

2025-2026

Annual Report

FREEDOM FIRM
RESCUE | RESTORATION | JUSTICE



Have you ever read a book that you can hardly put down? The kind where you can't wait to see what happens in the next chapter? I love a good book, and Agatha Christie happens to be one of my favorite authors. But even more than with a good mystery book, I'm on the edge of my seat right now!

This year we are celebrating 20 years of laser-intense focus on ending child sex-trafficking in India. We are rejoicing in over 1100 women and girls rescued, convictions that have changed regions, and lives that are being restored. We rejoice in Freedom Firm's plans to open a new office in northern India this year.

This has been an incredibly exciting book with never a dull moment. And we are on the edge of a new chapter. Even as we turn the page of our 20th anniversary, the story takes a surprising turn and a whole new facet of the adventure is developing. While Freedom Firm will continue to work in India, we are about to venture into new territory.

Over the past few years, we have noted a rise in the number of Bangladeshi victims being rescued, girls tricked and trafficked over the porous land border into India. Encouraged by Freedom Firm director Ashwin Rathod, founders Greg and Mala Malstead began to investigate the need in Bangladesh. Read Mala's letter in our online 20 year report (QR code below) outlining what they found. Once again, Greg and Mala are pioneering new ground, and I can't wait for this new chapter to begin!

Leah Henck
President, Freedom Firm USA

Scan the QR code to read Mala's letter "A Way Out"





Asha Kshirsagar is Program Associate for Freedom Firm's offices throughout India. She shares about the incredible improvements witnessed where change has seemed impossible:

"At a regional level, particularly in areas like Nagpur's Ganga Jamuna red-light district, sustained interventions have led to noticeable disruption of trafficking networks. Traffickers are more cautious and fearful due to consistent monitoring, rescues, and legal action. While trafficking has not been eliminated, it has become more covert, indicating that perpetrators are under pressure.

Nationally, trafficking patterns are shifting, with increased movement across states and more organized networks attempting to evade detection. However, there is also a positive trend of stronger inter-state coordination, improved law enforcement response, and greater recognition of trafficking as a serious crime, largely supported by organizations like Freedom Firm."

our mission

Freedom Firm USA's mission is to end child sex trafficking internationally through Rescue, Restoration, and Justice.

rescue

Investigation teams identify victims and mobilize the police to initiate a raid.

restoration

Social workers guide girls to healthy futures through numerous follow-ups.

justice

Legal teams work to see perpetrators prosecuted & girls empowered to testify.

our pillars

sacrifice

We lay aside the expectation of comfort in pursuit of this mission.

dignity

We believe in the unique and intrinsic worth of each person.

stewardship

We are grateful for every resource and steward them in service of others.

our promise

Our ALL for every ONE

Did You Know?

11M PEOPLE

are trapped in slavery in India – the highest number of people living in modern slavery globally

90%

of trafficking cases in India are internal; lowest classes of society are most vulnerable

(Bangladesh and Nepal are other primary sources of trafficking into India.)

$9B

is made annually from commercial sexual exploitation in India. This black money propels corruption.

INDIA ACCOUNTS FOR

1/3

OF THE WORLD'S

CHILD BRIDES

(often a first step to further sexual exploitation)



THERE ARE

3M

PROSTITUTES IN INDIA

40%

ARE

CHILDREN

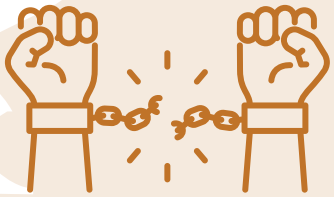
In 2024, only

7%

of trafficking cases ended in conviction.

How Freedom Firm is Helping

RESCUE **RESTORATION** **JUSTICE**







Since 2006:

1100+
girls rescued from sex trafficking

4000
girls impacted through restoration programs

34
perpetrators convicted

This Year:

63
GIRLS RESCUED

48
GIRLS STUDYING, TRAINING, & REINTEGRATED

195
LIFE SKILLS SESSIONS TAUGHT

67
PERPETRATORS ARRESTED

Rescue

Freedom Firm undercover operatives locate minor girls in brothels and document the crime. Our team partners with local police to raid brothels, rescue the girls, and arrest perpetrators. The survivors are then placed in shelter homes.

359 Investigations

47 Rescue Attempts

27 Successful Rescue Operations

63 Victims Rescued



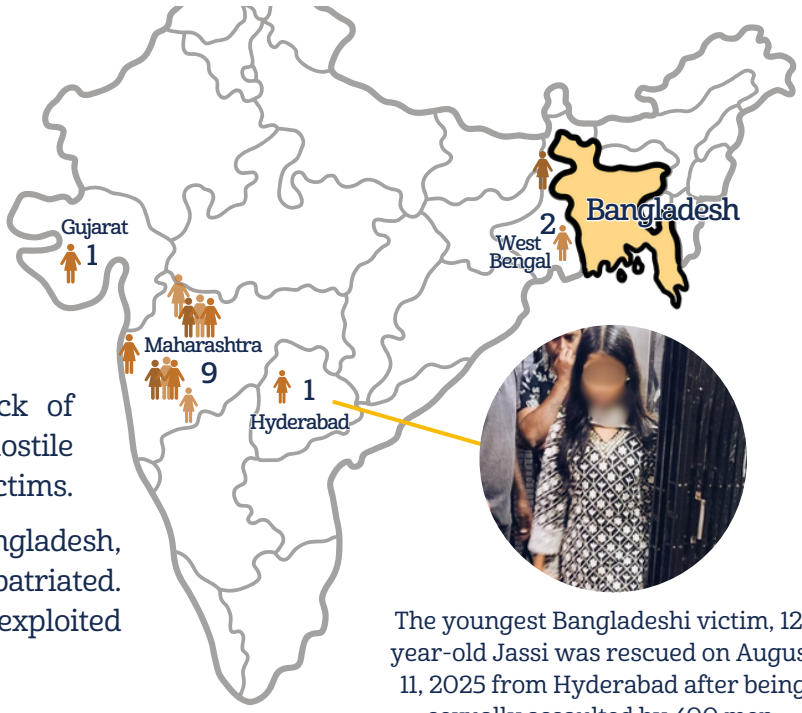
7 rescued, including 17-year-old Samrah (right), from a brothel on the Ahmednagar-Solapur Highway.

Bangladeshi Victims Trafficked to 4 Different States

The Freedom Firm team rescued 13 girls who were trafficked from Bangladesh to four states in India. Due to legal loopholes, and incorrect processing of survivors, victims of this cross-border trafficking are often wrongly imprisoned, placed in detention centers, interrogation centers, or shelter homes for years even after rescue from their traffickers.

False charges by law enforcement, a lack of action from courts, and treatment as hostile aliens all contribute to the plight of these victims.

In instances when girls are returned to Bangladesh, they are sometimes deported rather than repatriated. While being deported they are sometimes exploited by border forces or even re-trafficked.



The youngest Bangladeshi victim, 12-year-old Jassi was rescued on August 11, 2025 from Hyderabad after being sexually assaulted by 400 men.

Bangladeshi Victims Trafficked to 4 Different States



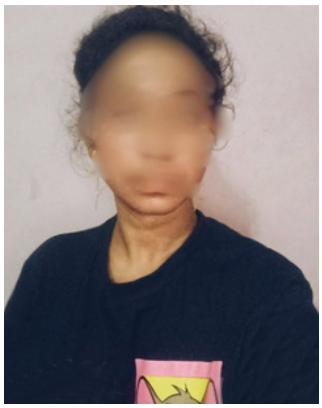
Tashi was rescued on April 10, 2025. She was trafficked from Bangladesh to Siliguri, West Bengal.



Shabana was rescued on June 14, 2025. She was trafficked from Bangladesh to the red-light area in Barshi, Maharashtra.



On July 11, 2025, the team rescued 17-year-old Jemini within 12 hours of learning that she was trafficked from Bangladesh to Pune.



On July 24, 2025, Freedom Firm rescued Shalima. She was trafficked from Bangladesh to Nashik, Maharashtra.



After tracking Lubna for many months, Freedom Firm finally rescued her on July 31, 2025. She was trafficked from Bangladesh to Pune.



Ridhi was rescued in Pune with her 12-day-old son on August 21, 2025 after being trafficking from Bangladesh to India.



On November 26, 2025, 15-year-old Shami and 13 women were rescued. Shami went missing in March 2025 and was trafficked from Bangladesh to Mumbai.



On March 5, 2026, Freedom Firm rescued 3 victims, Srabony, Sharmin, and Anna, who were trafficked from Bangladesh to Shevgaon, Maharashtra.



On March 25, 2026, Freedom Firm rescued 15-year-old Rachita who was trafficked from Bangladesh to West Bengal.

Karima

14-year-old Forced to Marry 27-year-old Man



14-year-old Karima after her rescue

In 21, April 2025, while following up with a survivor who had been re-trafficked, Freedom Firm learned that her sister, 14-year-old Karima, had been forcibly married and sold for Rs 40,000 (~$450) to a 27-year-old man who forced her into commercial sexual exploitation.

A social worker was able to speak directly with Karima on the phone. She pleaded for help. Investigators then tracked Karima to Jalgaon, Maharashtra, and contacted the Jalgaon Superintendent of Police, who immediately mobilized the Crime Branch to launch a rescue operation.

On May 22 at 9:05 p.m., the team and the police rescued Karima. The police arrested her phony husband and his mother. The Child Welfare Committee placed Karima in a shelter home where she remains safe.

On June 23, the High Court rejected the bail of the accused who sold Karima into prostitution.

Shani

Same Day Rescue—*Just in Time*

On May 29, 2025, Freedom Firm learned that 16-year-old Shani was about to be sold by her father to a a man in Maharashtra. They tracked Shani to a residential apartment in Pune where she was found, holding her 5-month-old baby brother. Shani's parents were out, and she shared her story with the team while they waited for her parents to return.

Shani revealed that after her husband died, her parents tricked her into thinking they were arranging another wedding for her, when instead, they subjected Shani to an inspection by an unknown woman, and beat Shani when she discovered and resisted their plan to sell her.



16-year-old Shani (right) after her rescue

When Shani's parents arrived, the police questioned them. The team learned that her mother was involved in prostitution for over 18 years. Shani's parents shared conflicting reports. Although the team urged them to file a case, the police chose to delay for further investigation.. Eventually, Shani's father was arrested and placed in police custody, but her mother's whereabouts are unknown. Shani is safe in a shelter home and has begun her journey of healing.

Wanted Brothel Keeper Exploits Two Intellectually Disabled Women

Sarika & Hirini

On August 9, 2025, Freedom Firm rescued two women, Sarika and Hirini from a brothel in the red-light area in Wani. The victims were intellectually disabled making them easy targets for the brothel keeper.

The team learned that the brothel keeper was a notorious 45-year-old woman with multiple criminal cases; she had been granted bail multiple times. Thankfully, the Judicial Magistrate passed an order for the brothel keeper to remain in police custody, and Sarika and Hirini were placed safely in a shelter home.



Sarika and Harini after their rescue

Rumana

Sold as a Baby by a Corrupt CWC Member



Rumana holds her brothel keeper "mother's" hand during the raid

Fifteen years ago, a corrupt Child Welfare Committee (CWC) member in Bundi, Rajasthan who was part of a child trafficking network bought an infant girl, Rumana, and sold her to a brothel keeper in Ganga Jamuna, Nagpur, for about $500. In February 2026, Freedom Firm travelled to Bundi, Rajasthan and learned about Rumana's situation. The police agreed to initiate a raid together, but members of their team tipped off the brothel and the rescue operation failed. The brothel was shut down, and there was no sign of Rumana.

On March 26, Freedom Firm was finally able to rescue 15-year-old Rumana. During her rescue, some local people attempted to forcibly take Rumana. The team immediately left the area to ensure her safety. The police detained seven individuals, and the brothel keeper, whom Rumana had come to know as “mother” was taken into police custody. The police escorted Rumana to the police station but refused to file a First Information Report. So the team presented Rumana’s case before the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights in Delhi. Meanwhile, the team learned that the CWC member who sold Rumana as an infant used his connections and political influence to escape during the raid. Rumana shared horrifying details with after her rescue: the CWC member’s own son had exploited Rumana in the brothel for over two years, starting when she was only 13 years old.

The lady chairperson of the CWC in Bundi, Rajasthan courageously filed a First Information Report against her colleague. Despite police pressure, and the accused’s connections and influence, Freedom Firm ensured that 15-year-old Rumana was rescued and placed in a protective home where she remains safe.

Restoration

After a survivor is rescued, she begins a journey of restoration. Freedom Firm social workers continue to offer help and guidance to her for years to come. In partnership with shelter homes across the country, Freedom Firm provides rescued girls with counseling, job training, education, and health care. Even after survivors return to their villages, Freedom Firm social workers visit and connect with them to offer resources and encouragement.

28 shelter homes offer our life skills sessions

38 home investigations

195 life skills sessions in shelter homes

961 phone calls and visits to survivors

Warrior Freedom Camp

In January 2025, survivors from different shelter homes gathered for a warrior-themed Freedom Firm Camp. During four days in the wilderness, survivors enjoyed outdoor adventures, creative activities, games, and meaningful discussions. Survivors found healing in nature while building friendships, teamwork, and confidence.







Celebrating Marriage, Motherhood, Education, and Career Pursuits



Rahila gets married



Diya thrives in school and prepares for her exams



Anu dreams big while mothering her baby



Sonali becomes a wedding planner



Hema is a responsible mother



Saba and Basanti work in a cafe



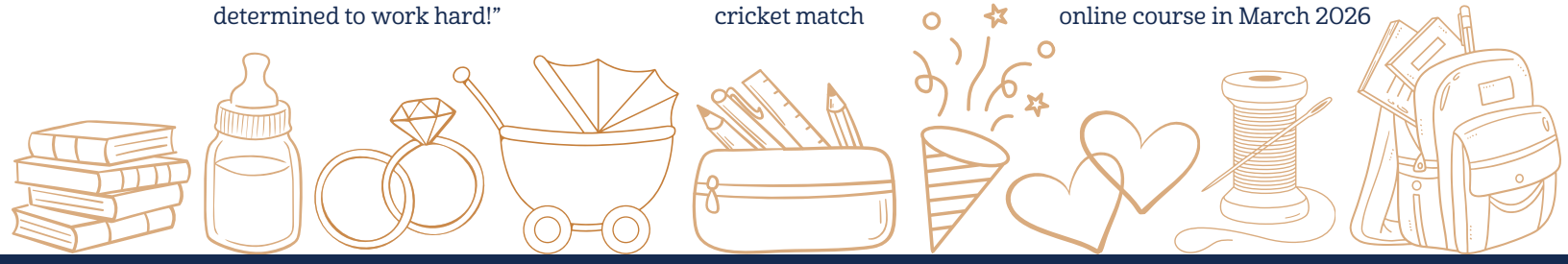
Suhu is loving college: “I’m determined to work hard!”



Rohini wins a medal in a cricket match



Neelu, eager to learn, began an online course in March 2026



A Life Reclaimed

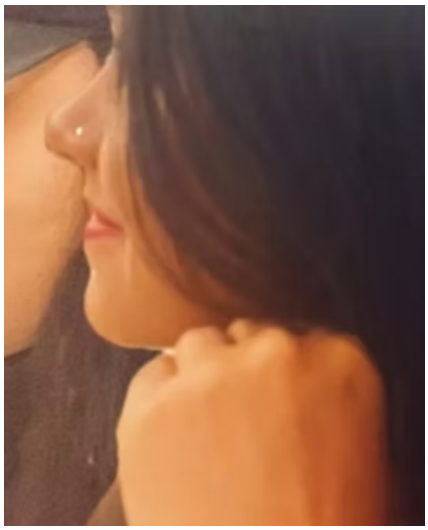
In August 2019, Freedom Firm rescued 13-year-old Sneha from a brothel in Moradabad. She was from the Bedia community who often sell their daughters into sexual slavery. Sneha's grandmother had sold her to a brothel, yet despite Freedom Firm's objections, the Child Welfare Committee granted the grandmother custody four years later.

Again, Sneha's grandmother sold her into prostitution. The team re-rescued Sneha on December 14, 2023 from a brothel in Agra. She was five months pregnant. The police arrested Sneha's grandmother and three males.

Sneha was placed in a shelter home where she began to heal and dream of a better future.



Sneha after her rescue



Sneha dreams of owning a beauty parlor

For years, the social workers tried to help Sneha understand that her grandmother was the villain in her story, but it was only when her grandmother showed interest in exploiting her younger sister that Sneha became concerned and decided to testify against her grandmother in court. Despite threats from her grandmother, Sneha faithfully attended court and bravely testified. In May 2024, the accused in Sneha's case applied for bail, but the bail was rejected at the Allahabad High Court.

In February 2025, Sneha tragically lost her 10-month-old son. A few weeks later, social workers visited her to see how she was doing and also invited her to a Dream Workshop. In spite of her recent heartbreaking loss, Sneha travelled 621 miles to attend the workshop in March. She wanted to make her dream of running a beauty parlor come true.

A few weeks later, Sneha enrolled in a six-month beautician training program in Agra.

In October 2025, the social workers visited Sneha. She was now happily married and the couple's love for each other was evident. Despite the horrors she endured, Sneha courageously fought for justice, rose above her suffering, and tenaciously pursued her dreams.

During the most recent visit, Sneha shared stories of her adventures, and warmed our hearts with the sound of her musical laughter.



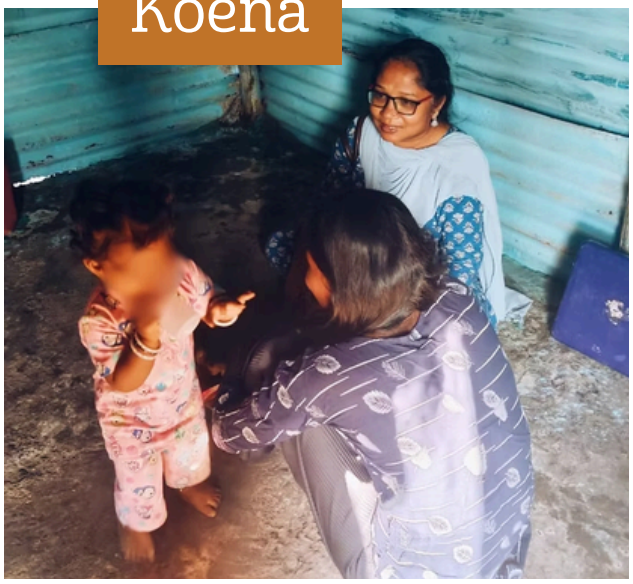
Sneha & social worker



Sneha & her husband

Hope Takes Root

Koena



Marriage Struggles and Disappointment

In October 27, 2025, a Freedom Firm social worker visited Koena (rescued in January, 2023 from Nagpur) in her home. Koena entered marriage with the hope that her husband would love, protect, and provide for his family. She shared her disappointment and concerns about her husband's drinking habits. She was at a loss for what to do.

Koena expressed her desire to pursue a job in catering. The social worker encouraged her to continue caring for her daughter and further develop her tailoring skills to allow her flexibility.

A New Home Brings Hope and Healing

In January 2026, the social workers visited Koena in her new one-room home. Koena's family moved due to criminal activity in their neighborhood. Her husband had been involved in gambling and fights creating an unhealthy and stressful home environment. But after moving into their new home, Koena's husband started working regularly and became more attentive to Koena and their baby. We are hopeful that Koena's husband will continue to step up and take care of his precious family.





Awanti

Struggling in School

15-year-old Awanti (rescued in February 2025 from Kolkata) was initially eager to learn. She attended singing classes, enjoyed reading books, and became friends with other girls in the shelter home. But when a social worker visited her in March, she had become agitated and aggressive.

Awanti was unhappy and homesick. She begged to return home. Her parents took custody of her in April before her 16th birthday. The social workers continued to check in with her, but she seemed unhappy, unwilling to listen, and showed no interest in school.

Thriving in School

During a social worker visit in February 2026, Awanti had turned a corner. She was studying diligently, submitted all her projects on time, and is attending extra tuition classes to strengthen her learning. Her parents even said that she was staying up late to study in the evenings. After several months of showing little interest in school, it is encouraging to hear that Awanti is now focused on school and is making steady progress.

Justice

Freedom Firm actively pursues the conviction of those responsible for trafficking minor girls. The Freedom Firm legal team assists public prosecutors at each stage of the criminal trial. Rescued girls are empowered to testify against their abusers and bring them to justice. Every trial and conviction creates a deterrent and raises the cost of sex trafficking in India.

989 legal follow-ups on old & new cases

67 perpetrators arrested

111 bail applications opposed

46 witnesses testified

Life Imprisonment for Sanchi's Accused!

At 12 years old, Sanchi was kidnapped, repeatedly raped, and became pregnant. In July 2020, her captors brought her to Neemuch to sell her, but she bravely escaped at a restaurant and fled to the police. Officers arrested the two men. Four months into her pregnancy, Sanchi was medically directed to receive an abortion. She was then placed in a One Stop Centre shelter. Sanchi battled severe nightmares. The social workers regularly counselled and taught her life skills as she began to heal from her traumatic past.



Sanchi with her husband, baby, and supplies from our social workers during a recent visit

Upon returning to her father's home in 2023, Sanchi faced continuous threats from one of the accused who had been released on medical bail. Despite her fear of the police (due to previous mistreatment by an officer) and threats from the accused, Sanchi she stood her ground, supported by her father, advocates, and dedicated social workers. Her father arranged her marriage for her safety, and Sanchi persistently attended court hearings. On September 27, 2025, **the legal battle ended in victory: both accused were sentenced to life in prison, and Sanchi was awarded $1,022 in compensation.**

Throughout her journey, social workers counselled Sanchi and encouraged her to look at life from a different perspective. Today, Sanchi is a mother to a 9-month-old baby boy. She has safely reintegrated into her community and is living a stable life with her family.

Legal Action Underway for Bangladeshi Victims

In 2026 Freedom Firm began focused legal action in the high courts of India to bring freedom and humane treatment to Bangladeshi rescued girls. Over the past few years, multiple victims have been wrongly imprisoned and mistreated after their rescue from sex trafficking. A legal precedent will greatly help current and future rescued girls to be properly treated in the legal system and safely returned home in a more timely manner and with dignity.

Fighting for Wrongly Imprisoned Bangladeshi Victims



Prachi, Mora, and Manila rescued Aug 4, 2023. Wrongly imprisoned then deported back to Bangladesh in September 2025



Tashi, rescued April 10, 2025 after being trafficked from Bangladesh to West Bengal. Wrongly imprisoned. The team is still fighting for her release and reunion with her daughter.

Advocating for Repatriation



Zarine, trafficked from Bangladesh, was rescued in Chhattisgarh March 2025. She is anxious that her parents may reject her and her baby when she returns home. The team is advocating for her to be safely repatriated and is investigating her home situation.

Homeward Bound At Last



Hanifa, trafficked from Bangladesh, was rescued April 2022, & soon to be repatriated. Her family is eager to meet their grandchild.



In March 2026, after 19 months, Fatima (rescued August 2025) was safely repatriated to her home in Bangladesh.

Volunteers & Sponsors



Manna Tique

A boutique in Hillsville, VA raises awareness by displaying survivor handicrafts in their shop



Chai Party

Volunteer Julia hosted a chai party to raise funds and awareness



Siblings Run for Freedom

Samuel Dirksen ran 209 miles and helped to raise funds and awareness

Rebekah Dirksen ran 107 miles and helped to raise funds and awareness



Hobbit Themed Birthday

Friends in Arizona raised funds and awareness at a birthday party

"Step Toward Freedom" 2025 Event Sponsors

Thank you to each of our Galax, VA sponsors for sponsoring our New River Trail awareness walk.



Curtis Bartlett Fitness



Power Up



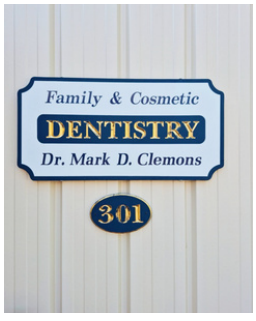
Farm Bureau Insurance



Corinthian Salon



EmbroideryVille



Dr. Mark D. Clemons



Galax Presbyterian Church



Christ Chapel



Twin County Regional Healthcare



Cornerstone Community Church

Throughout the year, Freedom Firm USA offers multiple opportunities to impact survivors of sex trafficking. Visit freedomfirm.org/get-involved to learn more!

Get Involved and Impact Girls in India!

People all over the U.S. joined Freedom Firm USA to learn, walk, run, and take action for survivors of sex trafficking.























22 people raised their voices for a survivor of sex trafficking on our *Voices for Her* podcast



Voices for Her: A Podcast from Freedom Firm USA

Brought to you by Freedom Firm USA, Voices for Her is a podcast created to share stories of rescue, restoration and justice. Each episode features a different narrator whose voice speaks for a survivor of sex trafficking in India.

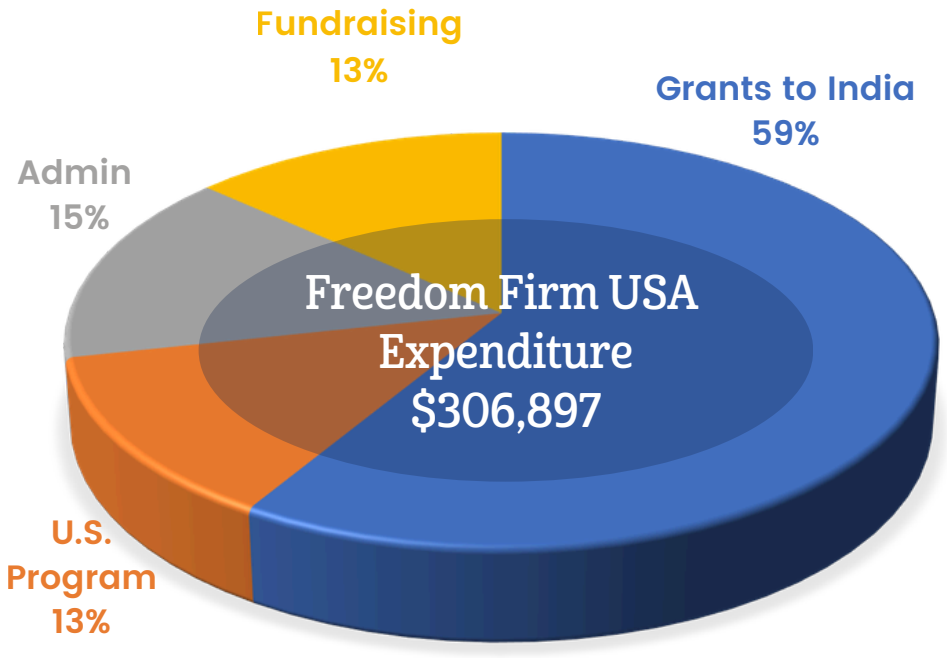
Listen here:

voicesforher.buzzsprout.com

Email podcast@freedomfirm.org to be a voice for a survivor and we will send you a short story to record.

Funding

Freedom Firm USA exists to support Freedom Firm in India by raising awareness and financial support for their work of rescue, restoration, and justice for victims of sex-trafficking. Freedom Firm USA's total revenue in our 2025-2026 fiscal year was $349,687. Our net assets ended the year at $438,212. We steward these funds seriously, striving to accomplish our mission efficiently and effectively.



Funds received through Freedom Firm USA

Atlas Free
Browncroft Community
Caterpillar Foundation
Charities Aid Foundation of America
Cornerstone Community
CPPS Heritage Fund
Freedom 4/24
Memorial Park
Morgan Stanley Gift Fund
The Mary Lynn Richardson Fund
United Way of Greater Kansas City

Thank you to the many generous individuals & foundations who have made this work possible!

To contribute online, please visit
www.freedomfirm.org/give

Donations by check can be mailed to:
Freedom Firm USA
214 Cherry Street
Galax, Virginia 24333

To access Independent Auditor Reports and IRS Tax Forms 990, please visit
www.freedomfirm.org/annual-reports

Freedom Firm USA is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.
Tax ID: 20-5280075.
All donations are tax-deductible for U.S. taxpayers.

This annual report reflects the activities and financial details of Freedom Firm from April 2025 to March 2026. Freedom Firm is a charitable trust registered in Udhagamandalam, Tamil Nadu. Freedom Firm USA is a nonprofit organization incorporated in the state of Minnesota, USA. Their fiscal year is from July to June. Freedom Firm and Freedom Firm USA are independent, legally distinct entities with two separate Board of Trustees.

Who We Are



Freedom Firm USA Staff

- Leah Henck, President
- Anne Dean, Grants Coordinator
- Tabitha Pinckney, Awareness Coordinator
- Esther Varghese, Communications and Development Associate



Freedom Firm USA Board Members

- Brian Rightler, Chair
- Roger Rumer, Member
- Carolyn Facemire, Member
- Kara Webber, Member

(not pictured: Reuben Arulanandam, Raghu Velaga, Aaron Dendy)

Freedom Firm Staff in India



- Ashwin Rathod, National Director
- Abraham Hedge, Program Associate
- Asha Lokhande, Program Associate
- Jacqueline Olivia, Associate Director C&D
- 6 Finance and C&D personnel
- 3 Area Supervisors
- 4 Liaison Officers
- 11 Social Workers
- 8 Investigators (faces blurred for their protection)

Freedom Firm Board of Trustees in India

- Shirley Aaron
- Pamela Clark
- Stephen George
- Nirmala Stephen
- Augustine Williams



Survivors celebrate Christmas in a shelter home.

Front Cover: Shabana (rescued June 2025 in Maharashtra) makes paper flowers in a shelter home.

Platinum Transparency 2026
Candid.

Charity Navigator
FOUR-STAR

BBB
ACCREDITED CHARITY

FREEDOM FIRM
RESCUE | RESTORATION | JUSTICE

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