

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2030

The Freedom Fund



Members of the National Harawa-Charawa Rights Forum from across Nepal gather to attend the National Level Meeting  
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# INTRODUCTION

In 2024, we commemorated a decade of collaborating to end modern slavery – celebrating the courageous efforts of our frontline partners while recognising the significant work ahead of us. It felt like an appropriate moment to reset and reimagine. Over the course of a year, we asked staff, board members, grantee partners, frontline leaders, lived-experience experts, donors and peer organisations where the Freedom Fund should go in our next phase.

We emerged from this process with a renewed sense of clarity and ambition, grounded in the reality that tens of millions of people are living at increasing risk of exploitation. Building on what we have learned so far, our 2025-2030 strategy includes a new mission sharply focused on investing in frontline organisations and movements, a theory of change and an update to our core values that highlights our dedication to genuine collaboration. It outlines bold strategic priorities for the next six years, how we will measure progress and the key shifts we will make to better support our partners and prioritise getting funding to the frontlines.

Ultimately, this strategy is not just an internal guiding document, but a renewed commitment to our frontline partners and the broader anti-slavery sector.

Photos, top to bottom: Certification ceremony of adolescents and professionals participating in the Freedom Fund's Brazil hotspot program ©Natália Corrêa/The Freedom Fund; Flavian joined the Freedom Fund project at Maisha Girls Safe House in 2023 and has since gained employment at a hair salon ©Melanie Hargreaves/The Freedom Fund; Domani set up her grocery business with seed money from the Freedom Fund and is part of a savings group facilitated by Freedom Fund partner Janachetana Dalit Sangam © Eva Jew/The Freedom Fund; First aid training provided to fishermen by Freedom Fund partner Stella Maris © Overgrown productions/The Freedom Fund



# WHAT WE KNOW

## Slavery still exists

An estimated 50 million people are living in modern slavery, an umbrella term referring to various forms of extreme exploitation including human trafficking, bonded and forced labour, the worst forms of child labour, commercial sexual exploitation, forced marriage and domestic servitude. A third of those 50 million are exploited in private sector supply chains. Nearly a quarter live in the Freedom Fund's current focus countries, Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal and Nigeria. Women, children and migrant workers are disproportionately affected. Modern slavery is a fundamental violation of human rights, fuelled by multiple and intersecting political, economic and environmental crises. It continues to grow in many parts of the world, and the global community has fallen far behind in its commitment to end modern slavery by 2030 as set out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## Frontline organisations play critical roles

Deep-rooted and unjust systems can most effectively be dismantled by those who know them best – impacted individuals and the organisations they lead and trust. Frontline anti-slavery organisations are grounded in local context, accountable to the communities in which they work and committed for the long term, but many have been historically and systemically under-resourced. And though history shows us that the leadership of individuals with lived experience is critical to any effective social movement, organisations led by survivors of modern slavery have faced significant exclusion and lack of investment. After a decade of partnering with frontline and survivor-led organisations, we have proof of what is possible when they are well-funded, supported and connected.

## Now more than ever, frontline anti-slavery organisations need our support

According to the International Labour Organization, “investment in action against forced labour has never been more urgent.” A recent report estimated the cost of ending forced labour at \$212 billion and growing, and philanthropic and government funding is sorely insufficient. Donors in high-income countries remain largely inaccessible to those on the frontlines of modern slavery, and onerous funding requirements often stifle organisations' autonomy and impact. While non-monetary support can be helpful, at the end of the day, organisations are clear that their primary need is flexible, long-term funding. Without intentional space for movement building, competition for resources and lack of trust can hinder the collaboration that systems change requires.

## The Freedom Fund is well-positioned to fund, convene and support frontline anti-slavery organisations and movements

As a collaborative fund dedicated to supporting frontline efforts to end modern slavery, we fill a critical gap: mobilising funding that is largely out of reach to our partners and translating it into concentrated investment that enhances their work and powers systems change at scale. We have learned what works (and what doesn't) when it comes to identifying and funding effective, locally-led anti-slavery interventions. We have developed a unique ability to foster collaboration, putting affected communities at the forefront and investing in the collaborative infrastructure that enables the development of powerful movements. We are moving into our next phase with greater clarity, determination and focus than ever before.

# OUR VALUES



## Respect

We value the knowledge and leadership of those most directly affected by slavery

We acknowledge those who have gone before us and work alongside us

We support each other through challenges and share credit for successes

We never forget that donors trust us to make a real difference with their funds



## Excellence

We seek the greatest possible impact with the funds we invest

We invest in the most effective interventions based on the best available evidence

We continually strive to listen and learn from our mistakes

We pay attention to detail



## Courage

We stand in solidarity with those on the frontlines of the fight to end slavery

We work in places and on issues where success may not be quick or easy

We are not afraid to take calculated risks

We speak clearly and plainly



## Collaboration

We believe that collaboration is necessary to achieve change at scale

We are responsive to the priorities of communities and partners

We practise humility by sharing power and resources

We follow through on our commitments and strive to be the best partner we can be

# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

## The problem


Slavery still exists. An estimated 50 million people are subject to **modern slavery** around the world today.


## Our mission


We invest in frontline organisations and movements to drive a measurable reduction of modern slavery in high-prevalence countries and industries.



### Resource mobilisation

 The frontline groups trying to end modern slavery are chronically under-resourced, and donors struggle to find and fund them.

 We bring donors of diverse interests together around the common goal of ending modern slavery and promote the importance of supporting frontline efforts.

 The anti-slavery sector is better resourced and donor funds are leveraged for greatest impact.

### Responsible supply chains



Businesses must be incentivised to change behaviours that contribute to the exploitation of workers in their supply chains.



We fund investigations, advocacy and litigation to promote responsible supply chains and equip frontline organisations to play a leading role.



Businesses take credible action, informed by communities and workers, to eliminate forced labour in their supply chains.

### Frontline hotspots



Frontline organisations, working closely with marginalised communities, are uniquely positioned to disrupt systems of modern slavery.



In high-prevalence hotspots around the world, we fund, convene and support frontline organisations and movements, prioritising proximate and survivor leaders.



Civil society is equipped to collaboratively and sustainably reduce and prevent modern slavery by transforming exploitative systems.

### Research & knowledge sharing



Sharing data and learnings enables development of effective interventions, leading to more funding and a greater reduction of slavery globally.



We build and share actionable knowledge about what works to end modern slavery and its scale and nature in our hotspots.



Anti-slavery organisations, donors and governments become more effective by adopting evidence-based, locally-led approaches.

### Our vision

A world free of slavery

# HOW WE ARE CHANGING

To fulfil our mission and embody our values, we will:

## 1 Lean into our role as a frontline funder and make more space for partners to lead

The Freedom Fund's primary purpose is to fund, convene and support frontline anti-slavery organisations and movements. Our experience shows that the best solutions come from frontline partners who are provided the space and resources to innovate and adapt. We will shift more of our resources towards funding for partner organisations and away from Freedom Fund implemented or directed initiatives. We will openly share resources, guidance and our own learnings in a manner that meets grantee partners' needs while ensuring they have autonomy in strategy and implementation. We will also explore new grantmaking approaches that centre equity and power sharing.

## 2 Integrate and concentrate our resources in high-prevalence geographies

We have updated and enhanced our hotspot model to incorporate learnings and experience from our movement building programs over the last decade. In the past, these programs have functioned separately from our geographically focused hotspot programs. We will integrate the Freedom Rising leadership program into our hotspots, and the Survivor Leadership Fund (which previously operated in hotspot and adjacent countries) will now only operate in our hotspot countries. This integrated model will enable us to offer a broader and deeper range of support for partners in our hotspot countries.



Photos, top to bottom: Signing of a memorandum of understanding between Freedom Fund partner Indonesia Ocean Justice Initiative and the Government of Central Java province @Armin Hari/*The Freedom Fund*; Samrawit, a returnee migrant to Ethiopia from the Middle East, takes her food preparation course through Freedom Fund partner Agar Ethiopia @Genaye Eshetu/*The Freedom Fund*; Rajvati Mandal, Central Chairman of the Harawa-Charawa Rights forum, speaks to the press on the government of Nepal's announcement of the liberation of the Harawa-Charawa people @Niranjan Shrestha/*The Freedom Fund*



Launch event for the inception year of the Uganda hotspot program in Karamoja, starting with projects to tackle child exploitation across Napak and Moroto districts ©Robert Ilukol/The Freedom Fund

### **3** Prioritise more flexible funding in our grantmaking and resource mobilisation

We recognise that long-term, flexible funding is vital to supporting innovation, collaboration and sustainability. Whenever feasible, we will make multi-year, flexible grants, and we will eliminate unnecessary restrictions and reporting requirements. We will prioritise engaging with donors whose funding is not highly restrictive and work to influence others to give more flexibly.

### **4** Build more sustainable and equitable internal operations

Where necessary, we will reorganise our teams to best support the integration of programs and shifting of resources towards grantmaking to frontline partners. We will continue our strategy of positioning our staff to be as close as possible to communities and partners.

# WHERE WE ARE GOING

Over the next six years, we will:

## 1 Fund direct impact in communities affected by modern slavery

We believe it is possible to work towards uprooting systems of slavery in the long term while supporting the protection and liberation of communities today. Our frontline partners understand the needs of their communities, so we will continue to fund a wide range of their work across our hotspots, from education and worker organising to support for survivors to exit slavery and rebuild their lives. **By the end of 2030, we will have supported our hotspot partners to directly impact the lives of 2.5 million individuals across the world – both those currently in situations of slavery and those at risk. In addition to our ten hotspot programs currently operating across eight countries, we plan to open up to three more over the next six years.**

## 2 Foster systems change to shift power

We believe that collective power is key to ending modern slavery, and we will facilitate collaboration through Communities of Practice that bring together diverse local actors working towards large-scale systems change. We will support frontline organisations working in communities to address underlying causes of modern slavery, hold powerholders to account for abuses and change policies and social norms, including those engaging with governments and businesses and tackling intersecting crises such as climate change and forced migration. Through our Responsible Supply Chains initiative, we will fund investigations, advocacy and strategic litigation to incentivise corporations to eliminate forced labour in their supply chains and equip frontline groups to lead these efforts. **By the end of 2030, Freedom Fund-supported partners will have enabled 20 million people to live in communities with improved resistance to exploitation and influenced government, business and society to strengthen their responses to modern slavery.**



### 3

#### Invest in the strengthening of civil society organisations and movements, especially those led by survivors and communities

We invest in ecosystems of organisations, not just programs. Through flexible funding, long-term relationships and offerings like our Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool, we will strategically contribute to the building of robust organisations and movements. We will prioritise the leadership of those with lived experience through our Survivor Leadership Fund in hotspot countries. We will also elevate the voices of frontline leaders in global forums, enabling them to build their power and profiles. **By the end of 2030, we will have supported the organisational development of at least 500 frontline partners, including 200 survivor-led organisations.**

### 4

#### Influence the anti-slavery sector to take up best practices

We will not end modern slavery on our own, and while the evidence base of what works has grown over the last decade, we have much more work to do to promote effective, locally-led interventions. We will invest in research about the nature and scale of modern slavery, in partnership with survivors and frontline organisations, and share our learnings with key anti-slavery actors. **We will actively contribute to best practices in programming and research being taken up by other anti-slavery organisations through communication and convening and by elevating the work of our partners.**



### 5

#### Mobilise resources and serve as a valued funding partner to both grantees and donors

We know that exploitation is ultimately about imbalance of power, and philanthropic dollars represent one form of power in the hands of frontline groups. Through pooled funding, we will bring together donors with a shared interest in ending modern slavery. We will share examples of best practices from our work with the donor community to make the case for more and better-quality funding for frontline anti-slavery organisations. We will also draw connections between exploitation and other global crises. **By the end of 2030, we will have mobilised \$350 million in cumulative funding commitments.**

Photo: Survivor Leadership Fund convening in Indonesia ©Saldi Ali/The Freedom Fund

# CONCLUSION

We are steadfast in our commitment to ending modern slavery and dedicated to partnering with organisations and donors around the world who share our vision.

Ours is an issue many deem too big or too complex to solve, but we know that is not true. We have evidence about what works, clear levers for change and powerful frontline movements equipped to dismantle systems of exploitation.

Together, we can build a world without slavery.



Photos, top to bottom: Committee members of Freedom Fund partner SPAN Batulubang in Indonesia ©Armin Hari/The Freedom Fund; Participant on a march to the State Palace in Recife, Brazil, advocating for the State government to increase its efforts to end commercial sexual exploitation of children ©Natália Corrêa/The Freedom Fund; Ufim is a member of a farming group made up of members of the Harawa-Charawa community who pooled their resources to lease a plot of land to grow fruits and vegetables ©Eva Jew/The Freedom Fund

# SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PROCESS

## Background

The Freedom Fund commissioned I.G. Advisors (I.G.) to facilitate a strategic planning process. I.G. is a globally focused strategy consultancy in the social impact space, positioned at the centre of the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Alongside the Freedom Fund’s Senior Leadership Team and Staff Steering Committee, I.G. co-designed and facilitated a highly participatory process that aimed to be rigorous, inclusive and energising as it defined a path forward for the organisation.

## Process

The process consisted of three phases over the course of 2024:

- **An inception phase**, involving alignment on key stakeholder groups, ways of working and methodology.
- **A knowledge gathering and analysis phase**, involving rigorous consultation with key stakeholder groups and culminating in an Analysis Report summarising key findings from the consultations.
- **A strategy creation and design phase**, involving design workshops with the Freedom Fund’s Senior Leadership Team, drafting, testing with key stakeholder groups and review and approval by the Board.

## Stakeholders and consultation methods

The stakeholders consulted through this process represent a wide range of perspectives, experiences and relationships to the Freedom Fund. Through surveys, interviews, focus groups and desk research, I.G. explored a range of questions about the current ecosystem of the anti-slavery sector and the Freedom Fund’s role, as well as the organisation’s theory of change, strategic priorities, programs and goals and operational implications.

We wish to extend our gratitude to those who were consulted throughout this process and who helped to inform our strategy. These groups and the consultation methods used are listed below.

Stakeholder group	Methods of consultation
Staff	Interviews, survey, focus groups, in-person workshops
Board	Interviews, survey, focus group
Leaders of peer organisations, funders and other external stakeholders	Interviews, desk research
Grantee partners from across current program areas	Survey, focus groups
Community Advisory Group (see following page)	Focus groups

Across all stakeholder groups and methods of consultation, language access was a key priority. Partner surveys were translated into more than ten languages, and focus groups were facilitated in local languages or through interpreters. Both oral and written forms of communication were used to allow stakeholders to provide input in a format most comfortable to them.

## Community Advisory Group

Although the Freedom Fund partners consulted through surveys and focus groups included many led by community members and individuals with lived experience of modern slavery, we sought to take a more intentional approach by forming a Community Advisory Group. The role of the six members of this group was to provide insight to their and their communities' priorities in the context of addressing modern slavery, to serve as a sounding board on key questions related to the Freedom Fund's role in the anti-slavery space and to review and provide feedback on presentations and documents, with particular concern to ensuring that the new strategy centres survivors and communities most affected by modern slavery. Following recruitment through an internal nomination process, members participated in three half-day workshops over the course of 2024 and were compensated for their time.

We extend special thanks to the members of the Community Advisory Group for their contributions:

Ganesh Bahadur BK, Rastriya Dalit Network, Nepal

Jessica Nhkum, Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT)

Iweng Karsiwen, KABAR BUMI, Indonesia

Maurine Ayodi, Baridi kwa Baridi Women CBO - Busia, Kenya

Rosana de França, Coletivo Mulher Vida, Brazil

Yenenesh Tilahun, KASMA Charity Organization, Ethiopia

# VISION

Our vision is a world free of slavery.

# MISSION

We invest in frontline organisations and movements to drive a measurable reduction of modern slavery in high-prevalence countries and industries.

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