

Annual Report 2012 - 2013

Ooty, Pune, Nagpur, India | U.S.A. | U.K.



*Rescue, Restoration, and Justice
for Victims of Sex Trafficking*

Annual Report 2012 - 2013

*Rescue from the frontline, Interview excerpt:
"Prostitution of minor girls is
lucrative. We have to give the forces
in the brothels reason to realize
that it is not worth the risk to deal in minor girls.
That's one way we can axe the trade..."*

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* Some names of girls in this report are changed to protect their identity

This annual report covers the 15 month period from January 2012 to March 2013

This report contains images shot by rescued girls. To order prints, send an email to
contact@freedom.firm.in

Photographs, including cover page picture on sale.

*"India will truly be free when a woman can
walk free & without fear, from Kashmir to
Kanyakumari, at midnight."
-Mahatma Gandhi*

International Headquarters, Freedom Firm, 78/85 Indu Sadan, Glenrock, Ooty, Tamil Nadu, India, 643 001
contact@freedom.firm.in
+91 423 244 3053
www.freedom.firm.in

Letter from the Director



On May 1st, 2013 we mark the 7th anniversary of Freedom Firm, giving May Day a special significance to us each year. The past year marked a number of important organizational milestones in Freedom Firm.

1. In 2008 Freedom Firm established a second office in Pune, Maharashtra. Since then our work has functioned from Ooty and Pune. This past year the Freedom Firm team in Nagpur has grown to 4 staff. Our efforts to rescue, restore and bring justice have only increased and we are on the verge of opening a new Freedom Firm office in Nagpur. In early 2013 an office premise was located in Kolkata to allow for a third Ruhamah workshop and accommodate the regional after care in West Bengal. As we launch into 2013 Freedom Firm is present in 4 locations with another office planned in Uttar Pradesh!
2. A new partnership developed in 2012 in Uttar Pradesh. Initial investigations and an intervention resulted in the rescue of 3 young women in Lucknow in October 2012. Shortly after that a foundation in the U.S. committed to 3 years of financial support for a new Freedom Firm office in North India. It is exciting to be able to explore other places in India where there is a need for the work of Freedom Firm. We look forward to this new challenge and opportunity in the months ahead.
3. After more than 6 years of providing residential care in Ooty, Freedom Firm transitioned to a restoration programme that focuses on employment opportunities. We've had the good fortune to partner with two local women's hostels that provide accommodation, food, counselling and, most importantly, the opportunity for rescued girls to integrate into the community and develop relationships with young women from different backgrounds.
4. On November 1st, 2012 Freedom Firm was granted approval under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)! After 5 years of effort and persistence this achievement brought



tears to my eyes! Many thanks to Jenitha Jayaveeran (Treasurer) and Karthika Rajkumar (Trustee / Chief Functionary) who carried the lion share of this responsibility. This major milestone in the life of any charitable organization in India allows Freedom Firm to directly receive financial support from abroad and to operate independently. Prior to this Freedom Firm operated as a project of another charitable society.

Since 2006, Freedom Firm has rescued more than 250 girls from commercial sexual exploitation, pushed hard for the prosecution of the perpetrators and been actively involved in restoring girls to lives of wholeness and self-confidence. The road has been hard, there have been many failings along the way; keeping an organization functioning and healthy has proven to be elusive. Nevertheless God continues to work and even to multiply our efforts.

I pray that as we look ahead in these days, we may never forget that we are in His hands, both us and those we seek to serve. As supporters, partners and colleagues in this work, you are a vital part of our history and our future. Thank you for sharing our vision. All glory and honour to God our heavenly Father.

Warmly,

Greg Malstead
National Director

Mission and Strategy

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.

We stand in solidarity with women who face abuse.

*-Mervyn D'Mello
Chairman, Freedom Firm*

The Strategy

Rescue: Freedom Firm undercover operatives locate minor girls enslaved in brothels, document the crime, and report it 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 aftercare, and the police file criminal complaints (or charges) against their oppressors.

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

Justice: We actively pursue the conviction of those responsible for oppressing 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.



Photography by rescued girls is available. To order prints send an email to contact@freedom.firm.in

The Story of Freedom Firm

In the year 2000 Freedom Firm Founders Greg and Mala Malstead moved their family to Mumbai, India. Greg became Director of International Justice Mission, Mumbai.

As an attorney, Greg established IJM's first overseas office and built a team of investigators, lawyers and social workers who partnered with local authorities to bring rescue and justice to victims of sex trafficking. In his five years with IJM Greg led and participated in interventions that resulted in the rescue of over 450 victims, prosecution of more than 180 perpetrators and convictions in 6 groundbreaking cases.

While the rescue and legal work were vital, the Malstead's wanted to engage in rehabilitation of the girls in a deeper way. Combining Greg's legal experience with Mala's creative passion and teaching background, they envisioned an organization that rescues girls, brings their perpetrators to justice and works to restore their lives to physical, emotional, and spiritual fullness. The Malsteads also wanted to target areas of Maharashtra and Karnataka that as yet had no major anti-trafficking NGO presence.

In 2006, the Malsteads, with the support of friends, founded Freedom Firm in Ooty, Tamil Nadu.

Freedom Firm's investigation team was soon on the ground rescuing minor girls along with legal and regional aftercare follow up, while the residential aftercare program began to take shape in Ooty. Since then, Freedom Firm has transitioned from residential aftercare to focusing on employment opportunities through Ruhamah Designs. Freedom Firm continues to work with existing shelter homes and government institutions that have been set up to care for women. Our social workers visit these homes and meet the girls to help with counselling, health care, education, and job training.

Since 2006, Freedom Firm has rescued over 250 young women and girls from commercial sexual exploitation and is actively involved in restoring these young women and girls to lives of wholeness and purpose.



Freedom Firm Staff Retreat at Brooklands, Coonoor, Tamil Nadu, February 2013.

Rescue: From the front line | Interview with an Investigator



Our investigators setting up spy cameras before an operation.

In 2012 -2013, Freedom Firm rescued 43 girls . The following interview is based on two rescues this year that have been of significance to the team.

1. As an investigator, how do you find and target minor girls for rescue? How did you find Rajni?*

Our first priority on investigations is to find and rescue minor girls by searching all corners of a red light area. In Pune we saw a girl standing in a doorway with her brothel keeper who was calling out to passersby. As soon as I saw her, I knew she was a minor. However, the more our team investigated, the more doubt there was regarding her age. Rajni looked older, but I chose to stick to my initial impression. I knew she was a minor girl as soon as I saw her, but couldn't prove it at that time.

2. What were the challenges rescuing her? What do you usually face on a raid?

There's always a challenge convincing the police. Further, we're always wary about how much information we should give out, what details do we keep to ourselves? Almost always, there is a tip-off before a raid, following which the girls are hidden away. Brothels often have secret passages, small compartments and hiding places built into them. Minor girls especially are stashed away like luggage. Sometimes the girls are made to just walk out of the brothels, run out onto the roads disappearing with crowds. When this happens, identifying targeted girls is impossible! There are long waiting periods, often indecision due to a lack of compelling information. When things do happen, we have to act

with urgency. It all comes together or falls apart at the snap of a finger.

3. For a long time, you argued that Rajni was indeed a minor? How were you so sure?

I think we've developed an ability to identify minor girls. We've spent a significant part of our lives in the Red light Areas; days and hours of surveillance. The areas we operate in under cover, we know each and every girl by face, we know every established brothel in Nagpur, Pune & Nashik. We can identify new places of activity that spring up. We know a brothel keeper or pimp when we see one. We know when a girl's new on the line. We know by our expertise, experience, it's our job.

4. How did you eventually prove that Rajni was a Minor?

Brothel keepers know that it is a criminal offense to use minor girls, and they force steroid injections and hormonal tablets on the girls for their bodies to develop. It works; a lot of girls look 5-6 years older. Rajni mentioned in her statement her age - 15 years, that she was given medicines to 'develop' and we have age verification tests done on all the girls we rescue; it confirmed her status as minor.

5. Have you or the team ever been attacked? How risky is the work you do?

During rescues, there's always the fear of being attacked by a mob. It has happened before, the agents surround the brothels,

they throw stones. It can be scary. Recently, one of our guys was caught by a goon assigned to watch the girls, eventually he did escape but had been beaten bad. We've all had things happen to us, at some point we've been caught, beaten, robbed – once even by the girls. We've had times when seasoned investigators have suddenly found themselves unable to walk into the red light areas. This can disrupt weeks of surveillance and planning. And it is failing, disappointing, have focussed so hard on getting these girls out.

6. There is surveillance video where you guys are engaging girls, doors break open, police and intervention teams come in, take over. You guys, on your cameras always seem to just get up, walk out the door...

The girls are taken in custody. The customers most often get away. We leave immediately as the raid happens, sometimes the pimps or keepers warn us, guide us out. This proves a good cover because we're not suspect, we're able to come back, look for girls again. We've learned over the years that to be effective we have to hit a place again and again, that's what it takes to shut down the trade in minor girls. The more footage and evidence we have, the more our legal team can present in court. Prostitution of minor girls is lucrative, we have to give the forces in the brothels reason to realize that it's dangerous to their interests to deal in minors, that it's not worth the risk for them. That's one way we can axe the trade.

7. In what circumstance did you find Priya?

In Priya's case, the information was given to us by an officer in the crime branch. Priya's mother had forced her daughters into

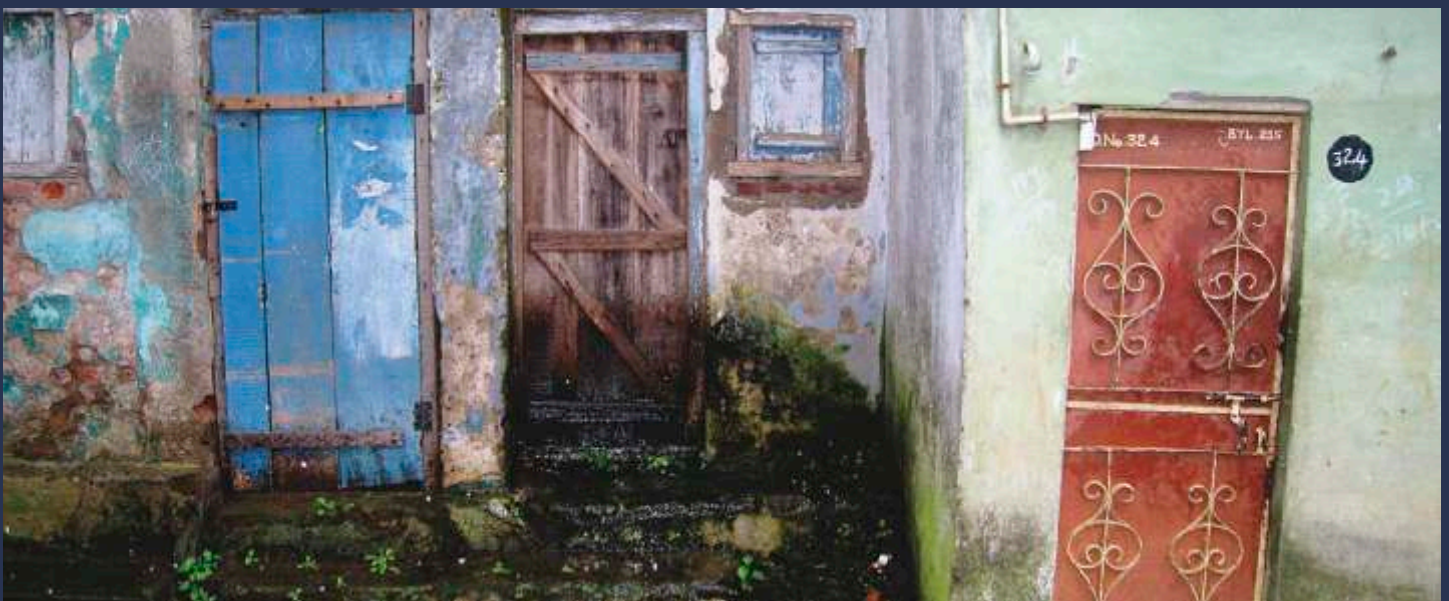
prostitution. At the time of rescue, Priya was found terrified and hiding under a bed. She was young - 13 years. The medical report confirmed her age and we were shocked to learn that she was three months pregnant. Shelter homes inadequately protected Priya and she disappeared. We've lost all trace of her, but continue to scour the brothels for any hint or lead. We believe it likely that her mother has taken her back to their village in rural Maharashtra. We're following any leads we get.

8. In several cases, girls refuse rescue? What are your thoughts on this?

Every minor girl in the profession has been forced physically and mentally. Traffickers and brothel keepers brainwash the girls, they portray a glamorous life, they prove to the girls that they can earn money, be successful, support their families. If a girl refuses to work, they're beaten, isolated for days and denied food. Tortured in every way till they break, they've been conditioned. They are young, impressionable and often naive. A lot of brothel keepers were once trafficked and they know the life, the girls they quickly come to believe in the false life imposed on them. They're trapped psychologically, knowing society will never again accept them as normal human beings.

9. What's encouraging about this job?

People are talking about the issue of trafficking, in India and globally. It's encouraging to know that there is awareness in our society. And as we fight on the front lines, we're reminded that there are people from around the world praying for us and we're grateful.



Photography by rescued girls is available. To order prints send an email to contact@freedom.firm.in

Restoration: Jyothi's story

Finding her way in the world



Jyothi was fifteen when she married against her parents' wishes. From a different caste and community, her husband was not an acceptable choice. Within a year she was pregnant and, according to Indian custom, her husband left her with her family for the birth of the baby. However, after their daughter was born, Jyothi's parents refused to allow her to return to him.

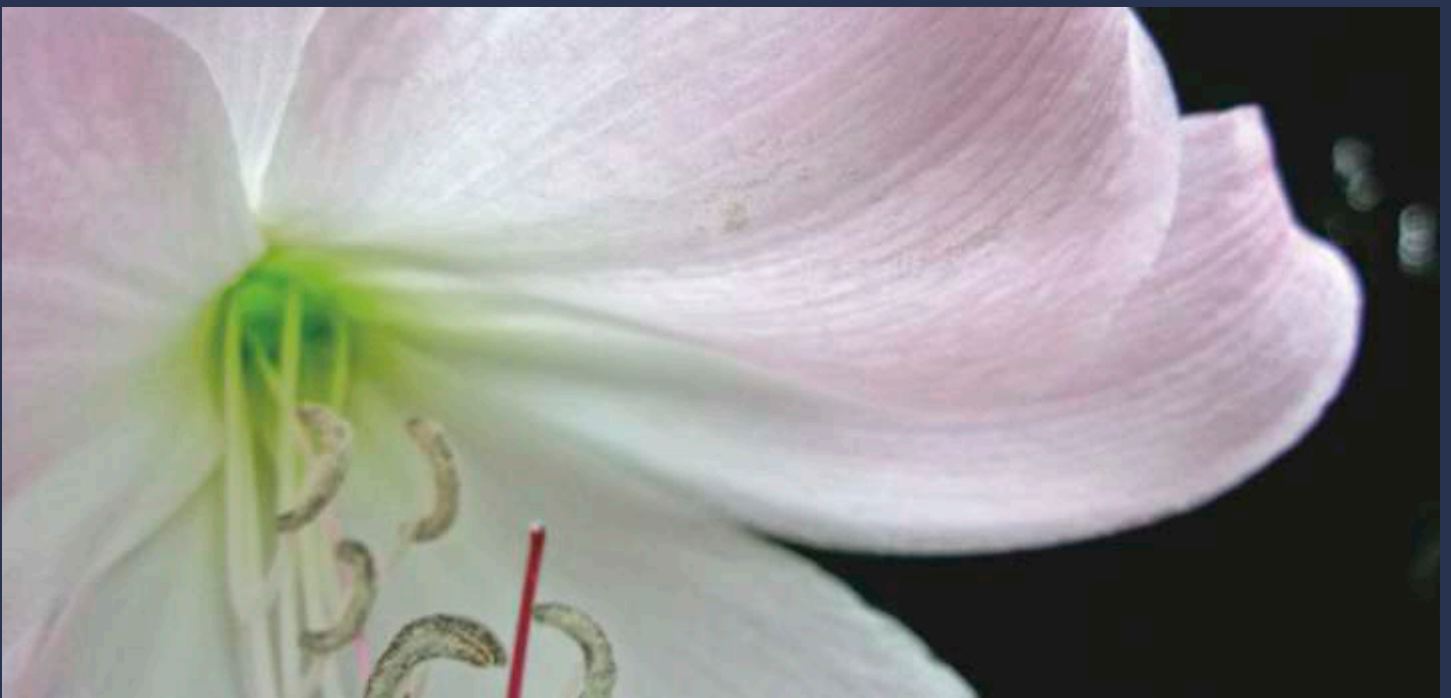
Eventually her husband gave up trying to contact her. Jyothi, desperate to find him, began to search many villages and towns

around Bangalore. At the same time, she needed money to support her child. She began working on a chicken farm but had to give her earnings to her parents, who used it to support their drinking habit.

As trouble increased at home, she continued to look for her husband in her free time. With no leads to his whereabouts, and in a state of despair, Jyothi met a man at Bangalore city's sprawling bus terminus. This man somehow earned Jyothi's trust and promised to help her find a better job. Together they boarded a bus and Jyothi fell asleep.

With a 24 hour bus trip it is possible that Jyothi was drugged. The story fast-forwards when she wakes up in Mumbai. Jyothi had been picked up by a trafficker and was about to be sold into prostitution.

When the brothel keeper saw Jyothi's skinny body, she forced her to take pills. Jyothi was threatened and abused and even segregated from other girls in the brothel. Finally, she had no choice but to accept her situation. Memories of her daughter, her grandparents and her lost husband crushed her. Her need to escape was urgent. "At first, several women would come by, one by one, one after another to 'look' at me. I overheard



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conversations; the voices of men as they would ask for a particular girl, and I would hear the brothel keeper saying that the girl was not available, but that there was a new girl who had just come. I resisted for the longest time, refusing to 'work'."

In a miraculous turn of events, Jyothi saw her chance. She remembers running frantically at night on dark streets. Alone, homeless, and with no way of getting back to her village, she was aware only of her overwhelming fear. Later that night Jyothi met a family who allowed her to stay with them. She told them what had happened, and they encouraged Jyothi to go to the police.

The Child Welfare Committee restored Jyothi to her family and then sent her to a private rehabilitation home in Mysore. In early 2013, Freedom Firm staff conducted a training in the same home.

When Jyothi attended the jewellery making workshops, Priyanka and Elizabeth, Freedom Firm staff, got to know Jyothi. She was looking for a job and joined Ruhamah Ooty Workshop after the training in March. After a few weeks of spending time together in the workshop and over tea and lunch, she confided in us. She was one of the first to share her testimony in front of all the girls and staff at Avalanche camp.



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2012 - 2013

Ruhamah Designs



Raji, one of our girls at the Ooty Ruhamah workshop.

2012 has been a remarkable year of growth for Ruhamah Designs. In March, we set up a new production unit in Pune, Maharashtra. We spent the first 3 months in a tiny basement room near the Freedom Firm office. In July we moved into a lovely, well-lit 2 bedroom apartment. We have our own office space, and now we have room to grow! As of March 2013 Rebecca, Esther and Mangala work at the Pune workshop and live independently in the city. Asha, the first girl to join Ruhamah in Pune left in January to get married and now lives in Kolhapur.

In Ooty, the Ruhamah workshop had 10 girls come and go throughout 2012 - 2013. Priyanka, a former rescued girl, now serves as workshop supervisor. In the last months of 2012 we began serious discussions about when, where and how to open a unit in West Bengal. Many girls trafficked to cities in Maharashtra come from West Bengal and we've felt the need for several years to do something to help in their reintegration.



Some of the products made at Ruhamah

Leg Up : Break through

2012 has been a year of transformation for Leg Up. We were operating from the property of Greg and Mala Malstead, outside Ooty. This was good because it afforded the girls a chance to get out of town and into nature. It was challenging because it was difficult to get up there for therapy and took time away from work and lessons. At the time we had therapy with one girl a week, and with the disabled children on Saturdays.

To facilitate greater access, we started our first satellite campus at Hebron School. We moved two ponies to the school and began a mutually beneficial partnership with Hebron. Now it isn't difficult for the girls and we have therapy with disabled children three times a week. We still use the Malstead property for disabled riding on Saturdays.

Leg Up is still in an experimental phase. We are working on keeping up with the growth and demand for the program. We continue to see growth in the character and lives of the rescued girls as they reach out to disabled children.



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Picture Change: Beyond the Darkness

Kate Gazaway founder of Picture Change volunteered with Freedom Firm in Ooty for 4 months in 2012. A couple of hours after the work day, Kate took the girls out, four days a week to take pictures using digital cameras and give them lessons in photography. 4 months and 6000



pictures later, Kate picked up the best 60 and had a gallery showing at a local Café.

Over 300 people in the community attended. Each wall of the gallery was devoted to one girl and her pictures. Each girl stood by her pictures as people would come talk to the girls congratulating them and asking questions about the pictures.

The event was a celebration of the creativity in each of these girls and their ability to triumph over the past, a wonderful way to acknowledge their journey, the show was suitably titled 'Beyond the Darkness'.

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Justice: Testify!

Kajol's Story

Kajol's* testimony is one of inspiration; the rescue and its challenges happened in 2009. The police and our team were without transport and had to hire auto rickshaws. Time was precious. Upon reaching the red light district, we found that our operatives were not allowed into the brothels; there had been a tip off. The girls that had been identified for rescue could not be found.

We caught the brothel keeper lingering nearby and proceeded to raid the building after breaking through a door, one of the targeted girls was found locked in a small room on the roof and taken into custody. The police and Freedom Firm workers tried to convince her to give an accurate statement. Our investigator - who had posed as a customer- eventually persuaded Kajol into cooperating. She bravely chose freedom.

After Kajol was rescued, she was immediately restored to her family and Freedom Firm lost contact with her. When her case came up, our social workers were determined to find her.

Armed with an address from the police and a connection in West Bengal, (another rescued girl's father) Kajol was found. Within weeks she testified in Pune. Seeing Kajol at court the accused panicked, and admitted herself into a local hospital - a ploy to delay the court proceedings. This went on for weeks until finally the Judge intervened. The defendant then tried using political sway, but the case resulted in a conviction in 2012. The accused immediately applied for and was granted bail. The case is now pending in the High Court. The path to justice demands persistence and a measure of faith. The good news is that Kajol is married to a good man, and she is safe.

In 2012, other girls testified and they will continue to do so in 2013. Our goal is to achieve convictions and hold perpetrators accountable. That is the message we want to send - that those profiting from the exploitation of minor girls will be found and brought to justice.



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Lalitha's Testimony

In 2009, Freedom Firm with NGO Justice and Care rescued Lalitha* from a brothel in Pune. Scared but sensing freedom was closer than ever before, she ran away from the government home and was missing for 3 years.

When her court case came up in 2012, both organizations tried to find her. The search began by travelling to her last known address which happened to be her aunt's home. From there, Freedom Firm's social worker in West Bengal learned a bit more about the past 3 years and got Lalitha's phone number. After contacting her and explaining the reason, she resisted and it took a couple weeks of meeting with both her and her aunt to convince them. After agreeing, they changed their minds again and insisted we take permission from the police station. In follow up with the police, they required us to cross more hurdles.

Meanwhile the legal team in Pune arranged for a court summons

to be sent to Lalitha but it never reached. Even so our social worker delivered a copy of the summons directly to Lalitha's house. With the summons and tickets in hand, Lalitha and her aunt agreed to board the train for Pune. Near the end, Lalitha's aunt became ill and great effort was taken to find another escort. Finally, Lalitha's aunt agreed to go. Our social worker met the party at the train station with fruits and snacks for the 2.5 day trip to Pune.

After a month, the impossible happened and Lalitha testified in court speaking about her trafficking and forced prostitution. In the end, Lalitha's flight from the shelter home caused the Judge to doubt her story. "If she could run away from the home, why not from the brothels?" The accused was acquitted. Despite this set back, we continue to pursue justice. We know Lalitha's story was true.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

- Martin Luther King

Writ Petitions

Nagpur Writ: The systems in place meant to protect rescued girls in Nagpur have failed. Minor girls are being released with disregard to procedure and many are being re-trafficked. Freedom Firm must now prepare a writ petition for the Nagpur Bench of the High Court asking Courts to intervene and protect victims from being trafficked again.

Pune Writ: Freedom Firm has compiled documentary evidence for the Mumbai High Court that shows a high percentage of accused who abscond from trafficking cases in Pune. The team plans to file a writ petition in 2013.



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2012 - 2013 Highlights

On the last tour of its 15 year prolific career, *Aradhna* performed in Ooty as part of the India benefit tour spanning Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Bangalore and Ooty. A majority of the proceeds were gifted to Freedom Firm.



The Ooty concert was hosted at Hebron school. Diya lights and marigold decked the stage in a soft glow. The sitar and tabla, Chris Hale as lead vocalist, Peter Hicks and Travis McAfee on guitar and bass, was truly a fusion of East meets West. Stalls were laden with Ruhamah jewelry, photography taken by our rescued girls, handmade cards, Aradhna CD's and Horse and Rider DVDs. The local Hebron and Ooty community supported the concert wholeheartedly. People were touched by the music and by the work of Freedom Firm. One lakh (\$2000) in donations was raised from the Ooty benefit concert alone.

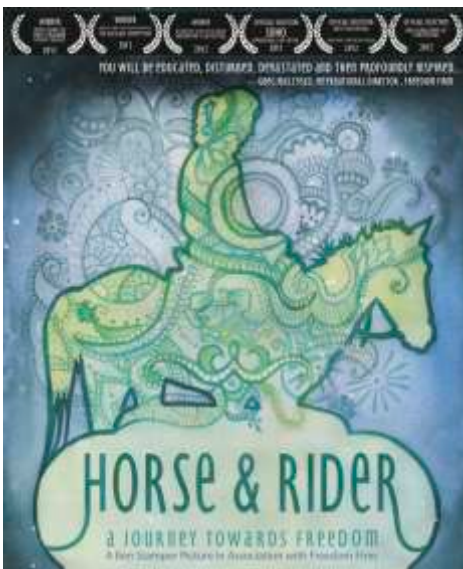
Recordings from the India Tour 2012 were compiled in a final live album from Aradhna to benefit Freedom Firm.

To buy a copy, log on to www.aradhnamusic.com

"Avalanche", the beauty of the mountains surrounding us speak of a good God. Gut wrenching stories spoken around campfires end in applause as we cheer each other through pain...



Servant men, good men, washing the girls feet in a ceremony echoing Christ washing the disciples' feet. This image branded in my mind. Girls, stripping off their shoes and socks in a hurry and slipping and sliding on rocks to be the next in line. Waiting as they lifted their feet in expectation. The urgency of their movement. Tears streaming down faces, unashamed. God's Spirit, palpable and near, moving over the pool of water, touching, healing, cleansing." -An Excerpt from Mala's Blog: <http://malstead.blogspot.in>



Horse & Rider, the film about two girls in Freedom Firm has won three film festival awards and five prestigious selections!

Rather than feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of human trafficking, people talk to us about how the film leaves them with a sense of hope as they watch the girls laugh, play and enjoy life.

The unique approach of the film does not leave people with a sense of despair, instead there is a motivation to get involved because the stories prove that change can happen. At screenings of Horse and Rider the credits are followed by great applause or absolute silence as the audience processes what they've seen. This film is making an impact.

For more information, to pick up personal copies for yourself, for your community or to donate, log onto www.horseandrider.com and www.freedom.firm.in Get involved by raising awareness about sex-trafficking.

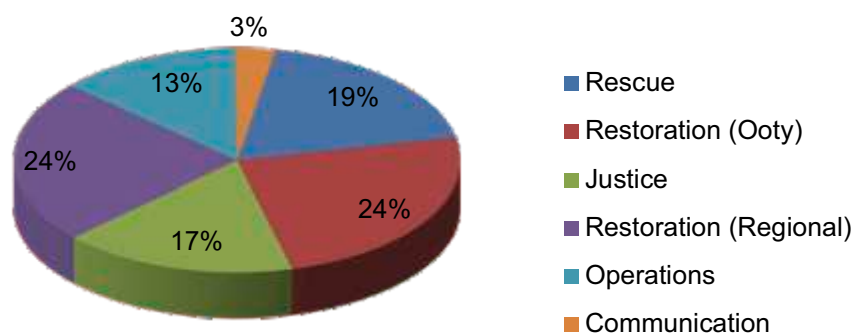
Finances 2012 - 2013

One of our core principles is Achieving Results. We allocate our resources with an uncompromising drive to achieve results balanced by a responsibility to stewardship of our resources. We are diligent about stewarding finances given by donors, not just because accountability matters, but also for the sake of relentlessly pursuing and achieving our mission - rescue, restoration, and justice for victims of sex trafficking.

Without your generous and sacrificial gifts, Freedom Firm would never be able to do the work we do. We rely entirely on the financial contributions of generous people like you to meet our operating budget, and we are so grateful that you believe in this work and contribute to its success!

Expenses

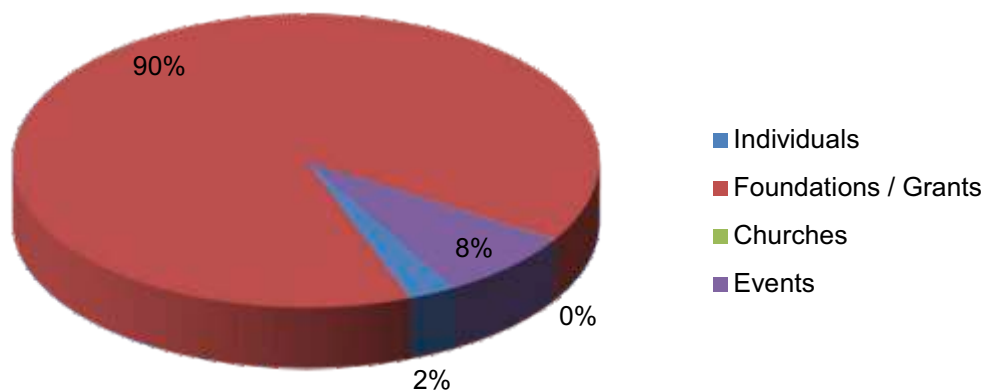
January 2012 - March 2013



Income Sources

January 2012 - March 2013

Total income: INR 75,91,677



Freedom Firm Boards

Freedom Firm Board

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