

Global Freedom...



...One Community at a Time

2019 | ANNUAL REPORT





Dear Friends and Supporters,

I write this letter as I shelter in place amidst the spreading of the coronavirus pandemic. The close tethering to our homes underscores the importance of communities even in today's hyperconnected world. Likewise, eliminating slavery depends crucially on our ability to mobilize communities. The march to a world without slavery happens one village, one town, one state at a time, each igniting with the light of freedom as it spreads across the globe.

At Free the Slaves, we're helping to lead the way to a slavery-free world by building community-wide slavery eradication and slavery resistance. Our front-line field programs help not only individuals, but assist entire communities that are victimized. The same economic, social, political and cultural conditions that enable individuals to be targeted by traffickers typically apply to their neighbors and family as well. By changing the systems and conditions that allow slavery to persist, we ensure that survivors are not re-enslaved after liberation — and nobody takes their place in bondage.

This year's Annual Report highlights the many ways in which Free the Slaves is empowering communities to create lasting freedom. These are your accomplishments, too. Your continued support will help us finish the job begun by earlier generations of abolitionists more than a century ago. We don't free slaves, you do. Together, we can build durable change.

Our deepest thanks,

Daniel Elkes | Board Chair

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The following individuals served on the board during 2019.

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Free the Slaves 2019 Staff

The following individuals served on the staff during 2019.

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Michael Shelton
Bukeni Waruzi
James Williams
John Whan Yoon

2019 Field Program Success

293

Individuals
freed from
slavery

40

Communities
made slavery
free and slavery
resistant

48,485

People trained
to protect their
communities
from human
trafficking

8,862

People received
socioeconomic
services to build
slavery resistance

296

Government
officials trained
to track down
traffickers and
help victims

5

Traffickers
arrested and
brought to
justice

2019 Survivor Spotlight | India

Helping Others “Move Toward the Light”



What happened to **Soni Vanvasi** has happened to millions. Her entire family was enslaved because a child fell ill. Now that she's free, Soni is determined to prevent human trafficking from ever touching another person's life.

Her ordeal began when her husband borrowed money from a brick kiln owner to pay medical expenses for their child. The entire family – husband, wife and three

children – were forced to make bricks to repay the loan. The kiln owner never paid them enough to work off the debt. He barely gave them enough to buy food so they could stay alive to work another day.

Fortunately, residents in a nearby village that Free the Slaves has liberated became aware of the situation. Soni's entire family was rescued, along with 17 others.

“I want to educate my kids and motivate others to do the same, so that at least the next generation does not lead a life like mine.”



Wherever she goes, Soni now shares her story of struggle and success. She has mobilized people to demand that government officials provide better roads, sanitation and health care. Soni has even met political party leaders to urge passage of a new anti-trafficking bill in India's parliament.



2019 Brings a New Executive Director to Free the Slaves



Free the Slaves is thrilled that a courageous advocate for the rights of women and children has joined the organization as executive director. **Bukeni Tete Waruzi** has helped put a Congolese warlord behind bars, has helped women trafficked into domestic servitude in the Middle East, and has served as a tireless human rights champion with American, European and African organizations for more than 20 years.

Waruzi has documented human rights abuses, implemented advocacy campaigns, conducted training workshops and made public presentations in more than 40 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, his home country, he formed and served as executive director of AJEDI-Ka/ Child Soldiers Project, a grassroots nonprofit organization to confront the widespread enslavement of children by armed militias. He liberated 365 children from rebel and militia groups in Uvira region. He video-documented evidence that led to the conviction of Mr. Thomas Lubanga, a notorious warlord, by the International Criminal Court for war crimes of recruiting and using children in armed conflict in DRC. In Kenya, Waruzi served as a program manager for the Porticus Foundation, overseeing the Francophone Africa region and projects on human rights, civic engagement, education and climate change. He served as executive director of Watchlist in New York, an organization that protects children in conflict zones. And he has served as a senior program manager in New York for WITNESS, an organization that empowers activists and victims worldwide to collect evidence that brings perpetrators to justice.

"I have chosen to take action and dedicate my life to fighting for justice for victims and survivors everywhere in the world. It is essential for peace and accountability, and to make the world a better place for everyone."

Visiting Liberated Villages in India

"I pledge to you that Free the Slaves will never rest until the final person in slavery walks free."






2019 Country Programs


DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:


People of Haitian descent face widespread discrimination in the neighboring Dominican Republic. Many are enslaved in the agricultural, construction and tourism industries. We work in ethnic Haitian communities to educate residents about their rights and to identify enslaved individuals for liberation. 


SENEGAL: Many rural parents send children to boarding schools in the city for religious instruction. But some of these schools are fronts for forced-begging street slavery rings. We educate parents about the risks of sending children away and develop alternatives for religious schooling. We provide help points for children in the city. And we work with legitimate instructors to weed out imposters who enslave kids. 

NEPAL: Integrating anti-trafficking strategies into international development programs helps those projects reach more people while also fighting slavery. We are training development workers at community literacy centers how to also educate villagers about their rights as workers and how they can safely migrate abroad for employment. 



HAITI: Impoverished parents often send children to live with other families hoping they will receive an education and better nutrition in return for light housework. Many of these children become household slaves instead. We provide rural schooling and community development to reduce pressure on parents to send children away. We raise awareness with homeowners that children should not be servants. We spot cases of slavery to report to police. 

GHANA: Thousands of children are trafficked into dangerous conditions in Ghana's fishing industry. As part of the Child Protection Compact between the U.S. and Ghana governments, we educate and mobilize community residents to respect child rights, we liberate children from fishing boats, and we provide them medical, psychological, educational and social work support to resume normal lives. 

INDIA: Debt-bondage slavery is illegal in India, but authorities don't always enforce the law. We train local officials about their responsibilities, support cases in the legal system, and create district bonded labor vigilance committees that link community members to government agencies that have a duty to help. 

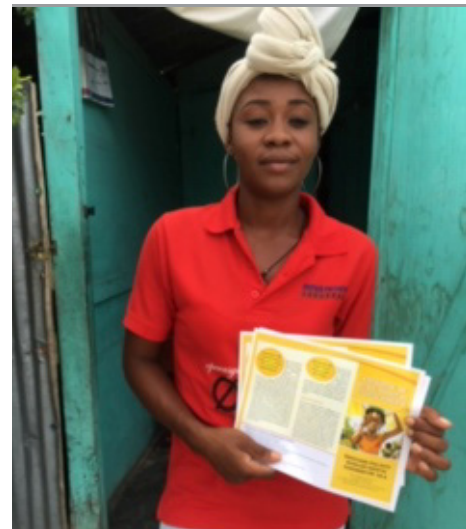
2019 Country Program Highlights

Haiti | Survivor Activism

Jisika Jean Claude was only 10 when her father sent her away to live with another family. She thought she would go to school, but was forced instead to do chores, iron and wash clothes, and care for other children as a household servant. It was not the life she was promised. She had become a Haitian *restavèk* child slave.

"My life would be different today if I was not in *restavèk*," she says. "I wanted to be a doctor but my dream has been destroyed."

Fortunately, a neighbor saw Jisika struggling and facilitated her escape. Now, Jisika helps rescue others, going door-to-door to uncover cases of child slavery. She knows how to spot it, because she's lived it. Angry homeowners threaten and mock her. Those are the ones she reports to police. Jisika's door-to-door activism is part of the "Zero *Restavèk*" campaign run by Free the Slaves and Beyond Borders. In 2019, the survivors talked to 7,500 people and identified 35 children who need help.



Ghana | Financial Resilience

Stella Abrokwah had been struggling to provide basic needs for her grandchildren by selling charcoal and iced water. "It was always a daily struggle," she says. "My grandchildren hardly attended school regularly and eventually became prone to child abuse and trafficking."

She looked to our Village Savings and Loan Association for help. Free the Slaves establishes these savings clubs to build grassroots economic resilience. In remote communities where there are no banks, people often borrow from traffickers posing as money lenders when there's an urgent financial need. The VSLA ends this key vulnerability.

Stella received business training and a small loan. It transformed her life. She has expanded beyond street trading and runs a mini-shop stocked with different items. "Business is much better and my financial position has improved," she says. "I am excited about my situation because I am able to provide adequately for my grandchildren and ensure that they attend school regularly."



2019 Country Program Highlights



Dominican Republic | Mapping the Future

When people map how modern slavery plagues their village, it's a real eye opener. The simple drawing becomes a road map to freedom. Everyone in bondage is identified, and residents pledge to liberate every last woman, man and child. Community mapping in 2019 laid the foundation for building slavery free and slavery resistant communities.

Senegal | Catalyzing Action

Our 2019 national symposium attracted a wide range of government officials, including presidential advisers on child protection, the Justice Ministry's anti-trafficking unit, the Labor Ministry's team to combat the worst forms of child labor and the Health Ministry's social action team. The workshop focused on successful examples of strategies to combat forced begging child slavery, obstacles to the adoption and implementation of tougher laws, and mechanisms for coordinating interventions and monitoring government commitments.



India | Creating Infrastructure

Sometimes building freedom means building buildings. Our program to operationalize India's law against bonded labor slavery has focused on creating lasting connections between communities and rule-of-law officials. One strategy has been to create permanent physical offices for district bonded labor vigilance committees. The simple act of cutting a ribbon is like opening a door to a slavery-free future.

Nepal | Empowering Partners

The anti-slavery movement needs partners and allies to successfully confront the global scale of human trafficking. In Nepal, our team conducted training for workers at community literacy centers. The capacity building workshops and technical assistance in 2019 have empowered staffers to become front-line anti-slavery activists.



2019 Movement Building



The anti-slavery movement is at a critical point in its evolution. There has been rapid growth in the number of organizations addressing various aspects of modern slavery. But the work is frequently uncoordinated, best practice literature is underdeveloped, and opportunities for peer-to-peer knowledge transfer are limited.

The Freedom from Slavery Forum was launched in 2013 by Free the Slaves to address these challenges. It creates a collegial space to learn and build lasting relationships among anti-trafficking experts from around the globe. Held at the United Nations Conference Center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the 2019 convening attracted 58 registrants from 46 organizations in 18 countries.

Presentations and workshops during the Forum covered a wide range of topics, including:

- Developing concrete action steps that civil society organizations can take toward coordinated global action
- Merging human rights and international development activities to accelerate change
- Using investigative journalism to persuade companies to clean up their supply chains
- Pursuing civil litigation to compensate slavery survivors
- Creating taxonomy of interventions – from rights education to psychosocial care for survivors to advocacy with governments – so researchers can estimate what it might cost to liberate the world's 40 million enslaved individuals





2019 Global Advocacy

ALLIANCE



Free the Slaves represents anti-slavery organizations on the Global Coordinating Group (GCG) of Alliance 8.7, a coalition formed to achieve United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, the end of forced and

child labor worldwide. In 2019, Free the Slaves board member and slavery survivor Evelyn Chumbow joined U.N. officials to share her perspective on building global freedom at an Alliance 8.7 presentation during the Paris Peace Forum.



**Alliance To End
Slavery & Trafficking**

Free the Slaves serves as the secretariat and co-chair of ATEST, a coalition of leading U.S. human

rights organizations that fight forced labor and human trafficking. In 2019, ATEST successfully lobbied for more than \$400 million in federal spending on programs to address modern slavery and its root causes at home and abroad. In March, ATEST chaired a Capitol Hill briefing for congressional staffers on new frontiers in the fight against modern slavery.



Our India program has earned a permanent place in the U.S. State Department's hall of honor. Free the Slaves helped brick kiln slavery survivors start their own brickworks to build economic self-sufficiency. The project, funded by the State Department, is part of the Museum of Diplomacy in Washington, curated by the Smithsonian

and opened in 2019. The exhibit features a brick from the Ram Janki slavery survivor brickworks. "This brick means freedom," one survivor says.



2019 Field Staff Spotlight: Dedication and Passion



Gemma Bardaji Blasco
Dominican Republic Country Director
Santo Domingo

From an early age I felt the vocation to do everything in my power to fight injustice, and I have been working for more than 20 years to advance human rights and gender equality in different countries. Injustice is manifested in different ways. But in essence it is always the same: the absence of rights and fear of what is different.

This is what brings me to the villages of the Dominican Republic. Our first visits to the communities have focused on talking about human trafficking and explaining its meaning. Our village talks are allowing people to become aware that their exploitation is illegal. But just as important, the talks allow people to be heard for the first time, to know that someone is interested.



“Many individuals don’t think of themselves as trafficking victims, and they aren’t sure what to do about it. I am working to change that.”



Lamine Gaye
Senegal Program Consultant
Dakar

My journey to becoming a human rights activist began while I was a high school. During holiday breaks, my classmates and I organized camps to benefit children in our neighborhood. Later, I had an opportunity to attend a child rights workshop. I became aware how widespread child rights violations were.

What I’ve done for the Free the Slaves Protect Our Children program in Senegal is liberate children from forced-begging street slavery, and work to prevent more children from becoming enslaved. It is for me a daily struggle, with a strong belief that every day tremendous progress can be made to benefit victims. Free the Slaves awakened me to the persistence of a sad reality that each of us had thought was over



“I developed a fierce desire to do everything possible to protect children.”

Our Thanks

A wide range of foundations, institutions and major donors made our work possible in 2019 through grants, donations and in-kind contributions. Our deepest thanks for their generosity and partnership.

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Sheila Siegel
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United Way
U.S. Labor Department
U.S. State Department
Zapier

Activism Rooted in Values

Our thanks, also, to the many, many individuals who contributed to our 2019 Universal Values annual grassroots fundraising campaign. Our human rights work is rooted in the values we all share as human beings. Working together, we will end slavery.



"Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people all over the world...would do this, it would change the earth."

William Faulkner



1320 19th Street NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036, USA

Tel: 202.775.7480 | Fax: 202.775.7485 | info@freetheslaves.net | www.freetheslaves.net



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