



November 2024

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR RESEARCH SERVICES

Mid-term project review: Enhancing protection of child sex trafficking (CST) survivors in Bangladesh

SUMMARY

The Freedom Fund is a global fund with the sole aim of helping end forced labour and human trafficking. We are a catalyst in the global effort to end forced labour and human trafficking, working in the countries and sectors where it is most prevalent.

Through our investments and support, we aim to shift power, so that frontline organisations and communities can shape and drive the change required to bring forced labour and human trafficking to an end. By partnering with survivors and those at risk of slavery as well as visionary investors, governments and anti-trafficking organisations, we bring together the knowledge, capital and will needed to dismantle the systems that allow slavery to exist and thrive.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Freedom Fund is working with partners based in Dhaka city, Faridpur, Rajbari, Jamalpur, Barisal, Mymensingh, Comilla, Patuakhali, Sylhet, Jessore, Kushtia, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Madaripur and Khulna in Bangladesh to provide direct support to those most vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and to reduce the prevalence of CSEC in brothels and on the streets. Our partners are working to establish a protective network—including families, civil society organisations and government—to safeguard children from situations of sexual exploitation. The Freedom Fund supports these partners through funding and institutional strengthening to help ensure their sustainability and the impact of their interventions. The project, which focuses on internal CST, is funded by the US State Department's office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (JTIP).

SCOPE OF CONSULTANCY

The Freedom Fund is seeking proposals from qualified research consultants or teams to conduct a mid-term review of our JTIP funded project. The scope of this review is to assess progress made toward project objectives, review the effectiveness of project interventions, and generate lessons to inform the remaining project period. This review is part of our commitment to ensure that the project objectives are effectively measured and support continuous learning. The Freedom Fund anticipates this assignment will take up to four months, with planning commencing in December 2024 and final reports due by March 2025.

ELIGIBILITY

Individuals and organisations with relevant research and evaluation experience are invited to submit proposals for this mid-term project review. The lead applicant must be a legally registered entity according to the laws of the country in which it operates. The Freedom Fund has a strong preference for individuals and organisations based in Bangladesh and who have worked on issues of CSEC, CST or experience with children in vulnerable situations.

BUDGET

A fee of approximately USD 40,000 has been made available for this mid-term review. Budgets will be reviewed with respect to the strength of the proposal in meeting the project objectives in a cost-effective manner - we do not simply prioritise the lowest budget. This is a fixed price contract.

PROPOSAL DEADLINE

Proposals should be submitted via email to Priyanka Chand with "Proposal for Mid-term Project Review: Bangladesh" as the email subject line at pchand@freedomfund.org **no later than 25 Nov 2024, 10am UK time**. Proposals should be submitted in English and in Word or PDF format. Proposals should be no more than 5 pages, plus CVs and annexes.

Introduction to the Freedom Fund and its work in Bangladesh

The Freedom Fund is a global non-profit organisation that identifies and invests in the most effective frontline efforts to eradicate forced labour and exploitation in the countries and sectors where it is most prevalent. We work with frontline organisations to help protect vulnerable populations, liberate, and reintegrate those exploited and prosecute those responsible. By partnering with survivors and those at risk of exploitation as well as visionary investors, governments, and anti-trafficking organisations, we bring together the knowledge, capital and will needed to dismantle the systems that allow forced labour and exploitation to exist and thrive. Through our investments and support, we aim to shift power, so that frontline organisations and communities can shape and drive the change required to bring exploitation to an end.

The Bangladesh hotspot program aims to bring an end to the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) within Bangladesh. The period 2022 to 2023 served as the pilot phase of the program during which we established our presence in Dhaka and provided grants and support to key local partners working in brothel communities and with street children. By the end of 2023, the four pilot phase partners had provided social services to over 5,000 individuals, most of whom were at-risk children living in brothels and on the street, and their mothers or caregivers. A key objective of the program is to increase social protection for children to prevent exploitation. To support this effort, the program has supported 912 children to re-enrol in school and connected 909 individuals to government services, mainly birth registration, national identity cards and government support allowances. Additionally, as part of evidence building at the pilot phase, Population Council and the Freedom Fund conducted a large-scale study to measure the scale and nature of

CSEC in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The surveys involved 1,245 young female sex workers in street settings in the Dhaka district as well as brothels in the Dhaka division.

In May 2023, the hotspot program began implementing an award from the US State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office) to increase protection for victims of internal CST in Bangladesh. The Freedom Fund is working with six delivery partners as part of this project: Aparajeyo Bangladesh, Dhaka Ahasania Mission, INCIDIN, Justice & Care Bangladesh, Karmojibi Kalyan Sangstha and Shapla Mohila Sangstha. The four-year project aims to build better protection and reintegration services at government and privately-run shelter homes for survivors of internal CST and in parallel support community-led initiatives such as mothers' and children's groups to help safeguard children from situations of internal CST and provides non-institutional support to at-risk children. Partners jointly identified two advocacy issues that are critical to preventing internal CST: improving access to birth registration documents for at-risk children and obtaining national identity cards for sex workers. Partners, therefore, work with affected communities and government bodies to overcome barriers to applying for these documents, without which children at risk and their mothers cannot access basic services such as education.

Background to the mid-term review

The goal of the mid-term review is to assess progress made toward project objectives, review the effectiveness of project interventions, and generate lessons to inform the remaining project period. This review is to ensure that the project objectives are robustly measured, support continuous learning and adaptation, ensure accountability to the communities that we seek to serve, and is part of our commitment under our contractual agreement with the TIP Office.

The mid-term review will be based on the four key objectives from the project's Results Monitoring Plan (RMP), assessing:

Objective 1: Increased awareness and will to combat internal child sex trafficking (CST) among government officials, law enforcement, civil society organisations (CSOs) and at-risk communities.

Objective 2: A robust evidence base on internal CST, inclusive of survivor voices, is generated and shared.

Objective 3: Children exploited by internal CST have access to survivor-centred and trauma-informed rehabilitation, and reintegration services provided by government and CSOs.

Objective 4: Frontline CSOs and survivor leaders are supported to strengthen their organisational capacity, leadership and advocacy skills to contribute to the eradication of internal CST.

Main mid-term review questions

As part of the contracting process, the questions will be refined with the advice of the selected team. Some indicative questions are included below to support the proposal

design. These questions will help examine the project's current progress while providing actionable insights to guide the remaining project period.

1. To what extent has awareness of internal CST increased among government officials, law enforcement, CSOs, and at-risk communities?
[This question assesses progress in raising awareness and identifies gaps in reaching specific target groups.]
2. To what extent have government bodies, CSOs, and at-risk communities demonstrated an increased willingness to actively combat internal CST, and what factors are influencing their level of commitment?
[This question assesses the 'will' aspect of the project objective by examining both the progress and any barriers to taking action against CST.]
3. How effective have the project's efforts been in generating and sharing evidence on internal CST, including the integration of survivor voices?
[This question explores whether the project has successfully created an evidence base and how well this information is being used by stakeholders.]
4. What are the key promising approaches, as well as challenges, faced by children exploited by internal CST in accessing survivor-centered and trauma-informed rehabilitation and reintegration services? How can some of these challenges be addressed in the remaining project period?
[This question aims at identifying opportunities and challenges in service delivery and offering solutions to improve these services during the remainder of the project.]
5. How well have frontline CSOs and survivor leaders been supported in strengthening their capacity, leadership and advocacy skills, and what additional support is needed to enhance their role in combating CST?
[This question examines the capacity-building efforts for CSOs and survivor leaders and highlights areas for further development.]
6. What adjustments are needed in the project's overall approach to ensure sustainable collaboration among stakeholders, including government, CSOs, and survivor leaders, in the fight against internal CST?
[This question assesses the effectiveness of partnerships and suggests ways to strengthen collaboration for the remainder of the project.]
7. Based on the midterm review's findings, what are the overall lessons learnt and practical recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the project in achieving its four key objectives and further contributing to enhancing protection of CST survivors?
[This question summarises key insights from the review and focuses on practical strategies to improve the project's impact during the remainder of its implementation period.]

Target participants of the mid-term review

The primary participants in the mid-term review will be Freedom Fund's implementing partners and project participants. In addition, a limited number of key stakeholders,

including relevant local/national government representatives and civil society actors will also be included.

It is expected that the selected team will engage regularly with the Freedom Fund Bangladesh team and its implementing partners, who will use this review to inform the existing project design and delivery for the remaining project period.

Research approach and methodology

The Freedom Fund invites individuals and organisations to propose an approach that would be suitable to achieve the objectives of the mid-term project review. The proposed methodology should address the below:

Qualitative approach: The Freedom Fund primarily seeks qualitative findings from the mid-term review, though a small component of quantitative insights may be included if relevant to answering the research questions. The quantitative component will also involve analysing the internal impact data that Freedom Fund's partners have gathered since the project inception. Therefore, proposals outlining methods for efficiently analysing and succinctly reporting program progress will be prioritised. Kindly include the data collection methods and sources of information. The Freedom Fund's preference is for in-person interviews; however, we are open to a mixed approach where remote methods are more appropriate. Please specify whether the research will be conducted in-person, remotely, or through a combination of both, and provide the rationale for your chosen approach.

Stakeholder participation: Please outline which stakeholders you will engage with at different stages of the mid-term review process and justify your proposed sample and its size. Describe how a sample of respondents will be obtained; consideration should be given to how these individuals can be accessed and engaged with in a manner which encourages honest responses. The review is not expected to exhaustively cover all locations in which the project operates, but rather, selection of an appropriate set of respondents.

Community engagement: Please highlight creative data collection methods that preferably go beyond traditional interviews and focus groups. Approaches that are inclusive and engaging for participants – especially with children and/or marginalised groups without research knowledge or experience – would be viewed favourably. In addition, please consider how you would share the review results back with the community in relevant and accessible ways.

Operational and ethical considerations: Highlight any logistical, ethical and/or safeguarding issues with the proposed methodology, such as encouraging candid responses through in-person and/or remote interviews, handling of potentially sensitive information, confidentiality of respondents, sensitivity and respect to stakeholders, Do No Harm etc. Please indicate how you will monitor responses provided and mitigate response bias that may influence the review process. The Freedom Fund's preference is to undergo an Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and we welcome applicants' advice and expertise on how best to navigate this process in alignment with the project's needs and

ethical standards. Please note that we expect the team (or its subcontractors) to include fluent Bangla speakers to administer data collection.

Data quality and analysis: Describe the procedures that will be in place to ensure a high level of data quality, and tools used for systematic data analysis. Describe the data analysis plan, including data analysis software, proposed analysis methods and a rough timeline. The work plan should allow for sufficient time for inputs from the Freedom Fund before finalisation.

The mid-term review approach should adhere closely to ethical principles and safety concerns of the participants and researchers themselves. If there are any other elements considered to be crucial to a successful review, please include them in your proposal.

The research will be contracted by the Freedom Fund US and supervised by our Research & Evaluation Manager based in London. The FF anticipates working closely with the research team through all stages of the project.

Budget

The FF has budgeted up to USD 40,000 for this project. Budgets will be reviewed with respect to the strength of the proposal in meeting the project objectives in a cost-effective manner, we do not simply prioritise the lowest budget.

As part of the proposal, please prepare a brief budget with the following breakdown:

- Personnel costs
- Fees to local research partners or subcontractors, if applicable
- Other direct costs – e.g. travel, software licenses, devices for data collection
- Overheads
- Value Added Tax or Goods and Services Tax, if applicable

Please note that costs related to research report translation, design and printing will be borne by the Freedom Fund.

Project deliverables & high-level timeline

Main deliverables	Proposed timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kick-off meeting with the FF team. ● Desk review of Bangladesh project documents and discussions with the FF team. ● Develop a suitable methodology to answer the mid-term objectives outlined above, presented as a detailed research protocol, which includes a realistic sampling strategy, all relevant data collection tools, work plan and a detailed overview of ethical considerations. 	Jan 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Submit the research protocol and tools to IRB for approval 	Feb 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primary data collection completed. 	Mar 2024

• Data cleaning and analysis.	Mar 2024
• Presentation of preliminary findings for internal review and discussion.	
• Draft report shared for review and discussion.	Apr 2024
• Finalise report, based on a structure pre-agreed with the Freedom Fund.	Apr 2024

In addition to the main deliverables listed above, the research team is also expected to discuss with the Freedom Fund any proposed design changes and share regular updates on the progress of field activities.

Proposal format

Interested parties should prepare a proposal of no more than 5 pages, plus CVs and annexes. Proposals should contain the following sections:

1. Short biography of principal investigator(s) and key team members, outlining relevant subject matter expertise and experience leading similar review and evaluation projects, particularly in Bangladesh. CV of the principal investigator should be included in the annex. Past report(s) from similar projects could be included as links or in a separate annex.
2. Research approach, addressing the topics listed in the 'Research approach and methodology' section of this RFP.
3. Team structure, defining the role and time commitment of key project team members.
4. High-level work plan for key project phases and deliverables.
5. Proposed budget in USD, containing the details listed in the 'Budget' section of this RFP. The proposal must be written in English and sent electronically in Microsoft Office or PDF format.

Proposal criteria & scoring

In reviewing proposals, the Freedom Fund will use the following criteria:

Technical criteria	Weighting
a. Technical capacity of the team (including local partner and subcontractors if relevant), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed method is appropriate, rigorous and feasible for generating meaningful insights to answer the research questions. - Experience of conducting project reviews and evaluations, with demonstrable understanding of relevant qualitative and quantitative research techniques (dependent on the proposed method). - Proven experience producing high quality reports in English, with a strong focus on qualitative findings. 	50%
b. Contextual knowledge of the team, including on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarity with the CST and CSEC situation in Bangladesh. Previous work on these issues will be advantageous. - Ability to gain access into and work collaboratively with communities affected by CST and CSEC to carry out the mid-term review. - Knowledge of economic, socio-cultural and political environment in Bangladesh. 	20%

c. Team structure, including:	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate staffing levels to deliver quality project outputs within the desired timeframe. - Contribution of Bangladesh and/or Bangladesh-based researchers, ideally in key roles such as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator where they are recognised as authors of the mid-term review. - Established infrastructure within Bangladesh for collecting data. - Gender diversity among the team members. - Team members with fluency in English and Bangla are essential. Proficiency in other local languages would be advantageous. 	
Financial criteria	
d. Costs are proportionate to the scale of work being proposed, and consideration of all potential expenses.	10%
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Total	100%

Commissioning timeline

11 Nov 2024	Release of this Request for Proposal.
25 Nov 2024 10am UK time	Proposals due. Please submit all documents to Priyanka Chand at pchand@freedomfund.org with "Proposal for Mid-term Project Review: Bangladesh" as the email subject line.
2 Dec 2024	All shortlisted research teams will be notified, and interviews will be scheduled.
9 Dec 2024	Clarifications/discussions with shortlisted teams.
13 Dec 2024	Contract signed with selected research team.

Payment and Jurisdiction

Applicants should observe that the Freedom Fund is a United States 501(c)(3) public charity. The awarded contract will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York, United States of America, without regard to principles relating to conflicts of law. All payments to the consultant under the awarded contract shall be agreed upon therein, in compensation for the services provided, and directly related to the approved costs of the required services when/if applicable. Contracts will always be drafted in United States Dollars.

Confidentiality

This Request for Proposal and associated documents are the property of Freedom Fund and confidential. Apart from using FF documents to respond to the request, you shall not disclose any details, to any other person or organisation, and shall treat this ToR/RFP and your response with complete confidentiality.