850	810	790	423	2,941
7 Micro-enterprises started	59	277	559	752	220	1,867
8 Individuals with new access to government services	254	1,698	4,041	4,897	4,486	15,376
9 Legal cases assisted	12	142	175	122	51	502
10 Arrests	1	1	4	5	7	18
11 Convictions	-	-	-	1	3	4
12 Changes in public policy	-	3	7	7	5	22
13 Media stories	38	132	172	170	122	634

Source: Freedom Fund (2019)

This trend should not be regarded as unexpected or unanticipated. The Freedom Fund programme manager interpreted the downward trends in some of these data as follows:

- Liberations – these peaked in 2017 and then gradually went down marginally, as there were only a finite number of people in the communities where partners are working that they could liberate. As the programme progresses you would expect that the pool of people to liberate would go down since they would have already been liberated in previous programme years, so we think this explains that trend.
- Community freedom groups and group members – keep in mind that this figure is looking only at ‘new’ and not existing groups, so the number hit a peak in 2016 as partners were forming groups for the first time so all groups and group members were counted as ‘new’. Then, as the programme progressed and groups were already formed and functioning, the number of new groups started to decline and new group members went down as well, since all existing members were not counted as new and this figure is just a reflection of any new people that were joining existing groups.
- At-risk children in school – similar to liberations, this number went down as there is only a limited pool of individuals in existing communities to get back into school. This number peaked in 2017 after partners undertook extensive outreach work and villages committed to becoming school dropout-free communities. After this initial wave, there were fewer children out of school, so fewer for partners to help re-enrol. This makes complete sense. What flows from this logically is that in terms of sheer numbers liberated or enrolled in school, there are diminishing returns to investments in particular villages. After 2–3 years, the package of services needs to re-focus on support to the very poorest families while maintaining the groups that exist, and at the same time rolling out group development, awareness raising interventions and linking to public services interventions to new villages.

Work in the mills

Despite the difficulties with engaging mill owners in dialogue, persisting was an efficient use of resources, with potential for high impact. As indicated above, this has led to reported improvements in conditions and, in some cases, pay.

Policy engagement with businesses and government

While the work with brands and high-level policy intervention is relevant and attractive, the evaluation team do not consider it to be the most efficient use of resources to shift the focus of the programme in this direction. The team's view is that there is strong evidence that what the programme has implemented works, while on the other hand there is a real dearth of evidence on whether interventions with businesses or policymakers work (Oosterhoff *et al.* 2019). (See also 4.2 Recommendations – Policy engagement with businesses and government.)

Freedom Fund staff team

The Freedom Fund programme advisors on the ground have been particularly effective. Some of the factors that we believe to be critical are that: they have an unusual combination of credibility with grass-roots communities, NGOs and links to wider institutions; they have adopted a targeted community development approach; they saw the Action Research as a modality for 'doing' the work from day one and integrated into the work plan; they had strong research and communication experience and understood the importance of evidence and how to use it for programming and communicate it.

The evaluation team's interaction with the Freedom Fund team over the period of four years has consistently demonstrated that the quality of strategic programme support staff for the Southern India programme has been high. Aside from their professional management competencies, we have been impressed by the learning culture that they have instilled, the relational approach to change that they have nurtured, and their personal passion and commitment to the programme.

The team clearly understands how to put a community development approach to change into operation. The consistency of support for this programme over time has enabled continuity, learning and the establishment and maintenance of long-term relationships. It has allowed trust to build, and communities to develop the skills for autonomous action.

3.4 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 learned from programme interventions and can they give examples of how these can be applied elsewhere? What can the community members and adolescents now do for themselves?

Overall, the programme displays the potential for real long-term sustainability, but it has weaknesses in its lack of theories of change (in particular, in relation to scaling), and in monitoring outcomes for individuals and households. The latter means that it is very difficult to judge long-term impact. A potential threat to sustainable impact is migration.

Changes in NGO practices

NGOs have diversified their activities to create a much more multi-pronged intervention and have rooted their work in the development of community groups. They have developed a range of new skills, including informing government policies and implementation, Action Research, etc. The critical shift in perspective among the NGOs is understanding that communities themselves can drive change, and that NGOs will be more effective if they can harness the power of the communities. By and large, they have done this.

Awareness

Once people are aware of the issues it is not possible for them to unlearn them. The knowledge they have is then transferred to friends and family and neighbouring villages, and others working at the same mills and so on. There is always the risk of misinformation spreading, but the programme has avoided this with repeated awareness-raising and information initiatives. A great deal of research has shown that awareness campaigns alone do not result in behaviour change when people cannot act upon them. However, through a range of interventions and services accessible through the groups, people have been able to act upon information. As a result, there have been major changes in customary practices and norms; for example, communities report child labour is no longer accepted in many villages.

Group autonomy

NGO and community respondents alike reported that more than half of the groups that had been set up in intervention villages were now independent and autonomous. **The groups take a wide range of actions autonomously**, from pushing for better services locally, to monitoring school dropouts and child marriages, organising against middlemen and organising action through the Action Research Groups.

Schools and education

The critical issue related to sustainability is the quality of teaching and facilities – especially for girls – and the extent to which there is a culture of inclusivity in schools. While it is clear that communities are mobilising very effectively to get children back into school, there are many examples of children who leave school because of the quality of the teaching or because there are no sanitation facilities for girls, or because lower-caste children are discriminated against.

Livelihoods

There is interview evidence that training is leading to jobs that are real and sustainable. However, it is unclear whether the numbers of successful stories evidenced in the qualitative interviews can be extrapolated to denote significant change at hotspot level. Some concern has been expressed that government loans for livelihoods need to be monitored more carefully, as people are spending them on other things such as repairing their houses, marriage costs and paying off other loans.

Engagement with mill owners and management

This is very much in its early stages, but there is reported evidence of significant improvements in pay and conditions in some of the mills. The establishment of ICCs in a significant number of mills is an institutional change and may be sustainable. However, whether it is effective depends on what is done with the complaints. The interviews reported changes in levels of harassment and improvements in toilet breaks and safety provisions. Collating detailed monitoring on these issues in the mills would improve the Freedom Fund's understanding of how best to extend its work.

Growing presence of migrant labourers

Improved conditions for village workers due to the availability of alternative employment may be sustainable, but the influx of migrants may lead to the perpetuation of conditions of bondage for a new constituency. This threat should be seen as a programming priority.

How scaling happens

While the logframe indicates how activities lead to outcomes, the programme has no explicit theory of change for scaling and sustainability. From interviews with five headquarters staff,

we identified five different interpretations of how they understood scale and sustainability were happening. Loosely speaking these are:

- The successful community development approach has built awareness, ownership and capacity for action, which will lead to the championing and spread of the process and solutions to problems from village to village and from organisation to organisation. This approach builds movements, which put pressure on decision makers to make more strategic changes.
- A successful community-based programme, with strong investment in evidence gathering, and which has demonstrated effectiveness through a large reduction in prevalence, is a model that can be extended in this programme and beyond.
- This programme models the viability of an approach that can be mainstreamed into government and other organisational practices.
- The programme has built a base for engagement with government and other decision makers, which can now be harnessed for greater impact. Resources in the second phase will be better used if diverted to a more strategic level.
- Getting to the root causes and focusing on prevention will make the results more extensive and sustainable.

One interviewee contrasted the perspectives of ‘changing the systems that allow bonded labour to be perpetuated’ and ‘changing the supply chain and the textile industry’. This tension is still very much alive. The evaluation team sees merit in putting resources into institutional mainstreaming and stronger engagement with government departments and businesses. But, the team would strongly argue that the programme is already modelling horizontal scaling out, which will provide a much stronger foundation for long-term policy change and effective regulation than direct engagement with the government and businesses.

As the programme reaches increasing numbers of people and villages, it builds knowledge for policy dialogues, models effective change processes and builds a critical mass of pressure on the next levels up in the system (e.g. the panchayats). In other words, the evaluation team believes that ground-level scaling is necessary to underpin systemic change at institutional level.

The Freedom Fund has been successful in accessing the targeted level of match funding for the C&A Foundation’s grant. This is encouraging in terms of the sustainability of the programme, giving the groups enough time to build their capacity and become autonomous and sustainable. The Freedom Fund has reported that it has secured additional funding from UBS Optimus Foundation for the Southern India hotspot

Overall performance of the programme

The scope of our work did not include any verification of the Freedom Fund’s monitoring data, nor did it include the work on brands or journalism. Work in the mills was referred to by the interviewees, but is not quantifiable. Work on policy and engagement with the government was referred to by qualitative interviewees, but in less detail and with a less clear indication of overall effectiveness.

With these caveats in mind, our review of the October 2019 logframe assessment provided by the Freedom Fund suggests that community-focused activities and activities that relate to engagement with the mills are consistent with the findings of our research, and that the trends indicated in their monitoring of key performance indicators over time are broadly consistent with the findings in the qualitative interview assessment (although not verifiable within the scope of our work).

Overall the programme has been successful

The awareness raising and group development activities have worked well. Some aspects of the programme, such as the *Call me Priya* film-based curriculum and progress made on engaging mill owners, have exceeded expectations. Important innovations such as the household expense analysis have emerged from the Action Research Groups and offer considerable potential for scaling. Similarly, the Tamil Nadu Alliance is well placed to make effective policy interventions.

4 Lessons and recommendations

4.1 Lessons

Follow-up and monitoring of outcomes for individuals and households is very important and according to interview respondents is not systematically embedded in the programme. The hotspot currently has no means of tracking and assessing long-term outcomes for individuals and households. It is hard to see if initiatives are sustainable without this. This could either be carried out by NGOs or through external evaluations.

It is crucial to keep on top of the shifting context. Increased migration has the potential to replace exploited village workers with migrant workers. It is important to note the diminishing returns of interventions in individual villages. It is also important for the initiative to remain agile. Once saturation point has been reached in, for example, awareness and or setting up groups, then these activities should shift to new villages.

4.2 Recommendations for the C&A Foundation

Continue to invest in community-based change processes

Not only have they had a demonstrable impact on reducing prevalence in target local communities, they also have also modelled a successful, large-scale, community-based, systemic change process. Community-based programmes on this scale are few and far between. The success of this model is significant not just to the modern bonded labour field, but to the wider development sector. It is recommended that the C&A Foundation continue to fund this extensive community-level work.

Policy engagement with businesses and government

Building on our conclusions above, while the evaluation team find the work with brands and high-level policy intervention to be relevant, we would not consider it to be the most efficient use of resources to shift the focus of the programme in this direction. The most efficient and effective use of resources is to build on the successful investment that has already been made. The famous quote ‘stick to the knitting’ from Peters and Waterman in their 1982 book *In Search of Excellence* is relevant here: do what you are already doing well.

Oosterhoff *et al.* (2019)’s evidence map of modern bonded labour also suggests that there is a real dearth of information on whether interventions with businesses or policymakers work. On the other hand, there is strong evidence from this research – and other studies – that the sort of targeted community-led intervention that the Freedom Fund has been carrying out does work. It is not the team’s view that the C&A Foundation should abandon all policy work at state or federal levels, but rather it should recognise that pressure for changes at these levels is likely to be strongest where it is responding to community activism rooted in the awareness campaigns and group development work that Freedom Fund and the C&A Foundation have catalysed, and in modelling effective alternatives such as ICCs.

Invest in good research to fill critical knowledge gaps

What has become clear from both our own research in the hotspot and a parallel systematic review led by Oosterhoff *et al.* (2019) is that there is a real dearth of evidence on what works. Their work showed that between 2008 and 2018 there were only 23 studies of bonded labour, debt bondage or domestic servitude. They state that there are ‘noticeable gaps in research... among which industry interventions were poorly represented.’ There are no studies of consumer-oriented interventions, and few studies that look at perpetrators (moneylenders, traffickers, employers). Legislative and policy change interventions are not well represented in the evidence base. Investing in robust research and mixed methods impact assessments could be a valuable contribution to the sector.

Invest for the long term

System change is a long-term process. Communities are gradually building awareness and capacity, generating solutions to their problems, extending their learning horizontally, and mobilising their knowledge towards change in workplace practices and policy. This takes time and the IDS–Praxis team strongly recommends that the C&A Foundation builds on what has been achieved and continues to invest in the hotspot.

Broaden the definition of systemic change

At present, the implicit understanding of system change is that by changing the practice of high-level policy actors the wider system changes. By system change, the IDS–Praxis team means *change that shifts the system dynamics that drive bonded labour in such a way as to eliminate or at least reduce it*. Within complex systems, system dynamics are interrelated. Thus, it will only be possible to keep girls in school if work is done on basic livelihoods, etc. Similarly if people are unaware of their situation then they will stay locked within the norms and assumptions that have governed their communities for decades (Burns and Worsley 2015). What this points to is that there needs to be a clear systemic analysis of the interconnections between these complex factors, and multi-activity interventions at many levels to ensure that everything is in place to ‘hold’ a family that is trying to move out of bondage.

IDS research leading up to the SDGs clearly showed that the lives of people living in the most extreme poverty were particularly complex and required more complex, interconnected interventions. In other words, for poor families it may be enough to provide education services. But, for very poor families, this needs to be accompanied by livelihoods work; work on rights; shifts in people’s understanding of norms related to child labour and marriage; work on entitlements to benefits and so on. Similarly, system change at the level of the mills requires institutional work with the mills, but also pressure from individuals who have a knowledge of their rights and who are collectively organised.

System change requires an understanding of the complexity and non-linearity of how change happens. It is the view of IDS–Praxis that effective policy change is mostly likely to come from mobilising evidence generated by local communities and the legitimacy that their testimony provides; local social norm changes (such as not accepting exploitation as a given); and political mobilisation, which puts pressure on politicians and policymakers to act. There is a real danger of conflating policy and legislative changes with system change. In fact, a great deal of policy change has happened, but it has not been either implemented or enforced. Similarly, brands have ‘cleaned up’ the most visible layers of their supply chains but have often displaced extreme exploitation into the hidden domains of supply chains. This is not to say that it is not useful work, but it requires political pressure from the ground up to put pressure on those who have influence to use it.

4.3 Recommendations for the Freedom Fund

Continue with the general policy of community development

The hotspot approach works and should be built on, supported by multi-stranded interventions and while ensuring that NGOs have the experience and capacity to deliver across a range of interventions.

In the villages where the Freedom Fund is already working, invest in making the groups autonomous mutual aid organisations that can initiate, create and sustain change. Support movement building through inter-group networking. This will help to mitigate the widely perceived individualisation of responses to social problems. Specifically:

- a. Expand the use of Action Research Groups as an effective way of generating sustainable community ownership of issues and community-generated solutions to locally identifiable problems. They have also demonstrated their power to support learning across NGOs.
- b. Invest in generic participatory facilitation skill training for fieldwork staff across all NGOs.

Build a staged model of intervention

Building a staged model will allow resources to be shifted between activities and then from village to village as development evolves. This can be linked to an exit strategy and should be linked to a theory of change (see below). There is a limit to the amount of new awareness work that can go on in the villages where the NGOs are already working. Monitoring data show that in most activities there are diminishing returns on interventions in each village over time. So, developing awareness campaigns and setting up groups in new villages should be seen as a priority. The Freedom Fund programme needs a nuanced approach to phasing, taking into account the stage of development of a community and the particular constituencies it is targeting.

Extend the work in mills to a greater number of mills

Consider developing new village-level programmes in other villages that supply labour to the mills that the Freedom Fund is already working with. This will increase community pressure on those mills and reduce the scope for mill owners to use a strategy of divide and rule. Be mindful of the effects of automation on the garment and textile industry, which will put large segments of the labour force out of work.

Decide what the priority for the next phase is

Decide whether the priority for the next phase of the Freedom Fund's work is to move to new villages and reduce prevalence among those who, with information and support, have a realistic opportunity to escape bondage (in the same way as has been done in the past five years or so); or whether it is to focus on a 'leave no-one behind' agenda, with the aim of reaching the remaining 10–15 per cent in bondage.

If it is the latter, it will be important to target livelihood initiatives at this group, bearing in mind that there will always be a percentage in any community – including in the global North – that struggles to make ends meet and will need long-term state support. In this case, it will be important to target individual families facing the greatest hardship with wrap-around interventions from across the full menu of current interventions and provide continuous monitoring and support to them. This will help to reduce the remaining 10–15 per cent of bonded labourers. Make sure that training and livelihood interventions are underpinned by a proper market analysis indicating that there are real and relatively sustainable jobs.

Support and develop public health initiatives and facilitate effective links to health services

Health crises are one of the biggest drivers of unsafe, high-interest loans. While communities have shown that with collective action they can mitigate other high costs through community-level action, such as wedding expenses, health expenses cannot be met that way. The types of loans the self-help groups provide cannot meet the levels of these costs. There is an ongoing need to develop initiatives to support and improve public health, especially primary and preventative health initiatives, and link people to public services and safe loans for medical expenses. Work to support access to the government's health insurance scheme should also be seen as a priority.

Continue to invest in the Tamil Nadu Alliance

This is widely seen to be effective. It provides a strong foundation for future policy work and enables learning across NGOs.

Roll out the household expenses assessment process

This has been trialled successfully in the Action Research Groups. Success in shifting norms, such as high temple payments and marriage expenses, and tackling issues such as alcoholism and middlemen will spread to other villages and over time build new norms.

Commission research on organ trafficking

Commission research to establish the extent and nature of the reported re-emergence of organ trafficking in power loom locations.

Invest more in programmes to track and support migrants

These should focus, in particular, on those living and working in extremely poor conditions.

Comprehensively collect medium- to long-term outcomes data for households

The First Time Home Visit Child Re-integration Form and Follow Up Forms used in the Northern India hotspot are good examples of how follow-up data can be recorded. It is important to follow up all interventions including rescue rehabilitation, livelihood initiatives, children in school, legal work, etc. This will help NGOs to understand how sustainable their interventions have been at family level.

Develop a clear theory of change and scaling

At present, this is not explicitly or clearly articulated. The IDS–Praxis team would argue from the evidence of this programme and others that movement-based change is likely to lead to horizontal scaling: where others take up an initiative that is working (e.g. household expenses analysis, which came from one of the Action Research Groups); where the knowledge of rights and laws moves from person to person (e.g. knowing one has the right to a minimum wage); and where political momentum can be built from local evidence (as exemplified by the work of the Tamil Nadu Alliance).

Develop a strategy for bringing knowledge of community-level change into policy spaces

Continue to invest in high-quality, locally based programme advisors

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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
Contact: Anna Raw

Background

The work carried out by IDS sits within a family of projects funded by the Freedom Fund and their partners in their 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.¹¹
- 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:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Memo summarizing the launch of the Action Research, including the topics chosen, participating NGOs and proposed timeline of action research phases | 2. July 2017 |
| 3. 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. | 4. Every four months |
| 5. 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. | 7. As advised by Geneva Global |
| | 8. May 2018 |

¹¹ 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.

6. Review workshop to discuss findings and implications with NGO partners
9. Presentation of preliminary findings on the five key research questions to C&A Foundation and the Freedom Fund. 10. July 2018
11. Workshop/ Synthesis report (4-6 Pages) shared with the C&A Foundation and the Freedom Fund. 12. 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 labour 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 labour?
- 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:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 13. Research design (including sampling protocol and field instruments) for a repeat study finalized, incorporating feedback from the Freedom Fund. | 14. December 2017/January 2018 |
| 15. Note confirming completion of field work, with data gathered on at least 2,900 households between August-December 2018. | 16. December 2018/January 2019 |
| 17. Data cleaning and data analysis. | 18. January/February 2019 |
| 19. Presentation of preliminary findings to the key research questions, for NGO partners. | 20. February/ March 2019 |

21. Presentation of preliminary findings to the key research questions, for C&A Foundation and the Freedom Fund.	22. February/March 2019
23. Draft technical report shared with C&A Foundation and the Freedom Fund. ¹²	24. April 2019
25. Final technical report and summary report (2 – 4 pages) for sharing with external stakeholders.	26. May 2019
27. Supplementary files shared with the Freedom Fund, including:	31. May 2019
28. Cleaned, anonymised data files	
29. Final version of survey instruments, in English and Tamil.	
30. Final version of field guide for data collectors.	

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.

3.1 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?

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

¹² For one round of joint review and comments.

- 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.

3.2 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).
 - (a) 20 interviews with NGO, Geneva Global & Freedom Fund staff.(Feedback on the hotspot model)
 - (b) 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.

3.2.1 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

3.3.2 Interviews with program staff and key stakeholders

(a) 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 policy work 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)

(b) 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:

32. Revisit the terms of reference and making adjustments as necessary	34. December 2018
33. Review of proposed list of target interviewees/focus groups presented by FF and Geneva Global by IDS.	35. December 2018 /January-2019
36. Interview list and discussion guides finalized	37. December 2018 /January-2019
38. Draft report shared with Freedom Fund and C&A Foundation.	39. Aug 2019
40. Presentation to Freedom Fund and C&A Foundation to discuss findings, implications and next steps.	41. Aug 2019
42. Final report and summary report (2 – 4 pages) for sharing with external stakeholders.	43. 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: Table of implementing partners

Organisation	Type of partner	When Partnership started	When Partnership ended
Centre for Action and Rural Education (CARE)	Implementing Partner	Sept 2016	Current
Centre for Education and Empowerment of the Marginalized (CEEMA)	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	March 2016
Child Voice	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	Current
The Salem Don Bosco Anbu Illam Social Service Society (Don Bosco)	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	Current
LEAF Society	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	Oct 2016
Organisation of Development Action and Maintenance (ODAM)	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	Current
Peace Trust	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	Current
People's Organization for Development (PAD)	Implementing Partner	June 2019	Current
Rights Education and Development Centre (READ)	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	Current
Serene Secular Social Service Society (5S, or SSSS)	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	Feb 2019
Society for Peoples Education and Economic Change (SPEECH)	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	Current
Trust for Education and Social Transformation (TEST)	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	Current
Tamil Nadu Rural Reconstruction Movement (TRRM)	Implementing Partner	July 2019	Current
Vaan Muhil Trust	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	Current
Vizhuthugal Social Education and Development Trust	Implementing Partner	Sept 2016	Current
Women's Organisation IN Rural Development (WORD)	Implementing Partner	Sept 2015	Current
Women's Organisation FOR Rural Development (WORD)	Implementing Partner	Dec 2016	Current
Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)	Implementing Partner	Feb 2016	Current
Access Livelihoods Consulting India Ltd.	Technical assistance: Livelihoods	Sept 2017	Aug 2018
Manonmani Trust	Technical assistance: Legal	Jan 2018	Current
Point of View	Technical assistance: SMS awareness raising	Jan 2018	Current
MS Chellamuthu Trust	Technical assistance: Mental health	Sept 2017	Current
Sanar Wellness Institute	Technical assistance: Mental health	Oct 2018	Current
Novo Media	Technical assistance: Film-based curriculum	April 2016	Oct 2017
CPA	Technical assistance: Financial	Nov 2015	Jan 2018
Centro de los Derechos del Migrante (CDM)	Technical assistance: Research/scoping study	Aug 2016	Dec 2016
Praxis	Technical assistance: Developing and piloting Community Maturity Tool	Oct 2018	Current
Thompson Reuters Foundation	Technical assistance: Journalist/media training	June 2019	Aug 2019
Kandasami & Associates	Technical assistance: Financial	June 2019	Current

Annexe 4: October 2019 logframe table

GOAL: Reduction of bonded and child labour, especially in spinning mills in Tamil Nadu.						
Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators	Baseline (as at June 2016)	Target (total for 3 years)	Results: by June 2019
CAF Forced and Child Labour outcome: Increased community capacity to prevent forced and child labour						
1.1: Provide further support to develop the adult Community Support Groups	<p>13 partner NGOs will regularly meet with approx. 370 CSGs these groups to help them formulate action steps.</p> <p>Complete training and on-going support of approx. 370 community based facilitators.</p> <p>Approx. 370 CSGs use the film-based toolkit.</p> <p>NGO partners adapt a 'Community Maturity Tool' (CMT) for measuring whether a community has</p>	<p>Increased community capacity to prevent forced and child labour</p> <p>e.g. Multiple CSGs take steps to improve performance of entitlements; address impact of alcoholism; improve use of health services; challenge brokers using risky recruitment. They persuade village government to make educational improvements; track migrants; and interact with mills to protect young workers.</p>	<p>CAF KPI 4: # Community structures in place to prevent forced/child labour</p> <p>% groups showing increased skills in action planning;</p> <p>% group members showing propensity for higher levels of intervention to protect at-risk youth;</p> <p>% group members showing increased knowledge of key issues affecting vulnerability to bonded labour. (Note: toolkit still in creation, so evaluation measures not yet finalised.)</p> <p>% of random sample of CSGs that have carried out a range of actions regarding issues such as entitlements, alcoholism, educational improvements, tracking of migrants</p>	<p>345 CSGs</p> <p>Baseline to be taken at start of use of toolkit</p> <p>CSGs have begun to take protective actions</p>	<p>370 CSGs</p> <p>Numerical target not set.</p> <p>75% will have carried out a range of actions</p>	<p>377 CSGs</p> <p>See IDS/Praxis report on community interviews (being finalised). IDS did not measure percentages, but their conclusion from randomised interviews with 60 community members was that '<i>increased awareness and group development are very prominent in the minds of both community participants and NGO staff members – with more than 75% in both categories citing this as a significant change.</i>'</p> <p>'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;</p>

	achieved sustainable protection of residents from bonded labour and trafficking.		Production of adapted CMT # communities achieving maturity.	Adapted tool not yet produced 0	1 main tool (with partners using their own version) 10 (multiple year process and high benchmark)	preventing school drop outs 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 take actions without the direct support of the NGOs this is a strong sign of sustainability.' Tool developed and piloted Not yet measured
1.2 Support economic self-help groups, joint liability groups and cooperatives	Train and support approx. 230 SHGs and JLGs.	Households earn more income, so the need to send adolescents into mills is reduced.	# members of SHGs supported # individuals graduating from vocational training # individuals who earn new income or start a microenterprise The study with beneficiaries will also track the causal link between earning more income and being able to withdraw family members from hazardous mill work.	2059 420 200	2300 1200 600	8,074 (total since July 2017) 1,706 (since July 2017) 1,307 (since July 2017) The IDS study (interviews) did not look at this causal link in a very specific way, but the relevance of livelihoods work is highlighted as one of the strategies contributing to reduction of prevalence of bonded labour. 'Generally the

						<i>training appears to be delivered efficiently and a number of cases of how it has led to an alternative to bondage are reported'</i>
1.3 Support adolescent girls groups and boys groups	<p>13 partner NGOs will regularly meet with approx. 510 girls groups, and 350 boys groups to help them formulate action steps.</p> <p>Approx. 860 adolescent groups use the film-based toolkit.</p>	<p>Increased understanding by adolescents about their rights and protections in the workplace, including trade union membership and negotiation skills.</p> <p>Increased ability to identify and reject recruitment to risky workplaces by adolescents.</p> <p>Actions by adolescents to motivate village leadership to address their specific problems, demonstrates negotiation skills.</p>	<p># Community structures in place to prevent forced/child labour</p> <p># Adolescent groups (disaggregated)</p> <p># group members (disaggregated)</p> <p>% Adolescent groups demonstrating increased skills in action planning to address causes of vulnerability;</p> <p>% group members showing propensity for higher levels of intervention to protect other at-risk youth from exploitation;</p> <p>% of group members showing increased knowledge of key issues affecting vulnerability to bonded labour.</p>	<p>456 (nearly all girls)</p> <p>8,121 (nearly all girls)</p> <p>Baseline to be taken at start of use of toolkit</p>	<p>510 girls groups, 350 boys groups</p> <p>12,900</p> <p>Numerical target not set</p>	<p>620 girls groups 432 boys groups</p> <p>10,552 adolescent girls group members 6,596 adolescent boys group members</p> <p>IDS interview report recognises increased actions taken by adolescent groups. Also the Call me Priya evaluation (final version almost ready) also found improvements in group members: After attending the FBC programme, a greater number of participants reported they would speak up about sexual harassment at work (36.8%) to both peers and management, and take action in the face of employer bullying (59.9%). Participants had a greater knowledge of</p>

						wage entitlements (from 19.2% of participants to 48.4%) between baseline and endline. However, less improvement was observed in knowledge of maximum overtime.
1.4 Support and guide CSGs and adolescents in dialogues with village self-government bodies, and provide training to these bodies.	Exact outputs will vary by location and whether partner provides specific training to village government.	Improved education results due to village government actions Increased dialogue between village government and mill management regarding worker rights violations. Migrant registers maintained by village government	CAF KPI 3: # survivors and at risk children enrolled in school # previously out of school survivors attending formal or informal education Narrative reports identify role of village government with mill management and maintaining migrant registers	359 247	950 600	1,729 (since July 2017) 716 (since July 2017) See narrative report for details on mobilising village government.
CAF Forced and Child Labour outcome: Survivors are rehabilitated and attain viable livelihoods						
2.1 Support participation of survivors of bonded and hazardous labour in mills in activities above. Provide mental health and legal support.	13 NGO partners give psychosocial assistance to approx. 3000 survivors. Diagnostic mental health research completed. Basic and specialised training for field staff completed. Panel of hotspot lawyers complete legal cases including compensations	Survivors successfully take up livelihood options, improve their well-being, benefit from financial compensation.	CAF KPI 1: # of female and male survivors trained and employed with viable livelihoods. # survivors graduating from vocational training courses # slavery victims liberated with follow-up support # self-help group members who are survivors	250 438 573	900 No target set 610	997 2,222 2,235

			# survivors provided with social and/or legal services	247	540	6,101
			# legal cases assisted			
			# compensation cases won by survivors/victims' families	27	115	324
				7	40	169
CAF Forced and Child Labour outcome: Improved brand and supplier practices deter forced and child labour. Also: Gender Rights Outcome: Increased leadership voice and capacities of women garment workers to realise their rights and influence decisions in the supply chain; Gender based violence reduced in the supply chain.						
3.1 Support TNMS Worker Peer Groups, with strong focus on worker rights. Other partners train workers inside mills on complaints committees and workplace procedures	Approx. 10,000 workers in 30 mills complete the worker rights curriculum Outputs of partners' training depends on access and permissions.	Increased knowledge of workplace rights and skills in negotiation.	CAF KPI 5: # female and male workers participating in rights and empowerment programs (disaggregate) # workers benefiting from improved working conditions and wages Note: A wide range of indicators have been agreed with ETI, for which they will measure a baseline and annual outcomes for the WPGs. These include changes in understanding and knowledge as well as data on specific improvements in conditions.	460 0 specifically counted so far. Baseline for new mills not yet available	10,000 3,000	ETI participants: 7,660; Current NGO mill workers group members: 1,403 (not including ICC members) The baseline-endline report on the initial 20 mills will be provided by ETI by the end of 2019. This will include percentages of workers showing improvements in knowledge as well as in specific working conditions. By end of 2018, ETI reported a range of positive improvements in working conditions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 20 mills are enrolling women workers in ESI. 10 mills now allow mobile

						<p>phones in the workplace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 allow greater freedom of movement for their workers • Workers in 12 mills reported improvement in health and hygiene. <p>Though clearly these reflect some continuing gaps in worker rights, we can assume from this that over 3,000 workers benefited.</p>
3.2 Support TNMS to upgrade mill management.	In 10 – 20 mills: Mill manager dialogue initiated. Training provided to supervisors to reduce harassment. HR consultancy support provided.	Improved working conditions, including reduced verbal and sexual harassment. Establishment of complaints committees.	<p># mills setting up committees against sexual harassment</p> <p># supervisors trained</p> <p># workplace or accommodation issues resolved at mills</p> <p># mills providing payslips to workers</p>	New service	No target set.	<p>193 with FF NGO support. But note that the narrative report indicates the status of these ICCs: 59% of the FF NGO-supported ICCs are active.</p> <p>199 supervisors trained by ETI.</p> <p>20 mills through ETI have resolved various workplace or accommodation issues.</p> <p>Endline report will show how many of the 20 ETI mills now provide payslips to workers.</p>
3.3 Support supply chain improvements and policy	Meetings between approx. 8 retailers meet	Improved cooperation between retailers to	CAF KPI 6: # brands collaborating in initiatives	8	8	Brands who were part of the FF hotspot

<p>engagement by international retailers and brands buying teams in South India</p>	<p>at least three times per year to plan action steps. Participation in meetings with officials at district or state level on working conditions.</p>	<p>promote labour standards</p> <p>Participation of retailers in seeking to influence officials</p>	<p>to improve worker protections.</p> <p>A range of actions taken by these brands working directly with FF program</p>	<p>Nomination of mills to TNMS; recommendations for adaptation of TNMS program; commitment to participate in district level meetings.</p>	<p>At least 5 concrete types of action are taken by at least 4 members.</p>	<p>initiative made a decision to discontinue the working group as they said it duplicated discussions they were having elsewhere. However, they committed to be responsive to specific requests for participation in events in TN. For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three brands attended the State Women's Commission Hearing in 2018, to show their interest in improved conditions. • Several brands have attended meetings organised by district government to register mill hostels. • Three brands now serve on the Local Consultative Committee for TNMS and make recommendations for adaptation of the program. <p>Further measures to promote responsibility in brands supply chains are included in the supplementary</p>
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						work during 2019-2020.
CAF Forced and Child Labour Outcome: Improved policy environment advancing women's rights and labour rights						
4.1 Support and guide NGOs for coordinated engagement with district labour and social welfare officials for policy/regulatory implementation	<p>Training modules prepared and delivered to district officials.</p> <p>Follow up meetings for registration of hostels in each of the 4 districts.</p>	<p>Increased inspections of mill hostels through District Child Protection Officers.</p> <p>Increased knowledge and skills of labour inspectors.</p>	<p>CAF KPI 2: Documentation of policy improvements related to forced and child labour</p> <p>Number of mill hostels registered.</p>	<p>2 districts have made serious initial efforts on mill registration</p> <p>Baseline not currently available. Low number.</p>	<p>4 districts show improvements in mill hostel registration and inspections</p> <p>Target not set</p>	<p>4 districts show improvements (details in narrative)</p> <p>18 ETI mills registered their hostels; 82 out of 109 of the mills with hostels that are working with our NGO partners have applied for registration. 34 of these 82 have now received their registration. Through district level efforts, additional mill hostels have been registered, and now RTI has been submitted to obtain information on progress with registration.</p>
CAF Forced and Child Labour Outcome: Increased awareness and knowledge for accountability						
5.1 Collaborate with Thomson Reuters Foundation to ensure 2 day trainings for journalists based in Tamil Nadu, and 1 day for partners.	Trainings completed for 30 journalists and for NGO partners in year 1 and year 3	<p>Improved quality and number of published reports.</p> <p>Improved quality of information provided by NGO partners.</p>	CAF KPI 7: # and focus of media stories generated	106	300	361 (since July 2017)