

Tackling slavery, trafficking and exploitation

Improving survivor leadership, **Thailand and Brazil**, reducing commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), **Bangladesh**

The scourge of modern-day slavery robs victims of their liberty, and communities of their hope. Forced labor, sexual exploitation and trafficking is fostered by poverty, belonging to a minority group - in combination with weak enforcement of laws. This program addresses the root causes of slavery from different angles, with the goal to reduce CSEC in Bangladesh and promote survivor led anti-slavery movements in Thailand and Brazil.

The problem

Over 50 million people are trapped in modern slavery around the world today, forced to work in dangerous and exploitative conditions, the majority being women and girls¹. Exacerbated by widespread poverty and criminal impunity of perpetrators, the poorest communities in Bangladesh are highly vulnerable to violence and exploitation. CSEC is a significant and pervasive problem in Bangladesh. In partnership with other anti-slavery organizations, the Freedom Fund published an assessment report in 2019², which estimates that at least 40,000 children below 16 years, and even 60,000 children below 18 years could be victims of CSEC. During the assessment, roughly half of the workers encountered in brothels were minors. Most of these were female (90-95%). The lack of female representation in leadership across anti-slavery organizations is glaring, given that women and girls comprise over 70% of those enslaved globally today. Very few women or survivors are supported to become leaders in the anti-slavery movement.

The partner

The Freedom Fund (FF) is a leader in the global movement to end modern slavery, which affects over 40 million victims worldwide, the majority of them women and children. FF

invests in the most effective frontline efforts to eradicate slavery in the countries and sectors where it is most prevalent.

The philanthropic solution

This program supports two different work streams in three countries. In Bangladesh, the FF is now ready to scale up from inception phase to a full hot spot model. As part of this second phase of work, the FF will conduct final prevalence research, and design a victim and survivor focused intervention model for tackling CSEC in Bangladesh. The FF also plans to grow their global anti-slavery movements. Building on their *Freedom Rising* pilot in India, the FF will expand their work into Brazil and Thailand, supporting the anti-slavery movement to become more diverse and inclusive by creating conditions for the movement to be women and survivor led.

The evidence

Several independent evaluations have recognised the impact of FF's hotspot model programs, including evaluations by the Institute of Development Studies and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.³

The impact

In Bangladesh, over 12 months, the FF aims to achieve the following: (i) 600 boys participating in a study to understand the prevalence of CSEC among boys in Dhaka city; (ii) 3 meetings held with survivors to review these findings; (iii) 400 children and 200 adults accessing social and legal services; (iv) seven partnerships agreements with local community-based organizations signed in Bangladesh. In Thailand and Brazil, 100 frontline leaders will be identified, and given 12 months of leadership and technical skills training, at least 10 survivors are supported to attend international convenings. One international convening that centers survivor leadership is held in the Global South.

¹ ILO Global Estimates of modern slavery, 2022

² Report "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Bangladesh", The Freedom Fund et al, 2019

³ Report "The role of agents and brokers in facilitating Ethiopian women into domestic work in the Middle East", London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2022

All programmatic data provided by The Freedom Fund. The UBS Optimus Foundation is a grant-making foundation that offers UBS clients a platform to use their wealth to drive positive social and environmental change. The Foundation selects programs that improve children's health, education and protection, ones that have the potential to be transformative, scalable and sustainable as well as programs tackling environmental and climate issues.

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UBS AG
UBS Optimus Foundation
P.O. Box
8098 Zurich

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