



Survivor Stories

Former Slave Frees Others: Roshan's Story

Roshan Lal grew up in a family of slaves, in an Indian village where slavery is common custom. Here, bondage is pervasive, crippling and conventional. Generations of villagers toil under slavery's brutal routine and know nothing else—until now. As a slavery survivor, Roshan works as a paralegal to help free others.

Familiar with Slavery's Brutal Grip

At Roshan Lal's legal clinic, a small brick outpost surrounded by vast wheat fields, villagers crowd inside on a bare floor. They come for his help. As a former slave, Roshan knows how hard it is to break slavery's brutal grip. Where Roshan lives, slavery thrives. His neighbors are forced to make bricks, crush stones, and harvest crops under the harshest conditions. They are trafficked like objects. They work without pay and suffer crushing physical abuse and sexual trauma. Roshan understands these hardships because he endured them, too. Roshan was reared in a family of slaves and knew no different. But several years ago, local activists were finally able to reach Roshan and his family. With support from Free the Slaves local partners, Roshan and his relatives were able to break the hold of slaveholders and start new lives in freedom.



From Victim to Hero



Once freed, Roshan could continue his education. He went to law school and began work in the tiny clinic as a paralegal—helping those still in bondage exercise their legal and human rights. In this part of Northern India, violent moneylenders, contractors, and gangsters control, exploit, and brutalize residents: year after year, for generations. Roshan's simple law clinic in the midst of this terror is proof that victory over slavery is possible. "I want to help everyone get their human rights," Roshan says. "My dream is to bring freedom to everyone who is enslaved."