



**Free The Slaves
Annual Impact Report**

Creating Freedom in a Changing World

2025





Ending the conditions that allow slavery to persist

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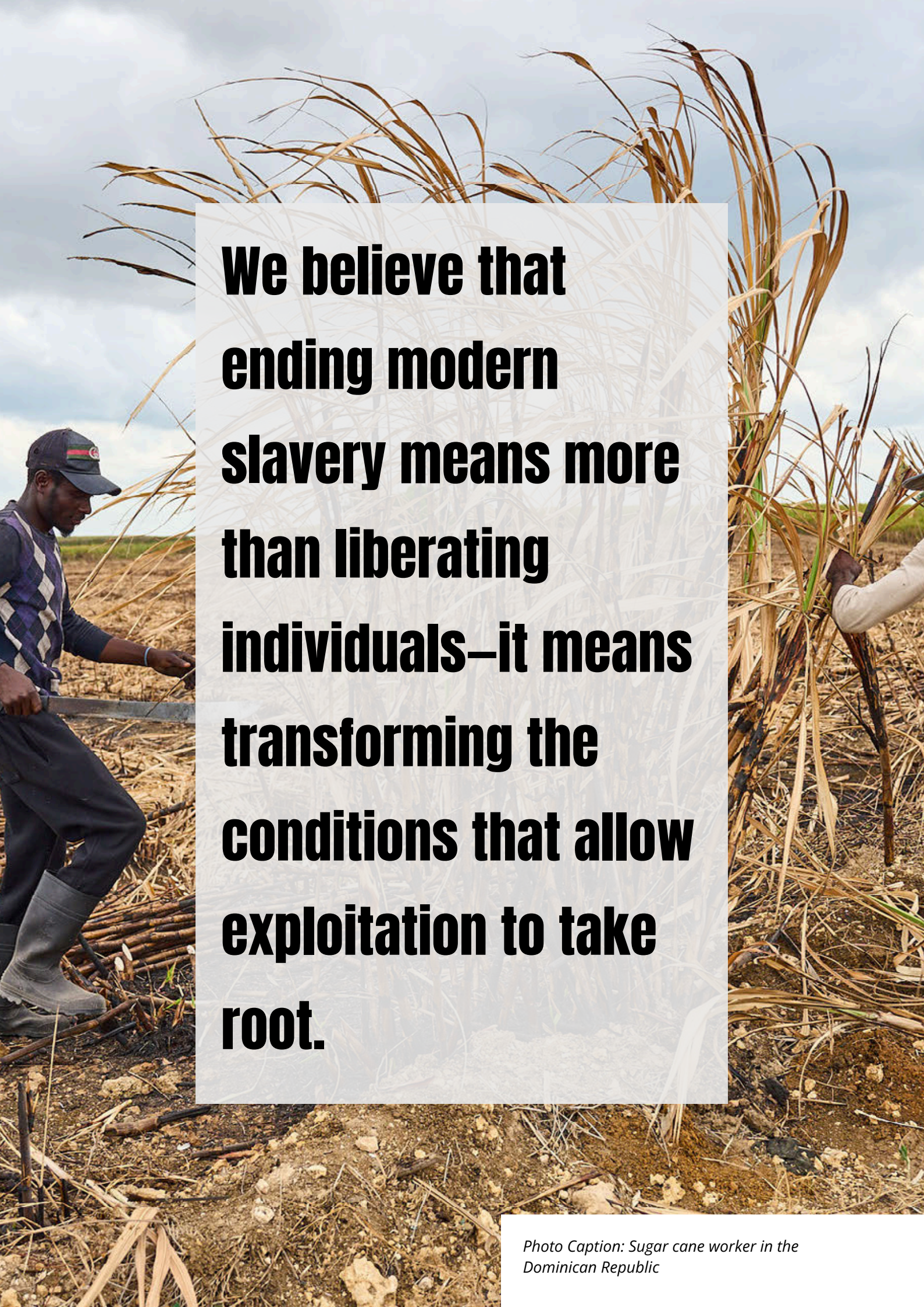
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Photo Caption: FTS Regional Manager for Latin America, Cinthia Belbussi, training civil society leaders in Bolivia.



We believe that ending modern slavery means more than liberating individuals—it means transforming the conditions that allow exploitation to take root.

Photo Caption: Sugar cane worker in the Dominican Republic

Letter from the Executive Director

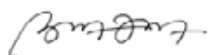
Dear Friends and Partners,

2025 was a year of increasing momentum and a powerful reminder of what's possible when survivors and communities are supported to lead. Across Free the Slaves' work, I saw courage in action: survivors stepping into leadership, community members choosing vigilance and prevention, and partners showing up with determination and care. Together, we turned that shared commitment into measurable progress. This year, 80 individuals moved to safety and freedom, 79 survivors strengthened their leadership through training, and 363 community members and 206 government officials built skills to prevent and respond to exploitation. We also helped establish 4 new community groups, with 24 active today, strengthening the local infrastructure that helps keep people safe. Through our digital outreach, we reached more than 600,000 people, extending prevention messages and survivor-informed advocacy across regions.

What makes me proud is how these results reflect real-world change. In India, survivor leaders and Migrant Vigilance Committees are helping families make safer decisions about work and migration, before harm occurs. In the Philippines, we contributed to reforms and coordination that strengthened protections for children and workers, while expanding space for survivor participation in national dialogue. In West Africa, we supported survivor return and reintegration alongside a stronger local response in mining-affected areas. Across the Caribbean, our partners and survivor leaders strengthened regional alignment and frontline capacity. Finally, in Bolivia, a national network has demonstrated increased capacity to identify indicators of trafficking, forced labor, and exploitation after an extensive training and mentorship program.

Thank you for walking with us. Your partnership helps ensure dignity is non-negotiable, survivor leadership is central, and freedom can take hold and last.

With gratitude,



Bukeni Waruzi
Executive Director
Free the Slaves



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Our Work In 2025



In 2025 FTS had active projects in the following countries:

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Antigua and Barbuda | Kenya |
| Argentina | Malawi |
| Barbados | Mauritania |
| Bolivia | Mexico |
| Cameroon | Nepal |
| Chile | Nigeria |
| Ethiopia | Philippines |
| Guatemala | Senegal |
| India | The Democratic Republic of Congo |
| Jamaica | Trinidad and Tobago |
| | Uganda |

Introduction

In 2025, Free the Slaves worked to make exploitation harder to start, easier to detect, and costly to sustain. From cocoa communities in Cameroon to mining zones in Senegal and the DRC, from courtrooms and policy tables in Kenya and the Philippines to survivor-led prevention in India, our work focused on strengthening local protection systems, elevating survivor leadership, and shifting the policies and practices that enable modern slavery. We paired community-led action—training frontline actors, building vigilance committees, and supporting survivor reintegration—with strategic government engagement and regional coordination so that change could outlast any one project or funding cycle.

Research, communications, and collaborative convenings amplified that impact by turning local evidence into broader action. In Nepal, our study on child domestic work became a platform for multi-stakeholder accountability, child-led leadership development, and municipal engagement. Across regions, targeted forums, webinars, and podcasts expanded survivor-informed dialogue and helped align partners around practical solutions. Together, these efforts reflect an approach rooted in dignity and accountability: survivors as leaders, communities as first responders, and institutions as duty-bearers, working to prevent exploitation and expand pathways to freedom.

Photo Caption: Sugar cane workers village, Dominican Republic



Our Impact

80 Individuals
Freed from
Trafficking

24 Active
Community
Groups

363 Community
Members
Trained

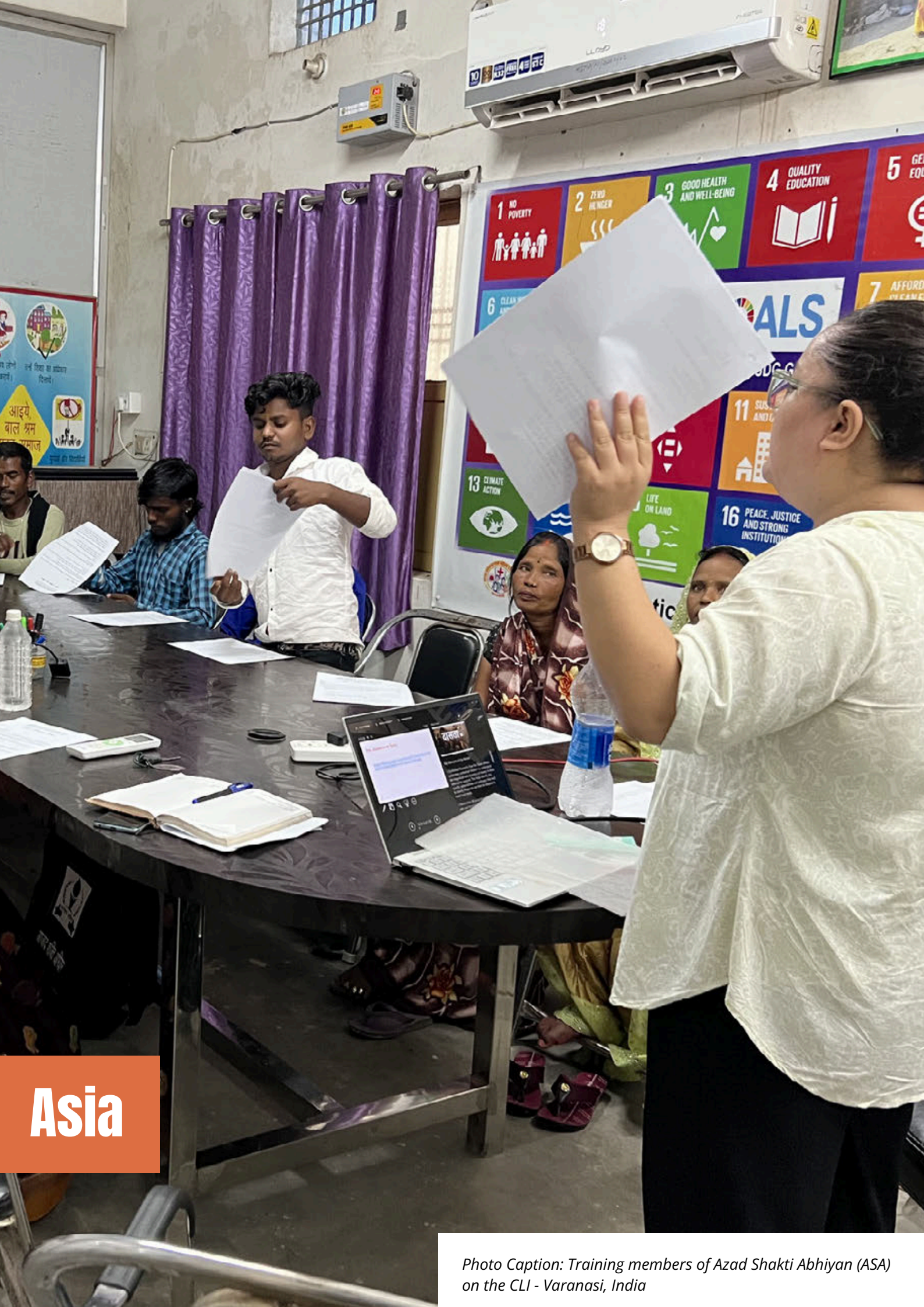
79 Survivors
Trained

206 Government
Officials
Trained

74 Forum
Participants

7 Survivor
Networks
Supported

600000+
People Reached
Through Media
Channels



Asia

Photo Caption: Training members of Azad Shakti Abhiyan (ASA) on the CLI - Varanasi, India

In 2025, Free the Slaves advanced a prevention-first approach across Asia by pairing survivor leadership with institutional strengthening. Our work kept one principle at the center: sustainable change happens when survivors and communities are supported to lead, and duty-bearers are equipped to act.

Enhancing Accountability Through Advocacy – The Philippines

In the Philippines, FTS helped translate anti-trafficking commitments into coordination and practical policy applications by bringing survivor-informed perspectives into the spaces where national decisions are made. Our work focused on strengthening protections for children and workers by supporting proposed reforms, improving interagency collaboration, and expanding pathways for survivor participation in prevention and response systems.

In August 2025, FTS joined the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) through the Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns (BWSC) Technical Harmonization and Validation Workshop. FTS contributed to the revision process for Department Order No. 149, the Guidelines in Assessing and Determining Hazardous Work in the Employment of Persons Below 18 Years of Age. We elevated concerns about emerging risks in informal and digital economies and helped reinforce stronger, clearer guidance in the order. This included improved definitions, stronger enforcement provisions, and expanded consultation processes that include survivors and community stakeholders.

Photo Caption: NCACL 6th Anniversary highlight: pledges to support the Philippines becoming an Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder Country.





Photo Caption: Collaborative revisions underway: DOLE's Technical Harmonization Workshop for D.O. 149.

In September, we partnered with Department of Justice–Interagency Council Against Trafficking to convene a high-level roundtable in Manila with 30+ agencies and organizations, aligning government, civil society, international partners, and survivor leaders to confront labor trafficking trends and close coordination gaps. The dialogue generated shared priorities on referral pathways, local government guidance, prevention programming, and coordination mechanisms, commitments IACAT is using to inform responses to labor trafficking. In October, we reaffirmed support for the Philippines' Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder bid, positioning survivor inclusion and prevention as core elements of an accelerated national approach.

Photo Caption: Stakeholders review proposed changes to D.O. 149 in the DOLE-BWSC workshop.



Community Driven Protection - India

In India, FTS demonstrated that prevention becomes durable when the community is the foundation and it is rooted in survivor leadership and reinforced by local vigilance systems. Through our partnership with MSEMVS and the survivor-led collective Azad Shakti Abhiyan (ASA), we focused on equipping survivors and community members to identify risk early, interrupt unsafe recruitment, and connect people to support before exploitation occurs.

FTS delivered multiple rounds of Community Liberation Initiative (CLI) training and safe-migration workshops reaching 150+ participants, many of them survivors. The trainings built practical skills like leadership, community organizing, advocacy, and enhanced participants' knowledge of rights and legal frameworks. They ensured that participants could run awareness activities, support peers, and engage duty-bearers. At the same time, the project strengthened local protection systems by reactivating 10 Migrant Vigilance Committees (MVCs) across Mirzapur and Bhadohi districts, helping communities recognize fraudulent recruiters, debt traps, and recruitment red flags, while also promoting safer choices. Prevention messages were reinforced through migration safety education materials and expanded into daily public life through 18 wall writings (local hand-drawn billboards), reaching people beyond formal sessions. The results show a clear shift from awareness to action: in Mirzapur, community members reported moving away from unregistered agents, with 10 migrants securing decent jobs through the National Skill Development Council - International in Varanasi following sustained briefings from our network of MVC educators and advocates.

Photo Caption: Briefing MVC members and migrants on safe international migration using SAFE TIPS guide.





Photo Caption: Members of ASA presenting group work in one of the training sessions on the CLI.

Success Story - Budhiram: Community Protector (India)

Budhiram, a survivor leader in Bhadohi, knows firsthand how unsafe recruitment can turn into forced labor. In early 2024, contractors promised him and 80 others (including his daughter and nephew) tile-factory work in Karnataka, but instead took them to marble mines where they faced coercion, withheld wages, restricted movement, and 18-hour workdays. Budhiram escaped and, after connecting with Azad Shakti Abhiyan (ASA), gained training on safe migration, legal protections, and grievance mechanisms. When his nephew confirmed the others were still trapped, Budhiram, supported by ASA, filed a complaint with the Bhadohi District Magistrate, prompting authorities to rescue all 80 laborers, recover unpaid wages, and bring his daughter home safely.

Months later, when the same contractors returned to recruit again, Budhiram recognized the warning signs and reported them immediately. One contractor was detained, fined ₹1.5 lakh (about \$1,600 USD), and formally warned, preventing new exploitation. As Budhiram put it: “We are trained now. These contractors cannot fool us anymore. I didn’t let them take anyone from my community.” Today, neighbors consult him before migrating, job offers are verified more carefully, and exploitative recruiters avoid the area, showing how survivor leadership and community vigilance can stop trafficking before it starts.

Success Story - Geeta: Freedom, Leadership, and Recovery (India)

Two years ago, Geeta was trapped in bonded labor and debt in Jaunpur with no clear path to safety or justice. After connecting with the survivor collective (ASA), she gained the knowledge and confidence to claim her rights and seek help safely. Today, after participating in FTS training, Geeta is free and leading others. She is helping families file unpaid wage claims, which keeps children in school. She also supported 30 bonded laborers in gaining their freedom and has rebuilt stability for her own family through a small livelihood cart and steady income.



Free The Slaves

**TRAINING SURVIVOR
LEADERS EMPOWERS
INDIAN COMMUNITIES TO
PREVENT BONDED
LABOUR**

www.freetheslaves.net





Photo Caption: Key meeting at DOJ Office, Manila: DOJ-IACAT and FTS leaders unite against human trafficking and forced labor.

Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS will build on what worked by deepening prevention and leadership in two key contexts. In India, we will consolidate and demonstrate community-led prevention as durable infrastructure, strengthening survivor leadership and vigilance mechanisms so communities can identify risk early and interrupt exploitation before it begins. In the Philippines, we will advance informed policy engagement alongside prevention-focused public awareness, while supporting ethical, survivor-led advocacy that strengthens protection systems and keeps survivor participation meaningful, safe, and influential.

Photo Caption: Shedding light on hidden exploitation: Research dissemination on child domestic workers in Kathmandu, Nepal





Caribbean

Photo Caption: Adrian Alexander, Sandra Christie Brown, and Diahann Gordon Harrison at the launch of ONRTIP's Digital Anti-Human Trafficking Course in Jamaica.

In the Caribbean, Free the Slaves focused on movement-building efforts that translate into stronger systems. We aimed to bring government, civil society, and survivor leaders together toward shared strategies while strengthening frontline capacity to identify trafficking and respond with dignity.

Regional Advocacy and Coordination: CCATIP Caribbean Anti-Trafficking Conference

As project lead for Caribbean Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons counter-trafficking conferences, FTS facilitated a convening over four days (21–24 July 2025) titled “Reflections: 25 Years of the Implementation of the Palermo Protocol in the Caribbean Community.” Timed to mark the Palermo Protocol anniversary and the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons—and concluding on International Self-Care Day—the conference was planned by a regional committee that included CARICOM IMPACS, UNODC, IOM, civil society partners, and survivor leadership from across the Caribbean. Over four days, participants assessed progress, shared innovations, and advanced survivor-informed and youth-inclusive approaches across the 4Ps (prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership) with sessions on justice responses, technology-facilitated trafficking, demand-side prevention, and the strategic use of data. A dedicated youth day examined climate-driven vulnerability and online exploitation, and each day closed with a survivor-led self-care session, reinforcing sustainability for frontline actors. Average daily attendance exceeded 100 persons, and CCATIP is now exploring the formation of an implementation committee to carry forward priority recommendations toward a regional roadmap to 2030.

**Reflections: 25 Years of the
Implementation of the Palermo
Protocol in the Caribbean
Community**



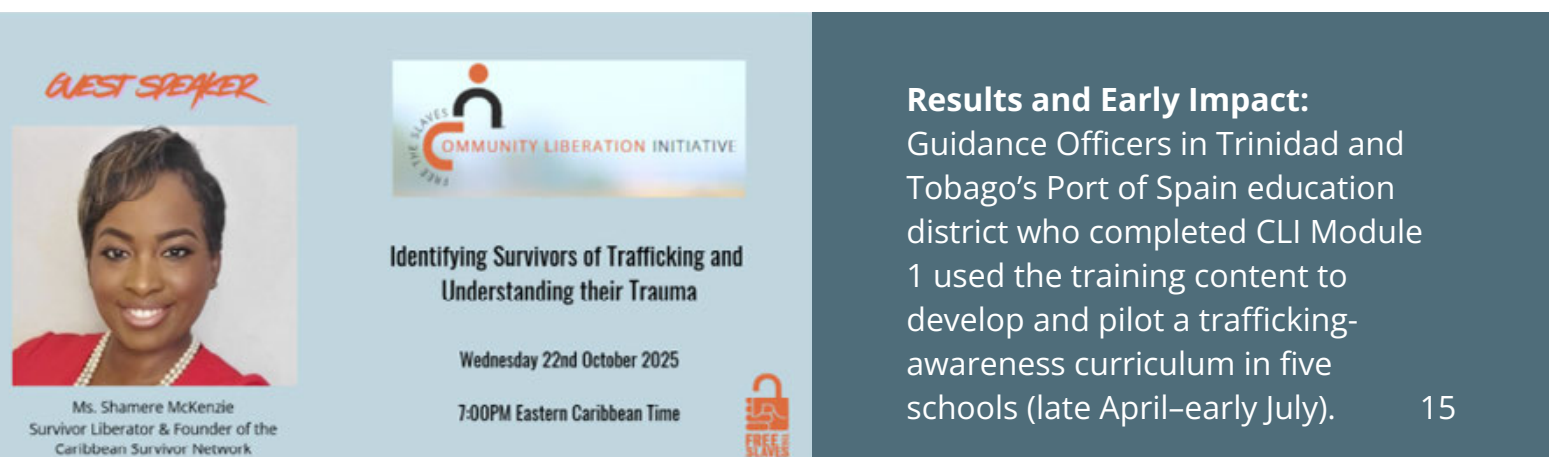
JULY
21 - 24
9AM - 12PM ECT

Strengthening Community Responses: Community Liberation Initiative Training


To help ensure regional commitments translate into practical protection, FTS expanded Community Liberation Initiative (CLI) training beyond Trinidad and Tobago, delivering virtual workshops to strengthen social workers' ability to understand trafficking, identify survivors, and respond with trauma-informed, rights-centered care. In Barbados, we trained 15 members of the Barbados Association of Professional Social Workers (BAPSW) from March to May, focusing on trafficking's intersections with domestic violence and homelessness. In Jamaica, we launched CLI training for 35 social work students and practitioners in July. Group work in the class addressed vulnerability among inner-city youth, persons with disabilities, older adults, people experiencing homelessness, and people facing substance-use challenges.

In late September, we began a second Jamaica cohort alongside a new Eastern Caribbean cohort with participants from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Grenada, and Dominica, including a guest session by Shamere McKenzie (Caribbean Survivor Network) on survivor identification and trauma. The second Jamaica cohort was paused after Hurricane Melissa disrupted electricity and internet access in late October; while no fatalities have been reported among participants, some experienced serious losses. The Eastern Caribbean cohort focused on risks faced by girls vulnerable to sexual exploitation and boys targeted for gang recruitment and forced criminality.


Photo Caption: Flyer of CLI guest lecture by survivor leader, Shamere McKenzie



GUEST SPEAKER




Ms. Shamere McKenzie
Survivor Liberator & Founder of the
Caribbean Survivor Network



COMMUNITY LIBERATION INITIATIVE

**Identifying Survivors of Trafficking and
Understanding their Trauma**

Wednesday 22nd October 2025
7:00PM Eastern Caribbean Time



Results and Early Impact:
Guidance Officers in Trinidad and Tobago's Port of Spain education district who completed CLI Module 1 used the training content to develop and pilot a trafficking-awareness curriculum in five schools (late April-early July).

Strengthening Justice-Sector Responses (Trinidad and Tobago)

In Trinidad and Tobago, FTS strengthened justice-system readiness to identify trafficking and apply survivor-centered practice through a targeted partnership with the Judicial Education Institute of Trinidad and Tobago (JEITT). Building on relationships established at the Freedom from Slavery Caribbean Regional Forum (February 2023), FTS and JEITT convened a Trafficking in Persons Sensitization Workshop on 18–19 July 2025 at the Judicial Waterfront Centre in Port of Spain. The workshop focused on strengthening judicial capacity to adjudicate trafficking cases, deepening understanding of relevant domestic and international legal frameworks (including intersections with criminal, civil, quasi-criminal, and family law), and addressing gaps in victim care, support, and reintegration, while reinforcing victim-centered adjudication and judicial accountability. It brought together the JEITT Executive, the then Chief Justice Ivor Archie, Appellate and High Court judges, masters, magistrates, registrars, and court administration staff, with contributions from FTS, CCATIP leadership, the CTU, ILO, and other experts. Eighty-three participants attended, and JEITT reported strong satisfaction, with most rating the workshop “Excellent” and noting clear relevance to their roles across the justice system.

Expanding Reach and Coalition Cohesion

FTS and CCATIP expanded regional influence by combining traditional media, podcasts, multilingual messaging, and consistent coalition communications to sustain public engagement and strengthen the movement’s shared voice. We recorded Caribbean Connections “success story” podcast interviews with government representatives from Jamaica, Guyana, and Belize, and produced a monthly 10-minute radio segment, “Freedom Interrupted,” on 195.5FM (August–December) to highlight FTS/CCATIP work, CLI training, conference insights, and the 16 Days of Activism campaign. These radio episodes were also shared on YouTube to expand access.

We also developed public service messages linking trafficking and digital violence for broadcast in Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, and Grenada, available in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Jamaican Creole, helping ensure outreach reaches non-English-speaking communities across the region.



In addition to the Caribbean Anti-Trafficking Conference, the Coalition also initiated work on two of its other regional projects in 2025.

There was a virtual consultation in February led by Dr Cherisse Francis for the Regional Stakeholder Mapping Project and another in April led by Mrs Diahann Gordon Harrison for the Regional Resource Hub Project. Both projects are ongoing.

Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS will deepen partnerships with regional stakeholders to promote, strengthen, and sustain community engagement that prevents trafficking in persons and helps communities maintain freedom over time, while also expanding networking, collaboration, and capacity-building across the anti-trafficking and modern slavery movement, particularly by strengthening survivor leadership and survivor-informed coordination among partners.



Central Africa

Photo Caption: Presentation at the launch of the research report Armed Actors, Modern Slavery, and Cocoa Smuggling, in Kinsasha, DRC

In Central Africa, Free the Slaves focused on strengthening coordinated action to address child labor and forced labor in high-risk mining supply chains, where exploitation remains deeply entrenched. In the DRC, we worked with civil society and government partners under SDG 8.7 to build shared capacity, improve referral pathways, and advance rights-based responses in artisanal and small-scale mining communities.

Empowering Women and Girls to Identify Trafficking

In the DRC, FTS and Cadre de Récupération et d'Encadrement pour l'Épanouissement Intégral des Jeunes (CREEIJ) strengthened community-level prevention by convening a two-day anti-trafficking awareness workshop in Pakadjuma in November 2025, reaching 50 girls and young women with practical information on trafficking risks, rights, and support options. The workshop immediately translated awareness into protection: several participants recognized their own experiences as trafficking based on the training and self-identified as victims, enabling partners to initiate rapid referrals for psychosocial, legal, and social support. This outcome underscored a core lesson of FTS programming in high-risk settings: when communities have credible information and trusted pathways to help, hidden exploitation becomes easier to disclose, and survivors can access support sooner.

Photo Caption: Women's prevention workshop participants pose for a photo to celebrate completing the course



Strengthening Capacity and Connections – The Democratic Republic of Congo

In September 2025, FTS and Alternatives Plus co-organized a two-day awareness and capacity-building seminar in Lubumbashi, DRC, convened under SDG 8.7 and aligned with the DRC's Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder Country Roadmap. The seminar brought together more than 18 civil society organizations and government representatives, including the Head of the Social Security Division of Haut-Katanga, to build shared understanding, improve coordination, and reinforce accountability in artisanal and small-scale mining, where children and vulnerable families face heightened exploitation risks.

Sessions examined the prevalence of child labor in cobalt and copper mines, reviewed legal frameworks and enforcement gaps, and highlighted the need for viable alternatives for families who depend on mining income. Participants explored trafficking dynamics, survivor protection, grievance mechanisms, and the value of integrating survivor perspectives into policy and program design, alongside international standards such as ILO Conventions 138 and 182. The seminar concluded with the signing of an MoU between FTS and Alternatives Plus, establishing a foundation for ongoing collaboration on community awareness, protection, and reintegration, as well as joint advocacy for rights-based mining practices.

Photo Caption: Awareness and capacity building seminar organized by FTS and Alternatives Plus in Lubumbashi, DRC



Building Community Prevention Capacity

Building on the November 2025 Pakadjuma workshop, FTS and CREELJ reinforced a prevention-to-protection pathway by integrating capacity building into both outreach and services at Centre la Grâce. The training content equipped participants with practical tools on prevention, protection, and reporting, including the forms and definitions of trafficking, common recruitment and manipulation tactics, warning signs, safe reporting options, and the medical, legal, and social services available in Kinshasa. Ministry of Social Affairs experts supported delivery, helping ensure the information was credible, actionable, and linked directly to available response mechanisms.

Crucially, the workshop was designed to extend beyond a single event through community mobilization. Following the training, the 50 participants formed a peer educator network, grounded in a shared message: “Human trafficking is a crime.” This network strengthens local ownership of protection efforts by promoting community sensitization, early risk detection and child protection, GBV prevention, and referrals of potential victims to services. Alongside this, CREELJ continues to build resilience through complementary activities at the transit center, including literacy and life skills education, vocational and income-generating skills, sexual and reproductive health education, and leadership and self-confidence development—helping ensure participants are not only informed, but better equipped to stay safe and support others.

Photo Caption: Community members engage in group work during the workshop



Photo Caption: Participants role play peer education strategies



Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS will mobilize survivors and civil society to participate in and support the Alliance 8.7 roadmap process, and build the capacity of task forces to strengthen monitoring and reporting on progress toward SDG 8.7 commitments.



Eastern and Southern Africa

Photo Caption: FTS Senior Regional Manager for East and Southern Africa, Jackline Mwende, providing support to Members of Survivors Network Kenya.

In Eastern and Southern Africa, Free the Slaves focused on building the capacity of survivors to engage with institutions and civil society to influence policies and practices that affect them and strengthening the systems that prevent exploitation and improve accountability, building credibility with government actors while reinforcing survivor-centered, community-linked responses.

Advocacy Campaigns

In July 2025, FTS supported survivor-led public engagement with Survivors Network Kenya (SNK) during Kenya's World Day Against Child Labour commemorations in Mombasa County and the national World Day Against Trafficking in Persons commemoration on July 30 in Nakuru County, working alongside county and national stakeholders. Survivors helped shape public dialogue and prevention messaging, participated in community forums, and amplified survivor-informed calls for protection and accountability through national and local media, including KBC Radio, Thingira Radio, and The Standard.

Photo Caption: Faith Muthiani (FTS) and Fauziah Wanjiru (SNK) participating in the commemoration of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.



Research and Knowledge Creation

FTS strengthened regional and cross-border coordination by engaging in technical and policy forums that improve practical responses to trafficking and exploitation. In Kenya, we participated in a civil society technical workshop hosted by GIZ under the Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme, contributing to the validation of national guidelines designed to strengthen coordination, service quality, and accountability across government and civil society counter-trafficking actors.

FTS also co-led a joint cross-border desk review with colleagues in Uganda on the trafficking of girls from Karamoja into Kenya and other destinations, serving on the steering group to guide analytical quality, validate findings, and shape actionable recommendations for government engagement, civil society coordination, and targeted interventions. At the continental level, FTS participated in the 10th International Policy Conference on the African Child in Addis Ababa, ensuring anti-modern slavery and survivor-centred perspectives were reflected in discussions on adolescent exploitation, forced labour, and child protection with government, civil society, and regional bodies.

Photo Caption: Capacity building workshop with Survivors Network Kenya



Survivor-Centered Policy Reform

In 2025, Free the Slaves advanced survivor-centered policy and advocacy across Eastern and Southern Africa by participating in national and county-level platforms and ensuring survivor priorities were reflected in public dialogue and institutional processes. By maintaining a consistent presence in decision-making spaces, FTS helped strengthen recognition of trafficking and exploitation as governance and protection issues, while reinforcing survivor inclusion as a standard, not an exception, in policy and advocacy conversations.

This approach strengthened alignment among civil society, survivor leaders, and duty-bearers, helping create more coherent pathways for prevention, protection, and accountability. Through these engagements, FTS contributed to a regional environment in which survivor-informed perspectives increasingly shaped discussions on justice and child protection, and in which anti-trafficking responses were more closely linked to broader policy frameworks and institutional responsibilities.

Photo Caption: Faith Muthiani (FTS) with partners during the World Day Against Child Labour commemoration in Mombasa, Kenya.



Survivor Expertise Shapes Justice System Workshops - Kenya

In 2025, Free the Slaves strengthened survivor-centered engagement with justice and policy systems in Kenya, moving beyond commemorations to ensure survivor experience directly informed how laws are understood and applied. As part of these efforts, FTS supported survivor participation in the Employment and Labor Relations Court (ELRC/ELRASE) Symposium hosted by the Judiciary of Kenya at Strathmore University. Through preparation and accompaniment, survivors were able to brief judges, magistrates, and labor officers on how gaps in interpretation and enforcement of child labor and trafficking laws limit survivors' access to justice. These exchanges strengthened linkages between survivor leaders and the judiciary, increased awareness among justice actors of the need for survivor-informed approaches, and reinforced commitments to integrate survivor perspectives into judicial handling of child labor and trafficking cases.

Photo Caption: Senior Manager for East and Southern Africa, Jackline Mwendu, with representatives from Survivors Network Kenya (SNK) during the Employment and Labour Relations Court Symposium at Strathmore University, Nairobi, Kenya.



“The engagement of survivors at the Employment and Labour Relations Symposium on the elimination of child labour has offered valuable learning for the Judiciary and for us as conveners. Their lived experience is informing our perspective and strengthening our approach. This is a practice we must deepen moving forward.”
Hon. Justice Wasilwa

FTS deepened this work through participation in a Judicial Sector Sensitization Workshop on the Kenya Judicial Benchbook on Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation on November 15, 2025, organized by Equality Now with the International Association of Women Judges – Kenya Chapter (IAWJ-K). The workshop convened judges, magistrates, and Court Users’ Committees and supported more consistent, survivor-centered application of the benchbook in trafficking cases. At the national policy level, FTS also contributed to Alliance 8.7 Technical Working Group meetings, including a session in Naivasha (December 2025), supporting planning for national reporting on Kenya’s Roadmap and helping shape discussions on indicators, reporting frameworks, and stakeholder engagement to track progress as a Pathfinder Country.

Photo Caption: Jackline Mwendu together with Survivor Network Kenya Members taking part in the Employment and Labour Relations Court Symposium



Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS will strengthen anti-modern slavery systems across Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Southern Africa by improving the implementation of laws and action plans and reinforcing inter-agency coordination and survivor inclusion. We will target prevention and protection in high-risk sectors, from agriculture and domestic work to extractives and overseas recruitment, and expand the use of practical evidence to guide policy decisions and program improvements.



Latin America

Photo Caption: Cinthia Belbussi, Regional Manager for Latin America, facilitating a workshop in La Paz, Bolivia

In Latin America, Free the Slaves strengthened its role as a technical partner for government and civil society, focusing on institutional readiness, survivor inclusion, and clearer pathways for policy implementation. Our 2025 work in Chile and Guatemala advanced two complementary goals: build credible entry points with national institutions and help translate commitments, especially under Alliance 8.7, into practical, survivor-informed action.

Human Rights Advocacy Engagement - Chile

FTS deepened institutional engagement with Chile’s National Human Rights Institute (INDH) following an official invitation to open a national seminar, positioning FTS as an emerging technical reference on modern slavery and labor exploitation. Ahead of the event, INDH requested a virtual training for its regional legal, social work, and psychology teams to address internal capacity gaps and strengthen shared understanding across disciplines. During the visit, FTS also met with the Ministry of Public Security’s Organized Crime and Terrorism Department to explore cooperation, including growing concerns around labor trafficking and digital forms of exploitation. FTS’s participation in the May 6 INDH seminar reached nearly 200 in-person participants, was livestreamed nationally, and has received 395 recording views, while an on-site interview further amplified FTS’s regional analysis and visibility.

Photo Caption: Cinthia Belbussi, opening a national seminar at Chile’s National Human Rights Institute (INDH) on emerging trends in modern slavery and labor exploitation.



16 Days of Activism Campaign

FTS supported the 2025 regional 16 Days of Activism campaign by coordinating messaging on digital safety, online exploitation, and the links between gender-based violence and human trafficking. In collaboration with the Organization of American States (OAS) and regional partners, we co-drafted a joint declaration and produced aligned radio and social media materials under the campaign theme, “Digital Violence Against Women.”

Strengthening Civil Society Capacity - Mexico

In Mexico, Free the Slaves strengthened the capacity of civil society partners to prevent and respond to exploitation by delivering an intensive five-day Community Liberation Initiative (CLI) training in Mexico City in late February 2025. Designed to blend conceptual grounding with practical application, the training used workshops, role-play, and scenario-based exercises to help participants translate learning into real-world strategies for their communities and program contexts.

Photo Caption: Cinthia Belbussi leading a Community Liberation Initiative training in Mexico City



To support effective implementation, FTS translated, reviewed, and contextualized key CLI materials for Mexico. Engagement remained strong—especially as sessions became more hands-on—and post-training evaluations showed all respondents reported increased knowledge, reinforcing the value of participatory, practice-oriented learning even in a condensed format.

Increasing Collaborative Capacity - Bolivia

In Bolivia, FTS partnered with Conexión and the Bolivian Network Against Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons (RBcTTP) to strengthen the country's collective response to trafficking, with a deliberate emphasis on forced labor and labor trafficking, forms of exploitation that are often less visible in policy and practice. The initiative was designed as a hybrid, multi-phase process to ensure learning translates into sustained institutional practice and stronger coordination across civil society and government actors.

Photo Caption: Cinthia Belbussi facilitating a collaborative training with Bolivia's National Network Against Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons.



The capacity-building process combined virtual learning with an in-person national workshop in La Paz in October, using case-based exercises, scenario simulations, and trauma-informed interviewing practice to build confidence in identifying labor trafficking indicators and responding safely. Participants also co-developed an inter-institutional referral flowchart, clarifying mandates and strengthening coordination among service providers, civil society, and justice actors. Participation included 44 people in the virtual phase and 25 in-person attendees representing organizations from La Paz, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, and Tarija, and the workshop included engagement with government leadership, including the Plurinational Council Against Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons. Pre- and post-assessments indicated strong gains in clarity and confidence—particularly in distinguishing trafficking, forced labor, and exploitation; recognizing indicators such as coercion, debt bondage, document confiscation, and restriction of movement; and applying trauma-informed approaches, laying the groundwork for a mentorship phase to support adoption and sustained use of the tools developed.

Photo Caption: Representatives of Bolivia's National Network of NGOs Against Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons presenting key outcomes from the training workshop in La Paz.



Creating Media Leadership in Spanish

In 2025, FTS strengthened regional communications and advocacy by pairing timely public messaging with accessible Spanish-language content.

We launched a Spanish-language podcast series, *Conversaciones Sobre la Esclavitud Moderna* (Conversations on Modern Slavery) to fill a gap in expert-level regional dialogue on trafficking in persons, forced labor, and corporate accountability. By December 2025, we had published eight episodes featuring UN agencies, Indigenous organizations, survivor leaders, and academia, covering modern slavery trends, Indigenous peoples and forced labor, corporate responsibility, technology-facilitated exploitation, and sector-specific risks in mining and agriculture. The series is also generating durable resources for continued advocacy, as the insights from the episodes will be consolidated into a forthcoming regional downloadable reference publication.

Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS will focus on three priorities in Latin America: strengthening institutional responses through technical assistance and evidence-based advocacy tied to SDG 8.7 frameworks; building partner and community capacity through Community Liberation Training, mentoring, and tools; and advancing survivor leadership by expanding ethical survivor participation and launching a long-term process toward a Latin American survivor network.



Middle East and North Africa

Photo Caption: Kuwait City's skyline reflects the Gulf's rapid development, shaped by migration and growth.

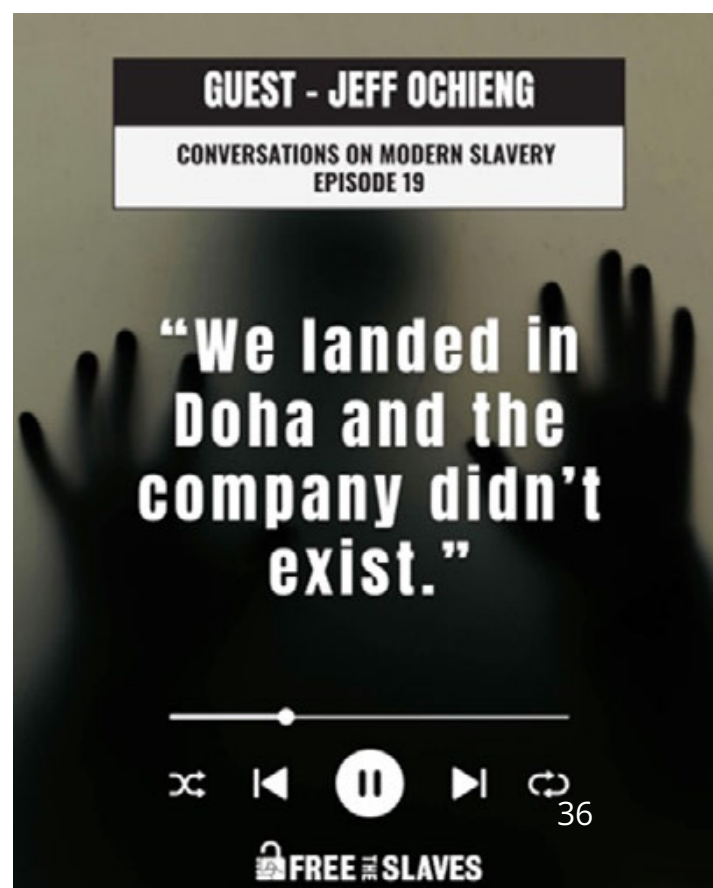
In MENA, Free the Slaves operated in a highly sensitive environment marked by geopolitical volatility, tightening civic space, and increased regulatory constraints, particularly in Gulf states. Within these limits, we advanced accountability through responsible, survivor-centered storytelling that elevated lived experiences and informed dialogue on migration governance challenges and forced labor risk without increasing operational exposure.

Storytelling in Difficult Times

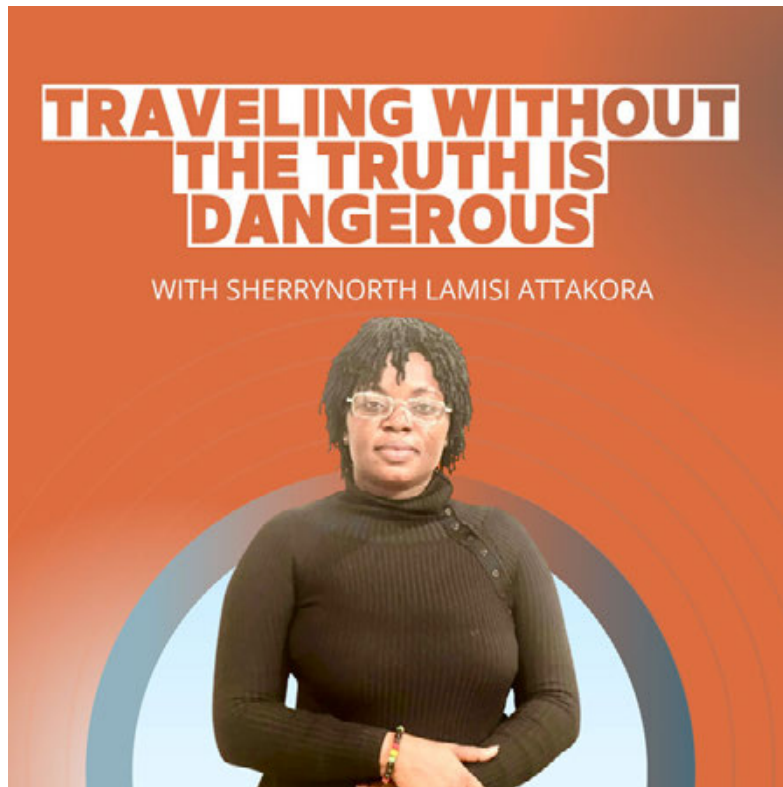
In the MENA region, FTS adopted a calibrated approach centered on institutional protection and strategic positioning, while advancing survivor-centered narrative leadership as a practical form of accountability. Through two episodes of Conversations on Modern Slavery, FTS elevated survivor voices connected to Gulf migration systems.

These episodes moved beyond testimony to highlight structural failures, particularly recruitment deception and the realities of the kafala system. They also reframed survivors as leaders rather than victims, strengthening accountability narratives while creating space for constructive dialogue on migration governance challenges in the region.

Episode 19, Jeff Ochieng (“The Day a Worker Lives”), traces Jeff’s experience of arriving in Doha to find the promised employer did not exist. His story documents exploitation in Qatar and Bahrain, including document confiscation, coercive contract practices, and excessive working hours. The episode connects individual harm to broader weaknesses in migration governance and the need for reform. Since his experience, Jeff has used his platform to report on migrant exploitation and labor rights.



Episode 21, Sherrynorth Lamisi Attakora (“Traveling Without the Truth is Dangerous”), follows Sherrynorth’s journey from recruitment deception and abuse within Gulf labor systems to public advocacy. Her story highlights the psychological dimensions of exploitation and the importance of survivor-informed reform.



Together, these episodes strengthened accountability narratives around Gulf migration systems and positioned FTS as a trusted convener of complex regional dialogue. They demonstrate how responsible storytelling can contribute to policy-relevant discussion in restrictive environments while protecting the safety of survivors, partners, and FTS operations.

Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS will build on its established GCC positioning by maintaining trusted relationships and expanding engagement carefully. Priorities include strengthening survivor-led advocacy, exploring technical advisory roles linked to corporate due diligence, reviving regional convenings when feasible, and deepening collaboration between Gulf and North African partners.

Through these efforts, FTS will continue advancing leadership on migration governance and forced labor risk mitigation across the region.



بناء القدرات والمعرفة للقيادات النسائية حول النصوص القانونية
وكالات المتعلقة بالاتجار بالمهاجرين والاتجار بالعبودية الحديثة.

Atelier de renforcement des capacités et des connaissances des femmes
sur les textes juridiques et les protocoles en matière de Traite
des personnes et Esclavage moderne.

Nouveau, 29-30 Septembre 20

West Africa

Photo Caption: FTS Mauritania Program Coordinator Dame Ba training women leaders in Mauritania

In West Africa, Free the Slaves advanced survivor-centered protection while strengthening the systems needed for prevention and accountability. Across countries, we paired direct survivor support with coordinated engagement of government, civil society, and partners to improve response pathways and sustain progress under SDG 8.7.

Supporting Survivors of Sex Trafficking in Senegal's Kédougou Region

In Senegal, Free the Slaves implemented a survivor-centered protection and reintegration program for Nigerian women and girls trafficked into the gold mining zones of Kédougou.

The program relies on a durable local coordination system built with government and community partners, including Community Vigilance Committees (CVCs), to identify victims quickly, secure their protection, and connect them to services. Survivors were referred to the La Lumière Shelter, where they received holistic, trauma-informed care supported by partners, including safe accommodation, psychosocial support, attentive case management, and assistance to stabilize health and wellbeing so they could prepare to safely return home to Nigeria.

Photo Caption: Gold mining village of Sambrabougou in Kédougou, Senegal



From there, FTS coordinated cross-border repatriation and reintegration support to ensure recovery continued after return. Through our partnership with the Emmanuel World Children Foundation (EWCF) in Nigeria, survivors received life-skills and economic empowerment support and were linked to tailored reintegration pathways, including education, catering, hairdressing, tailoring/fashion, and small business development. Across the reporting period, the program supported the safe return of 30 women and girls removed from trafficking, with comprehensive assistance that included medical care, psychosocial support, nutrition assistance, and safe transportation, so survivors returned home under secure and dignified conditions.

Photo Caption: Travel kits for survivors departing from the Senegal Airport



Photo Caption: Survivors getting ready to depart transit hotel in Diass, Senegal to go to the airport



Enhancing National Coordination Systems

To reinforce coordinated action at scale, FTS convened a high-level advocacy meeting in Dakar on October 22, 2025 to elevate national and regional attention to the accelerating crisis of sexual exploitation affecting hundreds of girls and women in the gold mining zones of Kédougou. The meeting brought together Senegalese authorities, international partners, and regional experts. Discussions focused on strengthening victim identification in mining communities, expanding access to trauma-informed social and legal services, improving cross-border coordination along recruitment and transit routes, and mobilizing emergency resources to help women and girls exit exploitation and reintegrate safely. Drawing on evidence and insights from partners, including research expertise from the University of Georgia's CenHTRO, participants reaffirmed commitments to closer government-civil society collaboration and agreed to advance plans for a multi-agency task force to coordinate operations and survivor support services, recognizing that delays would mean continued harm.

Photo Caption: Stakeholders participating in a high-level meeting on human trafficking in Dakar, Senegal, convened by Free the Slaves.



Bolstering Community Protection Frameworks

Building on this strategic momentum, FTS strengthened prevention and frontline-response capacity directly in Kédougou through three community workshops. These sessions equipped Community Vigilance Committee (CVC) members with improved skills to detect trafficking risks earlier, apply survivor-sensitive identification practices, and activate clearer referral mechanisms for protection and services. By pairing national-level coordination with community-level readiness, these actions reinforced a practical model of cross-border solidarity: community vigilance that triggers protection, survivor-centered care that supports recovery, and coordinated reintegration pathways that restore choice, dignity, and opportunity for women and girls returning home safely.

Photo Caption: Capacity building training for the Kédougou CVC members



Supporting Survivor Inclusion and Institutional Responses - Mauritania

In February 2025, Free the Slaves partnered with the ILO and Mauritania's National Instance Against Human and Migrant Trafficking to conduct a 7-day evaluation (February 12–18) of Mauritania's Alliance 8.7 Roadmap and implementation strategy. As a Pathfinder country and one of the first in West Africa to move into implementation planning, Mauritania has demonstrated strong political commitment to addressing forced labor, child labor, trafficking in persons, and modern slavery. The evaluation focused on strengthening coordination and improving how trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling are integrated into national responses. Findings directly informed a follow-up capacity-building workshop that brought 45 participants (26 men, 19 women) together in Nouakchott—including key ministries, UN agencies, human rights institutions, and civil society partners such as Initiative de Résurgence Abolitionniste (IRA) and Association Mauritanienne de Lutte contre la Dépendance (ALCD)—to share progress, identify gaps, and align on practical next steps. Participants highlighted priority needs, including stronger coordination, improved data and statistics, wider public awareness of legal frameworks, and clearer monitoring structures to track roadmap implementation.

Throughout 2025, FTS reinforced roadmap implementation through sustained capacity building and strategic partnerships. A women's leadership workshop (September 29–30) convened 34 women community leaders from organizations including SOS-Esclaves, Fondation Sahel, Etoile de l'Espoir, IRA, and ALCD, strengthening legal literacy, victim protection, and gender-sensitive approaches to trafficking and migrant smuggling. It also produced a shared roadmap for awareness, prevention, and protection initiatives tailored to the vulnerabilities of women and girls.

Photo Caption: Workshop for women leaders on legal texts, conventions, and protocols relating to human trafficking and modern slavery - Nouakchott, Mauritania



In November, FTS convened journalists and CSOs in Nouakchott to map complementary actions, strengthen ethical reporting and coordinated advocacy, and support the formalization of journalist and CSO networks with shared governance and 2026 action plans. This momentum continued in December, with a two-day legal framework training for 20 SOS-Esclaves members and partner NGOs, and additional partner-led trainings supported by FTS, including a Workshop on Modern Slavery and Social Inclusion with ALCD, expanding national capacity to prevent exploitation, strengthen protection, and improve accountability.

Photo Caption: Orientation of the participants, women leaders training - Nouakchott, Mauritania



Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS will reduce sexual exploitation and child trafficking through targeted awareness, survivor support services, and stronger enforcement of child protection laws, while consolidating and expanding community-based prevention in gold mining areas, strengthening vigilance committees, supporting livelihood alternatives, and advancing youth empowerment programs.



Freedom from Slavery Forum

Photo Caption: UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Professor Tomoya Obokata and Free the Slaves Board Chair Professor Dr. Timothy Patrick McCarthy during the keynote speech on Day 3 of the 2025 Europe Regional Forum

The Freedom from Slavery Forums are convenings that bring together survivor leaders, civil society, government, international institutions, researchers, and responsible private-sector actors to strengthen collaboration and strategy cohesion across the anti-modern slavery movement. More than conferences, the Forums are designed as working spaces for shared learning, alignment, and problem-solving, where participants surface barriers, exchange practical approaches, and build partnerships that translate ideas into coordinated action.

2025 Europe Regional Forum

In Europe, Free the Slaves strengthened cross-sector alignment by co-organizing the 2025 Europe Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum with Belgium's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Development Cooperation. Held at Egmont Palace in Brussels, the Forum convened 74 participants from government, survivor leadership, civil society, the private sector, academia, and international institutions to share knowledge, increase collaboration and, unify strategy. Through plenaries, technical panels, and participatory workshops, participants surfaced persistent barriers—fragmented regulation, inconsistent survivor inclusion, and limited collaboration in supply-chain due diligence—while advancing strategies to strengthen accountability and collective action.

Photo Caption: Panel discussion on labor exploitation in the textile supply chain at the 2025 Europe Regional Forum in Brussels, Belgium.



Survivor leadership was present in the Forum program, with survivor advocates leading sessions on trauma-informed engagement, accountability frameworks, and inclusive governance that advance lived experience in anti-modern slavery work. The Forum also catalyzed new partnerships for advocacy, research, and ethical sourcing.

Photo Caption: Group picture during the Europe Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum



Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, the Global Freedom from Slavery Forum will be held in Istanbul, Türkiye from May 11-12, under the theme: “Freedom in a Changing World: Strengthening Protections, Accountability, and Transforming the Systems” with regional convenings to follow. These forums will enable coordination of strategies, elevate survivor leadership, mobilize civil society, and strengthen cross-regional and cross-sector collaboration to accelerate progress against forced labor, child labor, and human trafficking.



Policy, Advocacy, and Business

Photo Caption: FTS team with Stakeholders at the conference launching an awareness campaign organized by FTS in Cameroon.

FTS works with governments, communities, and responsible companies to reduce forced labor risks and strengthen accountability in high-risk sectors and supply chains. In 2025, this approach focused on turning human rights commitments into practical systems on the ground by building community-led monitoring and referral pathways, supporting stronger response protocols, and aligning local action with emerging due diligence expectations.

Reducing Forced Labor Risks in the Cocoa Supply Chain - Cameroon

In Cameroon, Free the Slaves advanced rights-based business engagement by testing a community-led prevention model to reduce forced labor risk indicators in cocoa production in partnership with SUCDEN Trading. In early 2025, FTS launched a pilot project across four vulnerable cocoa-producing localities in the Central Region (Ntui, Nguila, Salakounou, and Mbangassina) where poverty, weak infrastructure, and informal labor arrangements increase exploitation risks. The project combined awareness-raising, capacity building, and implementing a monitoring system in the field to strengthen prevention at the source and create a practical foundation for ethical supply chains.

Photo Caption: FTS team, CVC members and a farmer (in the middle) during a visit to a cocoa plantation in Cameroon



A key aspect of the pilot project was the creation of Community Vigilance Committees (CVCs) formed by trusted local monitors and advocates for fair labor practices. With input from leaders, cooperatives, and civil society, 48 committee members were selected across the four localities (including educators, farmers, youth, and job seekers), reflecting gender balance and community diversity. FTS trained CVC members on forced labor definitions, documentation and data collection, case management, and monitoring through hands-on role-play and scenarios. **CVCs then conducted farm visits, household surveys, and community dialogues using customized tools and mobile phones**, identifying key risk patterns such as irregular wages, lack of contracts, coercive family labor, and dependency on landowners for food or housing, alongside confidential reporting of more severe indicators, including debt bondage, document confiscation, and excessive working hours. A training and awareness seminar in Ntui brought together government ministries, cooperatives, civil society, and local authorities, reinforcing their shared commitment to community-led monitoring and response.

Building on this foundation, FTS led a community awareness campaign from September 1-2, 2025 across the four localities, combining traditional ceremonies, public mobilization, and multi-stakeholder dialogue. The campaign linked community prevention to emerging due diligence expectations, including the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the EU Forced Labor Regulation (FLR 2024/3015), and highlighted the role of cooperatives and traditional leadership in driving change. While structural barriers remain, limited resources for monitoring, weak enforcement, and normalization of exploitative practices, the pilot project confirms that community-led vigilance can strengthen prevention and improve accountability in cocoa supply chains, with clear pathways for expansion through sustained investment, stronger coordination, and continued technical support.

Photo Caption: CVC members in Cameroon were issued mobile phones and trained to use them to document forced labor risk indicators in their communities.



Strategic Support for Alliance 8.7 and Pathfinder Countries

Free the Slaves' strategic support to Alliance 8.7 has increased as it is the only organization that is able to provide support for pathfinder countries in their roadmap development and implementation processes.

Following the strategic support provided to some pathfinder countries including Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Guatemala, FTS has received the demand for support from Alliance 8.7 for 15 pathfinder countries that need support in updating their roadmaps: 6 from Latin America, 3 from Europe, 4 from sub-Saharan Africa, 2 from North Africa, 1 from the Pacific and 1 from South Asia.

FTS has begun initial exploration and preparation for supporting some of these countries.

The support will focus on including survivors of modern slavery, forced labor, human trafficking, child labor, and CSOs in the process of updating the roadmaps and their implementation. This process ensures the voices and priorities of lived experiences are included in the roadmaps.

Recommendations for Alliance 8.7 GCG

At the 20th Global Coordinating Group (GCG) meeting, in May 2025, FTS submitted a series of recommendations to help strengthen CSOs and reinvigorate the Alliance 8.7 secretariat amid funding cuts.

The recommendations specifically included support for CSOs against funding competition, redefining the role of partner governments within Alliance 8.7, and strengthening the Alliance Secretariat.

These recommendations were discussed at the May meeting of the GCG of Alliance 8.7. The members of GCG will follow up on these recommendations at the 21st and 22nd sessions of the GCG in 2026.

Strengthening Human Rights Response Systems - Cameroon and Nigeria

In Cameroon and Nigeria, FTS supported Barry Callebaut to move from policy to practice by strengthening the country-level systems needed to respond to human rights concerns in cocoa supply chains. Working with global and local teams and in-country partners, FTS helped clarify how cases are identified, documented, escalated, and referred so responses are consistent, survivor-sensitive, and aligned with both national and international frameworks and company protocols as well as developed a Cameroon case management system and country-level SOP. This support strengthened staff capacities, including improved local readiness for case management and referral mechanisms, and reinforced safe, rights-centered coordination, and data protection.

FTS strengthened Barry Callebaut's operational readiness in Nigeria by delivering a two-day in-person training in Akure to build staff capacity to apply the company's human rights response protocol and grievance mechanisms consistently in real-world settings, covering child labor, forced labor, trafficking, and modern slavery. In parallel, FTS prepared the response architecture for verified FY24/25 FOS child labor cases by mapping child protection service providers and community mechanisms, identifying referral routes and access constraints, and coordinating early with child protection stakeholders through the local partner, Emmanuel Foundation. This work also integrated Nigeria's NDPA 2023 requirements into case data handling and information-sharing plans to strengthen confidentiality and safe, lawful case management workflows.

Photo Caption: Group picture of FTS team and Barry Callebaut's Nigeria team during the training of trainers session.



Photo Caption: Executive Director of Free the Slaves, Bukeni Waruzi, honoring a participant with a Diploma of Completion after the Human Rights Response Training that FTS organized for Barry Callebaut's Cameroon team.



Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS will support Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder roadmap development and implementation, while deepening business and community engagement to strengthen human rights response systems and prevent modern slavery—including forced labor, child labor, human trafficking, and servitude—both in local communities and across supply chains.



Research

Photo Caption: Launch event for Armed Actors, Modern Slavery, and Cocoa Smuggling in Kinshasha, DRC

In 2025, our research agenda combined field-based studies and “research-to-action” follow through, ensuring findings were not only published but also used to inform policy dialogue, strengthen partner capacity, and support survivor- and child-centered responses on the ground. Across publications, convenings, and collaborative learning spaces, our research agenda translated field realities into guidance for policymakers, practitioners, survivor advocates, and institutions working to prevent exploitation and improve response.

Enhancing Clarity

We expanded shared language and standards through two key resources. The Modern Slavery Glossary ([English](#)) ([Spanish](#)) makes complex concepts accessible and consistent for practitioners, researchers, and the public, strengthening the quality of policy and program dialogue. In March, FTS partnered with 11 organizations and universities to publish [Ethical Anti-Trafficking Guidelines for Faith-Based Organizations](#), offering practical direction for FBOs engaged in prevention and survivor support.

Generating Evidence

We also advanced evidence on exploitation in supply chains through a study on forced labor risks in the DRC’s cocoa sector. *Armed Actors, Modern Slavery, and Cocoa Smuggling* was [published in French and English](#) and presented in Kinshasa during a high-level meeting that included the Ministry of Employment and Labor, helping connect research findings to decision-makers positioned to influence reform.

Photo Caption: Launch event for Armed Actors, Modern Slavery, and Cocoa Smuggling in the DRC



FTS’s research in Nepal demonstrated our “research-to-action” model in practice. In partnership with Children-Women in Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH), we published Life as Child Domestic Workers in Kathmandu, documenting the pathways into child domestic labor and the realities children face inside private homes. The report was published in English with a Nepali executive summary and presented in Kathmandu in August 2025 to government and civil society audiences. It was accompanied by FTS’s first child-friendly version in English and Nepali to ensure findings were accessible to children through schools and local partners.

Photo Caption: Launch event for *Life as Child Domestic Workers in Kathmandu*, in Nepal.



In December, the evidence directly fueled follow-up action: a multi-stakeholder dialogue on ethical business practices, a two-day capacity-building training for 21 members of CWISH’s Children Advisory Board, and an orientation with municipal networks and Child Welfare Officers—including Municipal Association of Nepal (MUAN) and National Association of Rural Municipalities in Nepal (NARMIN)—to strengthen local data systems, protection mechanisms, and coordination. Together, these steps show how research can move beyond publication to drive structured dialogue, build capacity, and advance survivor- and child-centered change.

Sharing Knowledge

Finally, FTS amplified research impact by participating in global knowledge-sharing events and partnerships, including a presentation at a virtual parallel event for the 69th UN Commission on the Status of Women co-hosted with Walk Free, Footprint for Freedom, and The Salvation Army; a workshop in Chicago with UC Irvine on climate change and human trafficking; a lecture at UC Irvine; participation in the International Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference; and an FTS-Freedom Fund webinar strengthening shared learning, cross-sector collaboration, and the visibility of survivor-centered, systems-change approaches.

Photo Caption: FTS Senior Manager for Research, Marta Furlan, presenting an online lecture to UC Irvine



Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS will engage in new research projects together with grassroots and academic partners to expand knowledge and understanding on critical aspects of human trafficking. These include a project with Emmanuel World Children Foundation on the reintegration of sex trafficking survivors in Nigeria, a project on survivors' experiences with the judicial system in CARICOM countries, and a project with UC Irvine and Project Suma on community-based, Indigenous-led prevention strategies in Bolivia. The evidence collected through this research will be used to inform advocacy campaigns and to guide programmatic intervention. In 2026, FTS will also engage in the monitoring and impact evaluation of its 2025 research projects and their related activities, such as the Nepal project with CWISH and the training sessions on child labor that were built on the research.



Survivor Engagement

Photo Caption: Survivors Network Kenya strategic plan development meeting, supported by FTS

In 2025, Free the Slaves strengthened survivor leadership as a core driver of systems change, supporting survivors to shape prevention, protection, and accountability. Across Kenya and India, survivor-led groups moved from the margins toward decision-making spaces, demonstrating that durable anti-trafficking responses are stronger when lived experience is embedded in policy, justice, and community protection systems.

Supporting Survivor Networks

In Kenya, FTS strengthened Survivors Network Kenya (SNK) as both a visible survivor-led movement and a credible institution. We supported survivor leaders' consistent participation in policy, justice, and protection spaces, including the Judiciary's Employment and Labour Relations Court Symposium, where survivors highlighted enforcement gaps in child labour and trafficking cases and reinforced the need for survivor-informed justice. Survivors also contributed to national commemoration events and regional platforms, positioning lived experience as essential to migration and anti-trafficking governance.

To sustain this leadership, FTS helped SNK build stronger governance and accountability systems through targeted training and hands-on accompaniment. SNK strengthened safeguarding and financial management structures, adopted key policies and tracking tools, [launched its strategic plan](#), and expanded its membership through survivor-led outreach in Mombasa and Busia, reinforcing SNK's collective voice and growing survivor visibility across advocacy, judicial forums, and media engagements.

Photo Caption: Group photo at the Survivors Network Kenya strategic plan launch





Photo Caption: Capacity building with Survivors Network Kenya

“Free the Slaves’ support has been instrumental in strengthening Survivors Network Kenya (SNK)’s leadership and organizational capacity. Their technical accompaniment has helped us grow as a survivor-led network and engage more effectively in advocacy and systems change.”

Milliam Kamau, Chairperson, Survivors Network Kenya (SNK)

Photo Caption: Capacity building with Survivors Network Kenya



Training Frontline Survivor Leaders

In India, survivor engagement advanced through a six-month initiative led by FTS with MSEMVS and the survivor-led network Azad Shakti Abhiyan (ASA). The project positioned survivors as leaders by equipping 15 ASA survivor leaders through Community Liberation Initiative trainings focused on advocacy, leadership, and community mobilization. As a result, survivors strengthened confidence and expanded their roles in educating peers, responding to trafficking risks, and shaping local prevention strategies, reinforcing survivor leadership as a practical form of community protection.

Photo Caption: [Munnari Devi from Azad Shakti Abhiyan](#)



Survivor-Inclusion in Pathfinder Roadmap Development - Guatemala

In 2025, Free the Slaves initiated strategic engagement with the Government of Guatemala to support the update of the national Alliance 8.7 Roadmap for 2026–2030, with a focus on integrating survivor voices and perspectives into national policy frameworks.

Structured institutional dialogue was advanced with key stakeholders. Engagement with the Ministry of Labour (Alliance 8.7 focal point) and other authorities focused on clarifying scope, sequencing, and institutional roles. In parallel, collaboration with the Secretariat against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Human Trafficking (SVET) identified opportunities to strengthen the inclusion of trafficking in persons and modern slavery within the revised roadmap.

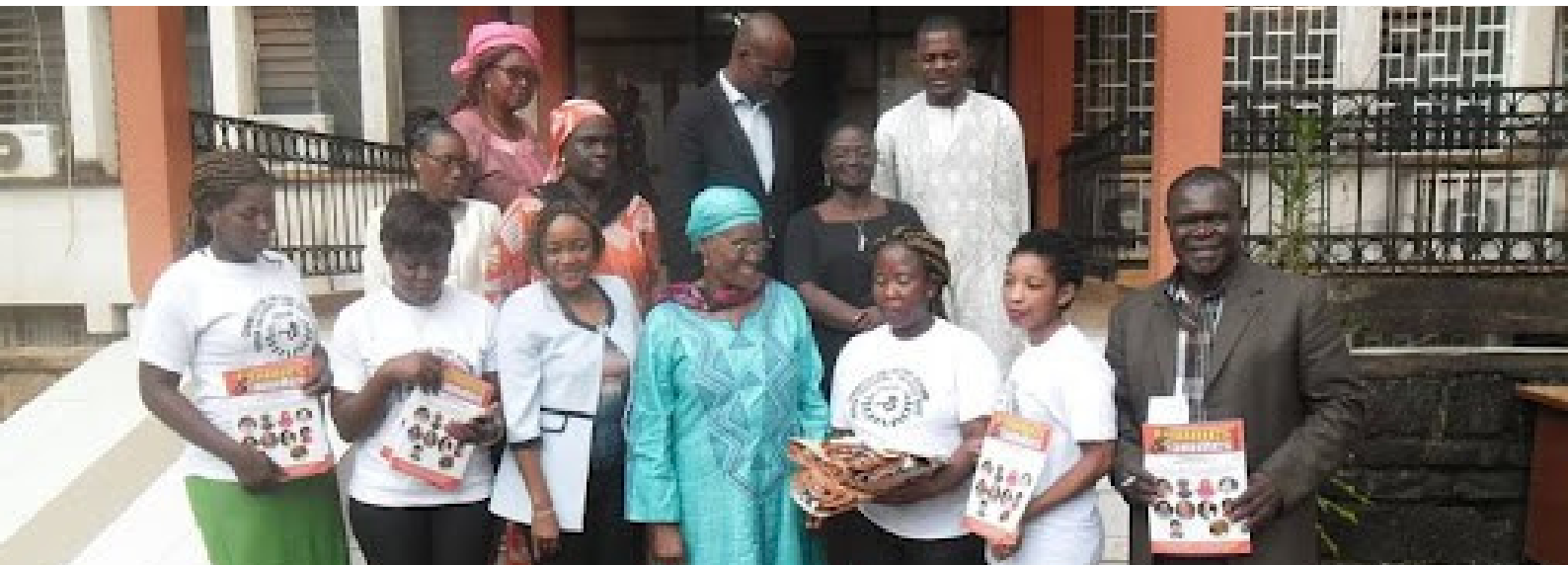
In addition, Free the Slaves strengthened collaboration with Fundación Sobrevivientes, a civil society organisation recognised by the Government of Guatemala and aligned with SVET. This engagement lays the foundation for joint action to advance survivor participation and integrate survivor perspectives within the roadmap process. A Memorandum of Understanding is expected in early 2026.

Coordination with the International Labour Organization, alongside mapping of organisations working with survivors and the worst forms of child labour, has laid the groundwork for technical consultations, capacity-building, survivor engagement, and multi-stakeholder validation planned for 2026.

Elkes Impact Awards

The Elkes Impact Awards are a key part of Free the Slaves' survivor engagement strategy, recognizing and elevating survivor leadership globally. In 2025, FTS opened its second global call for nominations to highlight outstanding survivor advocates and survivor-led or community-based organizations creating measurable change against modern slavery. Awardees receive a \$1,000 prize, recognition materials, and sponsored participation in the 2026 Freedom from Slavery Global Forum in Istanbul, Türkiye, along with a three-year appointment as Forum Ambassadors and continued support through the Survivor Engagement Initiative—helping build a visible, connected network of survivor leaders within the movement.

Photo Caption: Previous Elkes Award Winners - Survivors Network Cameroon



Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS will strengthen survivor-led organizations and networks as credible, independent actors by building capacity in governance, safeguarding, advocacy, and financial management; expand survivor influence in national, regional, and global policy spaces through structured, ethical, and protected engagement mechanisms; and build sustainable survivor leadership pipelines that support long-term agency, economic stability, and movement continuity across regions.



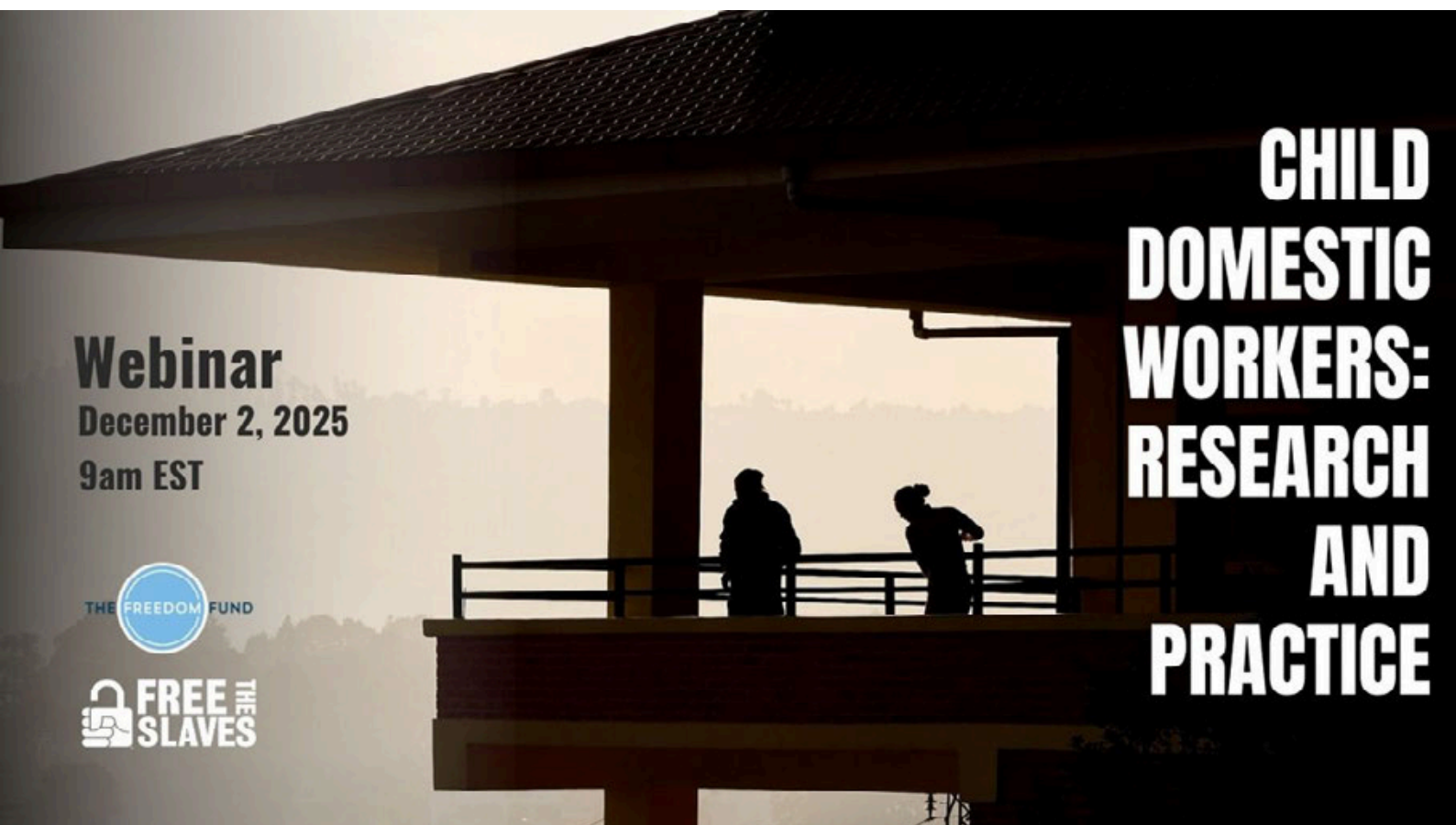
Communications

Photo Caption: Local leader speaking at a public awareness campaign in Cameroon

In 2025, the Communications team strengthened Free the Slaves' global visibility and program impact by translating complex work into clear, mission-driven storytelling and consistent cross-platform engagement.

Digital Engagement

A key part of this work was expanding FTS's digital convening and storytelling capacity. The team co-produced webinars and provided full technical production support for major online events, including a webinar on Child Domestic Workers and the four-day CCATIP online conference in July, helping make complex issues accessible to diverse stakeholders.



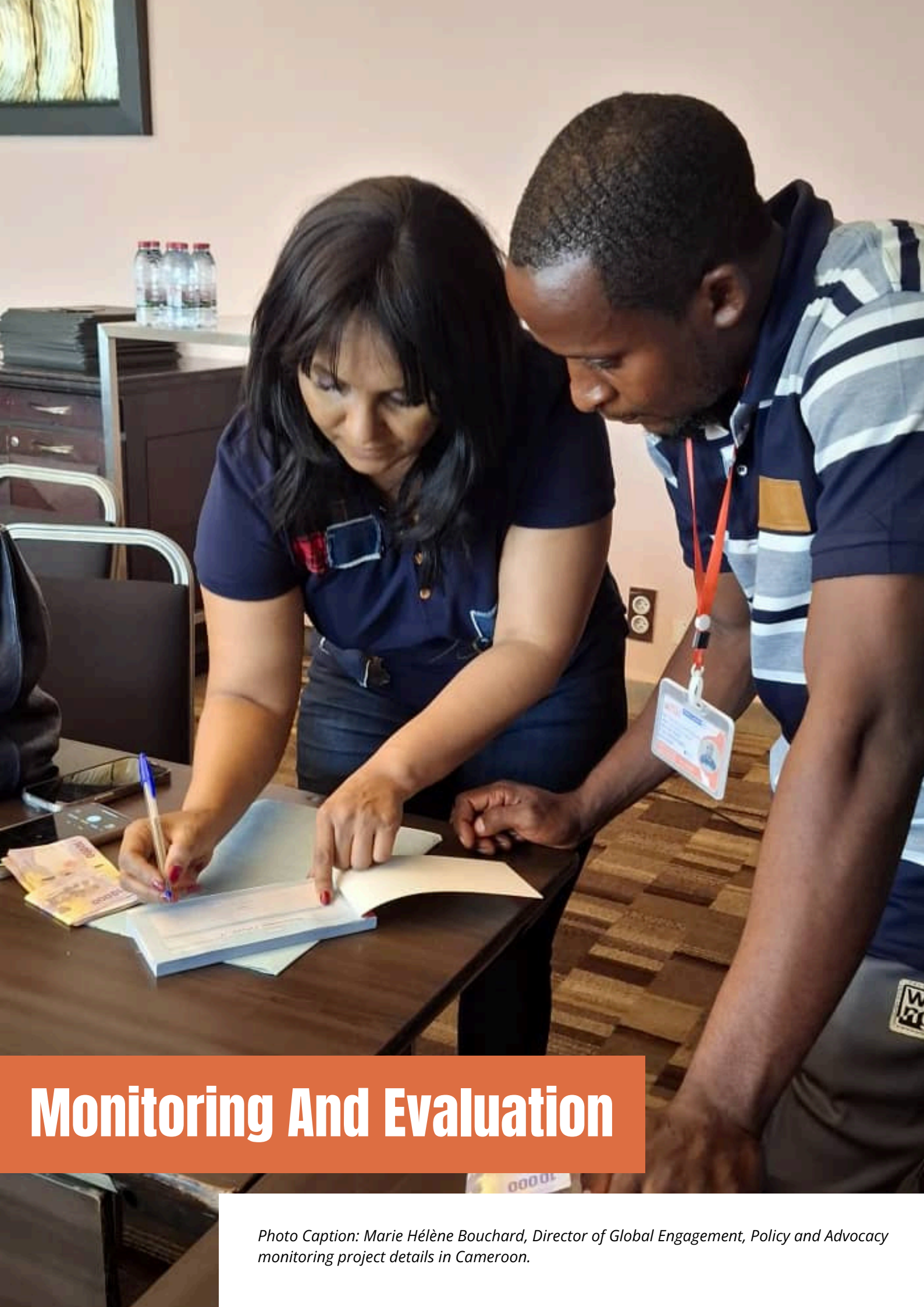
Podcast and Media

Podcasting remained a core advocacy platform: Conversations on Modern Slavery released five new episodes hosted by Bryon Lippincott, Dr. Marta Furlan, Kuldeep Singh Chauhan, and Mohammad Bader, featuring timely analysis and lived-experience perspectives that extended FTS's reach and deepened engagement beyond traditional formats. Our work with digital storytelling, social, media, online events, and traditional media outlets reached more than 600,000 people to increase awareness and educate the public about the issue of modern slavery.



Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS communications will help shape public discourse and influence the anti-modern slavery movement by producing compelling educational content and expanding multimedia storytelling and thought leadership that deepens public engagement and advocates for systemic change across regions.



Monitoring And Evaluation

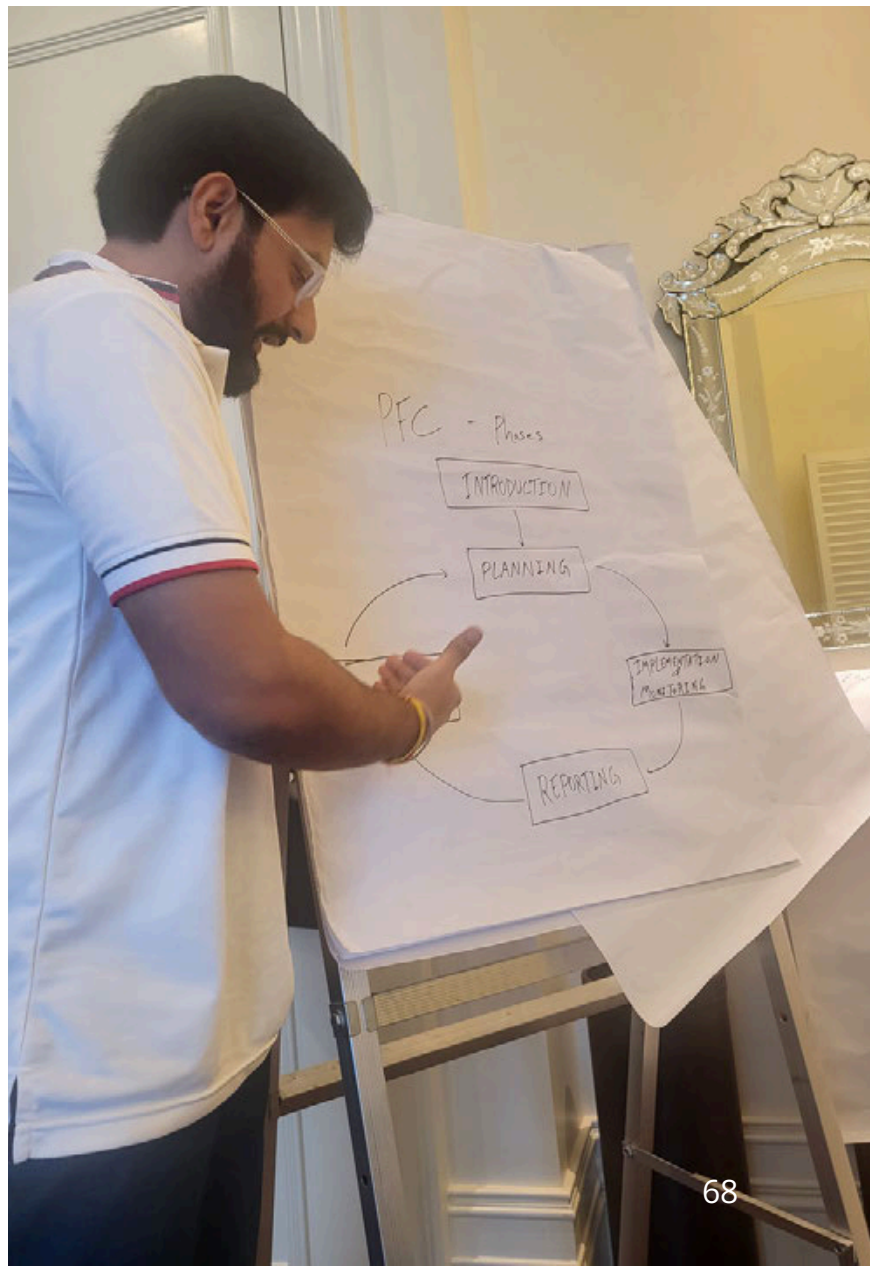
Photo Caption: Marie H el ene Bouchard, Director of Global Engagement, Policy and Advocacy monitoring project details in Cameroon.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) helps Free the Slaves stay accountable to survivors and communities while continuously strengthening how we design, deliver, and scale effective anti-modern slavery interventions. By tracking progress, testing assumptions, and creating feedback loops with partners and participants, MEL turns activities into credible evidence of what changed and why it matters.

Documenting Progress

In 2025, Free the Slaves strengthened Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) as a practical backbone for both accountability and improvement, ensuring our work remains survivor-centered, locally relevant, and grounded in rigorous evidence across regions. This included integrating feedback loops into trainings and convenings, using pre- and post-assessments to measure capacity gains, and documenting how community-based systems—such as vigilance committees and survivor-led networks—translate knowledge into prevention and protection outcomes in practice.

Photo Caption: Kuldeep Chauhan, Regional Director For Asia, presenting in the Philippines



Making Learning Actionable

Equally important, MEL reinforced FTS’s “research-to-action” approach by ensuring evidence generated through studies, consultations, and stakeholder engagement informed follow-up activities, partnerships, and policy conversations. Insights from multi-stakeholder dialogues and sector-specific engagements shaped adaptive implementation, refining community monitoring tools, strengthening referral pathways, and tailoring capacity building for justice and government actors. By pairing qualitative insights with quantitative results, FTS leveraged MEL to communicate credible impact to partners and funders, support ethical data practices, and identify where systems remain weak and require deeper investment.

Photo Caption: FTS team team meeting with partners in the Philippines



Looking ahead to 2026:

In 2026, FTS will continue using MEL to sharpen learning-oriented accountability, helping programs demonstrate results, improve effectiveness, and scale approaches that make exploitation harder to hide and freedom easier to sustain.

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