



2019-2020  
**Annual Report**





## Letter from Freedom Firm USA's Co-Founder

This war we are waging against the sexual slavery of young girls is like all wars. We lose ground we had once occupied, and then regain it after many years. New cities are at first completely impenetrable. Then, slowly we gain traction.

Often our fight is not only against traffickers, brothel keepers, pimps and parents that sell their daughters. We also grapple with the very people who should be protecting the girls after rescue. When we blew the whistle on an official in 2015, the government retaliated, and we lost access to four remand homes in Maharashtra for four years!

### Freedom Firm Regains Access

Catherine Raja, National Director of Freedom Firm tells the story best, "From 2015 to 2019 Freedom Firm worked to regain access so that our social workers could counsel the girls we had rescued. Social workers drafted, sent countless letters and tried many tactics to no avail. Then, in 2019, new officials came to power. They looked favorably on the efforts of the team and reinstated Freedom Firm social workers with access not only to the original four homes, but to eight of the government homes in Maharashtra. This was such a huge breakthrough!"

### West Bengal expansion

Many anti-trafficking organizations have worked in Kolkata in ancient and entrenched red light areas with little success. Here, in densely populated mazes of buildings that are home to thousands of prostitutes, organized crime is at its strongest and most impervious. Catherine said, "We tried many different ways to rescue minors in and around Kolkata. Finally, we were able to get a local team together, and even rescue girls before the year ended. Kolkata opened our eyes to the immense need in the area and the need for us to be creative every time, every place and for every girl. "I am astounded as I cheer on the team in India. I see their tireless work in the face of tremendous set backs. I also see how their persistence pays off in amazing victories.

While the India team does the work, none of it would be possible without YOU. Thank you for taking ground with us. We are honored that you continue to support the work in India.



Catherine Raja, National Director,  
Freedom Firm, India

## our mission

Freedom Firm seeks to eliminate child prostitution in India by **rescuing** minor girls, providing aftercare for effective **restoration** and bringing **justice** by prosecuting the perpetrators of sex trafficking.

## our pillars

### sacrifice

We lay aside the expectation of comfort in pursuit of this noble mission. We invite others to join in making sacrifices, believing it readies us for the task and leads to feeling rewarded.

### dignity

We believe in the unique and intrinsic worth of each person. We lend our strength to help victims of oppression awaken to their strength, helping everyone feel empowered.

### stewardship

We are grateful for every resource and steward them in service of others. We value simplicity and embody an innocence that makes us feel free.

## our promise

**Our ALL for every ONE**

# rescue

Freedom Firm undercover operatives locate minor girls in brothels and document the crime. The Freedom Firm team, along with the police, raid the brothels, rescue the girls and arrest the perpetrators. The rescued girls are then placed in government shelter homes.



31

new areas  
investigated

19

rescue  
operations

47

women and  
girls rescued

## Investigations in 29 cities and 2 districts



**NAGPUR** Hingna, Ramtek, Kanhan, Butibori and Kamathi

**UTTAR PRADESH** Etah, Jahanabad, Unnav, Devendra Nagar, Jabalpur, Mandala, Madai, Mughalsarai

**PUNE** Bangalore, Ichalkaranji, Jaysingpur, Central & Eastern districts of Tamil Nadu, Chakan, Talegaon

**WEST BENGAL** Baruipur, Gadiara, Garia (Private), Thakurpukur, Chetla, Haldia, Kalna, Khidderpur, Matia, Bowbazar

17 areas with verified evidence of prostitution



The Freedom Firm Allahbad team prepare for a raid.

## Shireen: six months of tracking turns into rescue

### 📍 **Bangladesh, 23rd June 2019**

An anti-trafficking organization in Bangladesh requests Freedom Firm to trace 16 year old Shireen

### 📍 **Pune, June 2019**

Freedom Firm immediately checks the red-light area.

### 📍 **Bangalore, July 2019**

We trace the trafficker's number, call her using a false pretext, and learn she is in Bangalore and not Pune.

### 📍 **Bangalore, August 2019**

Shireen called her family in Bangladesh crying, asking to be rescued.

### 📍 **Bangalore, October 2019**

Freedom Firm hires a private investigator to search for Shireen.

### 📍 **Chennai, November 2019**

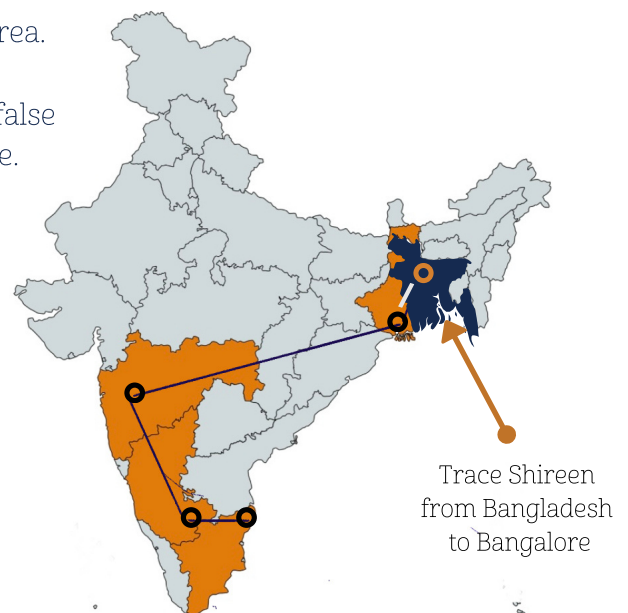
Shireen is sent to Chennai to service a customer who agrees to pay Rs. 12000 a day for her and books her for the entire week.

### 📍 **Bangalore, December 2019**

Our investigator keeps in touch with the trafficker but was unable to meet Shireen since the trafficker was wary

### 📍 **Bangalore, 22nd January 2020**

Shireen was rescued at 12:30 pm on 22nd January, exactly six months after she was trafficked to Pune.



# restoration

Freedom Firm's social workers, working in partnership with shelter homes across the country, provide rescued girls with counselling, therapy, job training, education and health care. We offer a wilderness camp and employment opportunities as well to help the girls grow in confidence and independence.

**46**

girls participated  
in Freedom Camps

**177**

girls impacted by  
aftercare programs

**13**

girls trained in  
shelter homes



A follow up visit reveals a rescued woman with her little girl, settled at home.

## BREAKTHROUGH IN MAHARASHTRA

**April  
2014**

Restoration work begins in Karuna Home, Nagpur.

**February  
2015**

Freedom Firm files a complaint against the acting probation officer.

**March 2015  
to  
August 2019**

For 4 years, our team is denied access to the home despite attempts for re-entry.

**August  
2019**

Our team meets the newly appointed Commissioner of the DWCD.

**August  
2019**

Freedom Firm is granted permission to work in all 8 homes in Maharashtra.

**November  
2019  
onwards**

Our social workers begin counselling and life skill training in Nagpur, Satara, Pune, Thane and Akola.

# freedom camps

Girls, staff and volunteers enjoyed fun filled days in the mountains of Kodaikanal. Stories, laughter and hugs, indoor and outdoor games and challenges, helped each girl realize their unique value and worth. Camp counsellors encouraged the girls to leave their past behind; all the shame, humiliation, betrayal, and abuse and replace it with love, forgiveness, laughter and joy. Even though they were heading back to their day-to-day realities, they caught a glimpse of what it meant to be truly free.



A staff helps this camper enjoy a new experience on the high ropes course



Learning to aim and shoot builds confidence!



Playing together in a rushing stream in Kodaikanal

# justice

Freedom Firm actively pursues the conviction of those responsible for trafficking minor girls. Freedom Firm lawyers assist public prosecutors at each stage of the criminal trial. Rescued girls are empowered to testify against their abusers and help bring them to justice. Every trial and every conviction creates a deterrent and raises the cost of sex trafficking in India.

26

perpetrators  
booked

35

cases filed against  
traffickers

37

bail applications  
opposed



A criminal complaint is filed after the rescue.



Often brothel keepers are the main accused in a criminal complaint.

## Justice won, battle by battle

Last year, we celebrated Freedom Firm's 10th conviction. While convictions are our "holy grail," they are rare. This year we celebrate each incremental victory in seeking justice for the girls. Every perpetrator that is held accountable for his crime creates a deterrent to others who traffic in children. Here are a few of 2019's battles and victories.

### May 6th, 2019

When the Freedom Firm team and the police raided a brothel and rescued four young women in Chandrapur, Maharashtra, the police arrested the brothel keeper. The Freedom Firm team assisted in filing a criminal complaint against the brothel keeper. The judge ruled that she should be sent to jail for 13 days until the next court hearing. As long as the case is active, Freedom Firm lawyers continue to attend each trial and oppose bail.

### July 25th, 2019

Proving a girl's age is of the utmost importance. After Freedom Firm rescued Rishi, they sent her to the hospital for age verification. When her parents produced a fake birth certificate, the court released her before the hospital report arrived. The test results arrived later and proved she was a minor. Freedom Firm legal staff petitioned the High Court to rule against Rishi's premature release and bring her back into protective custody.

### September 27th, 2019

50% of the battle after a girl is rescued is convincing the police to file a criminal complaint. When Priya, Salma and Swetha were rescued, 2 brothel keepers and 1 customer were arrested during the rescue operation and a criminal complaint was filed against them.

Our legal action recorded crimes against children. Each perpetrator now has a life-time record. Evidence is mounting against them. The message is heard by other criminals: it is not safe to traffic in minors. Perpetrators will be held accountable. We are taking ground, case by case.



A policewoman pulls children out of a brothel.

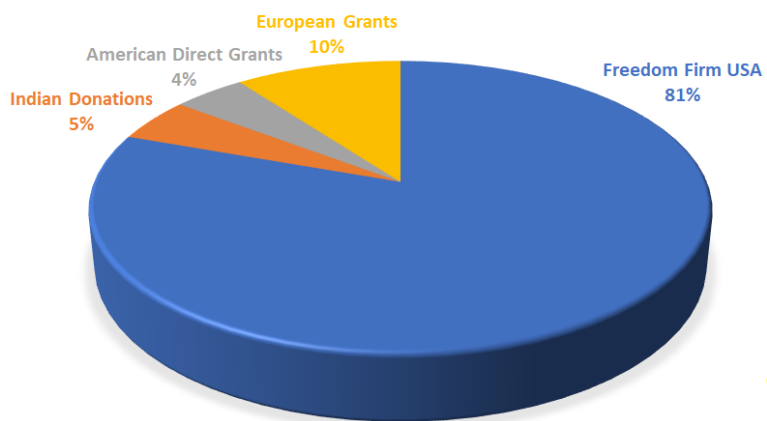
# funding

Freedom Firm India's total revenue from April 2019 to March 2020 was \$342,333. The sources of revenue are grants given through Freedom Firm USA, and donors in Europe and India.

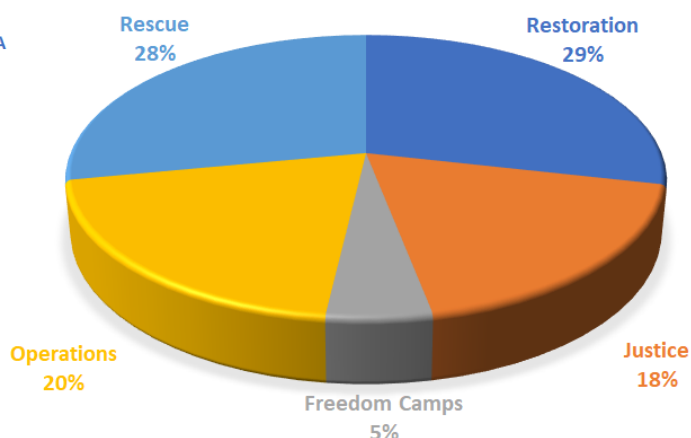
We were able to bring hope and healing to so many children and young women this year because of the sacrificial giving of individuals and foundations from the U.S., India and across the world.

Our deepest gratitude to each person and organization who contributed to Freedom Firm and allowed us to expand our work of rescue, restoration and justice for victims of sex trafficking in India!

**Revenue \$342,333**



**Expenditure \$315,940**



## Grants received through Freedom Firm USA

|                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Anonymous         | LifePoint            |
| AlongSide Asia    | Medtronic Foundation |
| Browncroft        | Memorial Park        |
| Engage Foundation | One Day's Wages      |
| Freedom 4/24      | Operation Blessing   |
| Grace             | WoodsEdge            |
| Individual Donors |                      |

## Grants received directly by Freedom Firm

Alongside Asia  
Free A Girl  
Individual Donors  
Justice Venture International  
Narsee Monjee and Jamnabai Narsee Public Charitable Trust

To contribute online please visit  
[www.freedomfirm.org/give](http://www.freedomfirm.org/give)

Freedom Firm USA is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.  
Tax ID: 20-5280075.  
All donations are tax-deductible for U.S. taxpayers.

## Donations by check can be mailed to:

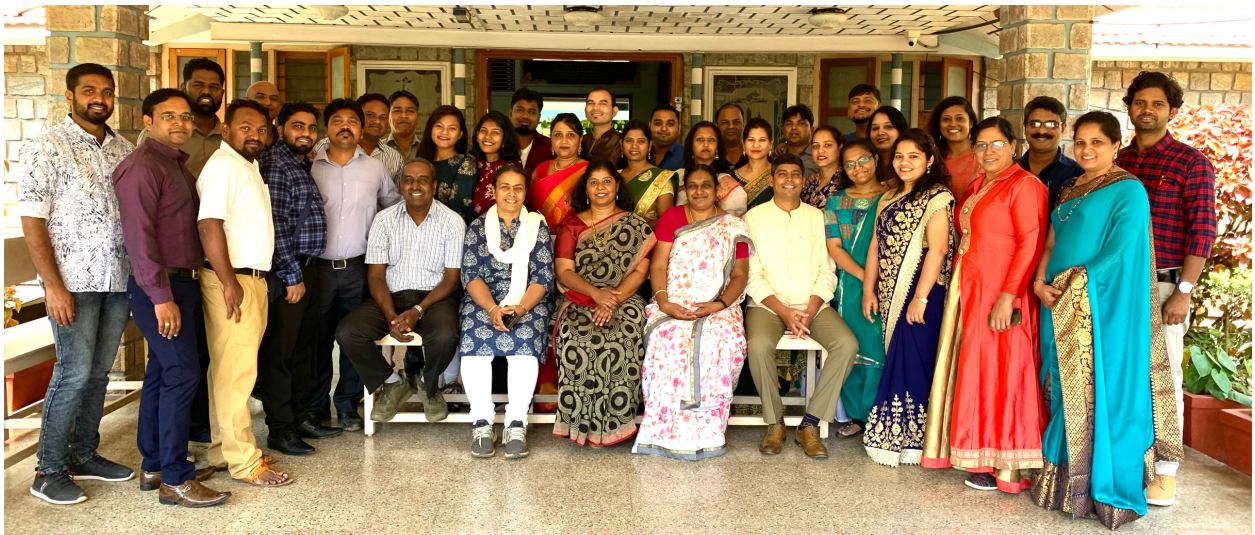
**Freedom Firm USA**  
811 North Kansas Avenue  
East Wenatchee, WA 98802  
USA

# who we are



Freedom Firm USA Board

Catherine Raja, Gaye Shepherd, Mala Malstead, Leah Henck, Roger Rumer (bottom row left to right)  
Greg Malstead, Reuben Arulanandam, Nathanael McRostie, Evan Henck (top row left to right)



Freedom Firm staff and trustees at a staff retreat

## Freedom Firm USA Board Members

- Roger Rumer, Chairman
- Gaye Shepherd, Vice Chair
- Nathanael McRostie, Secretary
- Evan Henck, Member
- Reuben Arulanandam, Member

## Freedom Firm Board of Trustees

- Ms. Pamela Clark, Chairperson
- Ms. Nirmala Stephens, Trustee
- Mr. Stephen George, Secretary
- Mrs. Shirley Aron, Trustee
- Ms. Padmini Williams, Trustee



Survivors in a shelter home enjoying a lighter moment with a cat.

Cover caption: She waits to be set free.

This annual report reflects the activities and financial details of Freedom Firm from April 2019 to March 2020. Freedom Firm is a charitable trust registered in Udhagamandalam, Tamil Nadu. Freedom Firm USA is a non profit organization incorporated in the state of Minnesota, USA. Freedom Firm and Freedom Firm USA are independent, legally distinct entities with two separate Board of Trustees as listed.

  
**FREEDOM FIRM**  
RESCUE | RESTORATION | JUSTICE

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**[freedomfirm.org](https://freedomfirm.org)**