



Evaluation report on the results of the interventions to reduce the prevalence of bonded labour in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh

Institute of Development Studies, UK in partnership with Praxis India and Rituu B. Nanda

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Purpose of the report

This evaluation report was produced by the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and Praxis India, for the Freedom Fund.

The project aims to support learning about the most effective community and NGO activities in combating forced and bonded labour in the Freedom Fund Northern India Hotspot covering Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The project is funded by the Freedom Fund (FF) and is directed by IDS. The objective of the evaluation is to provide an overall, independent assessment of the hotspots, particularly with regard to the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the hotspot model in reducing bonded labour in the area, and the sustainability of the hotspot model.

This report uses the findings of scoping visits, a collective analysis of 300 life stories of bonded labourers, a participatory statistical analysis of prevalence and other indicators, 52 interviews which obtained qualitative feedback from community participants, NGO staff, and other concerned stakeholders, a desk review of key programme documents, and the progress report of 11 action-research groups.

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List of abbreviations

ALC	Access Livelihoods Consulting India Ltd
ARG	Action-research group
BMVS	Bhusura Mahila Vikas Samiti
CHETNA	Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action
CPA	Centre for Promoting Accountability
CVC	community vigilance committee
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
EHA	Emmanuel Association Project
FCRA	Foreign Contributions Regulation Act
FF	Freedom Fund
FSS	Fakirana Sisters' Society
GG	Geneva Global
HH	Household
HLN	Human Liberty Network
IDEA	Institute for Development Education and Action
IDF	Integrated Development Foundation
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
JVI	Justice Ventures International
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal

MGNREGA	Mahatma Ghandi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MSEMVS	Manav Sansadhan Evam Mahila Vikas Sansthan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIRDESH	National Institute for Rural Development, Education, Social Upliftment and Health
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PGS	Pragati Gramodyog Evam Samaj Kalyan Sansthan
ROSA	Rural Organisation for Social Advancement
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHG	Self-Help Group
TSN	Tatvasi Samaj Nyas
UDS	Utpidit Dalit Samaj
UP	Uttar Pradesh

Note: Freedom Fund often refers to Community Freedom Groups, which is a catch-all phrase for all Community Support Groups. When we use the phrase narrative analysis, we refer to the life story analysis.

Executive summary

Background

Since 2014, the Freedom Fund has been working with local partner non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in North India to combat bonded labour and other forms of exploitation, focusing efforts on 700 villages across the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Using a hotspot model of concentrating resources in communities with high prevalence of bonded labour, often subject to intense socioeconomic deprivation and marginalisation, the Freedom Fund and its partners have provided community-based interventions to achieve the following objectives:

- 1 Reduce prevalence of these forms of exploitation in the specific communities in which Freedom Fund partners are working through direct prevention, protection, and prosecution interventions.
- 2 Improve the wider enabling environment for freedom through collective action and improving the effectiveness of government.
- 3 Increase civil society's capacity for sustained and effective action on these issues.
- 4 Contribute new evidence to the global movement through supporting rigorous research and evaluation in the hotspot.

Most people in the intervention areas were *dalits* (or Scheduled Caste) and/or Other Backward Classes (OBCs).¹ The programme has focused on supporting households to exit conditions of debt bondage and child labour in industries such as brick kilns, stone quarries, and agriculture. Local NGOs have been supported to conduct a range of interventions at the community level through awareness-raising, a variety of poverty alleviation interventions, and collective action, while also engaging with government, business, and other powerholders to address the underlying systems that drive exploitation.

To evaluate and inform this programme, the Freedom Fund commissioned the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Praxis India in 2015 to design and implement a parallel, longitudinal participatory research programme. This research project generated real-time learning for continuous development, as well as evaluating the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of activities. This report summarises the findings and recommendations of that research.

Evaluation methods

This evaluation utilised the following research methods:

- Collection and joint analysis of more than 350 life stories.

¹ Other Backward Class (OBC) is a collective term used by the Government of India to classify castes that are educationally or socially disadvantaged.

- A baseline and endline quantitative study to measure prevalence of bonded labour in the hotspot through participatory statistics. The prevalence study surveyed 3,142 households at baseline and 3,175 at endline.
- Action Research with 11 community-based multi-stakeholder groups, focused on systemic drivers of debt bondage.
- Qualitative interviews with 30 community members, 12 NGO staff, and eight external stakeholders, as well as interviews with Freedom Fund staff at the local, national, and headquarter level.

Key research findings

- Overall prevalence of bonded labour reduced from 56.2 per cent in intervention communities at baseline to 11.6 per cent at endline. The prevalence of children in bonded labour reduced from 12.1 per cent at baseline to 2.9 per cent at endline. While the prevalence of bondage inside and outside the community has reduced, men and boys are still working more often in conditions of bondage. This reflects the persistence of gendered norms about work which facilitates the acceptance of child labour among boys. Reductions were also observed in child marriage.
- Communities identified life crises and health crises as main contributors to bonded labour. Life crises often created the need for predatory emergency loans, and led to debt bondage. Health crises were often linked to insufficient health-care access and access to sanitation. Child labour also occurred to pay for family-owed debts.
- Lower caste communities were at increased risk of debt bondage through marginalisation, discrimination, and economic disempowerment. Discrimination against dalit children led directly to poor school attendance and education outcomes.
- Households in this hotspot have been able to change the characteristics of their working relationships through a combination of interventions at the heart of which is collective local mobilisation and action through community vigilance committees (CVCs).
- Membership of community self-help groups among households with all working members in bonded labour increased from 35 per cent of households at baseline to 94 per cent at endline.
- Awareness-raising on predatory lending and child labour combined with group formation through which people were able to act upon information, led to change in target communities.

Evaluating the hotspot model in Northern India

Relevance of design and implementation

- The hotspot model of targeting high-prevalence communities through investment in community-based NGOs has been justified as these community interventions have significantly contributed to the large reductions in bonded labour observed. However, some NGO investment was also directed to lower-prevalence communities.
- Use of awareness strategies to drive prevention has had a significant impact on the target communities through change in the norms of bonded labour. However, awareness-based preventative work must continue to be complemented by poverty alleviation in source communities.
- Narrative analysis highlighted the critical issue of predatory loans, often driven by health crises. Linking poverty alleviation to greater access to health care should be seen as a priority.

- While rescue work is important for the individuals and the return of rescued children can also have important awareness-raising benefits at the community level, there are reintegration issues and there are also children (notably boys) who are trafficked again. Therefore, the long-term benefit may not match other strategies, and while important, should not be prioritised.
- Although there are difficulties in taking successful legal action, such as witnesses withdrawing, enforcing the rule of law remains important to achieve systemic change. Having organisations in the hotspot NGO network that have legal expertise and regular exposure to the legal system allows legal knowledge to be updated and shared across the Human Liberty Network (HLN) and the hotspot, underpinning a rights-based approach.
- The successes of this programme are driven by the dedication and work of local NGOs. Their trusted standing with local communities facilitates delivery of multiple, parallel interventions. Due to the organic development of programmes in the hotspot, there is space for NGOs to carry out more collaboratively planned action.

Effectiveness

- The programme has been highly effective at a macro level in contributing to the significant observed reduction in prevalence of bonded labour. Awareness-raising and group formation work have increased community understanding of the risks and repercussions of bonded labour, child labour, and child marriage.
- The bottom-up approach of stimulating and facilitating collective organisation and local action has been key to the observed reduction in bonded labour. While NGOs deliver a diverse range of interventions, this flexibility allows situationally specific responses to the needs of different communities. The most consistently beneficial activities have been awareness-raising and creation of self-help/mutual aid groups and referral services.
- While many hotspot interventions are targeted towards the poorest castes, continued sensitivity to and explicit challenges to caste-based discrimination by local NGOs is necessary to ensure equity.
- The last groups remaining in bonded labour will likely be the poorest and most entrenched in cycles of exploitation. These groups, who may be dependent on exploitative work for survival, may be resistant to some interventions and will likely require a dedicated focus. The Freedom Fund may need to balance goals of regional reduction, by spreading the model to other settings, with eradication, which will take long-term local commitment.

Efficiency

- Group development has facilitated the wide coverage and effect of awareness campaigns. For example, the emergence of community vigilance committees allowed greater school enrolment and monitoring of school attendance.
- The collective action of partner organisations through the Human Liberty Network has facilitated the engagement of key government departments and initiatives, with NGOs citing the HLN as one of the most valuable effects of the hotspot.
- Community members note that livelihood promotion has struggled to connect with local employment demands, and needs continued rooting in market analysis.
- The wide range of activities carried out by NGOs has led to a considerable workload. While the Freedom Fund invests in organisational capacity development, it may be beneficial to define a core set of activities for all partners, complemented by specialisation.

Sustainability

- The hotspot model of collective action has shifted NGOs towards a more community-driven approach. NGOs have diversified their activities to provide multi-faceted interventions; they have rooted their work in communities and have developed a greater skillset. However, greater recognition and integration of community member input will be necessary for full sustainable change. Community groups may need support in achieving full autonomy.
- Awareness-raising has been a key success of the programme and is an essential underpinning and condition for sustainable behaviour and normative changes.
- The long-term success of interventions on education and livelihoods are bound to rely on local contextual factors. Increased enrolment, and gender and caste equity in education access will continue to be hindered by poor quality of schools and systemic discrimination. Unemployment and labour exploitation will continue to be driven by lack of meaningful alternative livelihoods. These systemic issues are important for sustainable change but are not necessarily within the spheres of influence of NGOs or the FF.
- A significant increase in support and funding is required for the monitoring of medium- and long-term outcomes, both for individuals and communities, to ensure that goals of rehabilitation and reintegration are met, and that re-exploitation is successfully prevented.
- While the Freedom Fund is dedicated to the vertical scaling of the hotspot model, and to greater regional and national-level collective action against bonded labour, the evaluation findings suggest that horizontal scaling to other affected communities is as important as a catalyst of systemic change. These two can be complementary.

Recommendations

- The hotspot model is effective in reducing bonded labour and should be built on. Community organisation and awareness-raising should be scaled horizontally to new high-risk communities in order to build on current successes. Horizontal scaling can be supported through a phased approach, where resources can be shifted between activities and locales as development occurs.
- To reach the most vulnerable people still trapped in bonded labour, more targeted and holistic family-level interventions should be provided.
- Investing in household expenses assessment will also allow communities to identify sources of financial insecurity.
- Greater emphasis should be given to the direct engagement of local communities in identifying problems and generating solutions to change. Supporting individuals to be champions and investing in, for example, paralegal volunteers can over time help to reduce the reliance on NGOs.
- We recommend investing in facilitation skills training for all NGOs.
- Medium- and long-term goals require continued focus and investment. Prioritising longitudinal follow-up for rehabilitation and reintegration services will ensure a better quality and continuity of care for individuals, as well as providing long-term data for programmatic decisions.

1 Context and approach

1.1 Aims and activities of the Freedom Fund Programme

The Northern India hotspot was launched in March 2014. The goal of the hotspot is to reduce the prevalence of all forms of trafficking, bonded labour, and harmful child labour in selected districts of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. There are four specific objectives:

- Objective 1: Reduce prevalence of these forms of exploitation in the specific communities in which FF partners are working through direct prevention, protection, and prosecution interventions.
- Objective 2: Improve the wider enabling environment for freedom through collective action and improving the effectiveness of government.
- Objective 3: Increase civil society's capacity for sustained and effective action on these issues.
- Objective 4: Contribute new evidence to the global movement through supporting rigorous research and evaluation in the hotspot.

The hotspot builds on past work supported by one of the Freedom Fund's founding investors, the Legatum Foundation. In early 2015, the Freedom Fund committed to an expanded three-year programme aiming to reduce the prevalence of bonded labour and trafficking in 27 districts of the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Initially, 19 partners were being supported by FF.²

IDS/Praxis were commissioned to design and implement a participatory research programme in January 2015. The aim of this work was to run in tandem with the Freedom Fund implementation programme and to underpin it with evidence generated iteratively and summatively which could inform programme learning.

The number of frontline implementing partners has varied from year to year, with the total as follows:

Table 1.1 Number of frontline implementing partners

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
17	18	17	16	16	16
In addition to the frontline implementing partners counted above, the Freedom Fund also gives grants to technical assistance and research organisations to support the work of the hotspot.					

Source: Freedom Fund.

² This report evaluates the performance of the partners who have been in the programme during the whole intervention period.

The Freedom Fund chose partners according to the extent to which they met the following criteria: (1) they address bonded labour; (2) they are involved in rescue and/or interception; (3) they equip survivors through effective support for recovery and reintegration; (4) they are positioned to contribute to systemic change, including through community-based reflection and collective action against bonded labour; (5) they are engaged in local, district, state, and/or national-level discussions with government; (6) they are involved in legal services for victim protection and/or prosecution of those who hold or traffic bonded labourers; and (7) their capacity, organisational reliability, trustworthiness, and transparency.

In 2014, the FF took over the Northern India NGO partners who were previously funded directly by the Legatum Foundation (one of the FF’s founding funders), and selected and managed by Geneva Global (GG), a Philadelphia US-based philanthropy consulting company. In determining which partners should continue in 2015, the FF took into account the past performance of each NGO partner. Partners who demonstrated a satisfactory performance were invited to reapply for three-year funding in 2015, and all were successful. The FF did not invite other organisations to apply for support at that time. In 2017, the FF carried out another round of detailed partner assessment, matching partner performance against the objectives of the hotspot programme. Following that assessment, they renewed support to each partner for 2018–19.

In 2018–19, the hotspot continued to work to the same four main objectives established in 2014 – community-based work; improvement of the wider environment for freedom; partner strengthening; and the generation of evidence.

There have been significant staff changes over the period – primarily due to the Freedom Fund’s growing number of grants in India. From July 2018 onwards, the Freedom Fund Senior Programme Manager took over direct management of all India-related projects from Geneva Global, including the Northern India hotspot. In July 2018, the two Programme Advisors also transitioned from being Geneva Global consultants to Freedom Fund consultants. A new Programme Officer was also recruited in August 2018, plus an additional Programme Advisor, focusing on the reintegration of trafficked children from Jaipur to Bihar and linked to the FF’s new hotspot in Jaipur. A new Senior Research and Evaluation Manager was appointed in June 2016, and a new Monitoring and Evaluation Officer joined in May 2019.

The Northern India hotspot programme budget (USD) is as follows, inclusive of management and staffing costs.

Table 1.2 The Northern India hotspot programme budget

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (est.)	Total
\$1,430,356	\$3,134,928	\$2,553,725	\$2,524,058	\$2,331,548	\$1,766,128	\$13,740,742

Source: Freedom Fund.

1.2 Challenges in combating bonded labour in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, India

The two Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are highly dynamic complex environments in which political and environmental factors can substantially shift what is possible in relation to any implementation programme. The Freedom Fund has been well aware of these challenges and we reproduce below some of the critical points from their context analyses (drawn directly from Freedom Fund annual reviews):

2015: There were several unexpected developments in northern India's political, environmental, and civil society climate throughout 2015. The earthquakes in April in Nepal caused some partner organisations located in areas close to the border to delay activities and others to participate in response efforts, providing relief materials and managing shelters for those leaving Kathmandu. Also, throughout 2015, other partner organisations needed to address the increased vulnerabilities of project communities as an irregular monsoon season affected many in Uttar Pradesh, diminishing crop yields and affecting livelihood.

Political tension between India and Nepal also resulted in difficulties for local communities near the border. Our partner organisations implementing projects in these areas reported that project participants were unable to work during this time and continue to experience a subsequent loss of income. Elections in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, as well as the election of Child Welfare Committee (CWC) members were held. As a result, partner organisations had to re-schedule activities and begin building relationships with newly elected officials. Increased scrutiny of NGOs receiving foreign funding affected partner organisations and banks as procedures for receipt of foreign funds changed. Our partner organisations were not negatively affected by this as a result of their diligence in complying with existing stipulations and ensuring ongoing compliance.

2016: In November, the government instituted a 'demonetisation' policy, declaring that all 500 INR and 1,000 INR banknotes in circulation would no longer be considered legal tender. The policy was intended to address challenges of corruption but prolonged cash shortages created significant economic disruption. In the Northern India hotspot, many project activities were delayed while partner organisations and community members dealt with the unavailability of legal tender at local banks. Additionally, the Bihar state government's alcohol prohibition initiated on 1 April 2016 affected the local context. While the prohibition appeared to reduce domestic violence and crime across Bihar, partner organisations also observed women and children from Indo-Nepal border districts being hired or forced to smuggle liquor across the border, leading to increased exploitation as they engaged in illegal activity.

Throughout the first half of 2016, the government of India experienced increased international scrutiny regarding the prevalence of forced labour in the country, part of which was the release of the 2016 Global Slavery Index which highlighted the high number of victims in India. Around the same time, the government of India released draft legislation aiming to address all forms of forced and bonded labour – the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation) Bill 2016. Upon release of the draft bill, the government invited comments from civil society leaders in an effort to ensure that the bill addressed the gaps of previous anti-trafficking legislation and provided clarity around the implementation of the bill's provisions.

Similarly, the government sought to revise and update the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and the Bonded Labour System Abolition (BLSA) Act, 1976. These increased efforts to revise key documents addressing forced labour created opportunities for the Human Liberty Network to

provide informed input, potentially impacting the future operating context of the Northern India programme. In addition to these developments, *panchayat* elections in Bihar resulted in delayed programme activities for many partner organisations as officials were unavailable for meetings. At the same time, the elections also led to the promotion of programme participants to influential positions within their communities. The increased representation of marginalised communities on decision-making bodies is an exciting development and will likely continue to have an impact on the programme's operating context at the local level (see the Freedom Fund Northern India Hotspot 2016 Annual Report).

2017: There was severe flooding in August 2017. Many of the NGO partners' districts in Bihar were devastated, with homes, crops, and livestock destroyed, increasing community members' vulnerability to bonded labour and human trafficking. With extensive damage to roadways, relief agencies were unable to swiftly reach many remote communities. Partner organisations that were already working in highly affected areas were well positioned to provide relief. Through emergency grants provided by the Freedom Fund, six partners supported community members with shelter, food, cooking supplies, health camps, and sanitation kits. They actively coordinated with government to rescue residents from areas with dangerous levels of flooding. This work, while critical for the safety of community members, delayed activities that were scheduled for the second half of the year.

The demonetisation policy enacted by the central government in 2016 continued to impact partner organisations' and community members' ability to access and utilise the cash necessary to conduct and participate in programme activities, causing some delays. Additionally, the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) registrations of several leading non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in India were cancelled during the reporting period. With this in mind, the Centre for Promoting Accountability (CPA) and Programme Advisors provided Freedom Fund partner organisations with updated information related to the regulation to ensure continued compliance with the FCRA. During the reporting period, the government also announced a new Goods and Services Tax that aims to replace all existing production and service taxes with one base, nationwide tax (18 per cent). It was expected that this tax would be enforced in July 2017 and would result in budget modification requests to compensate for the additional taxes and require partner organisations to register with an additional government entity.

In February 2017, elections in Uttar Pradesh resulted in a change of government leadership, including the Chief Minister position. This resulted in the need for partner organisations in UP to quickly develop rapport with newly elected officials. In Bihar, changes to the leadership of the Social Welfare Department resulted in the Principal Secretary and Director transferring to another department. While a new Principal Secretary joined the department, the Director position remains vacant, resulting in slowed intervention and support for communities (see Baumann 2017).

2018–2019: At a national level, the demonetisation policy roll-out across India resulted in lack of payments to labourers and lack of available legal tender in the programme working areas.

Other more positive contextual factors included the following: various government programmes were launched in programme areas, including the provision of pensions to rural families living in poverty, ensuring basic amenities (such as potable water, latrines, and

electricity) for low-income communities, and the activation of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme, which helps secure the safety of children.

The Freedom Fund North India Strategy Review for 2018–19 (Baumann n.d.) identified the following contextual factors (drawing also from the learning of the evaluation). In Bihar, they noted the following: an increase in unsafe migration to and from Nepal, Rajasthan, West Bengal, etc.; social media and mobile phones are more often being used as a mechanism for recruitment; debt is increasingly a result of medical emergencies; there is an increase in children employed in orchestras. In Uttar Pradesh they noted the following: an increase in child marriage in the Musahar community; debt is increasingly a result of medical emergencies; an increase of sex trafficking in programme areas; and reports of increased child labour in the brick kilns.

1.3 The research and evaluation approach

1.3.1 Team

(i) The review has been conducted by an international multi-disciplinary gender-balanced team of researchers from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Brighton, UK, in partnership with Praxis, India and independent researcher Rituu B. Nanda. IDS has a global reputation for its work on international development (www.ids.ac.uk) and has been ranked first in the QS global ranking of International Development Schools (with the University of Sussex). Praxis India is a not-for-profit organisation with one of the longest track records for participatory work in India and across Asia, and a long and productive relationship with IDS (www.praxisindia.org).

1.3.2 Methods

(i) This external evaluation used a hybrid methodology combining quantitative and qualitative data, field visits, and observations, with a review of reported programme outcomes. Participatory methods and collective stakeholder analysis processes were woven throughout the programme. The team closely linked the research, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes, to programme cycles and planning.

(ii) The work was commissioned from two specialist participatory methods teams to enable ambitious and innovative participatory research methods to be developed and implemented. The agreement was to pioneer rigorous participatory evaluation methods while at the same time offering some evaluative reflections on how and why change was happening based on qualitative interviews.

(iii) It was agreed with the Freedom Fund that the primary driver of the research evaluation work was a formative learning process within the context of an adaptive management framework. The evaluation has been conducted *alongside* the Freedom Fund interventions using an accompaniment approach focused on organisational learning and capacity building. There are always trade-offs between evaluation as accountability and evaluation as learning. The IDS team has always placed the emphasis strongly on learning for the programme. Learning at each stage has also fed into NGO programming. Review meetings were held before the annual budgeting process to assess lessons learned. Consequently, the research evaluation team can be seen as having an insider–outsider relationship to the team, providing insights to the implementation teams as an independent critical friend.

(iv) We will not explain the detailed methods associated with each component in this document as our main purpose here is to draw together the findings, analyse them across the components, and draw out critical recommendations for future phases and future work. Detailed accounts of the methods can be found in the research report Annexes linked at the end of this document.

(v) The reviewers have worked closely with the Freedom Fund in the development of tools, the collection of data, and the analysis of findings. The reviewers received assistance from staff at the Freedom Fund, notably the programme advisors, managers, and M&E specialists, to collect programme documentation.

(vi) The following methods were used in the evaluation:

- A scoping mission with visits to villages to understand the programme context.
- The collection and joint analysis of more than 300 life stories (Burns et al. 2015). Data produced included the life stories; a cluster map of key themes recorded on Post-it Notes and then transferred to Excel where each Post-it Note was linked back to its source story; and a very large-scale system map.
- Baseline and endline studies to measure the prevalence of different forms of bonded labour in the hotspot and the most significant indicators of change as identified by people directly affected by bonded labour. The methodology of participatory statistics to measure impact is described separately (Oosterhoff et al. 2019). The final report compares endline and baseline data. The prevalence study was complemented with focus group discussions of the respondents who had reported on their household and that of their neighbours. This resulted in immediate feedback from participants to explain contextualised results. Data produced included the numbers recorded for all villages at baseline and endline; aggregated spreadsheets with summary tables; and write-ups of focus group discussions of numbers at village level.
- Action Research (Nanda et al. 2019) with 11 community-based multi-stakeholder groups supported by six NGOs. These each started with the systemic drivers of bondage. The groups collected evidence related to this theme, analysed it, and then generated innovative solutions to issues they identified. Data include records of local evidence gathering – e.g. household expenditure data, flip charts, or recorded notebook records of discussions of action-research meetings.
- Individual qualitative interviews with 30 community members, 12 NGO staff, and eight external stakeholders on the usefulness of the NGO activities. These were supported by interviews with Freedom Fund local and national programme officers and headquarters senior management and research staff. Data include these 52 qualitative interviews.
- A review of key internal programme documents and reports, such as bi-annual reports to review the planned and achieved outputs and outcomes of the programme as well as the self-assessment of NGOs.

These can be explored in more detail in the four research reports which are linked to this document at Annexe 2.

(vii) The team were able to evaluate relevance from the narrative analysis, from the prevalence work, and from the qualitative interviews. Efficiency assessments have in large

part been derived from the documentary evidence and the qualitative interviews. Effectiveness has been assessed through the prevalence study and the qualitative interviews. Sustainability has been assessed through the interviews and the Action Research.

(The research was given approval by the IDS ethical review board in line with IDS research ethics policy.)³

1.3.3 Limitations of the evaluation

(i) The hotspot programme in North India is ambitious, large, and complex. The research and evaluation team has identified a number of limitations to the evaluation:

- Cost-efficiency and effectiveness fell outside the mandate of the evaluation.
- The evaluation team did not carry out any internal organisational audit capacity review of either Freedom Fund field staff or the NGOs. This means, for example, that quantitative claims made by the Freedom Fund in its annual reports based on their own monitoring data have not been independently verified.
- Although there are several reports on bonded labour in brick kilns in India, there were no baselines to compare with.
- As hotspot funding is used by local partners to support a wide and changing array of activities in each community, the Freedom Fund were unable to provide an in-depth breakdown of overall spending by activity. This limits this evaluation's ability to investigate how spending aligns with stakeholder priorities.
- The evaluators met staff from all organisations but did not interview senior management in all cases. Managers were present at some of the meetings and we spoke with some of them separately. We were working towards collaborative learning, rather than coming in as auditors of each NGO's performance.
- The sample sizes for the collection of feedback from various key stakeholders in the qualitative feedback process (52 interviews) were enough to give insights into how and why changes were happening, but within the scope of this work we were unable to continue to interview each category of respondents until saturation was reached and no new information emerged.
- As indicated above, the IDS/Praxis team cannot claim that its analysis is fully independent as we were facilitating a formative learning process which contributed to the adaptive implementation of the programme as well as a formal endline assessment. The action-research process was a direct intervention of local partners with support from the IDS/Praxis team. Reports from both community members and NGOs also suggest that the prevalence study made a significant contribution to community understandings of bonded labour. Nevertheless, we have attempted to justify all our observations and analysis on rigorous research to ensure that our role as critical friend has been strongly evidence based.

(ii) The review focused on contribution not attribution because:

3 See www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Research_Ethics_Policy.pdf.

- There are multiple organisations and institutions in the hotspot working towards similar goals. There has also been a history of activism, including dalit activism in these hotspots, prior to the Freedom Fund interventions.
- The Indian government has many relevant poverty alleviation and socio-political inclusion programmes in the area.
- NGOs working on other issues such as health or water supplies may have a direct impact on bonded labour (e.g. by reducing the need for high-interest loans, for example).

1.3.4 Scope of work

To summarise, the aim of the work described above was twofold:

Firstly: to generate real-time learning for the continuous development and improvement of the programme (formative evaluation);

Secondly: to provide credible evidence of the relevance, efficiency (a limited focus in this study – see below), effectiveness, and sustainability of the activities that have been implemented by local NGOs through the Freedom Fund programme.

Key evaluation questions for this research have been structured with relation to relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability as follows. The specific focus areas under these headings were agreed with the Freedom Fund and are specified in italics under the section headings in Section 3.

1.3.5 Definition of forced and bonded labour

According to the International Labour Organization, the definition of forced labour has been consistent since the passage of the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). However, the focus on particular types of forced labour have shifted as new forms of exploitation of labour have emerged; similarly, the indicators of forced labour have evolved over time (ILO 2014). The ILO (2014) indicators of forced labour are aimed at providing guidance in identifying situations of forced labour. These include: abuse of vulnerability; deception; restriction of movement; isolation; physical and sexual violence; intimidation and threats; retention of identity documents; withholding wages; debt bondage; abusive working and living conditions; and excessive overtime (ILO 2014). These indicators are proffered as a useful means to operationalise the concept of forced labour.

Bonded labour is generally described as a type of forced labour and is also known as debt bondage or debt labour. It occurs when a person is forced to use their physical labour to pay off a debt acquired by them or their family or inherited from their antecedents. They are forced into working for little or no pay, with no control over their debt and the value of their work invariably becomes greater than the original sum of money borrowed.

To identify whether or not a person was in bonded labour, we used the following criteria as developed for the participatory statistics based on the life story analysis (Burns *et al.* 2015).

- The presence of an advance or agreement. An advance, whether completely or partly in cash or in kind, made by one person who is also demanding the labour of the borrower as a means of repayment for a loan.

Plus at least one of these remaining four:

- No freedom of movement: physically constrained or has restrictions placed on his/her freedom of movement.
- Paid less than the minimum wage: a remuneration which is less than the current notified minimum wage under the Minimum Wages Act 1948.
- No freedom of employment: absence of freedom to choose one's employment or other means of livelihood.
- No freedom of marketplace: loss of freedom to sell one's labour in an open market.

These criteria and guidance on questions are detailed in the prevalence survey instrument and guidelines. They were evolved in meetings with community and NGO staff in the early stages of the process based on the collective analysis of the life stories, and international and national definitions and policies.

2 Summary findings

In the light of the above, we first draw out all of the key findings from the four core research reports. We do not detail the evidence here. This can be found in the individual reports. Here we draw out the key messages from each of the research processes, which will enable us to generate integrated conclusions in the next section.

2.1 Main findings from the life story analysis

2.1.1 *The life story collection and analysis process*

In this section, we outline the main findings of the life story analysis carried out in 2015. Life stories are personal accounts of the events and key markers in a person's life. They enable community-based analysts to see the causes and consequences of the factors depicted within them. The findings from the narrative analysis were used at an early stage to feed into the ongoing planning decisions of the programme. The full report is linked to this document (see Annexe 2). It is important to note that these are the conclusions that were drawn by community members and local field staff in a facilitated collective analysis process. They are not the conclusions of the IDS/Praxis team. The findings of the life story analysis are summarised for the purposes of this evaluation because they gave a strong indication of the relevance of the programme's activities.

The life story analysis process involved training local fieldwork staff to collect stories of forced/bonded labourers, and a collective analysis of the stories in a four-day workshop on 13–16 May 2015. Two processes were carried out. Firstly, participants were asked to identify the most important messages in each of the stories. These were placed onto Post-it Notes and clustered. Secondly, they were asked to think through in pairs the critical causal factors in each story, which they later mapped onto a large collective systems map which depicted the main drivers of bondage and the system dynamics that perpetuate them.

The profiles and characteristics of the stories collected by all NGOs were close to the planned sample. We found that 221 of the 353 people (63 per cent) were those directly affected (in forced labour or whose families were in forced labour); 44 people (12 per cent)

had either not been in forced labour or were survivors, and 88 people (25 per cent) were those who could provide a broad profile of the situation.

The aim of collecting and collectively analysing life stories is to:

- Enable community and NGO researchers to arrive at a collective understanding of forced and bonded labour issues in this Northern India hotspot;
- Understand the different forms that forced and bonded labour can take and agree on the categories and definitions that should be used in a prevalence study using participatory statistics. Further, to develop key indicators for the prevalence study through an analysis of the key dynamics of change identified;
- Inform critical issues and drivers of bonded labour to be explored in the Action Research.
- Reflect on how the individual NGO programmes can most effectively respond to the issues and dynamics identified and how the whole programme can meet the needs identified. Identify possible gaps and reflect on if and how these might be addressed.
- Stimulate and inspire NGOs about how to make their programmes and the hotspot approach more effective and relevant.

The stories enabled participants to build a comprehensive picture of how people perceived their lives and the options they have had in the context of forced and bonded labour in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The important thing about the life stories is that they allow people to speak of what is important to them, rather than provide information in categories that have been pre-constructed by researchers. This means that it is more likely to generate unanticipated findings.

2.1.2 Key issues

When all of the stories were clustered and analysed by theme, the biggest issue was health (54 stories), followed by education (32). Loans and advances (22) also included health. There were also a lot of stories that focused on caste (18), deceit (15), violence (15), and drugs and alcoholism (14).

2.1.3 Critical life incidents trigger the need for risky loans

Perhaps the biggest issue identified in this story analysis was the way in which loans were being triggered by life crises. The biggest of these by far was health, but other factors included death, marriage, and accidents. A quick mapping of interventions showed that the NGOs have focused their interventions on awareness, linking people to services, group formation, and collective action. There were at the time few initiatives directly related to health.

2.1.4 Children are made to work to pay for family-owned bondage debts

Many children – but most often the oldest boys – are given to middlemen and brokers when their parents cannot pay off bondage debts. Children often work for two or three years for very long hours, often in very bad conditions. This can lead to them getting ill or dying, and this in turn requires new loans, which can trigger a repetition of the cycle with the younger children being sent into the city to pay off the debts. Breaking this cycle is critical as is

understanding the family life cycle which makes certain family members – in this case older boys – more vulnerable.

2.1.5 Early marriage

Early marriage can lead to early childbirth, which can contribute to a host of maternal and neonatal health issues. Early childbirth can also be a hallmark of a lack of family planning, and can lead to frequent or ill-timed pregnancies which contribute to health risks, larger families, and greater economic pressures. This lack of reproductive agency is a key factor in cycles of poverty. Young brides are also at greater risk of intimate partner violence.

2.1.6 Caste

Caste is a major factor in bondage. The work is located in areas with a predominance of *dalits* and interventions often focus on ensuring legal rights for *dalit* communities. Nevertheless, there are few NGO interventions that explicitly focus on caste as a central issue in its own right.

2.1.7 There is a culture of deceit from middlemen

They often live in or close to communities. They are aware of the life crises of individuals and families and are highly predatory. Violence is regularly employed to enforce bondage, and this inevitably leads to fear which impacts on people's agency to engage with the middlemen. There were a few examples of resistance to landowners who enforce bondage with violence but generally there was a culture of fear.

2.1.8 Education

Aside from poverty, many children don't go to school because they perceive the quality of education to be extremely poor. Girls often don't go to school because sanitary conditions are so poor. *Dalits* drop out because they are systematically discriminated against.

2.1.9 Declaration of bonded status is not incentivised

There is little incentive for people to declare themselves in bondage because the local authorities are not enforcing the law and providing associated benefits.

2.2 Main findings from the prevalence study

2.2.1 The prevalence study process

Key indicators for the prevalence process were derived from the story analysis. A design for the process was evolved in dialogue with the Freedom Fund. Baseline and endline results were produced for the intervention villages. Visual symbols were derived and tested to enable non-literate people to recognise and remember meanings related to particular answers. A comprehensive validation process was carried out. At baseline, data were gathered on a total of 3,142 randomly selected households across 75 programme locations covered by 12 NGOs. At endline, data were gathered from a total of 3,175 households across 74 programme locations covered by the same NGOs.

The aim of the prevalence study was to assess change over time in relation to agreed indicators in the intervention areas. This survey did not provide prevalence data for the whole block or district, but draws upon data from a representative sample of intervention villages across the hotspot, with the statistical power to assess changes at the NGO level. As with other elements of this process, it was not designed to be used as standalone analysis, but rather as part of a mixed-methods analysis. Much of the explanation for change, for example, comes through the qualitative interviews.

2.2.2 Overall prevalence of bonded labour

Bonded labour reduced dramatically in the intervention communities in the period between the baseline and endline surveys, from 56.2 per cent to 11.6 per cent.

The baseline survey found that half of the participating households were directly affected by bonded labour. Among the participating households, 32 per cent had all working family members in bonded labour and 20 per cent had at least one family member in bondage.

Among the total number of 526 bonded labourers in 3,175 endline households, 378 were men (aged 18 and above) and 90 were boys (aged 17 years and below). While the prevalence of bondage inside and outside the community has reduced, men and boys are still working more often in conditions of bondage. This reflects the persistence of gendered norms about work that facilitates the acceptance of child labour outside the home among boys.

There are substantial geographic variations within our sample. In some intervention areas, the vast majority of households had some form of bonded labour at baseline (>95 per cent), while in others, the rate was less than 10 per cent. There are also huge differences in reductions between NGO areas. The causes of these differences are not clear and may be related to the socioeconomic characteristics of these areas, effects of natural disasters, the scope and intensity of government, or differences in NGO and community-led interventions.

2.2.3 Early marriage

Overall, the total number of child marriages reduced from 480 incidences among 3,142 households, to 181 incidences among 3,175 households. Child marriage for boys reduced drastically. It is possibly that households became more aware, with households with all members in bondage making the most improvements in reducing child marriage.

2.2.4 Children in bonded labour

Overall, there was a reduction in the number of children under the age of 18 working in bonded labour, from 12.1 per cent at baseline to 2.9 per cent at end line.

2.2.5 Membership of Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

At baseline, 35 per cent of households with members in exclusive bonded labour had SHG membership. This increased to 94 per cent at end line. This increase of SHG membership might have been the result of government and civil society initiatives to increase enrolment in

SHGs⁴. Many of the households who are SHG members no longer have members working as bonded labourers but among the people who still have one or all members working in forms of bondage a third have taken loans from SHGs. Households with and without members working in bondage are still borrowing from moneylenders and other informal and formal sources of loans. Loans and saving from SHG co-exist with borrowing from moneylenders and other informal and formal sources of loans.

2.2.6 Land ownership

There appears to be no statistical association between land ownership or house lease and bondage. However, the data does show that as the size of land increases, the prevalence of bonded labour decreases.

2.2.7 MGNREGA cards⁵

The majority of households (51 per cent) did not have access to an MGNREGA card at baseline or endline. However, among households with exclusively bonded labour, 61 per cent had MNREGA cards at endline compared to 43 per cent at baseline, so were entitled to receive 100 days of employment, which they may or may not have received. Most NGOs felt that the MGNREGA scheme overall was so badly implemented that it had not made a significant difference to bondage. However, as reported payment received for the number of days worked through MGNREGA increases, the incidence of bonded labour decreases. While these outcomes are promising, the current reported delay in payment of wages from other sources could reduce the benefits of such alternatives. This suggests that improved access to economic alternatives, such as MGNREGA, may be an important part of an intervention package aiming to reduce bondage.

2.2.8 Bank accounts

Access to a bank account does not have any statistically significant impact on the status of bonded labour and has slightly decreased across the hotspot.

2.2.9 Source of loans

There is a small reduction of 2 per cent in loans taken from moneylenders who are also employers between the baseline and endline.

2.2.10 Reasons for taking out loans

There was relatively little change in the reasons for taking out loans between the baseline and endline. The primary reason for taking out loans is for health. Of those taking out loans, loans for health accounted for:

⁴ <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/loan-interest-waiver-for-womenrun-shgs-in-bihar-42787>

⁵ Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA): Indian legislation and social security scheme to protect right to work for rural labourers.

- Households exclusively in bonded labour: 60 per cent at baseline, 57 per cent at endline;
- Households with at least one member in bonded labour: 61 per cent at baseline, 56 per cent at endline;
- Households with no members in bonded labour: 54 per cent at baseline and 54 per cent at endline.

The secondary reason for taking out loans is for marriage. Of those taking out loans, loans for marriage accounted for: `

- Households exclusively in bonded labour: 21 per cent at baseline, 14 per cent at endline;
- Households with at least one member in bonded labour: 25 per cent at baseline, 30 per cent at endline;
- Households with no members in bonded labour: 22 per cent at baseline and 23 per cent at endline.

While the reasons for taking loans has diversified, increased access to loans from credit and savings groups may not fully protect against the need for high-risk emergency loans for health crises, leaving households vulnerable to health shocks.

2.2.11 NGO and community explanations for changes in prevalence

Within the prevalence study, we consulted the NGOs to get their views on change. It is worth noting that in the Northern India hotspot, NGOs are delivering a diverse range of interventions compared to other FF hotspots in India.

In Bihar, NGO D did not record a statistically significant change in the prevalence of bonded labour in their intervention areas. NGO D attributed the absence of a decrease in prevalence of bonded labour in their intervention areas to their approach of building awareness about the issue itself. So people who had hitherto not been aware or had internalised their work conditions, were beginning to acknowledge that they were in bondage.

At baseline, NGO O had recorded prevalence of bonded labour at 36.8 per cent, while at endline, prevalence fell to 0 per cent. NGO O attributed the reduction to the role of community vigilance committees (CVCs).

In Uttar Pradesh, NGO I reported a drop in total bonded labour from 56.2 per cent at baseline to 0 per cent at endline. NGO I reported the reason for reduction in prevalence as the selection of intervention areas based on caste composition combined with location. Based on experiential knowledge, NGO I knew that certain castes are particularly vulnerable to bonded labour and trafficking, and used this knowledge to select locations. In these high-risk hamlets, NGO staff identified families who belonged to that particular caste as part of their planning process. NGO I thus combined a family-centred approach with targeted planning for specific castes in a specific location.

At baseline, NGO C and NGO B reported similar prevalence rates (55 per cent and 57 per cent with no statistically significant difference), but at endline, NGO C reported much lower

prevalence rates at 4 per cent than NGO B who reported prevalence at 36 per cent. At the feedback meeting with NGOs after data collection had taken place, NGO C attributed this change to their livelihood enhancement activities, such as cattle rearing, which they provided to community members. They also credited the reduction in prevalence to the functioning of CVCs in improving access to health and education. However, the data do not support this explanation. Reported health-care access in NGO C seems to have gone down. At baseline, 100 per cent of respondents reported having health-care access but at endline, 47 per cent reported having health-care access.

Loan-taking has also increased. At baseline, 74 per cent of respondents had taken out loans while at endline, 87 per cent had taken out loans. The difference as a result of the interventions may be that these are safer loans since SHGs have become the second most significant source of loans in the hotspot. Additionally, the NGO C committees implemented awareness campaigns on education, trying to encourage children to attend school, leading to an increase in the number of school-going children in their intervention areas. NGO B acknowledged the role of Action Research and discussions among the community as having brought change in prevalence, especially of exclusively bonded households. They also acknowledged the role of external factors such as floods and earthquakes in limiting their success, because of the material and immaterial damage as well as limiting the implementation of the intervention.

At baseline, communities in which NGO E worked had a higher prevalence than NGO G communities, but reported a lower prevalence at endline. NGO E thought that the main reasons for this success have been increasing the number of awareness activities on the vulnerability of girls being trafficked through their involvement in dance troupes, the formation of CVCs, and training people on leadership. NGO G staff reflected that the failure in proper implementation of government schemes hindered the success of their interventions to a larger extent. Fifty-nine per cent of respondents in NGO G's hamlets had access to MGNREGA benefits at baseline and 73 per cent were landless. At endline, 59 per cent had access to MGNREGA and 45 per cent were landless. So while there were improvements in land ownership, there were no improvements in access to MNREGA.

The prevalence rate in NGO K hamlets dropped from 17 per cent at baseline to 9 per cent at endline. NGO K staff reported that two years ago – during the intervention period – labourers lost their jobs because their mining contracts were not renewed, pushing them into a financially vulnerable situation. NGO K subsequently formed a farmer producer company and around 60–80 per cent of labourers who had some land were engaged in work. The remaining 20–40 per cent are vulnerable to bondage due to this economic instability which has affected the success of their intervention. These examples demonstrate the interconnections of bonded labour with wider social and economic factors and the need to account for such factors when designing and evaluating interventions.

Some participating NGOs such as NGO C mentioned that the use of a 'Migration Tracking System' by the CVC improved practices of safe migration by helping communities track where family members migrated and in what conditions they worked. This is a collectively adopted tool, which should be in use by all partners in all locations. It is used to promote greater responsibility by *panchayat* elected officials for people who are migrating. NGO J felt that the experiences of repatriated children educated communities about not sending their children outside to work. Continuing loans and the impact of natural disasters may be a reason why the prevalence rates among boys had not dropped as sharply as the rates of

girls. In many villages, it was often the eldest son who continued to work outside their home village, which matches the findings of the prevalence.

2.3 Main findings from the action-research processes

The action-research process can be considered an intervention in its own right. It both generated evidence and action. The point of the action-research process was to generate innovative solutions to bonded labour-type issues and to model that powerful mutual aid can be catalysed through these types of processes.

2.3.1 The action-research process

Action Research is a process whereby stakeholders impacted by a set of issues assess the situation through collection and review of evidence, develop theories of change based on that evidence, plan action, take action, learn from that action, and then restart the cycle with a new assessment of the situation, etc. It is based on the idea that we learn as much from action as from analysis. Typically, each group involves a core of 10–20 people. Prior to the evidence and action phases, most groups have needed three or four meetings to build trust and to clarify their primary role as mutual aid and self-help – not as vehicles for seeking NGO assistance or supporting the implementation of NGO programmes.

IDS and Praxis supported 11 action-research groups, coordinated by partner NGOs in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The groups identified the key issues for their research enquiries through the joint analysis of the life stories at the Collective Story Analysis workshop. The aim of the action groups was to develop ideas for pilot interventions, including encouragement and support of the researchers, but without additional project funding. This allowed people to explore ideas and to mobilise resources outside the operational programmes. Among those 11 groups, eight action-research groups completed a full cycle of Action Research.

The aim of the action-research process was:

- To develop a culture of autonomous action at the level of the community;
- To generate local evidence in relation to complex local problems;
- To generate effective innovative solutions to complex local problems.

Action-research groups focused on alcohol, health, brick-kiln bondage, supporting *dalit* children to go to and stay in school, and livelihoods.

All groups undertook actions during the early engagement period. These ranged from organising rallies against alcohol consumption to visiting authorities to demand that they re-open the local health sub-centre. These actions initially focused on general issues rather than specific modern-bondage-related ones but as they increased their skills and confidence and began to analyse their own data, they started to take action directly related to bondage.

2.3.2 Alcohol

One group mapped household expenses before and after prohibition. This enabled the group to see that prohibition had aggravated poverty. They developed a theory of change focused

on harm reduction: *If we change the demand for and supply of cheap, illegal liquor and reduce the financing of alcohol through loans, then we can reduce the effects of illegal alcohol production and consumption on bonded labour.* At the beginning of the action-research process in Bihar, the group wanted to enforce the abolition of alcohol and to punish those who drank. By the end, they were questioning alcohol producers and exploring the link between alcoholism and bonded labour. Six rallies focusing on different aspects of the alcohol problem were initiated from December 2016; two liquor shops were closed. During *holi*, alcohol consumption was reduced. The group plans to extend into the neighbouring village. This community-rooted approach can be considered successful – although care needs to be taken to ensure that men are not blamed for structural changes which have replaced male labour with cheaper women’s labour (damaging self-esteem and leading to mental health crises to which the response can be alcohol). The community realised that forcing men to stop consuming alcohol was not the solution and that they needed to focus on excessive drinking.

2.3.3 Health (illness and debt)

Four of the groups focused on illness and loans. This was in response to this being identified as a major gap by the narrative analysis process. Many were already weak from malnutrition and long working hours. Those who fell ill had to borrow money, often from moneylenders.

One group focused on diarrhoea. Because of open defecation, lack of drainage, waterlogging, and lack of safe drinking water, diarrhoea affected almost every poor family in the village. Many were already weak from malnutrition and long working hours. Those who fell ill had to borrow money – often from money lenders. Actions from the groups included mapping water pumps and petitioning government for deeper ones; supplementing government funds to buy better material for latrines and handpumps; installing a solar light themselves; running an emergency kitchen during the floods; and a joint emergency assessment to help citizens get compensation of 6,000 rupees.

In one village, the group worked on TB. TB is common but highly stigmatised and people don’t admit they suffer from it. The NGO collected a variety of data, and conducted a mapping of TB incidences. The group also looked at whether suspected TB could be silicosis. They collected data on income and health expenditure and found that a third of income was being spent on health treatments.

A third group used social mapping to visualise loans, diseases, and debts. Collective analysis showed that considerable money was being spent on preventable illnesses, such as diabetes, and on illnesses for which free treatment is available, such as tuberculosis. The group decided to prioritise health issues that required sudden expenses – such as C-section deliveries (as one third of the deliveries in six months were done through C-section) and typhoid.

A fourth group focused on the poor condition of the government hospital in the ward and theorised that if the quality of service improved, it would support people to use government hospitals instead of taking loans to visit private hospitals. One of the initial actions was to build pressure on the administration to set up a grievance redressal system which the women could access. The group received a setback with one of the more active members being admitted to the hospital because of a health condition triggered by advanced diabetes. This also dampened the spirit of the group.

2.3.4 Brick-kiln bondage

Another group worked on bondage to brick-kiln owners. Group members approached the brick-kiln owners to try and understand how much the loan was that each had taken and what remained to be paid back. The group members had to individually approach the brick-kiln owners several times to get this information. In December 2017, the Praxis team was informed that group members had completely paid back these loans. It appears that the group used low-credit micro-finance loans to pay off the high-interest loans from the brick-kiln owners or money lenders. Some used a part of the amount they received from the government as a disaster relief fund to pay off the loans.

2.3.5 Dalit children in school

Two of the groups worked on *dalit* children in school. The first found that not a single Mahadalit child was going to school regularly – even though they were enrolled. This was because of discrimination, the poor quality of the midday meal, and a lack of financial support and scholarship/lack of bank accounts. In addition, the group noted delays in distributing textbooks, the poor quality of the teaching, a lack of Aadhaar cards for children, and the limited interest of parents in their children's education. The group collected data on the number of enrolled children in schools and the number of non-enrolled children and drop-outs. In the first few months of 2017, the ARG focused on improving the quality of the midday meal, ensuring all children had bank accounts so that they could receive scholarship funds from the government and ensuring the timely distribution of textbooks. At the end of the two-year period, the group feels that the fact that no child migrated for work was a significant marker of success. Enrolment to and relationships with the school have improved. Parents are now actively involved with the school (e.g. monitoring the preparation of the midday meal in the school) and are reaching out to the parents of children who are not yet attending school. ARG members have helped ten children get their Aadhaar cards and bank accounts.

The action-research groups collected data on enrolled, attending, and non-enrolled students. Successful subsequent actions included enrolling 13 children in school, opening up bank accounts, etc. The action-research process in Village 3 increased the enrolment of students in school and raised community awareness of the value of education but in later meetings ARG members acknowledged that some children who had started attending school still came home after the lunch break. The group has been able to link *dalit* children to different educational opportunities – including to residential schools.

2.3.6 Debt related to marriage ceremonies

The following was reported in the Freedom Fund's 2016 mid-year progress report (Geneva Global 2016: 3):

After conducting action-research, partner organisations discovered that a large number of individuals in its working communities fell into situations of intergenerational debt due to expenses related to their children's marriage ceremonies and dowry. In fact, these communities reported that the principal amount for such loans varied between \$USD 220 and \$295 with an interest of 10 per cent each month. These arrangements were resulting in vicious cycles of intergenerational bondage impacting the entire family. In order to break the cycle of debt bondage, NGO K organised a safe collective marriage programme on April 20th in Allahabad. During this ceremony, five families

from the self-help groups who were planning the marriages of their children over 18 years participated. These families were provided with information about safe marriage, risks involved with taking loans, and Kanya Vival Yojana, a government scheme which discourages child marriage by providing financial assistance for education or marriage when the child reaches the age of 18 years. As a result of their participation, costs relating to the marriage ceremony were reduced and newly married couples were provided with seed funding and training to begin their own income-generating activities.

2.4 Main findings from the qualitative interviews

2.4.1 The qualitative interview process

The qualitative interview process was based on open structured interview questions – each with a set of further prompt questions. These were agreed in advance with the Freedom Fund.

These conclusions are based on interviews with 30 members of the community, 12 NGO staff members, and ten other stakeholders. The interviews focused on the work of the NGOs to reduce bonded and child labour and are therefore structured around the key intervention activities.

The aim of the qualitative interview process was to provide supportive (or contrary evidence) to other data in the rest of the sample. As indicated above, it is important to be clear that 30 community interviews across all of the intervention villages in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh can only signal some of the mechanisms by which certain changes happen and what to be alert to; it cannot tell us in any sort of representative way about what changes have happened.

2.4.2 Awareness-raising

There seems to be an increase in awareness around issues of child labour although some community respondents do not consider engaging children in child labour in the village, such as working in brick kilns with parents, as ‘child’ labour. There is increased awareness about bonded labour and the dangers related to middlemen, etc. However, it is still often seen by communities as equating to forced labour – being tied to a landowner, or being forced to work on their fields. Yet part-time labour in the fields by children for the family is not considered child labour. Respondents in all NGOs mentioned an increased awareness around trafficking and being conscious about the risks of sending children with strangers. There is also an increased awareness around the issues of child marriage, and of the reasons why children should be going to school.

2.4.3 Group formation and development

A great many groups have been created. Groups have provided a space within which awareness around bonded labour can be built and within which confidence to take action against bonded labour, child marriage, etc can be increased. Aside from the Self-Help Groups, there is some confusion amongst community members about which group is which. Sometimes, groups are doing the same things as each other – without coordinating between themselves. Groups have been effective at strengthening individuals but have failed to consistently build a collective identity. Many people across the interviews commented that there is a lack of collective spirit and a lack of collective action at a community level. SHG loans enabled people to manage small costs, but for larger amounts and immediate support, communities still depend on money lenders or advance payment. Action-research groups

have been particularly effective at generating innovation and community-led action. Action Research also developed evaluative thinking, both in communities and among NGO staff.

2.4.4 Confidence to speak out and challenge exploitation

Generally, people are more prepared to talk about issues of child labour and to some extent trafficking and child labour. There is still a certain level of fear related to bonded labour because of the perceived consequences of talking about powerful local people. The police are perceived to be more aware of the issue. There was a mixed view of the interest of politicians. Some were seen by interviewees to be completely ignorant of the issues. Others are using it in their campaigns, but there is no policy-level discussion by politicians. There is still an element of stigma associated with trafficking, as a result of which, it is a subject that is less discussed than bonded labour or child labour.

2.4.5 Engagement and empowerment of women

NGOs have been effective in the necessary task of bringing together women and the reported increase in the age of marriage (especially among brides) is a good outcome. The prevalence data also points to the drastic reduction in child marriage cases among boys as well as girls.

2.4.6 Continued focus on boys in child labour

The prevalence study found that the overall rate of child labour has declined. At baseline, there were 678 cases among 3,142 households, compared to 309 cases among 3,175 households at endline. However, the majority (79 per cent) of those in child labour at endline are boys, and an even higher portion (86 per cent) of children in bonded labour are boys. This points to a priority in needing to mobilise the boys and challenge the gendered norms that expose them to harmful work.

2.4.7 Caste

There has been a general relaxing of day-to-day caste inequality but deeper structural inequalities remain the same. Projects tend to expect that caste prejudice will be reduced as a side benefit from the other issues being addressed, rather than having specific activities to address it directly. There is scope for projects to tap into the economic implications of caste discrimination. Inevitably, most bonded labourers are in the lower castes. Shifting this will mean, for example, helping to ensure that lower castes get the same education as others. There is a need for the project to focus specifically on caste equity issues, rather than expecting collateral impact through other project activities. This is a difficult and certainly not a new issue, also with the potential to backfire.⁶

2.4.8 Rescue, rehabilitation, and follow-up

With regard to children, NGOs and others felt that once a child is rescued, there is still a risk that they will go back. Some of the respondents felt that there is not a comprehensive structured method for follow-up and monitoring. There is sometimes follow-up with schools

6 Policies providing quotas for lower and backward castes such as the Mandal Resolution created massive political unrest, including self-immolation of students. Many attempts have been made (see Mathur 2004).

and families but not in a sufficiently structured way. There is also no structured process for professional counselling of families of trafficking survivors.

2.4.9 Reintegration

Male workers are more likely to be accepted back into the fold of society and family, while girls and women face stigma, especially in cases of trafficking. Rescued boys can be under particular pressure to be re-trafficked or re-migrate, despite the follow-up and efforts of the NGO. In some of the cases recounted in the interviews, pressure came from the family and/or community at large.

2.4.10 Livelihoods and skills-training initiatives

The interviews suggest that livelihoods programmes are not as well targeted as they could be, and that they are often not accompanied by an effective market analysis. We have become aware of market analysis conducted by consultants for two of the NGO partners. However, it is outside the scope of this evaluation for IDS to verify the nature or quality of this work. Comprehensive market analysis should be a standard underpinning for all livelihoods programmes.

2.4.11 Trainings needing to lead to livelihood opportunities

Interviewees reported that in many cases, trainings did not turn into livelihood opportunities. This leaves lots of people with skills and no opportunities to turn these into jobs. Where they are turned into jobs, this often only generates supplementary income. This may be enough to help support daily living, but is not likely to be enough in the current form to replace a bonded labour income with an alternative.

2.4.12 Children's education and school drop-outs

Both enrolment and prevention of drop-outs has been enhanced by the monitoring role of the CVCs and the willingness of group members to talk to parents. While small successes have been made to improve the quality of education, much more needs to be done here. Most importantly, unless the stress on education goes hand in hand with providing parents with a better source of income and generating employment opportunities for adults, the intervention's success in linking children to education may be short-lived.

While safety or fear of sexual harassment in public transport or public settings are amongst the reasons for the dropping out of girls, respondents did not report discussions or interventions to address this. Similarly, they were not aware of specific interventions aimed at caste discrimination in schools.

2.4.13 Middlemen and brokers

Traffickers still deceive with promises of marriage or jobs. However, according to a community respondent, 'There has been a lot of improvement, now the middleman does not come to take children.'

Traffickers and middlemen try new tricks to lure people. So the NGOs now keep a stronger watch around railway stations. One significant difference is that earlier, the traffickers would take children and bonded labourers in groups. But now that groups have become very

conspicuous, they avoid large groups. One stakeholder noted that traffickers also used other less prominent railway stations and looked for land routes while trafficking people, especially children. One programme advisor expressed concern that this was also making the journeys of those trafficked much more traumatic.

Some success has been achieved through different strategies targeted at middlemen. These range from awareness campaigns – which caution people from taking advances – to stopping middlemen coming into villages, to prosecutions. This is valuable systemic work which targets one of the key facilitators of the system of bondage.

2.4.14 Linking to public services

NGOs are linking people to public services but because the public services are so unreliable, they may not impact much on bonded labour. Public services, schemes such as ration cards and job cards, have the scope to play a significant role in reducing vulnerability to bonded labour, if they work properly. While the NGOs focus on linking people to schemes, there is less focus on improving service delivery, especially education. NGOs not only link people to schemes, but also support the CVCs in helping the community access these schemes. This builds the capacity of the CVCs.

2.4.15 Policy, liaison with government, and the Human Liberty Network

The Human Liberty Network is widely seen to be successful. There are many examples of successful dialogues with government. Its strength lies in the cross-learning between organisations and the fact that it can harness the different strengths of organisations. A member of the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit noted that the HLN organisations had trained up to 2,400 constables in the last year on the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and the POCSO Act, 2012.

2.4.16 Support from district administrations to arrest traffickers, rescue children, and restore them to their families

One NGO acknowledged the support of the district administration in taking strict measures to arrest traffickers, rescue children, and restore them to their families. Some NGO staff, such as from NGO L, NGO J, and NGO O, joined the government's Dhava Dal unit, which conducts raids and organises rescues at hotels, tea-shops, and *dhabas*.⁷ The rescued children from two rehabilitation centres of NGO L presented a charter of demands to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in 2016 on the day the child labour trafficking portal was being inaugurated in Bihar. One stakeholder noted that what has worked is that now, the rescued child is not merely returned to the parents. The child is presented before the Child Welfare Committee, sent to a home, and due legal process is followed. As a result, it has been possible to file cases against traffickers.

2.4.17 Loans

While there is awareness about taking out safe loans, and even limits on the loans one takes according to one's ability to pay them back, none of the NGOs interviewed spoke about the importance of tracking one's loans.

7 Roadside restaurant.

2.4.18 Alcohol

Alcoholism is perceived to be a widespread and growing problem which is directly contributing to bonded labour. It leads to loans directly for alcohol, and it reportedly results in men not working to their full capacity or potential and therefore limits the family income.

2.4.19 Perceived pressures from the Freedom Fund

In the Northern India hotspot, concern was expressed by some of the NGOs that the Freedom Fund was constantly adding new priorities, and that the diversity of what they had to do was too great to do it well. Clearly, there is a balance to be struck here. One programme advisor pointed out the need to take NGOs beyond their comfort zones to extend and challenge their practice.

2.5 Self-assessment reviews

A review of the self-reflection analyses of the NGOs showed huge variance. Some of the NGOs provided a detailed and sophisticated self-critique, while others said that everything that they were doing was working wonderfully and demonstrated little or no reflective capacity at all. For example, one NGO says, 'This single strategy is foolproof to handle this'.⁸ In other words, their strategy can handle all of the issues related to bonded labour. This suggests that more capacity development is needed to support NGOs to develop the strategic capacities required. Also linked to the points made above on fear of losing funding etc., the Freedom Fund might want to reflect on how to create an environment where NGOs feel able to be honest. It is also clear from this documentation that each of the NGOs has a different emphasis and each is claiming that its big successes are in different domains to each other (e.g. community action in one locality, livelihoods work in another, etc.).

3 Evaluation findings

There are clear messages implicit in the analysis above about relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. In this section, we draw these out and make them explicit. The core objectives of the Northern India hotspot programme since it started were to support community-based work; the improvement of the wider environment for freedom; partner strengthening; and the generation of evidence.

3.1 Relevance of design and implementation

Are the design and activities of the hotspot reflecting the current needs and priorities of the community members and local government? Are they relevant to the objectives of the hotspot?

8 NGO self-reflection analysis, unpublished, 2017.

Overall, the focus of the hotspot and the activities that have been carried out within the hotspot are relevant. However, given that health has been identified as a critical systemic driver of loans that lead to bondage, a far greater emphasis should be placed on health in the future.

3.1.1

The broad hotspot approach was justified, as was the decision to focus investment on community-based NGOs in these localities. This suggests that continuing to invest in localities with clusterings of high prevalence could reduce the prevalence of bonded labour. The focus on village communities which provide bonded labour is justified as there is evidence that interventions within source communities have made a major contribution to the reduction in prevalence. NGOs have, however, in some cases invested resources in communities with relatively low prevalence.

3.1.2

The core of the model is a preventative approach rooted in awareness of multiple needs and empowerment strategies. The evaluation team believe that awareness is a condition for a change of behaviour that lays a foundation to be willing to change and take action, such as accepting people to be reintegrated into their communities. However, getting access to practical support and financial resources to act is also important. Overall, the preventative work has had the most significant systemic impact on the hotspot because it has had a sustainable change in mindsets.

3.1.3

There is a real danger that rescue only treats the symptoms – important as they are – and that if there is a constant supply of labour to replace those rescued, then the underlying problem is not being solved. There is evidence from the interviews that some of those rescued return back to bondage. The pressure on rescued boys and girls to leave again is different because of gender norms and values. Here the distinction between efficient and effective is important. While, by all accounts, rescue work is being carried out efficiently, it may be less effective than other strategies in the long term. Programme managers and advisors had very different views about the long-term value of rescue work and the efficiency and effectiveness of legal prosecution work. It is our view that while this work is important, it is not a priority.

3.1.4

A multiple intervention strategy is particularly important for poorer and most marginalised communities, and we attribute much of the success of this programme to the implementation of multiple parallel interventions (see Section 3.2.6).

3.1.5

Almost all community respondents were happy with their local NGO, noting that staff members were cordial and on time and had provided good information. There appears to be a trusting relationship between communities and local NGOs. This suggests buy-in to the NGO agenda.

3.1.6

The narrative analysis showed that a critical issue for the Northern India hotspot was the sheer number of people who were getting loans for health, often from middlemen at high interest. This revelation was turned into an indicator in the prevalence study, and the baseline results strongly re-enforced this finding. This is a key driver for bondage. The Action Research showed that autonomous groups were able to make the connections between health and bondage and take a variety of actions based on local evidence. Facilitating access to health care, initiatives to support the spread of good public health and health seeking behaviour, and finding alternatives to loans for health should be seen as a priority.

A further issue which appears repeatedly on community agendas, but which is not built into the work programme of NGOs, is alcoholism.

3.1.7

NGOs in the Northern India hotspot programme all had different specialisms and built on those specialisms. This means that the programme has developed in a much more organic way with interventions looking quite different from NGO to NGO. There is clearly an opportunity to form a more deliberate approach for NGOs to work together more consistently and intensively on shared models of intervention that allow for diversity in local responses. The prevalence reduction shows that a consortium of quite diverse but locally embedded NGOs can achieve results, perhaps because of their ability to respond to a variety of bonded labour situations. A more standardised approach could be less successful in such a complex context.

3.2 Effectiveness

To what extent has the programme achieved its aim of reducing bonded labour in the target communities? Do the effects of the programme vary between different groups? (Note: this will mostly be answered from the prevalence study findings.)

Based on the qualitative feedback from the community and NGOs: (i) how has the programme contributed towards the measured change, and (ii) what are the observable links between programme activities and wider changes in socioeconomic wellbeing, community attitudes and actions, government policies, and workplace practices?

Overall, the programme has been effective.

3.2.1

The programme has contributed to a dramatic reduction. from 56.2 per cent to 11.6 per cent in the prevalence of bonded labour in the target communities.

While some of this reduction could be associated with national trends, this is unlikely to have accounted for a drop of this magnitude. This suggests a major contribution from the Freedom Fund interventions. It is the view of the evaluation team that this bottom-up evidence generated by the research shows how interventions targeted at communities/households/individuals affected by bonded labour have contributed to a reduction in bonded labour prevalence in this geographical 'hotspot'.

The hotspot programme seems to be a 'tipping point' intervention, which alongside other institutional and norms change has enabled a significant impact to be made on longstanding and entrenched patterns of bondage.

3.2.2

Awareness-raising and group formation work has been effective to some extent. Interviewees suggest that most communities understand what bonded labour, child labour, and child marriage are, and understand their repercussions.

3.2.3

While a strong network of groups has been created, there was a widely stated view amongst interviewees that there is a lack of 'collectivity'. This could diminish the effectiveness of programmes. Some interviewees talked of the need for collectivised economic initiatives. Taking on middlemen and landlords requires a collective response. Similarly, introducing programmes to change spending norms on festivals, family gifts, and temple contributions would require a stronger focus on collective action.

3.2.4

From baseline to endline, the poorest castes are the groups that remain in bonded labour. The programme is addressing the issues that they face but could do more to address the issue of caste discrimination directly. Similarly, strengthening some of the gender inequality work could be achieved through greater investment in women at senior management level.

3.2.5

Rehabilitation and follow-up of those rescued is regarded by some interviewees as a bit 'hit and miss'. There is not a strong enough focus on trauma or stigma during the process, and there is no comprehensive monitoring process that takes gender and other social-economic characteristics into account.

3.2.6

The programme is being delivered by different NGOs. There is variety between the communities, the intervention characteristics, and components. These interventions are all combined and often take place at the same time, which is important because it allows a concerted yet flexible response to different problems that can contribute to bondage in these communities. This rich diversity means that we cannot say which intervention is the 'magic bullet' that can be scaled up to ensure universal success. What we can say is that a bottom-up approach that stimulates and facilitates collective organisation and local action is effective in reducing the prevalence of bonded labour in the intervention communities living with

bonded labour. The two most consistent and widespread aspects of the programme are the intensive work on awareness-raising and setting up self-help – mutual aid groups of various sorts. Systematic reviews of the evidence of ‘what works’ in interventions that aim to reduce the prevalence of forced labour in South Asia (Oosterhoff *et al.* 2018) agree that community-based approaches are effective in reducing prevalence of trafficking (Jensen, Oosterhoff and Pocock, forthcoming, 2020) at community and village-levels.

3.2.7

While there has been a marked reduction in prevalence as a result of the hotspot approach, the evidence from both the prevalence research and the qualitative interviews shows that there remains a hard core of 10–15 per cent of people who will not be able to escape bondage as a result of awareness, and/or managing household finances and loans better, but who will need meaningful alternative livelihoods. The key question which remains unanswered is the extent to which the livelihood initiatives are targeted to the very poorest – who are dependent on child labour to survive, and whether wraparound packages of support are being provided to these people. One might argue that this also gets to the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were targeted at the ‘low hanging fruit’, the aim of the SDGs has been more explicitly to reach those hardest to reach. Of course, all bonded labourers and child labourers might be included in this category, but there is a harder to reach group within this category which probably requires a different focus of activity. This can be regarded as a policy decision. Is the priority for the Freedom Fund to spread this successful model to other villages and reduce prevalence radically in the same way as has been achieved in the first phase? Or is it to eradicate the bondage of those facing the worst and most resistant forms of bondage – which will take a different focus?

3.2.8

The Freedom Fund Programme Advisors (formerly Geneva Global consultants) on the ground have been committed to, and supportive of, a community development approach. The continuity of programme staff on the ground has helped to ensure a coherent programme. At times, however, we acknowledge that they have felt caught between the accountability requirements of the Freedom Fund as well as the efforts to bring new specific strengths to the programme (such as introductions to livelihoods providers or mental health training), and the participatory agenda of issues directly arising from communities and NGOs on the ground. This was very visible to us when the IDS research itself was rolled out, as it tended to be seen as a competing priority rather than a core element of a learning and evidence-based programme.

3.3 Efficiency

Based on the type of programme activities which seem to be most impactful within the programme duration, to what extent do these align with the way the Freedom Fund is financing the NGO partners’ time and resources?

Overall, the programme has been moderately efficient.

3.3.1

Awareness campaigns and group development are impactful and given their coverage, are the most likely direct contributors to prevalence reduction. The emergence of CVCs as a vehicle for enrolling and monitoring school attendance is a good example of this.

3.3.2

According to the Freedom Fund's mid-2019 monitoring summary, there has been a steady upward trend in the numbers of new people benefiting from Freedom Fund interventions with a much slower growth in 2017. According to the Senior Programme Manager:

The number of Community Freedom Groups went up in 2018 because they started in some new communities with the new phase that went from 2018–2019. This may also be the reason why access to services continues to increase – plus the condition of entitlements is such that you could go on increasing access for a long time even if you're working with the same people. (pers. comm.)

The most plausible explanation for the slower growth in Community Freedom Groups is that by 2017, the saturation point for setting up new groups had been reached within the communities where the Freedom Fund was engaging. Numbers started to go up again as new communities were added post-2018.

Given a relatively steady state of funding year by year (see Table 1.2), this suggests that there is a cumulative increase in effectiveness of resource spend year on year.

Table 3.1 Freedom Fund monitoring summary mid-2020

Indicators as per website	Cumulative total at end – 2015	2016 total new	2017 total new	2018 total new	Mid-2019 total new	Cumulative total at mid-2019
1 Lives impacted	99,987	28,656	19,715	32,575	15,047	195,980
2 Victims liberated	6,066	2,895	2,812	2,805	1,485	16,063
3 Individuals accessing social & legal services	1,608	9,410	14,025	18,492	10,768	54,303
3a Survivors accessing social & legal services	1,608	2,595	5,023	1,967	814	12,007
4 Community freedom groups supported	1,502	387	121	334	220	2,564
4a Members of community freedom groups	23,346	7,736	1,723	8,153	6,286	47,244
5 At-risk children in school	12,880	3,254	3,197	4,650	4,130	28,111
6 Graduates of vocational training	1,216	1,570	1,417	2,070	933	7,206
7 Micro-enterprises started	5,547	1,425	1,949	2,371	1,681	12,973
8 Individuals with new access to government services	5,175	9,439	12,220	17,931	7,364	52,129

9	Legal cases assisted	651	678	503	743	493	3,068
10	Arrests	103	78	77	66	30	354
11	Convictions	7	13	11	11	4	46
12	Changes in public policy	1	5	6	10	12	34
13	Media stories	59	58	103	272	190	682

Source: Freedom Fund.

The Freedom Fund was not able to provide us with budget breakdowns per category of activity, so it is not possible to assess how spend maps onto beneficiary numbers by activity. Further, while we can note the summary monitoring outcomes, it was not within the scope of our work to verify their accuracy.

3.3.3

According to a number of the qualitative interviews, livelihood work is not generally underpinned by a strong market analysis, so a significant number of people are getting trained for jobs that don't exist or for work that is unsustainable.

3.3.4

It would probably be an efficient use of resources to continue to strengthen the focus on tackling the drivers of bonded labour, rather than to invest heavily in 'rescue' when the system ensures that there is a constant supply of workers to replace those who are rescued.

3.3.5

NGO staff feel overburdened and stretched across too many activities. This may have an impact on the efficiency of delivery of any one of these activities. On the other hand, the Freedom Fund is seen to invest a lot in organisational capacity development and learning. A number of NGO respondents in the qualitative interviews complained that the number of activities that NGOs were required to do was too wide. A number of external commentators commented on the fact that the programme was driven by Freedom Fund headquarters. On the other hand, programme advisors felt that it was important to push NGOs beyond their comfort zones to develop new skills and competencies. There are merits to both of these arguments. On balance, the solution might be a streamlined set of core activities carried out by all partners complemented with some specialisms (which means that each NGO doesn't need to be an expert in everything).

3.3.6

The Human Liberty Network is widely regarded as being a success, both in terms of providing inputs to government initiatives and as a vehicle for cross-learning. The 2017 Annual Report (Baumann 2017) notes its engagement in various government initiatives including the Bonded Labour Act's Central Sector Scheme for Compensation, the Child and Adolescent Labour Act regulations, the National Child Labour Project, and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme. The Annual Report notes the way in which recommendations were accepted into the revised Child and Adolescent Labour Act. Similar discussions happened in relation to the Bonded Labour Rehabilitation Scheme. Feedback from the qualitative interview indicates that the NGOs saw activities like this by the Human Liberty Network as

the strongest added value of the hotspot. While at state level, different HLN partners have good reach into the relevant departments, a lot of the national work appears to be led by NGO L and it is not entirely clear how much of it they might have delivered anyway without the network.

3.4 Sustainability

To what extent has the programme influenced the approach, organisational capability, and quality of activities (including monitoring and evaluation) of the NGO partners? What have the NGO partners undertaken together that they might not have done outside of the hotspot model, especially in terms of systems change?

What is the key knowledge and skills that NGOs have learned from programme interventions and can they give examples of how this can be applied elsewhere?

What can the community members and adolescents now do for themselves?

Overall, the programme displays the potential for long-term sustainability, but weaknesses in its lack of theories of scaling, and in monitoring of outcomes for individuals and households – the latter meaning that it is very difficult to assess long-term impact. While there is evidence of a transition to a more community-driven approach, this has been slow and may in turn slow the sustainability of the programme.

3.4.1 Change in the NGOs' understanding of their work

The NGOs are working in a different way than before. They have diversified their activities to create much more of a multi-pronged intervention, they have rooted their work in the development of community groups, they have developed a range of new skills including policy promotion, Action Research, etc.

While there is a shift by NGOs towards a more community-driven approach, this is less strong than in the Freedom Fund South India hotspot. We noted in our own work that when we asked NGOs to bring people from the community to the collective analysis process, they simply didn't do it because they didn't believe that illiterate community members would be able to do an analysis. This was not the case in the South India hotspot. An asset-based approach is very important. It helps communities to realise their own strengths and NGOs to value the potential of the communities. There are many things that communities can do for themselves. It is only when this transformation properly occurs that these programmes will be truly sustainable. This assumption has been gradually changing over time, amplified by seeing what the members of the action-research groups have achieved, but there is still a way to go.

3.4.2 Awareness

The qualitative interviews suggest that the awareness-raising processes that have been carried out by the NGOs has been effective. This work has been important from a sustainability perspective. Once people have an awareness of the issues, it is not possible for them to unlearn it. The knowledge they have then gets transferred to friends and family

and neighbouring villages. For example, one of the community participants mentioned that the SHG members have started identifying people who are desperate enough to mortgage or sell their jewellery for a loan, and advised them on safer sources of loans and helped them with the same.

3.4.3 Groups

A wide variety of groups have been set up. It is not clear from the interview data the extent to which the other groups are able to take autonomous action, generate autonomous leadership, and so on, although as indicated above, the action-research groups have developed into autonomous groups. The question is, who owns the issue? If the community owns it and if facilitated initially, it can get transferred to other communities. When we look at responses during discussions in prevalence or qualitative interviews, there were very few instances where communities said what they could do. Mostly, it was what NGOs/government could do for them. Identifying local champions for different issues and supporting them to take responsibility could help to build sustainability into the groups.

3.4.4 Rescue

It is not clear that rescue (as distinct from providing individuals support to liberating themselves from debt bondage) is a sustainable intervention. While it is important for individuals, and in some cases it provides credibility to the NGOs, it is unlikely to lead to sustainable systemic change.

3.4.5 Education

With regard to schools and education, the critical issue related to sustainability, is the quality of the teaching and facilities – especially for girls, and the extent to which there is a culture of inclusivity in the schools. While it is clear that communities are mobilising to get children back into school effectively, there are many examples of children who leave school because of the quality of the teaching or because there are no sanitation facilities for girls, or because lower caste children were discriminated against. There is qualitative evidence that some of the children drop back out of school. However, there is no comprehensive monitoring data on this.

3.4.6 Livelihoods

Reported evidence from some qualitative interviews suggests that vocational training is not systematically based on a market analysis and as a result is often unable to support sustainable income-earning opportunities. We have not seen evidence of comprehensive market analysis. Linking vocational training to a proper market analysis is what will ensure sustainability. The observation in the 2016 Mid-Year Report that ‘the absence of robust markets in rural areas impedes community members from participating in profitable or gainful employment’ seems pertinent. Where markets (or potential markets) don’t exist, there will be little point in training people.

3.4.7 Medium-term outcome data

While the Freedom Fund seems to have a fairly comprehensive input–output data monitoring system which can distinguish unique cases, etc. (assuming it is implemented correctly – it is beyond our scope of work to verify), there is very little data which track outcomes for

individuals or households to see if any of the interventions are sustainable. The Senior Programme Manager reports that:

Partners do follow up with the children, and in the case of the Jaipur returnees, they are now all using [a standard] follow-up format (this includes the follow-up visits format after the first visit). Until the Jaipur project, we have not been expecting them to report to us on whether children remain at home, and for the Jaipur project, we don't yet have sufficient data, but it's looking like less than 7 per cent at the moment, and our target is to get below 5 per cent. With regard to staying on at school, we don't have data on long-term retention. Regarding impact of legal work, we have not had the scope to undertake research on that. We are relying on studies in other areas that suggest that when there is a greater likelihood/level of certainty of arrest and punishment, it acts as a deterrent.⁹

Similarly, it is impossible to tell from the number of micro-enterprises started how many of these have survived and/or whether they provide a high enough income to enable families to get out of bondage or only supplementary income.¹⁰ Certain assumptions are employed around sustainability which are untested: for example, the 2017 Annual Report says that 1,949 people earned a new income which is 'a significant step towards self-sustainability' (p.5). This may or may not be the case. While it is important to be realistic about the survival rate of any new businesses (particularly in high poverty contexts), it is difficult to make any meaningful assessment of sustainability without outcome data. Again, it was noted in the interviews that there was no real process for tracking loans. While we appreciate that it may be difficult and costly to track medium-term outcomes (especially among communities with high rates of outward migration), there is clear value in understanding whether any of these interventions are sustainable.

3.4.8 How scaling happens

While the logframe indicates how activities lead to outcomes, the programme has no explicit theory of change for scaling and sustainability. On interviewing five headquarters staff, we identified five different understandings of how scale and sustainability were supposed to be happening. Loosely speaking, these were the following:

- This successful community development approach has built awareness, ownership, and capacity for action which will lead to championing and spread from village to village, and from organisation to organisation. This approach builds movements which put pressure on decision makers to make more strategic changes.
- A successful community-based programme with strong investment in evidence gathering, and which has demonstrated effectiveness through a large prevalence reduction is a model which can be extended in this programme and beyond.
- This programme models the viability of an approach which can be mainstreamed into government and other organisational practices.

9 Pers. comm., 26 August 2019.

10 It is important to be realistic about the survival rate of new businesses in these poor settings. Businesses can and do fail all over the world. Ninety per cent of Indian start-ups in IT fail within the first five years. See www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/90-indian-startups-fail-within-5-years-of-inception-study-2689671.html. It is realistic to expect that some bonded labourers funded with micro-credit will not be successful.

- The programme has built a base for engagement with government and other decision makers which can now be harnessed for greater impact. Resources in the second phase will be better used if diverted to the more strategic level.
- Getting to the root causes and focusing on prevention will make the results more extensive and sustainable.

We would strongly argue that the programme is already modelling horizontal scaling out which will provide a strong foundation for long-term policy change. As the programme reaches more and more people and more and more villages, it builds knowledge for policy change; models effective change processes; and builds a critical mass of pressure on the next levels up in the system (e.g. the *panchayats*). In other words, the evaluation team believes that ground-level scaling is necessary to underpin systemic change at an institutional level.

4 Conclusion and recommendations for the Freedom Fund

- The Freedom Fund strategy for the hotspot works, and should be built on. Continue with the general policy of community development (ensuring that it is asset based) – supported by multi-stranded interventions and ensure that NGOs have the experience and capacity to deliver across a range of interventions. Supporting NGOs to carry out specialist work in very local contexts will not provide a route to significant scale-up.
- There is a limit to the amount of new awareness work that can go on in the villages that the NGOs are already working in. Developing awareness campaigns in new villages should be seen as a priority, although given the frequent changes in procedures, state level policies, and new laws and schemes, enabling the ability of communities to seek information and keep themselves informed will remain important.
- It is our view that the Freedom Fund programme needs a nuanced approach to phasing – taking into account the stage of development of a community and the particular constituencies they are targeting. For example, communities that are developing strong groups with evident local champions could be supported with the development of action-research groups. Therefore, we suggest building a staged model of intervention – which will allow resources to be shifted between activities and then from village to village as development evolves. This can be linked to an exit strategy and should be linked to a theory of change and scaling.
- Target individual families facing the greatest hardship with wraparound interventions from across the full menu of current interventions, and provide continuous monitoring and support to these. This will help to reduce the remaining 10–15 per cent of bonded labourers.
- Make sure that training and livelihood interventions are underpinned by market analysis indicating that there are real sustainable jobs.
- In the villages where the Freedom Fund is already working, invest in developing strong groups: mutual aid organisations that can initiate, create, and sustain change. Think about this as movement building rather than group building. This will also provide some mitigation against the perceived individualisation of responses to social problems. However, people’s individual rights and aspirations, including escaping from collective pressures, are a reality that need to be respected. Action-research groups are an effective

way of generating sustainable community ownership of issues and community generated solutions to locally identifiable problems. These should be expanded and developed to support this process.

- Facilitation skills need strengthening. As we have previously recommended, the Freedom Fund should invest in generic participatory facilitation skills training for all NGOs. Reflection and learning approaches need to be extended to all levels of staff. Similarly, there needs to be skills building on understanding structural power relationships, especially those defined by caste, religion, and gender, so that these are consciously addressed in the further interventions.
- Create thematic and locational 'freedom' champions who can be the port of call for people in the community for queries on education, government schemes, legal support, migration, etc. and for key destination areas such as Tamil Nadu, Delhi-Haryana-Punjab, Kerala, etc. These could be survivors and community support group members.
- Develop and build a team of paralegal volunteers at the local level to initiate a ground-up demand for legal recourse, rather than one where the onus is on the NGO to provide legal support and access to remedies.
- Build a much more substantive programme of work on health into the programme. This should include: public health initiatives including water and sanitation issues; supporting access to low-interest loans for health care, access to government health services; working for better and more accessible health services. Further to the more service-oriented aspects of health, we would strongly recommend the following: (a) support for bonded labourers to get access to health insurance; (b) investing in stronger programmes of mental health and trauma work for survivors, and pilot ways to link people to health insurance.
- Consider a Northern Indian hotspot version of the 'Call Me Priya' film-based curriculum based on people's own histories which has been extremely successful in Tamil Nadu. Given the diversity in the Northern Indian hotspot, several films might be required.
- While rescue processes may be efficient, there is a constant supply of workers to replace those who stay out of bondage. It is not clear to us that rescue is an effective response to a systemic problem which needs to focus on root causes on its own and needs to be supplemented by other approaches.
- Continue to invest in the Human Liberty Network. This is seen to be effective and could support higher level systemic change.
- Introduce the household expenses assessment process which has been trialled successfully in the South India hotspot initially, in conjunction with the action-research groups. Success in shifting norms, such as high temple payments and marriage expenses, and tackling issues such as alcoholism and middlemen will spread to other villages and over time build new norms. This movement-based change is likely to be an effective and sustainable strategy.
- Comprehensively collect outcome data. The home visit child reintegration form is a good example of how follow-up data can be recorded. It is important to follow up all interventions including rescue rehabilitation, livelihood initiatives, children in school, legal work, etc. Without this, it is impossible to judge how sustainable the interventions are.
- Develop a clear theory of change and scaling. The implicit theory of horizontal scaling and movement-based change makes sense – but it is not explicitly or clearly articulated.
- Make an explicit decision as to whether the priority for the next phase of Freedom Fund work is to move to new villages and reduce prevalence amongst the easier to reach groups in the same way as has been done in the past five years or so, or whether the priority is to focus on a 'leave no-one behind' agenda with the aim of reaching the remaining 10–15 per cent in bondage. If it is the latter, it will be important to target

livelihood initiatives to this group, bearing in mind that there will always be a percentage of people in any community (including the global North) who struggle to make ends meet and who will need long-term state support. As indicated above, it will also be important to ensure that these vocational trainings are always linked to market assessments which highlight sustainable work pathways.

- Explore and strengthen the second-line leadership of women within NGOs, wherever possible. The presence of female staff, whose capacity has been adequately built, would help to accelerate new discourses on bonded labour/trafficking.
- The Freedom Fund might later want to consider a sustainability evaluation in locations which they have withdrawn from after three years.

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Annexe 1 Initial and Final Terms of Reference

A1 Initial Terms of Reference

Proposal to the Freedom Fund for Phase 2 of:

- Hotspot Research Accompaniment: Support for the Freedom Fund's Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning in the Northern India Hotspot
- Hotspot Research Accompaniment: Support for the Freedom Fund's Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning in the South-Eastern Nepal Hotspot

Applicant institution:

Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex,
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Contact: Anna Raw

Background

The work carried out by IDS sits within a family of projects funded by the Freedom Fund and their partners in their bonded labour hotspots. The focus of these particular projects are agricultural bonded labour (Nepal) – bonded labour in brick kilns and stone quarries – as well as some engagement with victims of sex trafficking (Northern India hotspot).

While the initial contracts in the Northern India and Nepal hotspots were funded until 31 December 2017 and 30 September 2018 respectively, it has been decided to extend the duration of both projects until September 2019 and to close down initial contracts as of 11 June 2017 (hereby called 'phase 1'), and re-contract the subsequent deliverables under the projects – hereby called 'phase 2'.

This proposal relates to phase 2 of both projects.

Summary of activities carried out to date

A detailed account of the work carried out to date as well as key findings can be found in the following project reports:

- *Participatory Statistics to Measure Prevalence in Bonded Labour Hotspots in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar: Findings of the Base- and Endline Study (Oosterhoff et al. 2019)*
- *Patterns and Dynamics of Slavery and Bonded Labour in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh: Findings from Life Story Analysis (Burns et al. 2015)*
- *Nepal Participatory Statistics Report (Oosterhoff, Sharma and Burns 2017)*
- *Nepal Life Stories Report (Oosterhoff and Burns 2017)*

For the purposes of this document, progress with activities can be summarised as follows:

- In both the Northern India hotspot and Nepal, the life story collection process, collective analysis of stories including system map, and report on this analysis are complete.
- In both the Northern India hotspot and Nepal, the first-round prevalence and participatory statistics study, including validation, has been completed, analysed, and reported on.
- In the Northern India hotspot, Action Research is substantially underway. In Nepal, Action Research will commence in October 2017.

Next phase of work

The next phase of work will include outstanding Action Research (Northern India hotspot), all Action Research (Nepal), the follow-up participatory statistics baseline in both countries, and an evaluation of the hotspot model (carried out through interviews with stakeholders) in both countries.

1 Work stream 1: Action Research

Objectives: Trial a participatory approach for diagnosing and addressing underlying causes of bonded labour in the community.

Key research questions:

- a) For the issues selected by the partners, what were the key reflections and promising approaches that were trialled?
- b) Of the approaches that were trialled, what were the effects?
- c) Reflecting on the approaches trialled and effects observed, what are the recommendations for other similar community-based groups?

With guidance from IDS/Praxis, approximately 14 partners (seven in each hotspot) will select/have selected one or (at most) two issues, around which they will set up locally based action-research groups bringing together diverse perspectives on addressing the specific problem. The main focal issues for Action Research were identified through the life story research. After the mapping of causal relationships and the existing hotspot interventions, NGO participants identified key issues where enhanced strategies are needed, e.g. the relationship between health and loans. The action-research groups will consider and try out different approaches, usually on a small scale, to identify promising ways forward, and at the same time documenting their reasons for actions and what results are gained.

Local groups need to develop their own solutions which are realistic from their perspectives, and that address power imbalances within their immediate environment. The strengthening of community facilitation skills among the partners will help local groups to develop solutions. IDS will support the different necessary stages of one enquiry stream process per NGO. If during this enquiry stream or after completion of the first enquiry, an NGO wants to start another one, they should be free to do so.

Nepal

This process will start from **October 2017 until September 2018**. The activities are:

- Action-research training facilitated by IDS
- Joint visit/s by IDS to support the NGOs and AR groups as part of the action-research process
- Feedback/capacitation visits to be made by the ActionAid facilitator to all the NGOs/AR groups during five different stages of the Action Research.

Proposed schedule of deliverables:

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|
| 1 | Action-research training | October 2017 |
| 2 | IDS support visit/s | Dates to be confirmed |
| 3 | Capacitation visits (AAN will provide ground-level advice and support on local organisation, facilitation, recording, analysis, and solution generation. AAN will also communicate learning from one group to another) | Dates to be confirmed |
| 4 | Presentation of findings to Freedom Fund | October 2018 |

Northern India hotspot

The process is underway and will be completed in July 2018. The activities are:

- One joint visit by IDS to support the NGOs and AR groups as part of the action-research process.
- Feedback/capacitation visits to be made by the Praxis facilitator/Rituu Nanda to all the NGOs/AR groups during five different stages of the Action Research.

Proposed schedule of deliverables:

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|
| 1 | IDS support visits | Dates to be confirmed |
| 2 | Capacitation visits (Praxis will provide ground-level advice and support on local organisation, facilitation, recording, analysis, and solution generation. Praxis will also communicate learning from one group to another) | Dates to be confirmed |
| 3 | Presentation of findings to Freedom Fund | August 2018 |

2 Work stream 2: Follow-up prevalence study using participatory statistics

Objective: Measure the change in prevalence of bonded labour across the Northern India and Nepal hotspots and identify socioeconomic factors that make households more susceptible or resilient to bonded labour.

Key research questions:

- a) What is the prevalence of bonded labour across the hotspot? How does this vary between districts and NGO partners?
- b) What has been the change in prevalence between baseline and endline? In which locations/with which partners have there been the greatest change?
- c) Has the nature and forms of bonded labour changed over the project period?
- d) What are the most significant changes as identified by people living and working in the context of bonded labour?
- e) What are the future implications for programmes that aim to eradicate bonded labour?

We will repeat the baseline study that was conducted with the same design. The design has sufficient statistical power and confidence interval to detect <5 per cent changes in prevalence across the hotspot. We will also do a validation as part of this repeat study for quality control, as was done in the first study.

This process will be between January 2018 and April 2019. The activities are:

- Preparatory work (methods, tools, and translation)
- Orientation to NGOs/training of researchers
- Data collection, and spot check visit
- Data entry and quality check
- Preliminary data analysis
- Joint analysis and feedback from NGO and FF and C&A
- Draft reporting.

Proposed schedule of deliverables in the Northern India hotspot:

1	Research design (including sampling protocol and field instruments) for a repeat study finalised	January 2018
2	Note confirming completion of fieldwork, with data gathered on at least 3,000 households between May–November 2018	December 2018
3	Data cleaning and data analysis	December 2018–January 2019
4	Presentation of preliminary findings to the key research questions to the Freedom Fund	February 2019
5	Draft technical report shared with the Freedom Fund	March 2019
6	Final technical report and summary report (2–4 pages) for sharing with external stakeholders	April 2019
7	Supplementary files shared with the Freedom Fund, including: – Cleaned, anonymised data files – Final version of survey instruments, in English and Hindi – Final version of field guide for data collectors.	April 2019

Proposed schedule of deliverables in SE Nepal:

1	Research design (including sampling protocol and field instruments) for a repeat study finalised	January 2018
2	Note confirming completion of fieldwork, with data gathered on at least 1,600 households between March–July 2019	August 2019
3	Data cleaning and data analysis.	August–September 2019
4	Presentation of preliminary findings to the key research questions to the Freedom Fund.	October 2019
5	Draft technical report shared with the Freedom Fund	November 2019
6	Final technical report and summary report (2–4 pages) for sharing with external stakeholders	December 2019
7	Supplementary files shared with the Freedom Fund, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cleaned, anonymised data files – Final version of survey instruments, in English and Nepalese – Final version of field guide for data collectors. 	December 2019

3 Work stream 3: Overall evaluation of the Northern India and Nepal hotspots as a whole

Objective: Provide an overall, independent assessment of the hotspots, particularly in regard to the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the hotspot model in reducing bonded labour in the area, and the sustainability of the hotspot model.

3.1 Key evaluation questions

Relevance

- a) Are the design and activities of the hotspot reflecting the current needs and priorities of the community members? Are they relevant to the objectives of the hotspot?
- b) What are the views of relevant stakeholders (primarily programme participants, with selected inputs from community leaders, government representatives, private sector employers) towards the programme? For example, do they consider it an opportunity, a threat, or are they indifferent?

Effectiveness

- c) To what extent has the programme achieved its aim of reducing bonded labour in communities in the target areas (as a source for bonded labour)?
- d) Based on the qualitative feedback from the community and NGOs: (i) how has the programme contributed towards the measured change, and (ii) what are the observable links between programme activities, and wider changes in socio economic wellbeing, community attitudes and actions, government policies, and workplace practices?

Efficiency

- e) Based on the type of programme activities which seem to be most impactful within the programme duration, to what extent do these align with the way the Freedom Fund is financing the NGO partners' time and resources?

Sustainability

- f) To what extent has the programme influenced the approach, organisational capability, and quality of activities (including monitoring and evaluation) of the NGO partners?
- g) What have the NGO partners undertaken together that they might not have done outside of the hotspot model, especially in terms of systems change?
- h) What are the key knowledge and skills that NGOs have learned from programme interventions and can they give examples of how this can be applied elsewhere?
- i) What can the community members and adolescents now do for themselves?

Note: These evaluation questions will be reviewed before the final evaluation is undertaken.

3.2 Activities

The evaluation team (i.e. IDS, Praxis/ActionAid Nepal) will use three main sources of information to triangulate and formulate insights relating to the key research questions. This process of the different activities listed below will be between January 2018–May 2019 for the Northern India hotspot and Nepal. The information sources are:

- Desk review; pertinent programme documents from NGO, Geneva Global, and Freedom Fund reports and materials;
- Qualitative feedback from community participants and NGO partners. This would roughly include, per hotspot:
 - (i) Up to 30 interviews with programme participants/survivors (from six NGO partners, all randomly selected).
 - (ii) (a) 12 interviews with NGO, Geneva Global, and Freedom Fund staff. (Feedback on the hotspot model);
 - (b) Eight key informant interviews, with individuals who are not programme participants but who possess first-hand knowledge or expertise on bonded labour in the community; for example, government representatives and private sector employers.

These semi-structured interviews will be conducted by evaluation partners (i.e. Praxis or ActionAid Nepal) in local languages, and respondents' anonymity will be emphasised to ensure we solicit candid feedback, as much as possible. IDS conducts the international interviews in English.

3.2.1 Feedback from participants/survivors

This work will involve qualitative interviews with people (including survivors and members of Community Support Groups) who are or should be beneficiaries of Freedom Fund programmes and who will focus on their experience of engaging with the services provided by NGOs supported by the Freedom Fund.

Questions will relate to their prior circumstances: what assistance they have had (including group-based benefits); whether they received training or other assistance to improve their economic wellbeing; whether they obtained improved income as a result and if so, how; open-ended feedback about what participation in the programme has meant to them – what has been valuable, what has been missing; what their group has done in relation to the issues, what they can do to protect people from bonded labour in the future, how they see their personal participation in the future, etc.

The activities are:

- Preparation of Instrument (IDS and partners)
- Translation of tools and guide
- Collecting and translating interviews
- Analysis of interviews
- Finalising by IDS team.

3.2.2 Interviews with programme staff and key stakeholders

(a) Interviews with NGOs, Geneva Global, and Freedom Fund staff. How has it made a difference for the NGOs to be part of a hotspot rather than just an individual grantee? In particular, what involvement in collective policy promotion have they had, and can they identify ways that have led to influence on government and any real changes?

(b) Interviews with stakeholders not directly related to the programme such as government officials, business people, teachers, medics, etc.

The aim is to get their insight into how the activities of the programme align with their analysis of the problem. The activities are:

- Preparation of interview schedule by IDS team and partners – in consultation with FF and GG;
- Finalisation and logistic;
- Field process – interviews;
- Document, analyse, and report on the hotspot model (IDS team).

IDS and partners will determine the most efficient timeline and coordination of activities. Interviews will be conducted in the most efficient way to correlate with travel and existing processes underway within the Action Research and Participatory Statistics work streams. The indicative timeline is spread over the period November 2017–May 2019.

1	Interviews – Northern India hotspot	January 2018–January 2019
2	Interviews – Nepal	January 2018–January 2019
3	Draft report on both countries shared with the Freedom Fund	April 2019

4	Final report shared with the Freedom Fund	May 2019
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Proposed schedule of deliverables in the Northern India hotspot:

1	Draft report shared with the Freedom Fund.	April 2019
2	Final report and summary report (2–4 pages) for sharing with external stakeholders.	May 2019

Proposed schedule of deliverables in Nepal:

1	Review terms of reference and refine as necessary	November 2017
2	Review of proposed list of target interviewees/focus groups by FF, Geneva Global, and IDS	December 2017
3	Interview list and discussion guides finalised	January 2018
4	Draft report shared with the Freedom Fund	April 2019
5	Final report and summary report (2–4 pages) for sharing with external stakeholders.	May 2019

Final reporting

The format of the final reports will be written in English and be a maximum of 40 pages for each hotspot (without Annexes). It should include:

- Executive summary
- Background to the evaluation, including key research questions
- Description of the FF programme in the hotspots
- Methodology
- including discussion of the nature and quality of the information used and limitations for each component
- Research/findings directly responding to the key research questions
- Analysis/conclusions
- Lessons learned
- Practical, feasible, and strategic
- At different levels: programme partners and beneficiaries and other stakeholders
- Recommendations
- Annexes:
- Initial and final terms of reference

The final reports will be submitted in May 2019 (Northern India hotspot) and December 2019 (Nepal).

A2 Final Terms of Reference

Work stream 3: Overall evaluation of the Northern India and Nepal hotspots as a whole

Objective: Provide an overall, independent assessment of the hotspots, particularly in regard to the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the hotspot model in reducing bonded labour in the area, and the sustainability of the hotspot model.

3.1 Key evaluation questions

Relevance

- a) To what extent do the design and activities of the hotspot reflect the current needs and priorities of the community members? Are they relevant to the objectives of the hotspot?
- b) What are the views of relevant stakeholders (primarily programme participants, with selected inputs from community leaders, government representatives, and private sector employers) towards the programme? For example, do they consider it an opportunity, a threat, or are they indifferent?

Effectiveness

- a) To what extent has the programme achieved its aim of reducing bonded labour in communities in the target areas (as a source for bonded labour)?
- b) Based on the qualitative feedback from the community and NGOs: (i) how has the programme contributed towards the measured change including tackling root causes; (ii) what are the observable links between programme activities and wider systems change (e.g. wider government policies and practices, strengthening civil society collaboration, and generating evidence for anti-trafficking sector)?
- c) What have the NGO partners undertaken together that they might not have done outside of the hotspot model, especially in terms of systems change?

Efficiency

- a) Based on the NGOs' assessment of impact achieved through (i) the different types of programme activities of local NGOs and (ii) the main work streams within the Change Strategy: to what extent do these align with the programme's investment of time and resources?

Sustainability

- a) To what extent has the programme influenced the approach, organisational capability, and quality of activities (including monitoring and evaluation) of the NGO partners?
- b) What are the key knowledge and skills that NGOs have learned from programme interventions and can they give examples of how this can be applied elsewhere?
- c) What can the community members and adolescents now do for themselves?

Note: These evaluation questions have now been extensively reviewed and signed off.

3.2 Activities

The evaluation team (i.e. IDS, Praxis/ActionAid Nepal) will use three main sources of information to triangulate and formulate insights relating to the key research questions. This process of the different activities listed below will be between January 2018–May 2019 for the Northern India hotspot and Nepal. The information sources are:

- Desk review; pertinent programme documents from NGO, Geneva Global, and Freedom Fund reports and materials/policy review
- Qualitative feedback from community participants and NGO partners. This would roughly include, per hotspot:
 - (i) Up to 30 interviews with programme participants/survivors (from ~six NGO partners who have been working for a suitable duration, with the aim of diverse representation).
 - (ii) (a) 12 interviews with NGO, Geneva Global, and Freedom Fund staff to get feedback on the hotspot model.
 - (b) Eight key informant interviews, with individuals who are not programme participants but who possess first-hand knowledge or expertise on bonded labour in the community; for example, government representatives and private sector employers.

These semi-structured interviews will be conducted by evaluation partners (i.e. Praxis or ActionAid Nepal) in local languages, and respondents' anonymity will be emphasised to ensure we solicit candid feedback, as much as possible. IDS conducts the international interviews in English.

3.2.1 Feedback from participants/survivors

This work will involve qualitative interviews with people (including survivors and members of Community Support Groups) who are or should be participants of Freedom Fund programmes and will focus on their experience of engaging with the rights-based activities and services provided by NGOs supported by the Freedom Fund.

Questions will relate to: significant changes in relation to them or people in their community being able to leave situations of forced labour over the last three years; NGO activities and services they have utilised and groups they have been involved with; how the groups have helped them and what motivates them to keep going to the group/s; how children have been helped with their education; whether there is now more, less, or maybe a different kind of caste discrimination; whether women and girls are now treated differently in the community; how access to essential services has changed; what else could be done for community members in bonded labour/child labour; examples of activities that the NGO could have done but didn't, or could have done better; whether community members are more or less willing to talk about bonded labour/child labour/trafficking and whether people who have left bonded labour are still free (and if not why not).

The activities are:

- Preparation of Instrument (IDS and partners)
- Translation of tools and guide
- Collecting and translating interviews
- Analysis of interviews
- Finalising by IDS team.

3.2.2 Interviews with programme staff and key stakeholders

(a) Interviews with NGOs, Geneva Global, and Freedom Fund staff.

Questions will relate to: perceptions around the most significant impacts on bonded labour/child labour/trafficking in the communities that they work in; community group/s they have helped to set up and how well they are functioning; what motivates community members come to these groups; the extent to which community members have become more able to seek help or take action independently; evidence that children from bonded labour families are better able to attend school; changes in relation to caste discrimination and the situation of women and girls; most important public services for reducing bonded labour; what else can be done to improve the situation of families in bonded labour; willingness in communities to talk about bonded labour; perceived success of rehabilitation of ex-bonded labourers; perceptions in relation to successes in influencing higher-level decision-making on bonded labour; benefits of partnerships with other NGOs in the hotspot and drawbacks of working in the hotspot model.

(b) Interviews with stakeholders not directly related to the programme such as government officials, business people, teachers, medics, etc.

The aim is to get their insight into how the activities of the programme align with their analysis of the problem.

Questions will relate to: how they have come to know the work of the NGOs on bonded labour and what their interactions have been with them; how the situation of bonded labour has changed; whether they think the work of the NGOs has led to changes to the lives of people affected by bonded labour; whether they perceive communities to be more active in protecting themselves from bonded labour; whether organisations like theirs are more willing to talk about and act on bonded labour; whether NGO services to help survivors are helpful; if they think NGOs are accountable and transparent towards communities and examples of the ways in which NGO activities have influenced higher-level policy making/decision-making and implementation of schemes (e.g. at district or state level) on bonded labour.

The activities are:

- Preparation of interview schedule by IDS team and partners – in consultation with FF and GG
- Finalisation and logistic
- Field process – interviews
- Document, analyse, and report on the hotspot model (IDS team).

IDS and partners will determine the most efficient timeline and coordination of activities. Interviews will be conducted in the most efficient way to correlate with

travel and existing processes underway within the Action Research and Participatory Statistics work streams. The indicative timeline is spread over the period November 2017–May 2019.

1	Interviews – Northern India hotspot	January 2018–January 2019
2	Interviews – Nepal	January 2018–January 2019
3	Draft report on both countries shared with the Freedom Fund	April 2019
4	Final report shared with the Freedom Fund	May 2019

Proposed schedule of deliverables in the Northern India hotspot:

1	Review terms of reference and refine as necessary.	November 2017
2	Review of proposed list of target interviewees/focus groups by FF, Geneva Global, and IDS.	December 2017
3	Interview list and discussion guides finalised.	January 2018
4	Draft report shared with the Freedom Fund.	April 2019
5	Final report and summary report (2–4 pages) for sharing with external stakeholders.	May 2019

Proposed schedule of deliverables in Nepal:

1	Review terms of reference and refine as necessary.	November 2017
2	Review of proposed list of target interviewees/focus groups by FF, Geneva Global, and IDS.	December 2017
3	Interview list and discussion guides finalised.	January 2018
4	Draft report shared with the Freedom Fund.	April 2019
5	Final report and summary report (2–4 pages) for sharing with external stakeholders.	May 2019

Final reporting

The format of the final reports will be written in English and be a maximum of 40 pages for each hotspot (without Annexes). It should include:

- Executive summary
- Background to the evaluation, including key research questions
- Description of the FF programme in the hotspots
- Methodology

- including discussion of the nature and quality of the information used and limitations for each component
- Research/findings directly responding to the key research questions
- Analysis/conclusions
- Lessons learned
 - Practical, feasible, and strategic
 - At different levels: programme partners, participants, and other stakeholders
- Recommendations
- Annexes:
 - Initial and final terms of reference.

The final reports will be submitted in May 2019 (Northern India hotspot) and December 2019 (Nepal).

Annexe 2 Links to core research reports

Findings from Life Story Analysis: Patterns and Dynamics of Forced and Bonded Labour in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh

(https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/13154/Patterns_and_dynamics_of_slavery_and_bonded_labour_in_Bihar_and_Uttar_Pradesh-Findings_from_life_story_analysis.pdf?sequence=370&isAllowed=y)

Findings from the Northern India Hotspot Participatory Action Research Process

(https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/14654/Summary_results_Participatory_Action_Research_North_India.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

Findings from the Northern India Hotspot Prevalence Study Baseline and Endline Findings

(<https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/14653>)

Findings from the Northern India Hotspot Qualitative Interviews: Feedback from Community Participants, NGO Staff, and Other Stakeholders (Chandrasekharan *et al.*, forthcoming, 2020)

Annexe 3 Table of implementing partners

Current implementing partners

- 1 Aangan Trust, since 2015
- 2 Adithi, since 2015
- 3 Bhusura Mahila Vikas Samiti (BMVS), since 2015
- 4 Centre DIRECT/Duncan Hospital, since 2015
- 5 Fakirana Sisters' Society (FSS), since 2015
- 6 Guria Swayam Sevi Sansthan (Guria), since 2015
- 7 Institute for Development Education and Action (IDEA), since 2015
- 8 Integrated Development Foundation (IDF), since 2015
- 9 Manav Sansadhan Evam Mahila Vikas Sansthan (MSEMVS)-NP, since 2015
- 10 National Institute for Rural Development, Education, Social Upliftment and Health (NIRDESH), since 2015
- 11 Pragati Gramodyog Evam Samaj Kalyan Sansthan (PGS), since 2015
- 12 Prayas Juvenile Aid Centre (Prayas), since 2015
- 13 Regions Beyond Medical Union Society (also known as Emmanuel Association Project (EHA), since 2015
- 14 RURAL Organisation for Social Advancement (ROSA), since 2016
- 15 Tatvasi Samaj Nyas (TSN), since 2015

Past implementing partners

- 16 Manav Sansadhan Evam Mahila Vikas Sansthan (MSEMVS)-TIP, from 2015 to 2017.
Note: this is not a different partner organisation, it was part of the same partner, MSEMVS, but that particular project of MSEMVS was discontinued at the end of 2017.

Technical advisors

- 17 Access Livelihoods Consulting India Ltd (ALC), from 2015 to 2017
- 18 Change Mantras, from 2016 to 2017
- 19 Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action (CHETNA), from 2016 to now
- 20 CPA (financial auditor), from 2016 to now
- 21 Free the Slaves, from 2016 to now
- 22 Healing Fields Foundation, from 2016 to now
- 23 Justice Ventures International (JVI), from 2015 to 2017

Research partners

- 24 Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, from 2015 to now
- 25 San Diego State University, from 2016 to now