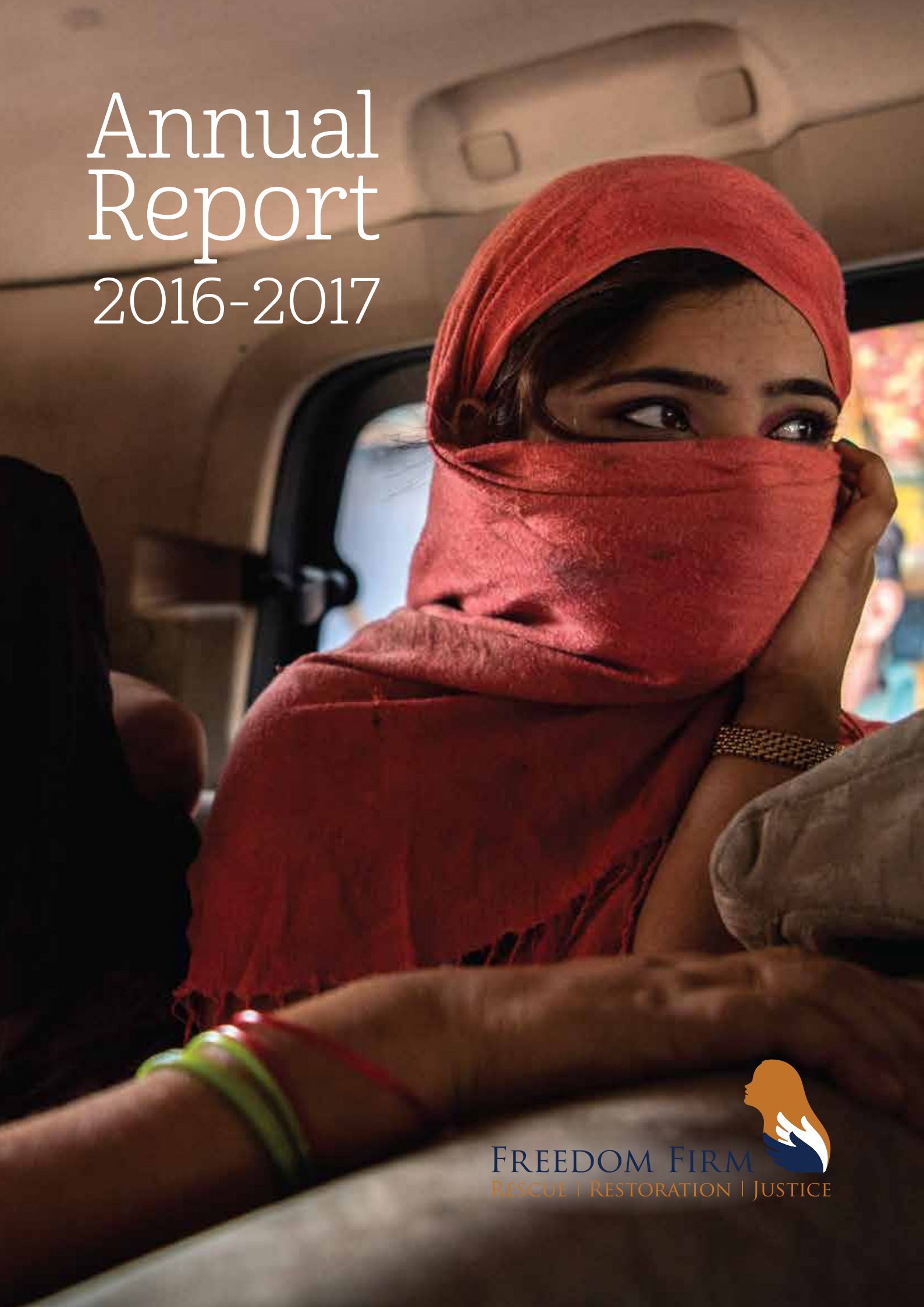


Annual Report 2016-2017



HIGHLIGHTS 2016-2017



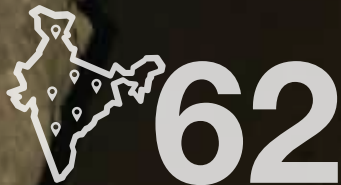
women & girls
rescued from
brothels



girls trained in
jewelry making



girls participated
in Freedom
Camps



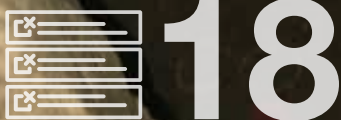
new areas
investigated by
Freedom Firm



cases filed
against
numerous
traffickers



girls testified
against
trafficking
offenders



bail
applications
opposed



rescue
operations in
new areas



brothels closed
down

On 16th February 2017, Freedom Firm's investigation team and police initiated a raid in Ganga Jamuna. After two minors were rescued, the police conducted a thorough search and found two girls in this small covered hole under their beds. If the girls had not been found, the police would have sealed the brothel, and the girls would have been trapped inside.

Letter From The National Director

In 2013 I was granted a Person of Indian Origin (PIO) card by the Government of India, the culmination of our efforts to achieve a more permanent status in India. Mala was born in Kolkata when her parents lived there in the early 1970's, making her eligible for Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI). When our advocate searched through dusty government archives in Kolkata, he eventually found her birth records. Two years later in 2012 she was granted OCI status. This allowed for all of our children to become Overseas Citizens and for me to acquire the status of a PIO and eventually an OCI. I was very grateful, this meant that we all held life time visas to remain in India for any purpose for as long as we wanted. I felt that our presence was secure.

Then in December, 2015 a police official showed up at our door in Ooty and delivered "leave India notices" giving us 7 days to leave the country! I immediately rushed to the Madras High Court where our advocate managed to submit a petition before a vacation judge on Christmas Eve and the notices were cancelled! However, we knew this wasn't the end of the matter. The court allowed the government to pursue an inquiry into our activities and to proceed so long as we were given reasons and an opportunity of being heard. At the end of 2016 I travelled between Nepal and India to attend a conference when my OCI card was confiscated at the border. Despite some relief from the High Court it was clear that we were still "persona non grata" in India. Thus began a difficult season of separation from my family.

By the end of January, 2017 Mala and my two youngest children, Abbi and Morgan were served with a second round of leave India notices. Mala again rushed to the High Court but this time the judge was not so sympathetic. The leave India notice was upheld and during the course of the hearings Mala was frequently within hours of being deported! With no time to spare our advocate managed to get an application before the appellate bench. Several weeks passed while the government prepared their case against us and final arguments took place in April, 2017. As I write, we are waiting to hear the order from the High Court that will determine our future in India.

So what has happened to Freedom Firm?

The Freedom Firm trustees wisely encouraged me to put a plan in place given the uncertainty we were facing. By the middle of 2016 I approached Catherine Raja, our Director of Operations and CEO of Ruhamah Designs. After more than 4 years in Freedom Firm I was convinced that Catherine was the right person to take up the leadership. Since joining Catherine has demonstrated a remarkable ability to adjust to the ever-changing demands of our small NGO. Initially focused on Freedom Firm, she moved into the leadership role in Ruhamah Designs in 2014 and turned it into a successful independent business. Ruhamah now financially supports Freedom Firm, rather than the other way around! Catherine's capability is matched only by her sacrificial commitment to this cause and her desire to serve the oppressed. She accepted the role of Associate National Director at the beginning of 2017 and I am delighted to announce that Catherine will officially take over as National Director starting in 2018! In the meantime, 2017 is a year of leadership transition, despite this I have seen Freedom Firm continue to achieve its mission through Catherine and a growing team of dedicated people. I urge you to take time to read this annual report and see the amazing things God has done through the people at Freedom Firm.

Mala and I hope to remain involved and supportive of Freedom Firm in the years to come. Whether that will be inside India or not remains unclear. Either way, we trust in the One who already knows.

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jer. 29:11

Warmly,
Greg Malstead,
*National
Director*





The Mission

Rescue, Restoration and Justice

Freedom Firm seeks to eliminate child prostitution in India by rescuing minor girls, providing effective rehabilitation and prosecuting the perpetrators of sex trafficking.

Rescue

Freedom Firm undercover operatives locate minor girls in brothels and document the crime. This information is then reported to the police. The Freedom Firm team, along with the police, raid the brothels, rescue the girls and arrest the brothel keepers and traffickers. The rescued girls are then placed in government remand homes and Freedom Firm files criminal complaints against their oppressors.

“Rescued girls are empowered to testify against their abusers and to help bring them to justice.”

Restoration

Freedom Firm's social workers partner with shelter homes across the country to provide rescued girls with counselling, therapy, job training, education and health care. The creative program includes a summer camp, animal therapeutic activities with partner organisation Leg Up, and employment with business Ruhamah Designs to help the girls grow in confidence and independence.

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 to help bring them to justice. Every trial and every conviction creates a deterrent and raises the cost of sex trafficking in India.

The Freedom Firm team at the annual retreat in March, 2017

A second chance for Deepa

Rescued by Freedom Firm in 2011, Deepa* joined our Ruhamah Designs workshop in Pune, where she was a dedicated worker and produced beautiful jewelry. Unfortunately, in 2015, due to escalating problems with a co-worker, she left Ruhamah and ran away from the shelter home.



Despite best efforts to find her we were unable to locate her until October, 2016. To our surprise, we learned that she was married, had a baby girl and was living with her parents.

Freedom Firm social workers visited Deepa in her parents' home and she shared her experiences after leaving the workshop. As she opened up, she

tearfully described how her husband abused her and wanted to marry another woman. Deepa left him and returned to her parent's home. In the future Deepa hopes to move to Pune or Mumbai to find a job and care for her daughter. Freedom Firm will support her in this process.



The restoration process is challenging for every girl that we rescue, and Deepa is no exception. As we walk alongside girls at Freedom Firm we realize that learning and growing involve painful mistakes and that it takes genuine humility and courage to take responsibility and carry on.



**As we walk
alongside girls
at Freedom
Firm we realize
that learning
and growing
involve painful
mistakes.**

The Net Tightens around Bindoo Khalkor

Freedom Firm has pursued Bindoo Khalkor for a long time; ever since Reema was rescued in Nagpur in 2014. With the rescue of Prena, in 2016, the case against Khalkor became even stronger.

Bindoo Khalkor is a notorious trafficker and habitual offender. She approached Reema's parents offering to provide for her and to arrange her marriage in a good family. Convinced by these promises, Reema's parents sent her with Khalkor. Instead of a good marriage Khalkor forced Reema into prostitution.

On 28th July 2016, with Khalkor present in court, Reema bravely testified that she was forced to prostitute in Khalkor's brothel. Surprisingly, Khalkor was accompanied by a young girl who we later discovered had been forced into prostitution in Mumbai. Khalkor brought her to Nagpur in an effort to keep her away from Mumbai, where another anti trafficking group had already attempted to rescue her. Later that day Freedom Firm received a call from the Nagpur police with information about a 14-year-old girl in prostitution named Prena. This turned out to be the same girl that Khalkor brought with her into the court!

The next day one of our investigators went into the red-light area in Nagpur to confirm that Prena was being forced to prostitute. After engaging her, he noticed that Prena had wounds on her body inflicted by her customers and brothel keeper. Later, while debriefing the investigation, the team realized that this was the same brothel where Reema was rescued two years before. Our team, together with the Nagpur police rescued Prena that day, and placed her in a protective shelter home. Khalkor was arrested and sent to jail.

Bail Denied

Khalkor immediately applied for bail and faced several denials in the weeks following her arrest in Prena's case. Surprisingly, during a bail hearing in September we discovered that the government public prosecutor, who is supposed to oppose bail, argued in favour of granting Khalkor bail, saying; "She has been in jail for two months already, I don't

think it's necessary for her to be in jail any longer." The judicial magistrate agreed with the public prosecutor despite clear directions from the Bombay High Court that bail should not be granted to habitual offenders. (see Freedom Firm vs. Commissioner of Police, Pune and ORS.) Fortunately the judicial magistrate didn't have the authority to approve bail under the POCSO Act (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act), so the case was forwarded to the District Session court. On 11th October, we received the good news that Khalkor's bail application was denied.

Fake Birth Certificate

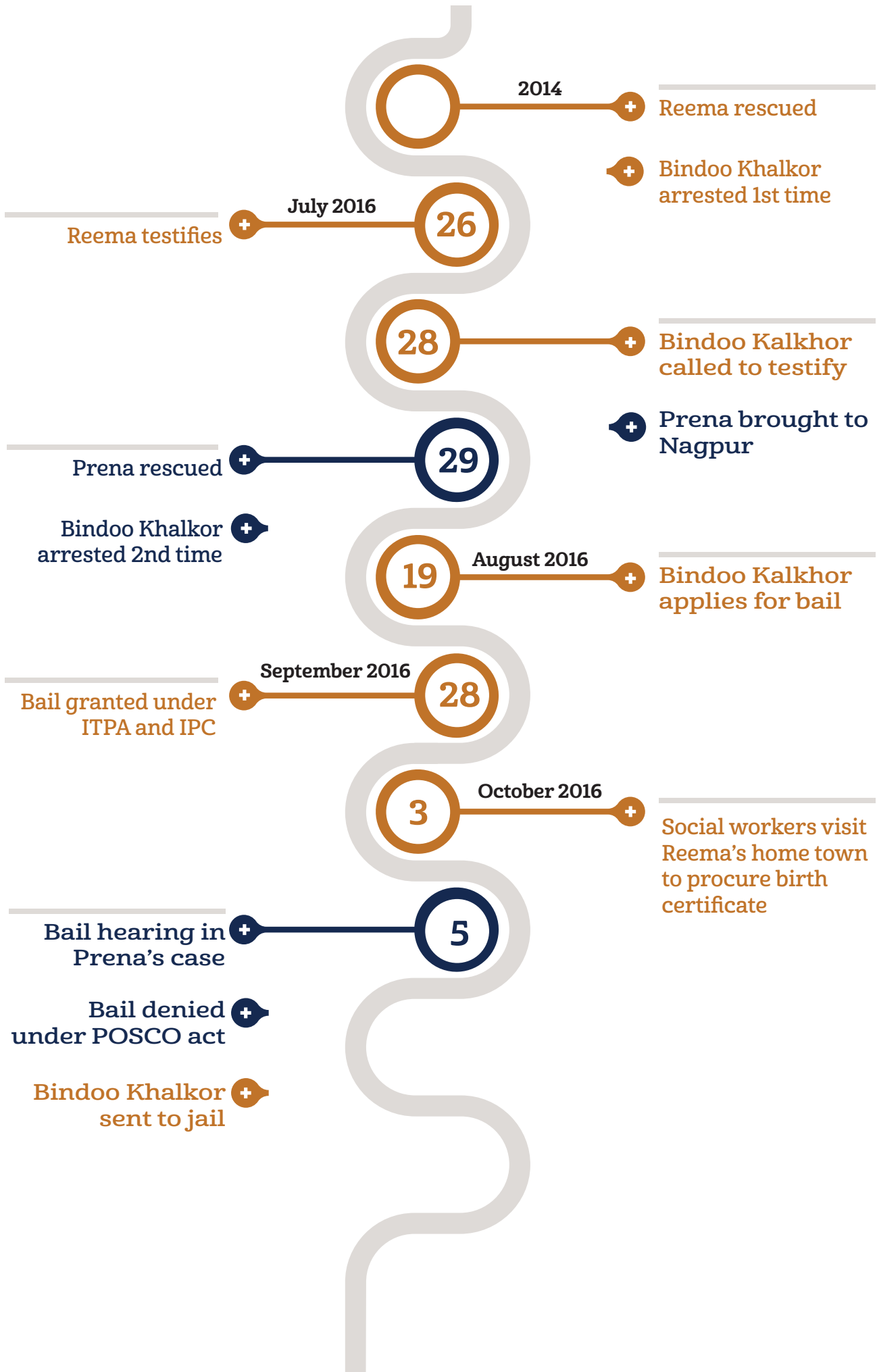
As the trial progressed in Reema's case Freedom Firm discovered that the opposition lawyer had submitted a fake birth certificate that stated Reema's birth date as 30th February 1996, overlooking the fact that there are only 28 days in February! If successful this would show that Reema was not minor at the time of rescue and would undermine the prosecution. Bindoo Khalkor and her associates, in the process of fabricating a birth certificate, supplied the proof that it was false! The public prosecutor asked Freedom Firm if we could find Reema's original birth certificate.

In October, our social workers travelled to Reema's home town to get her birth certificate; the family and villagers said that Reema had no birth certificate as she was born on a farm. The social workers, however, found a birth record from the Anganwadi register (a government nursery school) that states her date of birth as 18th February 2001, making Reema only 13 years old at the time of rescue!

During the visit Freedom Firm staff encouraged Reema's parents to testify against Bindoo Kalkhor because of the way she had tricked them into giving Reema to her. In February 2017, Reema's parents came to Nagpur to testify in the case and gave compelling evidence against Khalkor. She remains in custody awaiting the final judgement in the trial connected with Reema's trafficking. If convicted Khalkor will remain in prison for a very long time.

**names changed*

3 Year Pursuit of a Trafficker



Freedom Camps 2016-17

In 2016 Freedom Firm began to host regional camps across India which has enabled us to reach many more girls and shelter homes, reduce transport costs for the participants and allow camps to be aligned to the language and culture where the girls are located.

We changed the name from Avalanche Camp to Freedom Camps and a unique logo created to match the rebranded concept.



*Freedom for me is to be
able to laugh and walk around freely,
to enjoy nature and do what makes me
happy.*

*My favourite part of the camp were the
outdoor activities that were conducted.*

Sapna

*Freedom, I am still trying to understand
what it really means. But I think if I am
able to go out of the shelter home and
make a new life for myself then that
would mean Freedom for me.*

*My favourite part of the camp was
meeting all these new didis and other
girls like me and learning so much from
them.*

Monalisha

*Freedom for me is the realisation that
I am not bound by any shame or my
past mistakes. I can choose to rebuild
my life and help others do so too.*

*My favourite part of the camp was
when I was able to share with
everyone here about my life and how
Christ changed me some years ago by
entering my life.*

Priya

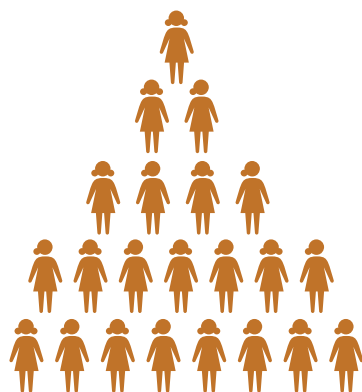


Girls at the 2016-17 Freedom Camps

22

April 2016

Bangalore
22 Girls



25

May 2016

Bangalore
25 Girls



Freedom for me is just being able
to do what I want without any
force or compulsion.
My favourite part of the camp
were the craft activities and the
games we played in between.

Meena

21

November 2016

Kolkata
21 Girls



Freedom for me is being able to see
my family again and trusting the
world around me. But I don't know if
I will be able to do that.

My favourite part of the camp were
the outdoor activities and the dance
night where we danced our hearts
out.

Komal

27

March 2017

Kodaikanal
27 Girls



Pushing the Boundaries

There is tremendous change and impact in places where organisations are fighting against trafficking. For example in 2010, when Freedom Firm found minor girls in the city of Nagpur, our team approached the police to conduct a rescue operation and 19 girls were rescued. Of the 19 girls, 16 were underage. Fast forward seven years, in March 2017, we were approached by the police who told us that they were planning to conduct a raid and asked us to help them since our investigators knew the area like the back of their hands. They conducted a massive raid and took out 95 women from the same red-light area. Out of the 95 girls, three were underage! This

huge reduction in the presence of minor girls in prostitution in Nagpur is directly related to the work of Freedom Firm and other NGO's. Brothel keepers and traffickers know that there is a high price to pay for exploiting minor girls and many of them have stopped doing it.

The challenge in India is that it's so vast. Many towns and villages have red-light areas where there is trafficking activity. Freedom Firm is determined to go to these lesser known places, to be able to intervene and to bring rescue to girls who no one else has found.

States where Freedom Firm worked in 2016-17

New area investigations

MAHARASHTRA

- Mul (Chandrapur)
- Gadchiroli (Gadchiroli)
- Gondia (Gondiya District)
- Akot (Akola)
- Akola (Akola)
- Bhandara (Bhandara)
- Tumsar (Bhandara)
- Ballarshah (Chandrapur)
- Rajura (Chandrapur)
- Sakoli (Bhandara)

GUJARAT

- Chikhli (Navsari)

CHATTISGARH

- Bilaspur (Bilaspur)
- Rajnandgaon (Rajnandgaon)
- Gandai (Rajnandgaon)
- Raipur (Raipur)
- Bhilai (Durg)
- Durg (Durg)
- Lakhatola (Kabirdham)
- Mungeli (Mungeli)

MADHYA PRADESH

- Sarangpur (Rajgarh)

RAJASTHAN

- Tonk (Tonk)
- Sawai Madhopur (Sawai Madhopur)

- Bundi (Bundi)
- Kota (Kota)
- Meru (Tonk)
- Shop (Tonk)

UTTAR PRADESH

- Navabpura (Moradabad)
- Varanasi (Varanasi)
- Kanpur Nagar (Kanpur)
- Gonda (Gonda)
- Agra

- Kaushambi (Kaushambi)
- Bareilly (Bareilly)
- Pratapgarh (Pratapgarh)
- Jaunpur (Jaunpur)
- Lucknow (Lucknow)
- Saharanpur (Saharanpur)
- Mirzapur (Mirzapur)
- Muzaffarnagar (Muzaffarnagar)
- Shahjahanpur (Shahjahanpur)

Rescue Raids in

operations new areas

MAHARASHTRA

- Mul (Chandrapur)
- Gadchiroli (Gadchiroli)

Brothels closed

MAHARASHTRA

- Gadchiroli (Gadchiroli)

Raids in new areas

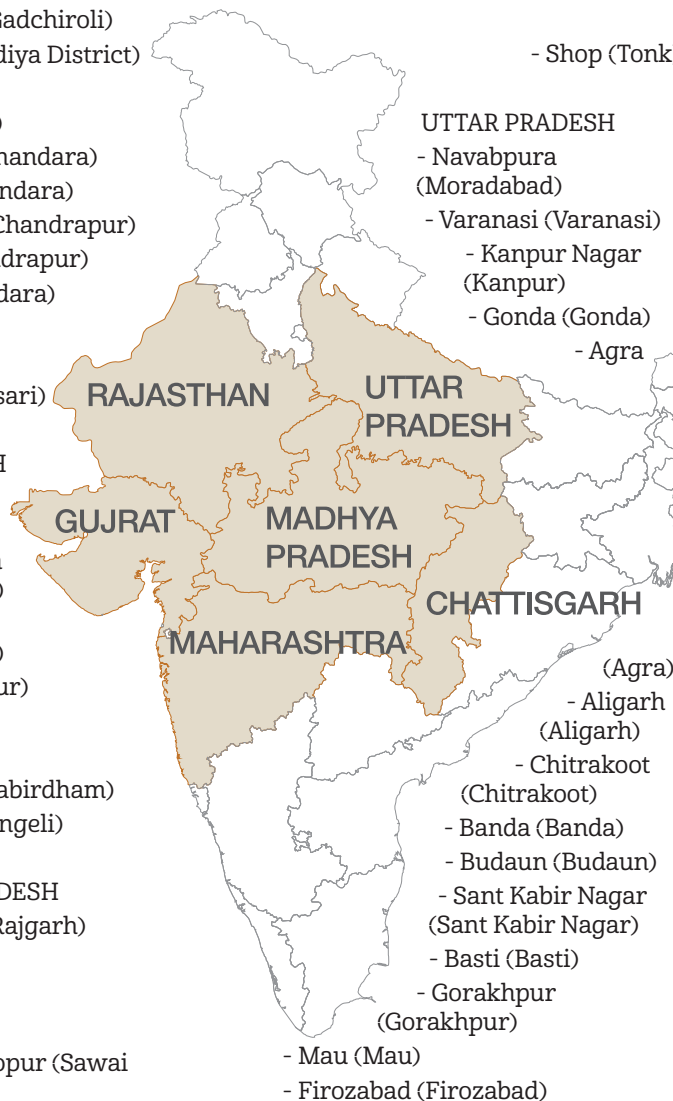
UTTAR PRADESH

- Chitrakoot (Chitrakoot)
- Banda (Banda)

Brothel closed

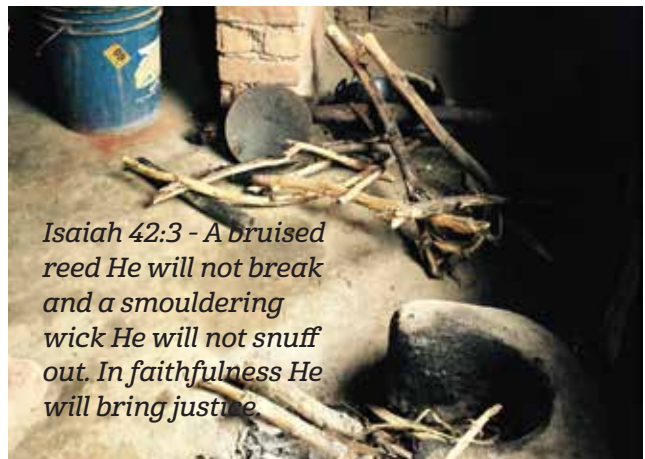
UTTAR PRADESH

- Chitrakoot (Chitrakoot)
- Banda (Banda)





Earrings handmade by survivors of sex trafficking



Isaiah 42:3 - A bruised reed He will not break and a smouldering wick He will not snuff out. In faithfulness He will bring justice.



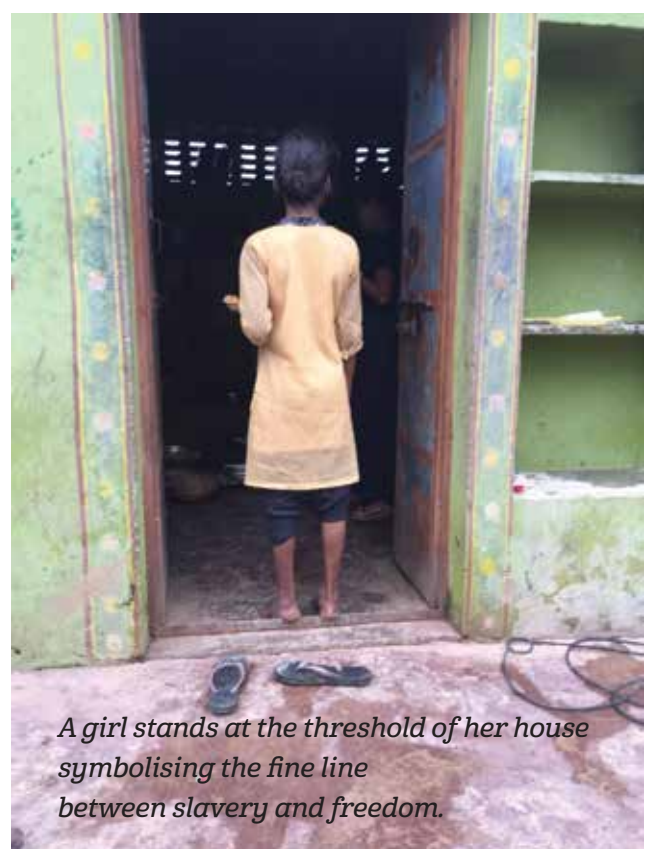
A photo of a rescued girl standing beside a parrot in a cage. A symbolic picture of how she was once enslaved but is now free.



A social worker conducting a home inquiry for a rescued girl along with local police



An employee at Ruhamah Designs creating a spiral bracelet



A girl stands at the threshold of her house symbolising the fine line between slavery and freedom.

Justice: One Girl at a Time

“Government systems are not equipped to cope with large numbers of women and girls who come out of prostitution,”
Greg Malstead, *National Director, Freedom Firm.*

Usually Freedom Firm staff ask the police for help to rescue a girl. However on a few occasions the police call Freedom Firm instead and ask us for help. In March, 2017 the Nagpur ACP (Assistant Commissioner of Police) called Freedom Firm and asked for our help to rescue many girls. The following is an extract from Nagpur Today, a local paper that covered the raid:

“In one of the biggest actions of recent times, a team of cops, led by Lakadganj ACP Rina Janbandhu, on Tuesday afternoon raided the infamous Ganga Jamuna (Red Light) area and arrested over 95 sex workers and pimps. 48 ‘clients’ too were placed under arrest. The area is ‘famous’ for a host of brothels running flesh trade with impunity.”

At Freedom Firm in order to accomplish our mission we must work closely with several government agencies, especially the police. It is critical that we maintain a cooperative posture with the police and support them as best we can. Although mass raids are not the best way to combat sex-trafficking, we readily assist the police when they call us. Unfortunately, in this case, as with almost all mass raids, the results were predictable and less than ideal.

“Government systems are not equipped to cope with large numbers of women and girls who come out of prostitution,” says Greg Malstead, National Director of Freedom Firm. The welfare system (Department of Women and Child Development) does not have the infrastructure to provide food and accommodation for large numbers at a moments notice. When big groups of women are rescued it puts the local government into crisis mode. The rescued girls experience more hardship as a result. In some cities, like Allahabad, U.P. there is literally no shelter home for rescued girls, and they have to

stay temporarily in the women's police station. Although they have just been rescued, they face a negative reaction from government authorities since there are simply not enough resources to accommodate the girls. “As a result,” Greg explains, “the pressure to release girls without due process is much greater.”

From a legal perspective mass raids are also not a good strategy. Since most brothels are small in size and may just contain one brothel keeper and a couple girls, mass raids tend to involve multiple brothels. In order to have strong cases, individual complaints should be made against every brothel and brothel keeper involved. However, in India, police tend to just lump all the brothels and victims together in just one criminal case. Since the crimes of individual brothel keepers are not matched to individual victims, the overall case is weakened. The result is that perpetrators are not held accountable for the crimes they have committed.

Ultimately mass raids mean less protection for each girl and less accountability for perpetrators. Freedom Firm is committed to doing rescue operations that focus on just one or two girls at a time, and just one or two brothel keepers. Girls are more likely to be protected for longer, and there is a greater chance that the perpetrators will be held accountable. In the long run, a few girls and a strong case will lead to greater systemic change than many girls rescued but unprotected and perpetrators not being held accountable.

We are grateful that in the mass raid in March only 3 girls were found to be minor. This represents an enormous change from what Freedom Firm encountered just 7 years ago. Our first rescue in Nagpur involved 19 girls of which 16 were minor!

Freedom Firm advocate getting ready to appear in the District Court

A rescued woman rescues others



My phone rang late one evening a few months ago, jolting me out of a relaxing movie. Onima, a girl we had rescued in 2000 was on the line. Her voice shook with urgency, fear and a touch of hysteria. "Didi (sister) my brother-in-law has fallen, or maybe he was pushed, off a train in Calcutta." All I could piece together of the disjointed and jumbled story was that her brother-in law was in the hospital and seriously injured. He needed to be moved to a government hospital, but the nursing home would not release him until the family paid over 1 lakh (the equivalent of \$1500) to the nursing home. Would we help, she asked. I think I groaned.

Onima was 12 or 13 years old when (during our time with IJM) Greg led the team that rescued her. She was part of the Freedom Firm Aftercare home from 2006 to 2008, moved to Mumbai after she graduated from the program, found work in a factory, successfully set up her apartment and learnt to live independently. I deeply admire this young woman, who, in spite of tremendous challenges and health complications, lives a healthy and productive life.

Yet my heart sank when I heard the amount of money she mentioned. Many of the rescued girls reach out to us when there is a crisis and they need money. Its always hard to know what are genuine needs and what are simply ploys for more money. We tend to resist giving hand outs, desiring instead to see young women living independently. Our first job is to verify the situation. Fortunately we have an office in Kolkata and our social worker and Ruhamah workshop manager immediately met Onima at the hospital. The story checked out. The "accident" had happened on 6th May. Onima and her sister Thumpa tried to pool together what money they

had, but with no insurance or support from relatives they had only been able to scrape together Rs. 7000, (about \$110).

Freedom Firm's social workers in Kolkata intervened and advocated for her sister Thumpa (wife of injured Paltu) with the hospital authorities. The social workers cited a new legislation which stated that no private hospital is allowed to keep patients when they are unable to pay for their expenses. After much negotiation the hospital released Paltu when Freedom Firm paid Rs.5000. Unfortunately, shortly after he was transferred to the government hospital, Paltu died.

By walking along side Onima through this situation, our social workers learned much about her that was unknown to us before. One of the reasons why her aunt sold her at the age of 13 to be a sex worker was that Onima was considered to be least useful in her family and also because she was of dark complexion. Her sisters Rani and Thumpa, both fair-skinned, were kept at home and were given opportunities that were denied to Onima. However, when her youngest sister Rani turned 13 she was clearly at risk, Onima was the first to intervene. In 2008 she brought her sister to Ooty where she enrolled her in a Christian orphanage that provided her with an education and a home. This protective home nurtured Rani until she was married. Nirupa Idiculla, Freedom Firm social worker, writes, "It was beautiful to see how the rejected one in the family turned out to be the most useful one in time of need.. Just as there were advocates in her life, today she stands in the gap fighting for her sisters. For all the times that she had no hope, she provides hope to others."



Leg Up: Change & New Birth

The last year at Leg Up was one of shock, loss, change and new birth. While out on a trail ride, Shadow, our best therapy horse had a sudden heart attack and died within a few hours. 2 months later another of our horses, Hershey, contracted pneumonia and died suddenly. With only Firefly left, all of us in Leg Up grieved the loss.

In October we purchased a beautiful pregnant mare, Samadanum (meaning "peace" in Tamil). On February 27th, a little black filly, Eden, was born straight into my arms. It was an unforgettable moment in a difficult year, and she brought the wonderful new promise of things to come. The rescued girls brushed and interacted with her as a newborn, making her incredibly gentle and trusting. Summer, the mother, is an obedient and a delightful horse to ride, and a great addition to Leg Up.

While we have had many sessions with the disabled children during the last year, the last few months have been disappointing with one of our partnering programs giving way to pressure from the government to stop sending the children because of the court case against our family. We have continued to use the time to build and invest into our rescued girl, Kamna* and give her extra one-on-one attention and riding lessons. It's been fun to see her growth, ability and confidence blooming.

Shortly after this reporting period, Kamna decided to leave Ruhamah and move on to another job in another city, so for now, there is a lull in activity and program at Leg Up. We look forward to re-thinking the program design and how to make it more accessible to more girls and children. We may even do horse therapy camps in the future!

It's been fun to see Kamna's growth, ability and confidence blooming.



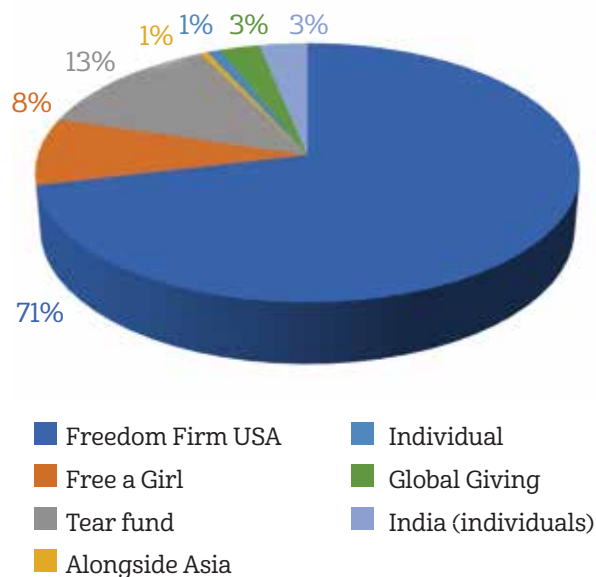
**name changed*

Funding

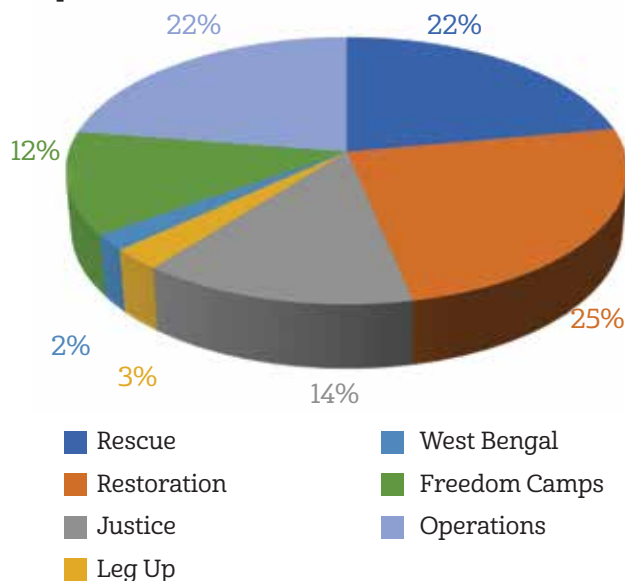
Freedom Firm's total income for the year was Rs. 1,67,41,804/-. Our sources of income have been grants given through Freedom Firm USA, direct grants from donors in Europe and USA, and individual donors in India.

We simply could not have achieved all that we did without the generous support of individuals, foundations and churches from across the world. Thank you to everyone who contributed to Freedom Firm and allowed us to expand our work of rescue, restoration and justice for victims of sex trafficking in India!

Income in INR: 1,67,41,804



Expenditure in INR: 1,61,41,927



Grants from Foundations and Churches that funded our operations in 2016-17

Grants received through Freedom Firm USA

First Fruits
Freedom 4/24
She is Priceless
Woodsedge Church
Maclellan
Individual Donors

Other Grants

Global Giving
Alongside Asia
Free A Girl (Netherlands)
Tearfund (UK)

Local Donations- India

Individuals

To continue giving, please visit our website: www.freedom.firm.in for online donations.

If you wish to send donations by cheque, please send them either to:

In the US

Freedom Firm USA
P.O. Box 6440, Elgin,
IL 60121

(Freedom Firm USA is a US registered non-profit 501 (c)

(3) Tax ID: 20-5280075. All donations are tax-deductible for US taxpayers.)

In India

Freedom Firm
78/85, Indu Sadan, Glenrock,
Ooty - 643 001, Tamil Nadu
(Freedom Firm is a registered trust in India approved under section 80G(5)(vi) of the Income Tax Act, 1961. All donations are tax-deductible for Indian taxpayers)

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Gaynelle Shepherd - Director
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Pennsylvania

This annual report reflects the activities and financial details of Freedom Firm, a charitable trust registered in Udhagamandalam, Tamil Nadu. The list of Trustees / Directors includes the Board of Directors for Freedom Firm USA a non profit organization incorporated in the state of Minnesota, USA. Freedom Firm and Freedom Firm USA are independent, legally distinct entities with a separate Board of Trustees / Directors as listed in this annual report.

*Front Cover photo of a girl rescued from a brothel in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh in May, 2017
Back Cover photo A girl with folded hands symbolizing gratitude in prayer*