REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

July 2023

Research service: Modern slavery risks among people lacking official documentation

Summary

The Freedom Fund ([freedomfund.org](http://freedomfund.org)) is a global non-profit organisation with the sole aim of helping end modern slavery. We are keen to improve our understanding of the risks of modern slavery faced by individuals who are unable to access legal protections and entitlements due to either (i) the lack of legal status, such as statelessness or undocumented migration status or (ii) barriers in obtaining legal documents to prove their status, such as birth certificates and land titles.

The study would first examine the issue globally, followed by a deep dive into three countries of strategic interest to the Freedom Fund: Brazil, Kenya and Nepal. The main objectives of this research project are: to identify actionable mechanisms and inform responses by civil society organisations (CSOs) in the three countries; generate practical policy recommendations; provide credible evidence to inform responses from multilateral institutions and aid funders towards this vulnerable population.

The Freedom Fund anticipates this project to commence in September 2023 and will require primary data collection across three countries. The exact time frame will depend on when ethical approval is granted for the research. Timelines and research activities are adaptable in response to operating context and unforeseen disruptions.

Eligibility

Individuals and organisations with relevant research experience are invited to submit proposals for this evaluation. The lead applicant must be a legally registered entity according to the laws of the country in which it operates.

Budget

A fee of approximately USD$150,000 has been made available for this research. Proposals with budgets that are higher or lower will still be considered. Budgets will be reviewed with respect to the rigour of the proposed methodology and relevant experience of the team to meet the project objectives in a cost-effective manner - we do not simply prioritise the lowest budget. This is a fee-for-service contract.

Proposal deadline

Proposals should be submitted via email to research@freedomfund.org no later than Monday 31 July 2023 6pm UK time. Proposals should be no more than 5 pages, plus CVs and annexes.

Introduction to the Freedom Fund

The Freedom Fund is a global fund with the sole aim of helping end modern slavery. We are a catalyst in the global effort to end modern slavery, working in the countries and sectors where it is most prevalent. We invest in and partner with organisations and communities on the frontlines of ending exploitation.

By partnering with those at risk of modern slavery as well as visionary investors, governments and anti-slavery organisations, we bring together the knowledge, the capital and the will needed to dismantle the systems that allow slavery 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 modern slavery to an end.

Through our hotspot model, we convene strategically aligned networks of anti-slavery organisations in high prevalence areas of Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Liberia, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria and Thailand to multiply the capacity, impact and influence of frontline partners.

Background on people lacking official documentation

Globally, there are an estimated 103 million people who are undocumented, based on a 2019 report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. This figure is expected to rise over the next decades due to increased income disparity, economic shocks and climate change.

Total = 103 million undocumented people around the world, made up of...

1. In addition to the 103 million people who are undocumented, there are also other populations who have legal status but do not have the official documentation to access entitlements, such as marginalised ethnic communities who lack birth certificates and land titles.

2. People lacking official documentation (encompassing the groups mentioned above) face a higher risk of falling and remaining in a situation of exploitation, and pose a distinct challenge for the anti-slavery community. The hidden nature of this population as well as their complex needs—ranging from social stigma, inability to access support services, to ineligibility for legal protection—requires a more targeted approach in anti-slavery policies and programming.

Eligibility

The Freedom Fund is seeking to understand what can be done to prevent the trafficking of individuals and communities without formal legal status, what members of these communities perceive as their most important risk reduction needs, as well as how to improve outcomes for those community members who survive trafficking.

The goals of this research are to:

a. Produce credible, action-oriented research in 3 focus countries (most likely Nepal, Brazil, and Kenya) to highlight sub-groups who lack documentation that puts them at greater risk of modern slavery, including the social and economic structures that exacerbate the risks faced by these populations.

b. Share practical recommendations on policies and programs that are informed by the experiences of survivors of trafficking and realistic for the countries in focus.

c. Inform future actions—especially among policymakers and aid funders—about the population of undocumented citizens and workers, and their specific vulnerabilities to human trafficking.

Main evaluation questions

As part of the contracting process, the list below will be further reviewed and refined with the advice of the successful team, such as reframing to the perspectives of the participant groups.

1. Profile on the global population of people with informal statuses:

   a. Who are the major sub-groups, their relative population size and characteristics?

   b. How do they end up lacking essential documentation? In particular, distinguish between the following groups:
- People who choose to remain undocumented;
- People who do not qualify for documentation;
- People who lack the resources to apply for documentation; and
- People who have lost access, for example, due to forced displacement, documents withheld by employers or family members, etc.

c. Why does the lack of documentation put these groups more at risk of falling into, and remaining in modern slavery?

2. Based on primary research in the three focus countries, who are the sub-groups that are at heightened risk of modern slavery? Specifically:
   a. What forms of exploitation are especially common among these sub-groups? (e.g. intergenerational debt bondage, labour exploitation, domestic servitude)
   b. What types of services/support do they need and what prerequisite documents are they lacking? What services should be available in theory and what is accessible by this group in reality?
   c. What additional barriers are faced by victims/survivors who are undocumented, compared to those in similar predicaments but who are documented?

3. What policies and programs are most needed, locally and globally, to reduce the population of people lacking essential documentation, and to connect people with services that protect their basic human rights and guard against modern slavery?

Research methodology

The key methodological steps are as follows:

1. Desk-based evidence review of existing and emerging evidence, both globally and in each focus country;

2. Primary data collection with in-country respondents—including service providers, policy officials, community leaders, individuals with lived experience and other related stakeholders—to obtain insights from the affected communities. The data collection will be mixed-method in nature, both qualitative and quantitative information will be gathered from respondents; and

3. Data analysis, presentation of draft findings to the FF and other global experts, plus a final report.

The methodology outlined in your proposal should address the following:

Desk review search strategy: Describe an overarching literature review strategy, including how grey literature sources specific to the focus countries will be elaborated, noting that focus countries may not have a sufficient online infrastructure to make written materials readily accessible on the web. The purpose of the desk review is to ensure this study builds upon, not duplicates, prior studies. A desk review is preferred over a systematic or scoping literature review approach.

Access to respondents: Describe how the research team will contact and recruit the respondents, especially how to identify and engage with survivors of trafficking and those with other types of lived experience in communities of interest. Include a justification and strategy for conducting the interviews (for example, which will be remote and which, if any, will be conducted in-person) and a description of proposed qualitative and quantitative domains of inquiry.

Ethical review: Reflect on how potential concerns of an ethical review board will be addressed, such as direct engagement with vulnerable populations and victims of violence, including possible discussions of illegal activity or traumatising topics. The Freedom Fund will assist with the actual submission to one or more accredited institutional review boards, but the preparation of submission materials will be the responsibility of the successful applicant.

Safeguarding standards: Demonstrate how the methodology reflects an adequate level of sensitivity and nuance. Please indicate how you will monitor responses provided and how you will mitigate response bias. Work planning should allow for sufficient time for input from the Freedom Fund and implementing partners before finalisation. We
welcome creative strategies for online or tech-enabled interactions with participants (for example, using WhatsApp), but strategies for ensuring that the sample remains representative in a population with mixed digital literacy should be included.

**Recruitment strategy:** Proposals should detail target sample sizes for the qualitative and quantitative components, noting that the Freedom Fund may later negotiate changes to these estimates with the successful applicant.

**Data quality and analysis:** Proposals should detail the procedures that will be in place to ensure a high level of data quality. Applicants should describe how the quantitative findings (for example, descriptive summary statistics) will be provided, such as any proposed stratifications by sub-groups of respondents. Include an overview of the qualitative analysis methodology to be employed.

**Process to share evaluation findings:** In addition to formal written reports, we would also like the evaluation team to suggest creative formats to share the evaluation findings and include this as part of their deliverables.

The research approach should adhere closely to ethical principles and safety concerns of research participants and researchers themselves, including safety protocols to limit the spread of Covid-19. If there are any other elements considered to be crucial to a successful study, please include these in your proposal.

The Freedom Fund encourages compensation for study participants from vulnerable communities, whether as survey respondents, interviewees and other contributors, however this will depend on each local context. Applicants are free to describe how they plan to engage the research participants, including an explanation of why compensation should or should not be provided.

The selected team will be contracted by, and report to, the Freedom Fund’s Head of Research and Evaluation, based in London. The Freedom Fund anticipates working closely with the research team through all stages.

In summary, the chosen applicant will be responsible for:

1) Conducting a multilingual desk review of what is known about the modern slavery risks to people lacking official documentation in the three focus countries as well as globally;

2) Developing a suitable methodology for the primary data collection with participants in each of the 3 focus countries, presented as a detailed research protocol, which will be informed by the main findings from the desk review, all relevant data collection tools such as consent forms, survey questionnaires and interview guides, and a detailed overview of ethical considerations;

3) Obtaining suitable ethical approval for the primary data collection (with any related fees to be covered by the contracted partner);

4) Hiring and training any data collection personnel, including on safeguarding procedures;

5) Undertaking all data collection, including monitoring the quality of data and data collection as well as addressing any safeguarding concerns;

6) Undertaking data analysis of all primary data using appropriate methods of analysis;

7) Producing a ~40-page written report of the qualitative research findings, as per a structure pre-agreed with the Freedom Fund; and

8) Producing cleaned datasets for the desk review, qualitative, and quantitative components (where applicable).

The Freedom Fund is particularly interested in working with teams that can demonstrate: (a) a gender-balanced enumeration team, ideally with at least half of the total staff being female, (b) commitment to involving survivors to inform research design, (c) flexibility to do data collection in community and remote settings, and (d) prior research experience with survivors of exploitation.
Main deliverables and high-level timeline

The proposed schedule outlines the main deliverables, and some flexibility is possible to account for ethical approvals and unforeseen disruptions.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main deliverables</th>
<th>Proposed timeline</th>
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<tr>
<td>Internal presentation describing the main findings from desk review</td>
<td>September 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft research protocol for primary data collection with participants (including sampling/recruitment strategy, ethical considerations, consent forms, data collection tools)</td>
<td>October 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finalised research protocol, incorporating feedback from the Freedom Fund</td>
<td>November 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical approval for the study is secured from one or more accredited ethical approval bodies, chosen in collaboration with the Freedom Fund</td>
<td>December 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memo confirming completed data collection</td>
<td>March 2024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft presentation to the Freedom Fund to outline main findings and implications</td>
<td>April 2024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final report outlining the key research findings, based on a structure pre-agreed with the Freedom Fund</td>
<td>May 2024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final package of cleaned dataset(s) (desk review, qualitative, and quantitative – as relevant) and codes used in the analysis</td>
<td>May 2024</td>
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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 desk and field activities.

Budget

The Freedom Fund has budgeted approximately USD$150,000 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 cost
- Direct cost of in-person fieldwork (for example, training workshops, venue for data collection, transportation, telecommunications, personal protective equipment, printing, etc.)
- Compensation to study participants, if deemed appropriate
- Overheads
- All applicable taxes related to provision of services (such as Valued Added Tax or Goods & Services Tax)

Proposal format

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

1. **Short biography of project lead(s) and key team members**, outlining relevant subject matter expertise and prior experience leading similar research projects. CV(s) of the project lead(s) should be included in the annex. Past report(s) from similar projects could be included as a link or in a separate annex.
2. **Methodology**, addressing the topics listed in the ‘Research methodology’ section of this RFP.
3. **Team structure**, defining the role and time commitment of key project team members.

4. **High-level work plan** with timing of key project deliverables and proposed format of final report.

5. **Proposed budget** in USD.

The proposal must be written in English and sent electronically in Microsoft Office or PDF format.

### Criteria for assessing proposals

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

#### Technical criteria

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<tr>
<th>a. Technical capacity of the research team, including:</th>
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<td>- Experience with mixed methods research, with a demonstrable understanding of relevant research techniques.</td>
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<td>- Proven experience conducting research on potentially sensitive topics (such as irregular migration or experiences of violence) with survivors of human rights abuses.</td>
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<td>- Proven experience producing detailed research reports in English.</td>
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<td>- Experience obtaining ethical approval for sensitive research studies.</td>
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<th>b. Contextual knowledge of the research team, including:</th>
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<td>- Knowledge of issues relating to lack of legal status for individuals and communities at large.</td>
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<td>- Familiarity with issues faced by vulnerable populations in low- and middle-income settings.</td>
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<th>c. Team structure, including:</th>
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<td>- Adequate staffing levels to deliver quality outputs within the desired timeframe.</td>
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<td>- Gender diversity among the team members.</td>
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<td>- Established resources to conduct an extensive desk review.</td>
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#### Financial criteria

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<th>d. Consideration of all potential expenses.</th>
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**TOTAL 100%**

### Proposal timeline and submission instructions

- **06 July 2023**: This Request for Proposal is publicly advertised.
- **By 25 July 2023** Any clarifying questions regarding this Request for Proposal should be emailed to research@freedomfund.org with “Question: People lacking official documentation” as the email subject line.
- **By 31 July 2023 6pm UK Time**: **Final proposal submission.** Please submit all documents to research@freedomfund.org with “Research proposal: People lacking official documentation” as the email subject line.
- **By 07 August 2023**: All shortlisted research teams will be notified.