



# ADAPTATION INNOVATION GROWTH

2020 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



OUR 20TH YEAR

## 20 YEARS OF **FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM**

Just as Free the Slaves was set to commemorate our 20th anniversary and enter our third decade, new challenges emerged for our work. The COVID-19 pandemic has made millions of people more vulnerable to modern slavery. And the renewed movement for racial justice has reinforced, yet again, that slavery cannot be fully overcome as long as systemic inequality, marginalization, and violence persist.

Our 2020 Annual Impact Report details the many ways that Free the Slaves programs have adapted throughout the year to provide humanitarian relief, protect public health, and sustain economic lifelines in the global trafficking hot spots where we work. Our field teams innovated new ways to continue educating and mobilizing communities to become slavery resistant, despite the disruptions of the pandemic. We expanded our global footprint to include new regions where community-based anti-slavery responses are desperately needed. Undergirding these efforts is our fundamental commitment to human rights and global justice. We believe every person deserves to be treated with fairness and dignity—everywhere in the world.

Over 20 years ago, Free the Slaves helped spark the modern anti-slavery movement, and we have helped lead it ever since. Our key strategy has always been to forge partnerships to create lasting impact. Despite the challenges of 2020, we will succeed in ending modern slavery if civil society organizations, survivors, the private sector, and the public sector all work together. We thank you for joining us on this historic journey to move freedom forward.



BUKENI WARUZI  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

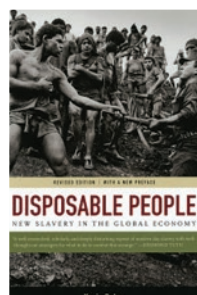


TIMOTHY PATRICK MCCARTHY  
BOARD CHAIR

## 20 YEARS OF **ACCOMPLISHMENT**

Explore the history of Free the Slaves with year-by-year highlights of our first two decades of freedom work at

► [freetheslaves.net/timeline/](https://freetheslaves.net/timeline/)





## 20 YEARS OF **IMPACTING LIVES**

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**14,000+**

People freed  
from slavery



**650,000+**

People reached in trafficking hot  
spots through awareness raising  
and rights education



**300+**

Traffickers and  
slaveholders arrested

## 20 YEARS OF **GLOBAL LEADERSHIP**

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### **Pioneering Community Based Responses**

Slavery will be eliminated forever when people in slavery are able to stand up for their rights and care for themselves and their families. That's why we and our partners organize the most vulnerable people and teach them how they can collectively demand payment for their work, protection from physical and sexual abuse, and access to jobs, loans, and other ways to lift themselves out of poverty. We've codified our approach and now we're able to bring it to organizations around the world who can use what we've learned to help even more people out of slavery.



### **Galvanizing Governmental Action**

Free the Slaves has been a leading advocate for anti-trafficking legislation and funding, at the global level, in the U.S., and on the front lines. We represent civil society on Alliance 8.7, the U.N. initiative to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal to end forced and child labor. We helped form and serve as co-chair of the Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking, a coalition of 15 leading U.S. anti-trafficking organizations.



### **Creating Public Awareness**

Free the Slaves books, films, events—and coverage of our work in newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and social media—have reached hundreds of millions of people worldwide. We helped awaken the world to the fact that slavery still exists. We crafted a blueprint so that politicians, business executives, faith leaders, celebrities, activists, and the public can learn how to help.



### **Building a Global Movement**

Free the Slaves strengthens anti-slavery work locally and globally. We provide training and funding to nurture a growing network of grassroots front-line partner organizations that help victims and the vulnerable. We convene the annual Freedom from Slavery Forum so activists from around the globe can learn from each other, build partnerships, coordinate action, and strengthen the movement's collective voice.

# 2020 | A Year of Crisis and Innovation

The worldwide health and economic crises caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic made modern slavery worse. As livelihoods were disrupted, people took loans that have trapped them in debt bondage slavery. Children were forced to work to support their families. And the crisis isn't over. Migration will surge when international travel resumes, and many migrants will be tricked by traffickers posing as legitimate labor recruiters. Free the Slaves programs adapted to the challenges in many ways.

## PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN COVID-19 RELIEF ► DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Our Dominican Republic team delivered food parcels and sanitation kits to impoverished communities where we work that were not reached by government programs. People of Haitian origin living in the Dominican Republic are especially vulnerable to modern slavery. They were neglected by the official pandemic response. Our "Everyone Deserves a Mask" 2020 crowdfunding program stepped in to assist.





## PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH ▶ HAITI

Our Haiti team employed slavery survivors to sew masks and assemble personal protective equipment kits for distribution to remote slavery hot-spot villages. A team of 30 survivors made 4,000 masks and assembled 2,400 hygiene kits. Testing and treatment is extremely limited in Haiti, which means prevention is a critical front-line defense.



## SUSTAINING ECONOMIC LIFELINES ▶ GHANA

Our Ghana team conducted pandemic adapted training and support to help communities sustain their village savings and loan associations. These communal programs provide economic resilience for vulnerable families, allowing people to take legitimate loans in times of hardship instead of sending a child into slavery in return for cash.



## DEVELOPING DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT ▶ INDIA

Training our front-line partner organizations required significant adaptations to our Community Liberation Toolkit modules. With in-person workshops no longer possible, the curriculum needed transformation into an online training format. Our India team led the way to ensure that vital programs to educate public officials and anti-trafficking activists were able to continue. The newest training module—Strengthening the Rule of Law—was completed in 2020 and piloted for Indian and Nepali activists.





# 2020 | Global Racial Awakening

Racial injustice is a legacy of slavery. The Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment outlawed slavery in the U.S., and the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights helped prohibit slavery around the world. But these remarkable achievements did not end slavery. And they have not eradicated systemic injustice that modern forms of slavery still cause today. That is why Free the Slaves programs focus on transformative change.



## **PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION** ► MAURITANIA

Racial injustice is at the heart of Mauritania's system of slavery. Mauritania has made significant commitments with national laws and as an Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder Country, but little progress. The Free the Slaves program, begun in 2020, catalyzes journalism as a tool for social progress. By training reporters to create engaging and inclusive coverage of modern slavery and governmental inaction, and by training civil society to work effectively with the media, officials with a duty to enforce Mauritania's anti-slavery laws can be held accountable.



## ADDRESSING MIGRATION & DISCRIMINATION ► MIDDLE EAST



Gulf region countries are a top destination for job-seeking migrant workers, facilitated by an underregulated recruitment industry. Migrants, many from India, are frequently treated as an underclass, trapped in modern forms of slavery because of their racial or ethnic origins. Free the Slaves launched a new project in 2020 to promote safe migration from India to Gulf Cooperation Council states. The program will establish a comprehensive framework to protect workers at every stage of the migration process, from recruitment and deployment to employment and safe return.

## ADVANCING RECOGNITION & EQUALITY ► DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Many Haitians in the Dominican Republic live in dire conditions, including systemic racial discrimination, extreme poverty, and marginalization. Children of Haitian descent are forced to work in domestic service, street vending, begging, agricultural work, construction, and other inhumane activities. Free the Slaves works with Haitian communities in the Dominican Republic to educate residents about human trafficking, what the risks are, what their rights are, and how to deal with the situation collectively.



## CONFRONTING CASTE INEQUALITY ► INDIA

India's caste system has been abolished but endures informally, relegating millions to destitution and slavery. Members of the Dalit caste are often trapped in bonded-labor slavery on farms and at brick kilns, trapped in an inescapable cycle of poverty, illiteracy, and oppression. Our goal is to empower Dalit communities to stand against slaveholders to demand better working conditions. We educate those in bondage about human rights, labor rights, child rights and women's rights; we mobilize communities to exercise those rights through the formation of village committees; we train villagers to advocate for better police protection, schools, housing, health care and other socioeconomic services; and we provide vocational training to help survivors find decent jobs after freedom.



## Kwezi is Free in Ghana

At 7 years old, Kwezi left his childhood home with expectations of a better life and more opportunities. But that was far from his reality. Instead, he was tricked by traffickers and was forced to work on dangerous and deadly fishing boats, with little food and rest.



**I woke up at dawn and worked until dusk, bailing water out of the boat, paddling the boat, pulling the net and processing fish with my master's wife."**

— Kwezi

Fortunately, Free the Slaves had been working with local groups in the region where Kwezi was enslaved. Together, we are on constant lookout for child trafficking victims. When the field staff learned of Kwezi's situation, they partnered with government officials to pressure the trafficker to release him.

Kwezi is now free. Doctors screened him for COVID-19. Psychologists provided trauma counseling. He's eating better and catching up on schooling. Social workers will ensure that when Kwezi returns home, he will not be re-trafficked.



*(Kwezi is a pseudonym used to protect his identity.)*



# 2020 | Worldwide Projects

## Caribbean ▶ HAITI

Impoverished rural families send children to cities hoping they will have better lives in return for domestic housework. Too often it results in child slavery. Our program works in source communities to uplift children through schooling and economic development that prevents child trafficking. In cities, we work to raise awareness that child trafficking is illegal.

## Latin America ▶ DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

People of Haitian origin face extreme exploitation in the agriculture, construction, and tourism sectors. Our program works to promote minority rights and help community members work collectively for dignity and recognition.

## West Africa ▶ GHANA, MAURITANIA, SENEGAL

Ghanaian parents unable to support their children send them to the fishing fleet on Lake Volta, hoping they will send remittances home. Our program works to educate families on child rights and recover children from fishing slavery. In Mauritania, the government has committed to ending race-based slavery. Our training program for journalists and civil society will hold the government accountable. In Senegal, our research team is documenting the impacts of COVID-19.

## East Africa ▶ KENYA

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the number of people who are trapped in modern slavery, especially child victims of sexual exploitation. Our program is researching the scope and drivers of modern slavery to establish the need for urgent interventions.

## Middle East & North Africa

Migrants flock to the Gulf region for construction, domestic service, and hospitality jobs. Refugees from conflicts are targeted by traffickers. Our newest regional program is developing strategies to safeguard migrant and refugee rights.

## South Asia ▶ INDIA

Debt-bondage and risky migration trap millions of Indians in slavery. We work to improve enforcement of India's ban on bonded labor and to educate Indians on the tricks traffickers use to lure vulnerable migrants.

## 2020 RESULTS



173

Individuals freed from slavery



4,517

people received socio-economic services to build slavery resistance



9

traffickers arrested and brought to justice

# 2020 | From Slavery to Freedom Success



How could we not support the great work of Free the Slaves? How could we pass up the opportunity of giving the gift of freedom to individuals currently in slavery? It's a privilege to support this important work."

— Margaret Graff  
and Richard Higgins  
*Free the Slaves Donors*

## "GROWING UP FREE" CALLED A MODEL FOR THE WORLD



The first-ever U.S. Child Protection Compact Partnership (CPC) to end child trafficking wrapped up its final year in Ghana in 2020 with a national symposium. Officials said the project was a terrific success that other countries should follow. The U.S. began CPCs as an innovative technique for government-to-government contracts that coordinate social services, law enforcement, child rescue teams, recovery shelters, and prevention programs into a whole-of government, whole-of society effort. The five-year Ghana program, led by Free the Slaves, liberated 408 children, educated 369,705 community members and 177 traditional leaders to prevent child trafficking, helped launch 473 microenterprises, created 45 village savings and loan associations to create economic resilience to avoid modern slavery, and led to the arrest of 24 traffickers.



## 20 WALK FREE IN INDIA

The liberation of exploited workers is a critical part of building a world free from persecution and injustice. This story of freedom starts with a phone call. A woman who received human rights training from a Free the Slaves partner organization discovered that her aunt was trapped at a brick factory with 19 others, forced to work, abused when they dared ask to be paid. The trainee knew just what to do. She had become part of a village committee that refers cases of abuse to officials who enforce India's anti-slavery laws.

The woman managed to reach her aunt by cell phone to let her know that the law was on her side. The aunt was so encouraged that she decided to lead a mass escape. The workers told the slaveholder they were going to the market to use government food ration coupons. Instead, they rushed directly to the office of a district magistrate, who provided food and protection overnight. Activists from our partner organization took statements from the workers to build a court case against the slaveholder. The next day, they were provided safe passage back to their homes.



## ARE YOU FINANCING SLAVERY AND RACIAL INEQUALITY?

The products we buy are decisions we make about the world we want. Everyday purchases can fuel modern slavery and the racial inequality it creates. Our friends at 522 productions volunteered with Free the Slaves in 2020 to produce a vivid video reminder of the impact the globalized economy has on vulnerable individuals from disadvantaged groups.

See the video at [vimeo.com/481529279](https://vimeo.com/481529279)



### 2020 RESULTS



**45,021**

people trained to protect their communities from trafficking



**327**

government officials trained to apprehend traffickers



## FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY FORUM

The Freedom from Slavery Forum was established to gather anti-slavery leaders from around the world to create a collegial space to coalesce, create partnerships, discuss promising practices, and develop a shared agenda for action.

The 8th annual Forum happened in a unique and exceptional environment caused by the global pandemic. Civil society organizations are at the front of the fight but are experiencing increased demand for services while facing a decrease in funding, driving an urgent need for innovation in advocacy and other programmatic design and delivery.

The 2020 Forum featured 27 presenters from governments, multilateral institutions, academia, foundations, and civil society organizations. The diverse panels included representatives from organizations in Australia, Canada, France, Ghana, Kenya, India, Switzerland, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

The 2020 virtual forum was an opportunity to increase participation, interaction, networking, learning, and sharing. The forum was structured into four 90-minute virtual sessions, each focusing on a different theme.

- The Use of Research to Fight Modern Slavery
- Strengthening Advocacy from Grassroots to Global
- Empowering and Learning from Survivors
- Fundraising and Resource Mobilization

The virtual events were free to attend and open to everyone in the anti-slavery movement. Across the four days, 554 individuals registered and 285 individuals from 33 countries participated.

**See the Zoom video recordings and read the Forum report at [freedomfromslaveryforum.org](https://freedomfromslaveryforum.org).**



**[The Forum] was very helpful in gaining perspectives from survivors and folks working in different parts of the world. The diversity and specificity offered was compelling and enlightening."**

— Forum Participant





We've come a long way since International Women's Day in 1998, when we challenged the world to adopt the three "P" paradigm of prevention, protection and prosecution. The decade of development that followed sharpened our understanding. As Secretary [of State], I was proud to call for a decade of delivery, and what a productive decade it has been. Today I'm calling for a decade of determination. It is time to take stock of our efforts to determine what is working and what is not. And most importantly, we must stay determined. Let's keep going."

— Hillary Rodham Clinton  
*Former U.S. Secretary of State*



## **2020 FORUM ADDRESS**

Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton recalled the formative days of the modern anti-slavery movement and called for a "Decade of Determination" to end modern slavery as the Forum observed the 20th anniversary of ratification of the U.N. Palermo Protocol and passage of the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

**See her remarks at [vimeo.com/472683435](https://vimeo.com/472683435)**

# 2020 | Advocacy: From Grassroots to Global



## HOLDING GOVERNMENTS ACCOUNTABLE

The U.N. effort to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, the end of child and forced labor, relies on voluntary commitments by governments to become “Pathfinder Countries” that show the world how to end slavery at scale. Free the Slaves, which serves on the alliance’s global coordinating group, is expected to lead a new monitoring initiative to hold Pathfinder Countries accountable for their commitments.



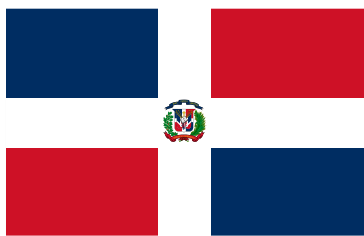
## ADVISING AMERICA’S NEW PRESIDENT

The ATEST coalition, co-chaired by Free the Slaves, developed extensive recommendations to guide the incoming administration of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris on whole-of-government approaches to combat modern slavery. The 60-page brief called for catalytic investments in prevention programs and protection of survivors.



### HAITI

Free the Slaves advocacy in Haiti has helped prompt the government to fund the country’s National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons. It is the first infusion of funds since the official committee was created five years ago. The committee’s job is critical to implementing Haiti’s 2014 anti-trafficking law.



### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Child marriage was banned in the Dominican Republic in 2020, thanks in part to Free the Slaves partnering with 14 other organizations to form a new coalition that advocates for the rights of the enslaved and the vulnerable. The coalition joined a successful lawsuit to outlaw child marriage. The ban is the first landmark success for the newly formed Civil Society Coalition against Trafficking in Persons.



### GHANA

A new government shelter for children liberated from fishing slavery opened in 2020, after persistent advocacy by Free the Slaves. A lack of shelter beds has been a bottleneck in efforts to house children as they recover from slavery. Ghana’s government promised to build a shelter, but it required consistent pressure to get the facility staffed and operational. The very first children to use the new facility were part of a Free the Slaves liberation operation.



# 2020 | New Research Partnership



## FIELD WORK BEGINS IN KENYA AND SENEGAL

Our Kenya and Senegal teams began a field study in 2020 on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a goal of shaping future anti-trafficking programs to help communities cope with growing challenges. It was the first project in a multi-year partnership between Free the Slaves and the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham in the U.K.

The two organizations announced the plan to merge research, community activism and global advocacy efforts on the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. The new team will work with local communities to understand what works to prevent and/or end modern forms of slavery, pioneering new anti-slavery techniques to support this understanding, and engaging in research that can inform policy and practice.



**University of  
Nottingham**  
Rights Lab

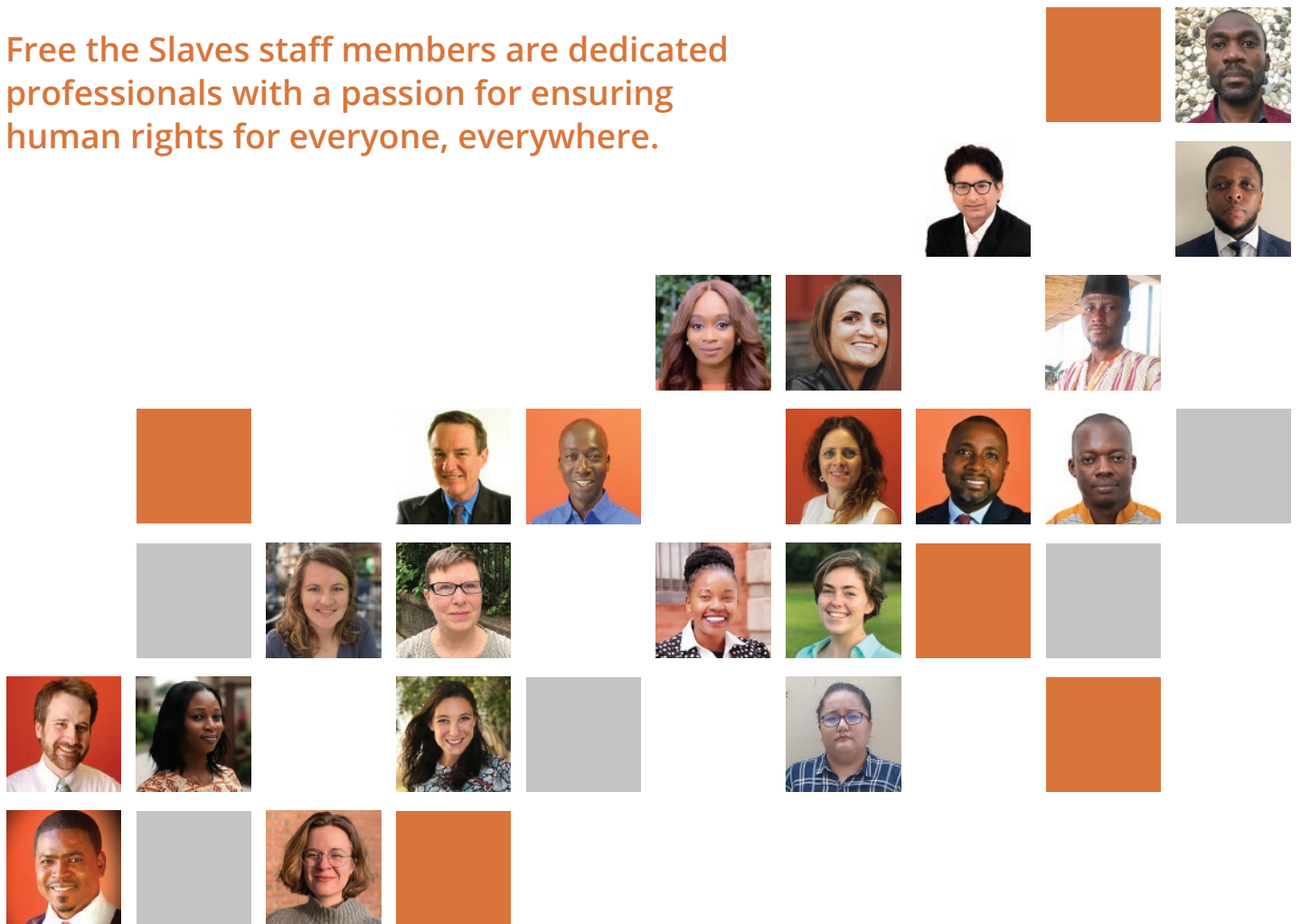


**The Rights Lab has long admired the world-leading work of Free the Slaves, with its focus on empowering at-risk communities. Our own focus includes research on how to create resilience to slavery in a community-based way. We were thrilled to begin our first major joint project with Free the Slaves this year, funded by U.K. Research and Innovation."**

— Zoe Trodd  
*Rights Lab Director*

# 2020 | Free the Slaves Global Staff

Free the Slaves staff members are dedicated professionals with a passion for ensuring human rights for everyone, everywhere.



*The following individuals served on the Free the Slaves staff in 2020*

Gemma Bardaji Blasco

Sonia Blaise

Joha Braimah

Casey Branchini

Kuldeep Singh Chauhan

Munya Chitambo

Julie Davis

Justine Dery

Tsering Diskit

Anthonia Emordi

Terry FitzPatrick

Lamine Gaye

Christa Geisecke

Narit Gessler

Julia Grifferty

Smith Maxime

Lee McClure

Kim Maria Misao

Jackline Mwende

Bismark Quartey

Nour Sibaa

Marie Soveroski

Bukeni Waruzi

Pauline Werner

John Whan Yoon





“

**My hope for the future is that every one of us wakes up knowing they have the freedom to live a healthy life, decently, in a developed environment, making their own choices to enjoy life to the fullest, not dictated by anyone else's decisions."**

**— Nour Sibaai**  
*Free the Slaves Middle East and North Africa Regional Manager*



# 2020 | Free the Slaves Board of Directors



*The following individuals served on the Free the Slaves board in 2020*

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**Juan A. Arteaga**

Crowell & Moring LLP\*  
*Board Secretary*

**Evelyn Chumbow**

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**Jane Covey**

Harpwell, ME

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Lowenstein Sandler LLP\*

*\* Affiliations are for ID purposes only*



# 2020 | Our Thanks

A wide range of foundations, institutions, and major donors made our work possible in 2020 through grants, donations, and in-kind contributions. Our deepest thanks for their generosity and partnership.

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University of Nottingham  
Rights Lab

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Anonymous Foundation

Our thanks, also, to the many, many individuals who contributed to our 2020 annual fundraising campaign. Our human rights work is rooted in the values we all share as human beings.

**WORKING TOGETHER, WE WILL END SLAVERY.**







**OUR 20TH YEAR**

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