


**SUPPORTING
SURVIVORS,
ENHANCING
RESILIENCE IN
LOCAL
COMMUNITIES**

2023 ANNUAL
IMPACT REPORT





320 19th Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036 USA
T: 202.775.7480 | F: 202.775.7485
info@freetheslaves.net

www.freetheslaves.net

[Facebook](#)

[Youtube](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Instagram](#)

Copyright ©2024 Free the Slaves

Cover Photo: A woman weaving yarn in Uttar Pradesh India

Cover Photo Credit: Anshul Uniyal

Contributing Photographers: Anshul Uniyal, Bukeni Waruzi, Bryon Lippincott, Papa Fall, Dame Ba, FTS Field Staff

Letter from the Executive Director



Dear Friends, Partners, and Esteemed Supporters,

As we reflect on the impact of Free the Slaves work in 2023, I am filled with a deep sense of appreciation and a renewed commitment to our mission. I am inspired by the remarkable progress we have made in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking across diverse regions of the world. From the heart of Senegal to the bustling communities in the Dominican Republic, from the legal battlegrounds in Kenya to educational platforms in India, our concerted efforts have made progress toward liberation and justice.

The accomplishments detailed in this report illustrate what we can achieve when we unite in purpose and action. Our teams, in collaboration with local partners and empowered by the courage of survivors, have made notable advancements in dismantling the systems of modern slavery. We have successfully strengthened the capacity of 380 civil society actors and 177 government officials and directly contributed to freeing 149 individuals from the shackles of slavery. Our educational outreach has touched the lives of over 2100 community members, while our forums and webinars have engaged over 1700 participants, significantly amplifying our collective voice against this global injustice.

Each story and narrative within this report embodies the essence of our work—a testament to the strength found in collaborative action and the transformative power of targeted, community-specific strategies reinforced by global support and solidarity. From advocating for policy changes in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to facilitating survivor-led advocacy efforts in Kenya and DRC, our efforts underscore the critical need for tailored approaches that resonate with the unique challenges and opportunities within each community.

As we forge ahead, we are met with the sobering reality that the battle against modern slavery is far from over. Yet, the milestones achieved this past year serve as a beacon of hope and a catalyst for our ongoing endeavors. The path forward is fraught with challenges, but our resolve to combat slavery in all its forms is stronger than ever. The achievements highlighted in this report not only celebrate our past successes but also lay the groundwork for the continued fight for freedom and dignity for all.

Thank you for your steadfast support and commitment to our cause. Your partnership is invaluable, and together, we step into the future with determination, ready to confront the challenges that lie ahead and driven by our shared vision of a world free from the bonds of slavery.

With heartfelt gratitude and unwavering determination,

Bukeni Waruzi

Executive Director, Free the Slaves

Regions

Headquarters – Washington, D.C

The Caribbean - Haiti, **Trinidad and Tobago***

Mena – Jordan, Kuwait

Asia – India, Nepal, Philippines, Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam

Latin America – Dominican Republic, Peru

West Africa – **Ghana, Senegal, Mauritania***

East and Central Africa – Kenya, **Democratic Republic of Congo***, Cameroon

Europe - **Spain***

FTS maintains legal registrations in these countries to ensure our responses are grounded in the reality of our partner communities. We are continually working to expand our registrations into more countries in the regions where we work.

Key Statistics

- 380 Civil Society Actors Trained
- 8 Survivor Networks Supported
- 177 Government Officials Trained
- 149 Individuals Freed from Slavery
- 190 Survivors Trained
- 2100+ Community Members Trained
- 1100+ Webinar Participants
- 690 Forum Participants
- 500,000+ Media Audience Reached





Global Initiatives

Research

Free the Slaves engages in research to inform and enhance our understanding of the communities affected by modern slavery and guide our intervention programs, advocacy efforts, and collaborative partnerships, ensuring effective and targeted actions that are based on accurate data and analyses. In 2023 we published three major reports based on our research.

Peru - Between Neglect and Exploitation: Four Case Studies in Indigenous Communities in the Peruvian Amazon

Between Neglect and Exploitation: Four Case Studies in Indigenous Communities of the Peruvian Amazon contains findings from research by FTS and ONOTZI, a Peruvian indigenous rights organization. The research examines the linkages between illegal extractivism, human trafficking risk, and environmental degradation in the Peruvian Amazon. The research points to the ways that human trafficking is driven by illegal mining and logging, and drug trafficking. Indigenous persons live in conditions that place them at a high risk of human trafficking. The research identifies diverse forms of modern slavery manifesting in communities. Adults work in conditions characteristic of forced labor and human trafficking for sexual and labor exploitation. Forced child marriages are normalized, and adolescents are

also trafficked for labor and sexual exploitation. The report calls on the Peruvian state to implement a range of recommendations that address the root causes of human trafficking among indigenous communities and safeguards their human rights.

[English Full Report](#)

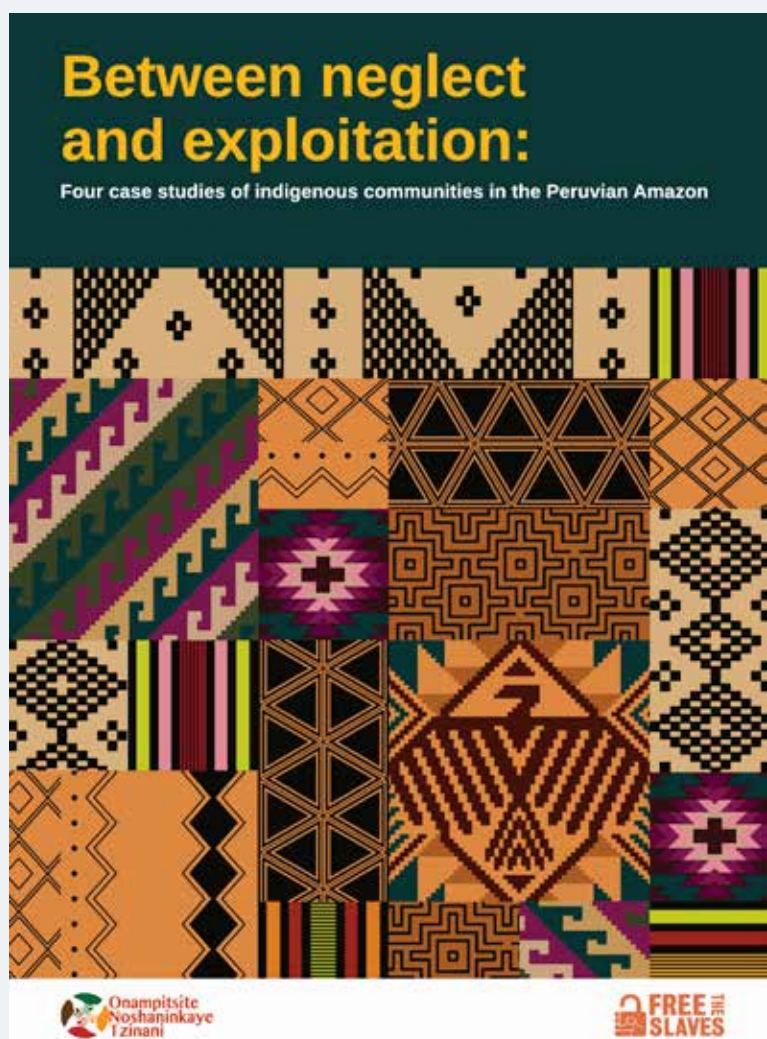
[English Executive Summary](#)

[Informe completo en español](#)

[Resumen ejecutivo en español](#)

[Ashaninka Executive Summary](#)

[Ashaninka Full Report](#)

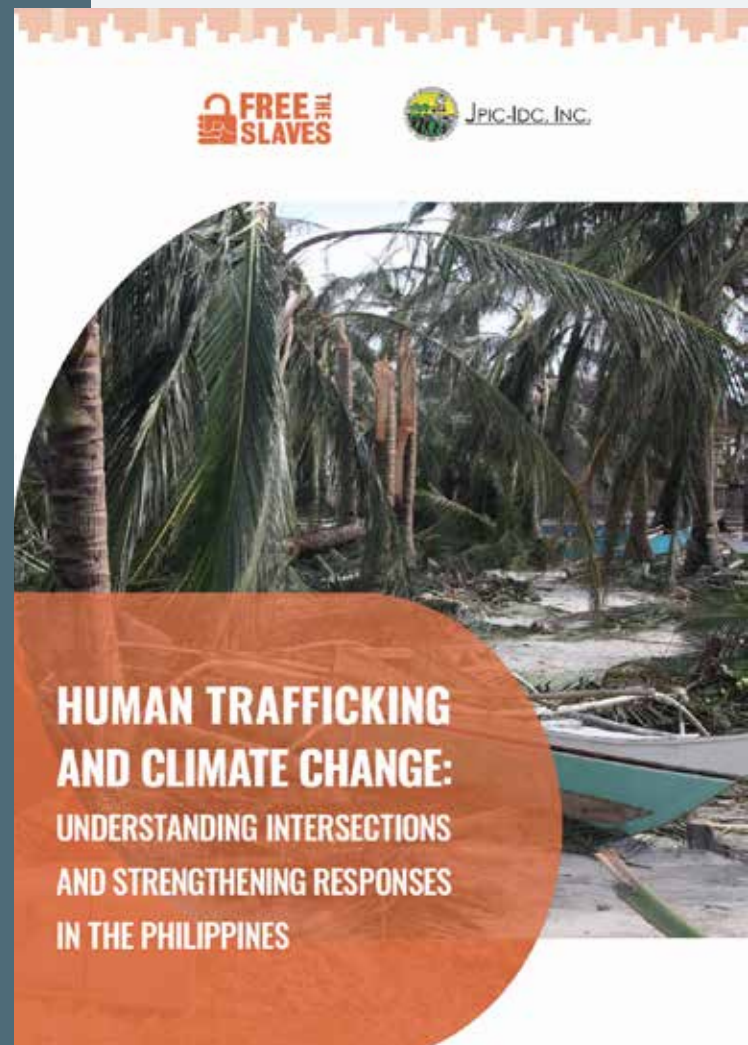


Philippines: Human Trafficking and Climate Change: Understanding Intersections and Strengthening Responses in the Philippines

Human Trafficking and Climate Change: Understanding Intersections and Strengthening Responses in the Philippines contains findings from research by FTS and JPIC-IDC. The research examines the linkages between climate change, climate change-related hazards, and human trafficking in the regions of Eastern Visayas and Caraga (Eastern Philippines). The research finds that communities affected by climate change become exposed to the risk of exploitation by human traffickers. Exploitation can take different forms, but in Eastern Visayas and Caraga it is mostly labor trafficking and forced labor, child hazardous labor, sexual trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), and online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC). Recognizing that natural hazards heighten the vulnerability of individuals and communities to exploitation by human traffickers, actions that address climate change-related vulnerabilities become a much-needed strategy to end the conditions that allow human trafficking to exist.

[Download](#) The Full Report

[Download](#) Exec. Summary



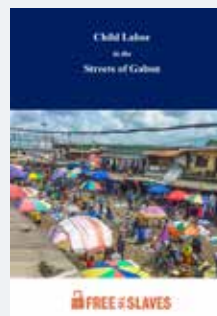
Forced Labor in Global Supply Chains: The Case of Canada

This research examines the critical issue of forced labor within global supply chains, focusing on the role of multinational corporations (MNCs) in exploiting vulnerable workers in developing countries. It highlights how the demand for cheaper goods in developed nations leads to complex supply chains where labor rights are often overlooked. [Download Here](#)



Child Labor in the Streets of Gabon

The Global Slavery Index reports 50 million people in modern slavery worldwide, with Africa being the most vulnerable region. Gabon, facing significant challenges with child labor and trafficking, is a focus, especially in sectors like mining and domestic work. [Download Here](#)



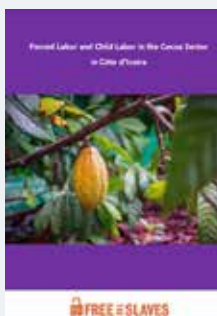
Forced and Child Labor in Cameroon's Cocoa Sector

While the sweet taste and the pleasant smell of chocolate please consumers around the world, the production of cocoa beans hides a bitter reality. Instances of forced labor have been identified among internal migrant workers who come from the remote North and East of Cameroon or from the areas of conflict in the Southwest and Northwest regions. [Download Here](#)



Forced Labor and Child Labor in Cocoa Sector in Cote d'Ivoire

Cote d'Ivoire is the world's largest exporter of cocoa. Here, the phenomenon of forced labor seems to be especially prevalent in the case of migrant workers coming from non-cocoa producing areas of Côte d'Ivoire's northern regions or from Burkina Faso and Mali. [Download Here](#)



From Illegal Migration to Human Trafficking: Dangerous Journeys Across the Horn of Africa and The Arabian Peninsula

The journey from the Horn of Africa through Yemen to the Arab Gulf accounts for 40% of all migratory movements worldwide and has seen constant increase over the past few years. In 2023, with 86,630 people migrated to Yemen from the beginning of January to the end of July. [Download Here](#)





Movement Building

One of the most significant challenges facing the anti-modern slavery movement is collaboration and coordination between actors and disciplines and across sectors. Strengthening the movement by creating a neutral, inclusive space where actors from all disciplines and sectors can come to learn, share knowledge, and form collaborative partnerships is a core function of Free the Slave's role as the Secretariat for the Freedom from Slavery Forum. As the world accelerated its recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic Free the Slaves initiated the second series of Regional Forums aimed at strengthening regional responses to modern slavery and catalyzing a more connected and collaborative anti-modern slavery movement. The Regional Forum series started in the fall of 2022, with the Latin America, North America and Europe, Africa, and Mena Regional Forums. Spring of 2023 brought the Asia Regional Forum in January, and the Caribbean Regional Forum in February, with the Global Forum being held in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic in From May 10-12

Asia Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum

The 2023 Asia Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum was a pivotal event in the fight against modern slavery, convening 338 participants virtually via Zoom for two days of intensive discussions. The forum, focusing on collaboration, coalitions, and partnerships post-Covid in Asia, and meaningful engagement of survivors of modern slavery, provided key insights and proposed solutions to combat slavery in the region. Participants, including anti-slavery movement leaders, benefited from increased understanding of Covid-19's impact on modern slavery and identified areas for collective action.



Caribbean Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum

The Caribbean Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from February 6-8, 2023, marked had remarkable engagement from stakeholders across the region. Over three days, 119 attendees gained crucial insights on identifying barriers to effective prevention, lessons from successful interventions, and strategies to improve legal processes and access to justice for vulnerable groups.



The 2023 Freedom from Slavery Global Forum, which opened on May 7, 2023, with a celebratory welcome reception, marked the 10th anniversary of the Freedom from Slavery Forum Series and set an impactful agenda for three days of intensive discussion and collaboration among stakeholders dedicated to combating modern slavery. Daniel Elkes, the founder of the Freedom from Slavery Forums, alongside other key figures, delivered opening remarks that prefaced a series of opening day sessions beginning with a keynote on the plight of the Uyghur population in China. The first day continued with a panel on fostering a Survivor-Centered Movement and side events exploring pathways to survivor employment in anti-trafficking efforts and collaboration between survivor-led and non-survivor-led organizations. Workshops delved into trauma-informed practices in survivor housing and participatory action in antitrafficking research. The subsequent days of the forum delved into demand-driven forced labor and the global economic structures that perpetuate modern slavery. A variety of sessions offered deep dives into corporate accountability, government roles in anti-slavery initiatives, trafficker disruption, and strategies against sexual exploitation trafficking.



2023 Freedom from Slavery Forum Series Organic Outcomes

A total of 690 participants attended the 2022- 23 Regional Forum Series, and the 2023 Global Forum in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, was attended by 188 participants, 64 of whom identified as survivors, and 6 government delegations.

A new survivor network from the 2022 Freedom from Slavery Africa Regional Forum. This Survivor network co-founded a Survivor Leadership Academy in East Africa.

A new coalition of CSOs representing Latin America as a result of the 2022 Latin America Regional Forum.

The Jamaican government will host the 2024 Caribbean Regional Forum.

Ohio State University's College of Social Work was inspired to update its curriculum based on its experiences and learnings at the 2023 Global Forum.





Regional Initiatives

East and Central Africa Kenya

In Kenya, Free the Slaves expanded our work to combat modern slavery and human trafficking. A key initiative has been our partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Kenya and the Kenyan government, with the goal of securing Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder Country status for Kenya. This collaboration is pivotal in developing effective strategies, policies, and interventions to specifically tailor Kenya’s Alliance 8.7 Roadmap to the needs of underserved communities and individuals in Kenya. FTS’s role includes shaping the development of legal frameworks, enforcement mechanisms, and victim support services – crucial elements for Pathfinder countries – in Kenya.



A notable aspect of FTS's work in Kenya has been our focus on training and capacity building. Collaborating with Kituo Cha Sheria, FTS conducted a 4-day training for survivors, refugees, and community paralegals, covering public interest litigation and psychosocial support strategies. Additionally, the FTS Team facilitated a Human Trafficking 101 session at the University of Kabarak and partnered with various organizations to train **107 survivors**. This training empowered survivors with knowledge and skills, enabling them to contribute to the Kenya roadmap for combating human trafficking. As a result of these training sessions and workshops survivor leaders created a list of recommendations for addressing modern slavery, human trafficking, forced labor, and child Labor and will present them to representatives of the Kenyan government for inclusion in the Kenya roadmap development process in spring of 2024.





Case Study – Survivor Engagement in Kenya’s Alliance 8.7 Journey

Free the Slaves in Partnership with the the UK Governments Foreign, Common Wealth and Development office, trained survivors of modern slavery to contribute to the Kenya's Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder Country Roapmap Development process. Survivors developed and contributed recommendations in the areas of forced labor, modern slavery, human trafficking, and Child Labor. Fauzia, a survivor of human trafficking, felt a deep need for better government support for those returning to society after escaping their traffickers. During the program's training sessions, Fauzia was inspired by the recommendations, including comprehensive psycho-social support for returnees. She resolved to advocate for this crucial support. Fauzia's was elected during the training as a representative for other survivors in government stakeholder meetings on the Alliance 8.7 accountability framework. As Fauzia engaged with the Alliance 8.7 framework, her voice was amplified. Her experiences were validated, and her determination to advocate for comprehensive support for survivors was rekindled. She now has a seat at the table, a voice among the policy makers, and a chance to make a difference.

In the meetings, she shared her story, the pain of her past, and her dreams for a brighter future. Fauzia was no longer just a survivor; she was a survivor with a mission, an advocate with purpose. But Fauzia's commitment extended beyond the meeting rooms. She is affiliated with "Footprints to Freedom," a survivor-led network dedicated to supporting and empowering survivors of human trafficking.





In 2023 our team also completed a groundbreaking research project exploring how anti-trafficking organizations engage with survivors. This unique study involved survivors as research assistants, who contributed to conducting interviews and data analysis. They also played a critical role in leading a research validation workshop in Nairobi. The participatory approach enriched the research, ensuring survivor experiences were integral to the findings. The finalized report, reflecting these insights, is set to be launched in the second quarter of 2024, and expected to influence future strategies in the fight against trafficking in the region.

FTS provided technical support for The Survivor Leadership Academy in Nairobi, produced by Survivor Network Cameroon and funded by the Freedom Fund. The Academy trained 11 survivors from East and Central African countries in various skills, including communication, understanding trauma, and advocacy. This initiative not only emphasized survivor leadership but also provided practical tools for empowerment and funded survivor led advocacy projects for each participant. The success of the Academy, marked by the allocation of micro-grants for community projects, demonstrates FTS's commitment to survivor empowerment and continuous support through ongoing online sessions and internship opportunities.

Survivor Academy Project Case Study

Jenifa Nelson Kato, a survivor of human trafficking, attended survivor capacity building training in

Nairobi organized by the Survivors Leadership Academy, with support from Free the Slaves. Trained in identifying and assisting survivors, she developed an action plan to address domestic servitude, human trafficking, and child labor in Ngora District, Kagera Region, Tanzania. From the 10th to the 15th of October 2023, Jenifa successfully executed planned activities, such as identifying and establishing a survivors' group in Kibirizi Village and conducting radio talk shows on preventing migration and human trafficking. Unplanned activities included a school dialogue with 322 pupils and the establishment of a school club for preventing human trafficking. The project aimed to empower survivors, create awareness, and protect the rights of survivors. It exceeded its goal by identifying and forming a group of 17 survivors (10 girls, 7 boys). The survivors' group was established and strengthened, and community awareness increased through media interventions and school dialogues.





Free the Slaves has also been active in fostering partnerships and supporting services for survivor engagement. Through meetings and training sessions with Kituo Cha Sheria, FTS has worked to provide comprehensive assistance to survivors of labor trafficking. These efforts have included developing legal strategies, expert legal training, and emotional and mental preparation for legal proceedings against the government of Kenya.

Furthermore, FTS's involvement in multi-stakeholder meetings and participation in the annual Employment and Labor Relations Court event in Kenya has been crucial in raising awareness about exploitative labor conditions and modern slavery. We continue to advocate for the importance of strong legal frameworks, stringent enforcement, and comprehensive support mechanisms.

The Democratic Republic of Congo

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Free the Slaves (FTS) has demonstrated its commitment to fighting modern slavery through various policy, advocacy, and training initiatives. A significant highlight was FTS Executive Director, Bukeni Waruzi's participation in a government workshop in Kinshasa to review the DRC's Pathfinder Country roadmap. This workshop marked a historic development as the government acknowledged gaps in their roadmap and decided to include survivor representatives in the national task force, a testament to FTS's impact on survivor inclusion in national initiatives.

FTS's training and capacity-building efforts in the DRC have been robust. Our DRC staff provided technical support for broadcasting awareness programs on radio and television, reaching an extensive audience in North Kivu. These programs played a crucial role in educating the public about modern slavery and several survivors self-identifying their exploited status and seeking help from authorities.

Survivor engagement in the DRC has been a focal point for FTS. Survivors were introduced to FTS's work and vision during the establishment of a survivor network. Training sessions were conducted leading to the development of strategic recommendations for the DRC's roadmap, which survivor leaders presented directly to DRC government officials.



Partnership efforts in the DRC have been equally significant. FTS hosted meetings with ILO DRC, IOM, and various embassies to discuss the development of the DRC roadmap for Alliance 8.7. These collaborations have been instrumental in ensuring the proper development of the roadmap and fostering alliances with key organizations.



“

This has opened my eyes and erased the confusion I had on what it means to address this issue at government policy level. I have never met survivors of modern slavery before, I don't know what to say, I am so touched by the opportunity and through the testimonies of survivors I learned a book that was long overdue for me reading. I can't thank you enough but I can guarantee you, all your priorities will be included in the final roadmap,,

-Donat Bagula, DRC Government Alliance 8.7 Coordinator, and Secretary General at the Ministry of Labor

Asia



As part of Free the Slaves advocacy and communications strategy, FTS Regional Director for Asia, Kuldeep Singh Chauhan the Asia team had three articles on pressing issues published in newspapers in Asia. The first article introduced Alliance 8.7 and the Pathfinder Country Accountability Framework in a newspaper in Vietnam. The second article summarizes the outcomes from the ASEAN Leaders Summit on Human Trafficking, and the third focuses on the complexity of addressing Uyghur forced labor in supply chains. You can read two of these articles by following the links below.

Press [here](#) to view the full article



Press [here](#) to view the full article





India

In India, Free the Slaves (FTS) has undertaken a multi-faceted approach to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking. Our primary projects were the Fostering Fee Accountability and Cost Tracking (FFACT) Project and various Community Liberation Initiative (CLI) trainings. These initiatives demonstrate FTS's commitment to addressing complex issues in the region by combining policy advocacy, capacity building, and effective collaboration with local partners and government bodies.

Under the FFACT Project, which focuses on improving regulation of foreign employment recruiting fees paid by Indian citizens who elect to work abroad, our team organized three significant meetings with the Protector of Emigrants (POE) in 2023, focusing on the crucial aspects of fostering fee accountability and cost tracking. These discussions, which included participation from their in-country partner MSEMVS and the Project Director from Verite, aimed to secure the cooperation of the POE and raise awareness about the importance of developing tracking mechanisms for worker recruitment fees in combating modern slavery in India. These meetings resulted in enhanced awareness among POE officials about the FFACT Project, fostering a shared commitment to collaboration and a willingness to cooperate on the project, setting a foundation for future joint efforts to enhance accountability mechanisms for foreign employment recruiters.

We have reached more than 6500 people by building on the foundations of the more than 300 Community Vigilance Committees CVC's that were created in previous projects, utilizing their connections to build 33 new Migration Vigilance Committees (MVCs) and training them to assist their communities with establishing safe migration practices, educating them about the risks of migration for work, and ensuring they have the knowledge and tools they need to escape exploitative situations.



Success Story: Shweta Singh's Journey in Empowering Safe International Migration

Shweta Singh, a 26-year-old mother from Kansapur village in Bhadohi district, Uttar Pradesh, has become a beacon of change in her community. With two children and a deep commitment to her village, Shweta's life took a transformative turn when she learned about the Safe International Migration project from FTS's Partner, MSEMVS.

Her involvement began three years ago, when she met Mr. Rajneesh Kumar Yadav leading a discussion at a local Integrated Child Development Scheme Center, and his message struck a chord with her. Recognizing the issues her community faced with unsafe migration, Shweta felt a growing desire to contribute. She volunteered as a Community Vigilance Committee (CVC) member, stepping into a journey of learning and leadership.

Shweta's transformation was remarkable. Through training and meetings with MSEMVS, she gained in-depth knowledge about the risks of unsafe international migration. Her newfound understanding included the critical roles of the Protector of Emigrants (POE) office, government-mandated recruitment fees, and the importance of using registered agents.

As a CVC leader, Shweta played a vital role in educating her community. She used the SAFE TIPS guide to conduct awareness sessions, significantly enhancing people's understanding of their rights and the precautions necessary for safe migration. Her efforts led to a tangible shift in the community's approach to migration, with people beginning to question sub-agents and seeking essential documentation and fair recruitment fees.

[Download](#) the safe tips guide in Hindi.

[Download](#) the safe tips guide in English.



Shweta's leadership extended beyond awareness campaigns. She was instrumental in organizing monthly meetings, training CVC members, and forming and mobilizing the Migrant Vigilance Committees (MVCs). These initiatives were crucial in the successful implementation of project activities and ensuring a collaborative effort in promoting safe migration practices.

However, the path was not without challenges. Convincing community members to participate and coordinating meetings with MVC members, who were often government representatives with other priorities, were significant hurdles. Despite these obstacles, Shweta persevered, driven by the positive changes she witnessed – migrants who had previously had negative experiences were now migrating safely and finding better employment conditions.

Shweta's story is not just about individual growth but also about community empowerment. Her recommendations for future phases of the project, including innovative ideas for training resources and maintaining continuity between project phases, reflect her deep understanding of community dynamics and the importance of sustained engagement.

Today, Shweta Singh stands as a testament to the power of community leadership in bringing about social change. Her journey from a concerned resident to a pivotal figure in safe migration advocacy in Kansapur showcases the transformative impact of the FFACT project, empowering communities to challenge the status quo and embrace safer, informed migration practices.



Community Liberation Training

FTS's engagement in India also extends to Community Liberation Initiative (CLI) trainings. These trainings aim to build the capacity of civil society organizations and NGOs to effectively combat modern slavery. The training encompasses many crucial aspects of anti-trafficking work such as victim-centered approaches, identification, freeing, rehabilitating, and reintegrating survivors, and enhancing the justice process. In one notable CLI training for organizations in India and Nepal, participants demonstrated an 80% improvement in knowledge, highlighting the effectiveness of the training.

Participant quote

Kranti Tamang (Shanti Foundation): "The training provided valuable insights into creating structured plans for survivors' reintegration. It will significantly impact our work to better support survivors."





Nepal

Free the Slaves has continued to raise awareness against modern slavery and human trafficking in Nepal. A notable achievement was the hosting of a webinar in collaboration with the Alliance 8.7 secretariat, targeting NGO/CSO representatives, government officials, and media outlets in Nepal. This webinar, led by FTS CEO Mr. Bukeni Waruzi and Ms. Nutan Sharma from Alliance 8.7 Nepal, focused on enhancing understanding of Alliance 8.7's objectives, particularly Nepal's role as a Pathfinder Country.

Cambodia

Free the Slaves' work in Cambodia has been focused on both policy and training aspects. The team developed a fact sheet examining Cambodia's legal and policy landscape concerning human trafficking and modern slavery and conducted a webinar to share the information with stakeholders in the region. This document serves as a critical resource in designing strategic programs to address modern slavery effectively.



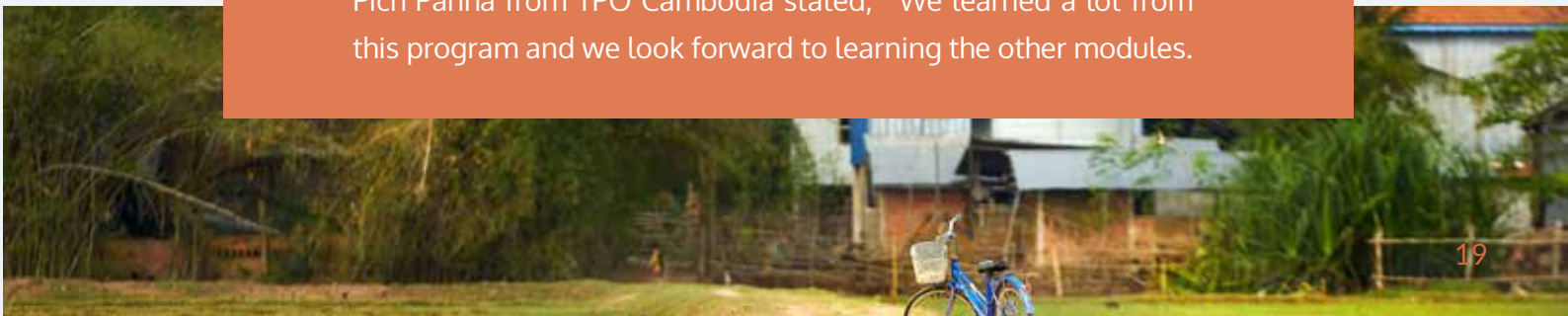
[Link](#) to the report and webinar.

Community Liberation Training

Furthermore, FTS collaborated with the Chab Dai Coalition for a virtual training program on the Community Liberation Toolkit, aimed at empowering CSOs in Cambodia. The training focused on "Ensuring Access to Social and Economic Services," equipping participants with strategies to mobilize communities against modern slavery. This initiative highlights FTS's commitment to strengthening the capacity of organizations and enhancing collaborative efforts against slavery in Cambodia.

Participant quote

Pich Panha from TPO Cambodia stated, "We learned a lot from this program and we look forward to learning the other modules."





Vietnam

In Vietnam, Free the Slaves presented the Alliance 8.7 Accountability Framework to the Counter Trafficking Network (CTN), fostering engagement and collaboration among NGOs and embassies involved in anti-trafficking efforts. The presentation highlighted the potential of the accountability framework and encouraged collaboration with the government for its adaptation and implementation. The International Labour Organization (ILO) offered to act as a liaison between the CTN and the government, symbolizing a significant step towards a coordinated response to human trafficking in Vietnam. This initiative underscores FTS's dedication to promoting collaboration and fostering effective strategies to combat modern slavery and trafficking in the region.

Bangladesh

FTS's activities in Bangladesh included organizing an online Community Liberation Training for 15 participants. This training, facilitated by the South Asia team, involved participants from diverse organizations engaged in combating human trafficking and modern slavery. The training's impact was evident in the participants' testimonials, highlighting its relevance in enhancing their projects and effectiveness in addressing modern slavery.



Participant quote

Md. Abdul Gaffar - Winrock International: "This training will be such an asset for us. It will help us condition our active projects to more effectively serve people who are vulnerable. Those suffering from climate change are often the most vulnerable to human trafficking in Bangladesh. These tools give us the opportunity to counter this trend."

Malaysia

In Malaysia, Free the Slaves, alongside Our Journey and Global Shepherds, has played a pivotal role in highlighting the urgency of combating modern slavery through the release of a comprehensive report on modern slavery in Malaysia and the production of the webinar to spread the information among stakeholders in the region. By shedding light on the challenges and the need for immediate collaborative efforts, Free the Slaves and its partners are actively contributing to the global fight against human rights violations related to modern slavery in Malaysia. [Link](#) to the report.



Philippines

In the Philippines, Free the Slaves has undertaken a pivotal research project to explore the intersection between human trafficking and climate change, a crucial issue affecting vulnerable communities. This comprehensive study aimed to illuminate the realities of human trafficking within climate change-affected regions, addressing a gap in understanding these interconnected challenges. To disseminate the findings, FTS organized a week-long engagement in Cebu and Manila, which included an academic conference, a practitioners' workshop with participation from CSOs, NGOs, government officials, and community leaders, as well as meetings with the Philippines' Human Rights Commission, the UN Office on Human Rights, and UNICEF Philippines. This extensive outreach effort was further amplified through international channels, including a webinar, a publication on United Nations University (UNU)-Wider, a blog post on Human Trafficking Search, a podcast episode on FTS's podcast, and a guest lecture at Wheaton College. These diverse platforms not only shared the research findings but also fostered a broader understanding of the critical link between human trafficking and environmental factors.

Community Liberation Training

A Community Liberation Training for 11 participants, focusing on empowering local non-profit organizations with essential knowledge and skills to support survivors was also conducted. This training facilitated by the FTS Asia team covered critical topics like incident reporting, victim identification, and rehabilitation, and resulted in substantial improvement in participants' understanding and capabilities.





The Caribbean

Caribbean Coalition to Combat Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking & Caribbean Survivors' Network

Following the success of the 2023 Caribbean Forum, efforts are underway to form a regional coalition of civil society organizations and other stakeholders dedicated to ending modern slavery and human trafficking. This initiative has involved virtual meetings with the Commonwealth 8.7 Network and the Global Learning Community (GLC) of Chab Dai, with both organizations expressing willingness to share resources to build the coalition's capacity.

Registration of Free the Slaves in Trinidad and Tobago

In the last quarter of the year, we received our registration certificates in Trinidad and Tobago for Free The Slaves under the Companies Act and the Non-Profit Organisations Act respectively. As we now have legal status in the country, we expect this will open doors for us for greater engagement with the government and local civil society organisations

In addition, we have been able to speak to national policy and raise awareness of our work in combating modern slavery and human trafficking in the national media. We received coverage for the Caribbean Regional Forum in print and audio/visual media and have participated in radio and television interviews and discussions throughout the year on these issues, establishing ourselves as

an authority on the subject in the eyes of the media houses and the public.

Our print, radio and television appearances in early 2023 helped to promote Free The Slaves as a new key stakeholder in the region and the Caribbean Regional Forum. Those appearances we made provided insights to the public about the key discussions and decisions taken at the Forum.

Our media appearances later in the year helped promote the Community Liberation Initiative training and served to establish Free The Slaves as a knowledgeable organisation upon which media houses can call for insightful commentary on matters related to human trafficking in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean.

The Caribbean team also hosted a Community Liberation Training for regional stakeholders. The 3-day virtual training event attracted participants from civil society organizations (CSOs/NGOs) and government agencies across Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Jamaica, Grenada, and Guyana, with a notable representation from Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Education and Ministry of National Security, as well as Jamaica's Ministry of National Security. This multi-national assembly registered a marked enhancement in knowledge, understanding, and capability post-Comprehensive Learning Initiative (CLI) training, especially among individuals previously unfamiliar with modern slavery. All attendees reported a significant boost in comprehending the definitions of human trafficking and modern slavery, with the majority now equipped to develop and implement actionable plans against these issues.



Latin America & Europe

Dominican Republic

In the Dominican Republic, Free the Slaves (FTS) has been a prominent member of the Civil Society Coalition against Human Trafficking since 2019. FTS played a key role in the participatory roundtables for reforming Law 136-03 against human trafficking and migrant smuggling, facilitated by UNODC. Despite the bill entering Congress at the end of 2022, it faced rejection due to concerns raised by nationalist groups about Haitian migration. This setback, ahead of the 2024 presidential elections, led to the withdrawal of the bill and plans for a new draft. In response, FTS engaged with key stakeholders like IOM and UNODC to strategize on promoting this crucial reform, considering the situation in Haiti. FTS's proposal to reorganize the Coalition and act as an interlocutor with governments and international organizations was well-received. Additionally, FTS facilitated political advocacy training for Coalition members, equipping them with tools to implement an advocacy plan in light of the upcoming elections, thereby strengthening the fight against human trafficking in the Dominican Republic.

Latin America Regional Work

In Latin America, FTS has been actively collaborating with various organizations to address human trafficking and modern slavery. This includes a partnership with the International Indigenous

Women Forum (IIWF) to provide training on human trafficking and develop indicators of violence against indigenous women. In Peru, FTS conducted research into illegal mining and logging in indigenous communities, presenting the findings at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The research was also shared regionally online, including a podcast discussing its implications. FTS-LA is working to form a Regional Working Group (RWG) on Forced Labor, comprising various Latin American organizations, to unify efforts against human trafficking. This initiative involves creating a joint declaration, internal trainings, and action plans for 2024.

In Europe, FTS-EU will be part of the Advisory Council of Experts for the [ERASMUS+](#) project, focusing on training tools to combat labor exploitation, particularly in the agricultural sector, contributing to the development of teaching materials and a transnational network of experts. FTS also successfully completed the registration process for our organizational office in Spain in December of 2023. The official registration of FTS in Spain will enable greater involvement in European projects and collaborations with academic institutions.



MENA Region

Free the Slaves work in the Middle East and North Africa focuses on improving social inclusion across the Middle East. Our newest project works across all layers of society in Kuwait, government, civil society, the public majority and vulnerable communities to promote, expand and improve social inclusion and protection. Our work with the government will help improve and expand social protection frameworks to ensure all of society has access to essential protections. Our partnerships with civil society will build their capacity for research and advocacy and community mobilization. Our work with vulnerable communities will build their capacity to effectively and meaningfully engage with key actors to achieve sustainable and effective inclusion and promote human rights.

In the MENA region, the MENA office also co-produced a new podcast episode in collaboration with SOWT, aimed at raising awareness about the lack of civil rights for stateless individuals in the region. This podcast was part of a series of six episodes focused on different forms of modern slavery, reaching an audience of over 27,000 across four main countries in the MENA region.

To further disseminate information, FTS MENA launched Facebook and LinkedIn platforms in Arabic, which, within four months, established a significant online presence, enhancing regional connections.

The posts on these platforms covered themes like the definition of modern slavery, FTS methodology, Alliance 8.7's purpose, and awareness messages against child labor, early marriage, and domestic servitude.

For training and capacity building, the MENA office prioritized the customization of the community liberation toolkit to reflect regional nuances and translated it into Arabic to increase accessibility. The toolkit's modifications catered to cultural sensitivities, legal frameworks, and regional issues like political unrest and socioeconomic disparities.

Research conducted by FTS MENA in 2023 provided a comprehensive overview of modern slavery in the region, exploring ten types of slavery and their correlation with eleven vulnerability factors across eight industries. This research serves as a reference document to guide evidence-based strategies and interventions in the MENA region and will be published in 2024.



West Africa

Senegal

In Senegal, Free the Slaves' in partnership with the Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CenHTRO) at the University of Georgia led efforts that led to the liberation and repatriation of numerous women from the grim realities of sex trafficking. In partnership with local NGO LA LUMIERE, FTS identified and extricated 130 victims from exploitative conditions. Six traffickers were arrested from as part of the project operations with five of them successfully convicted and sentenced to prison terms. These survivors received care and support tailored to their recovery and reintegration, with 68 among them successfully repatriated to Nigeria. 35 of those repatriated received livelihood support, through vocational skill training, enrolment, businesses, and formal education. Free the Slaves also repatriated 15 additional survivors outside of the funding provided by JTIP and CenHTRO. This cross-border coordination, facilitated by the Emmanuel World Children Foundation, ensured that survivors could continue their journey to socio-economic reintegration within the comfort and familiarity of their home country. Survivor networks established in Nigeria provided peer support systems for returning survivors

In Senegal, Free the Slaves (FTS) also took significant steps to strengthen local government capabilities against human trafficking. The launch of the TIP-Data Management System App marked a pivotal advancement in data management, enhancing transparency and accountability in trafficking cases.

This tool empowers stakeholders to collect and share vital information, aiding the development of targeted interventions. FTS's collaborative efforts with the Social Action Directorate in Kedougou magnified these advocacy endeavors. By training social action staff and supporting the identification of 25 at-risk girls, FTS facilitated the creation of a robust protection framework for vulnerable populations, emphasizing the prevention of sexual exploitation.



These activities are funded by the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. The opinions, findings, and conclusions therein are those of the author[s] and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.



Case study

In the heart of Dyabougou, a village within the Kédougou region of Senegal, Free the Slaves (FTS) in collaboration with LA LUMIERE (LL), embarked on a crucial operation that brought a young woman named Joy from the shadows of sex trafficking into the light of freedom. The partnership between FTS and LL facilitated Joy's swift escape from exploitation and her immediate admission to a shelter designed to offer sanctuary and support to survivors like her.

Upon her arrival, Joy found not only a safe haven but also a community of Nigerian sisters at the Kédougou Shelter. The shelter team, understanding the trauma she had endured, provided her with essential care packages, including hygiene and clothing kits, and necessary medical attention. The psychosocial support she received was pivotal in her recovery process, offering her the reassurance and confidence to rebuild her life in a secure environment.

During her three-month rehabilitation period at the shelter, Joy demonstrated remarkable resilience and integration. She found solace in cooking Nigerian dishes and forged meaningful connections with other survivors.

The journey towards reintegration led Joy back to Nigeria, facilitated by FTS and LL, in a coordinated effort with a local NGO based in Akure, the Emmanuel World Children Foundation (EWFC), known for its dedication to supporting orphans and trafficking survivors. At EWFC's shelter, Joy embarked on a new chapter of her life obtaining her national identity card, a mobile phone, and the establishment of a bank account, which were essential steps in reclaiming her independence and identity.

The staff at EWFC played a critical role in Joy's reintegration, offering personalized advice, psychological support, and vocational training, which culminated in Joy discovering her passion for pastry making. Supported financially by FTS, Joy was able to purchase the equipment needed to pursue her training and eventually secure employment at a bakery in Akure. Her journey from survivor to a skilled pastry chef is a testament to her strength and the comprehensive support system provided by FTS, LL, and EWFC. Joy's success story is not just about her individual triumph over adversity but also underscores the collaborative effort between organizations across borders to restore dignity and hope to survivors of trafficking.

Capacity building also saw remarkable progress; FTS equipped local actors with the skills necessary to support survivors. The training of Bājenu Gox, safety and security workshops for shelter staff, and media training workshops contributed to a community better prepared to combat trafficking and support those affected. These initiatives underscore the organization's commitment to fostering resilience and offering trauma-informed care to survivors.



Mauritania

Mobilizing Communities and Government

FTS's efforts on these fronts contributed to Mauritania's "substantial and measurable progress on workers rights and eliminating forced labor" resulting in the country's reinstatement in the US African Growth and Opportunity Act trade benefit program. Our work building a non-partisan anti-slavery parliament network will help Mauritania fulfill its Alliance 8.7 mandate





Case study – Paralegal Support

Coumba Samba Traoré: Championing Justice in Mauritania

In Nouakchott South, Mauritania, Coumba Samba Traoré’s work as a paralegal has become a critical component in the fight against modern slavery. Born and educated in Nouakchott, Coumba’s academic journey culminated with a License in Management from the University of Nouakchott, setting the stage for her future in civil society engagement and activism. By 2017, she had already taken on leadership roles within the Mauritanian Students’ Union, furthering her commitment to social justice.

Coumba’s transition into a paralegal role with Free the Slaves in January 2023 marked a significant turn in her career, dedicating herself to enhancing access to justice and civil rights within her community. The third quarter of 2023 was particularly eventful, as Coumba undertook the mission of training, monitoring, and supporting individuals affected by modern slavery, and engaging in pivotal legal advocacy and community awareness campaigns.

Her efforts led to notable interventions, such as the successful legal pursuit for justice for a young boy subjected to torture and a case involving the assault of a 16-year-old girl facing challenges in the legal system due to a lack of evidence. Coumba’s community involvement extended to the support of young individuals from the reintegration center, CARSEC, highlighting her comprehensive approach to advocacy, which includes legal support, training, and community mobilization.

Despite encountering financial, logistical, and systemic obstacles, including corruption within the law enforcement agencies, Coumba remained undeterred. Her strategy involves not only addressing individual cases but also organizing training sessions to raise awareness about modern slavery, its implications, and preventive measures. These sessions have been instrumental in educating the community about their rights and the subtleties of contemporary forms of slavery, which often go unrecognized.

Looking forward, Coumba aims to continue her advocacy work, focusing on legal follow-ups, increasing awareness sessions, and training to enhance the community’s understanding of human rights issues. Her dedication exemplifies the vital role of paralegals in bridging the gap between vulnerable populations and access to justice, contributing significantly to the broader fight against modern slavery in Mauritania.

Strategic workshops for government officials, civil society organizations, and journalists aimed to deepen the understanding of Mauritania's legal framework against modern slavery and encourage a culture of advocacy and accountability. FTS's efforts in building knowledge and capacity among key stakeholders were aimed at ensuring that government agencies are better prepared to fulfill their roles in combating trafficking.



In Mauritania, Free the Slaves took a proactive step towards combating modern slavery by training 15 journalists on various aspects of human trafficking, enhancing their capacity in field reporting and communication techniques. This initiative, a collaboration with IRA and supported by expert Mamoudou Lamine Kane, focused on the ethical complexities of covering sensitive topics related to modern slavery. The outcome was the formation of a dedicated anti-modern slavery journalists' network and the subsequent publication of nine insightful articles on a specialized microsite. These articles, contributed by trained journalists and human rights activists, represent a significant stride in advocacy and public engagement, illuminating the nuances of trafficking and reinforcing the media's pivotal role in raising awareness and prompting action against modern slavery in the region.

[Link to the site](#)





Ghana

Education and Economic Empowerment In Ghana, the re-launch of the "Supporting the Fight against Human Trafficking" project highlighted FTS's dedication to education as a means of prevention. Engaging community members through durbars (a traditional gathering convened by Chiefs, elders, and opinion leaders of a community or village) significantly raised awareness about trafficking and the importance of vigilance when seeking employment. The formation of Community Action Plans (CAPs) in collaboration with local leaders and the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development signified a community-driven approach to address modern slavery.

The FTS team also emphasized economic empowerment as a crucial deterrent to trafficking. The implementation of the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) in various communities laid a foundation for financial independence and resilience, reducing vulnerability to trafficking through strengthened economic conditions.

There was a collaborative effort of FTS, PACODEP, CCPCs, Social Welfare (DSW) and the Police in identifying and removing 20 victims from trafficking. These were children, within the age range of 6 to 17 years, who suffered labour exploitation in fishing and farming communities in Bono East and Oti regions due to these major challenges of single parenting and financial hardships. All the survivors were referred to the shelter and received the support of medical screening and care, nutrition, psychosocial support, counselling, literacy services, and family tracing. During reintegration, survivors received support including Educational Material (for 15 survivors), and Vocational training and apprenticeship (for 5 survivors).

Additional Project Activities



There was a Community Action Plan development with the Social Welfare Officers, community leaders and CCPCs in 4 communities within Jaman North district and Tain district.



A capacity building workshop for the 21 persons from the local Assembly, Social Service Sub Committees and Law Enforcement Agencies (Ghana Police Service and Ghana Immigration Service) at Sampa-Jaman North district and Nsawkaw-Tain district.



Capacity building and training of 128 learning group members from 7 communities in the Jaman North (2 communities), Tain (2 communities) and Sene East (3 communities) districts on Financial inclusion, specifically Community Savings and Loans mechanisms. This was aimed at reducing the vulnerability of community members through access to credit for activities to enhance livelihood. Some groups have saved to about GHS 7000 and taken loans to support businesses and farming.



The capacity building of 30 members of the Coalition of NGO's Against Child Trafficking (CNACT) on the development of Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

Board of Directors:

Evelyn Chumbow, Davina Durgana, Lila Leno (Treasurer), Carolyn Long (Vice Chair), Sheila Mahony, Timothy Patrick McCarthy (Chair), Anesa "Nes" Parker, Karen Stauss (Secretary) and Amy Komoroski Wiwi, Moninda Marube and Fanta Toure-Puri

2023 Staff List

HQ:

Balfour, Giselle
Bivins, Lily
Bouchard Rice, Lauren
Bouchard, Marie
Helene
Chitambo, Munya
Ehighalua, Daniel
Lippincott, Bryon
McClure, Marion Lee
Onwuaduegbo, Vasilis
Rosado, Lianet
Sanchez, Loriel
Waruzi, Bukeni

Regional:

Agano, Dety
Al Manha, Rasha
Ba, Dame
Banasam, Grace
Bardaji Blasco, Gemma
Blasé, Sonia
Bramah, Joha
Chauhan, Kuldeep
Cissokho, Sokhna
Fatou
Dansokho, Bamba
Dery, Justine
Diallo, Alphousseyni
Diskit, Tsering
Fall, Papa
Furlan, Marta
Gaju, Aline
Lamptey, Claudia
Madronio, Romcy
Muthiani, Faith
Mwende, Jackline
Saka, Issa

Donors Major Donors

Foundations:

CenHTRO
Dunn Family Foundation
Elkes Foundation
Freedom Fund
Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
Global Fund to End Modern Slavery
Humanity United
InMaat Foundation
International Labor Organization
Joyce and John Feeney
MKM Fundation
National Endowment for Democracy
Pathy Family Foundation
Richard Higgins and Margaret Graff
Rights Lab, University of Nottingham
Rob Granieri
Sea 2 Sea
The Sunflower Foundation
Timothy Patrick McCarthy and CJ Crowder
US State Department Office Trafficking in Persons
Verite
Walk Free
W. Oneil Foundation
Other anonymous individual donors

Free the Slaves is exceedingly grateful for the support it receives from governments, private foundations, and individual donors.

