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## UNFUNDED LIST

### HONOREE: Free The Slaves

#### *Honoree Proposal Description:*

Free the Slaves (FTS) is an international organization that provides training and technical assistance to partners in order to combat modern slavery. Their Unfunded List honoree submission was for a mobile phone messaging campaign in India.

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#### *Organization Website:*

<https://www.freetheslaves.net>

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### **Mobile Phone Messaging Campaign in India**

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### **Organizational Background**

Free the Slaves (FTS) is a leading organization in the global fight against modern-day slavery, committed to liberating people who are enslaved around the world and strengthening community resistance to slavery. Modern-day slavery exists in forms of bonded labor, sex trafficking, and child slavery, and it is a hidden crime, making it extremely difficult for the public to identify and for those in slavery to seek help. Slaves face horrific violence, violations of their basic rights, deprivation, poverty, and hazardous working conditions.

Founded in 2000, FTS has grown into a respected and thriving organization, perceived as a thought-leader and catalyst within the anti-slavery movement. Over the course of 16 years, FTS has developed holistic approaches that address the root causes of slavery and has freed more than 12,000 people. FTS has programs in six countries (Haiti, India, Nepal, Ghana, Senegal, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), each with unique community-based approaches that focuses its work on some of the most prevalent forms of slavery within these contexts. The anti-slavery movement is one of cooperation and collaboration. Guided by a data-driven, community-centered approach, FTS acts as a connective advocate among sectors in the global anti-slavery movement. FTS advances the anti-slavery field as a supportive resource, educator, and catalyst of strategic partnerships. FTS's community-based model meets communities where they are in order to disrupt networks of slavery in lasting ways that can be scaled to have global impact. With particular emphasis on empowering vulnerable populations, FTS strives to eliminate instances of trafficking at its source. FTS develops innovative data-collecting tools to

monitor and evaluate instances of slavery in order to prevent and intercept trafficking as soon as possible.

FTS designed its community-based model to include a unique mix of interventions, building the capacity of both local organizations and the communities themselves. The model fosters community resistance to slavery by advancing survivor and household security and strengthening legal protection. This model sustainably reduces slavery in countries by liberating people and reintegrating survivors into their communities.

### **Scope of the Problem**

In India, debt bondage ties villagers to financial debts that they are forced to repay through endless labor. Although debt bondage has been outlawed in India, landless scheduled caste and tribal communities are especially vulnerable to debt bondage due to marginalization and discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Many members of lower-caste communities are illiterate and impoverished, with small sources of income from manual labor in agriculture and industries like brick kilns or carpet making. Impoverished villagers are likely to borrow from predatory moneylenders in order to survive and, without knowing the risks or their personal rights, become ensnared in debt bondage. It is imperative that these communities understand risks and their rights in order to resist and prevent debt bondage.

### **Proposed Solution**

FTS proposes to combat slavery in India by conducting a multifaceted mobile phone messaging campaign in Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where there are scheduled castes and tribes subjected to bonded labor and sex trafficking. Despite low education and technological awareness in the target communities, around half of the households own a basic mobile phone, used to receive calls and play music. The mobile phone campaign will reach vulnerable community members through voice messages and influential government officials through SMS messages in order to improve human rights awareness and responses.

Voice messaging via mobile phones is an efficient, scalable, and cost-effective way to instantaneously reach vulnerable populations and increase awareness about basic rights. It is more effective than SMS messaging due to low literacy rates. Additionally, apps and other innovative technology are not appropriate in these contexts because community members also have low technology literacy and basic-feature phones. FTS pilot tested a mobile outreach approach in 2016, disseminating four messages in the local language (Bhojpuri) in 13 villages in Uttar Pradesh. Messages raised awareness about bonded labor and informed participants about their rights at work, the importance of Community Vigilance Committees, and government schemes for bonded labor relief. FTS reached 192 community members over the course of 28 days. 92% of participants found the information they received helpful, clear, and valuable. 86% of listeners asked to receive

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<sup>1</sup> Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are recognized by the Indian Constitution as particularly disadvantaged and requiring special protection and treatment.

additional informational messages in the future. While only half of the test messages included the phone numbers of FTS' Indian partner organization staff, 29% of survey respondents contacted partner staff to seek additional information or to get help. This is particularly impressive in communities where many people have not yet learned how to make outgoing calls on mobile phones.

Building on the success of the pilot project, an XYZ grant will allow FTS to expand the mobile phone message approach with three additional grassroots partner organizations (a total of four) to reach at least 1,000 new communities in new districts in three states. Community members will receive voice messages that are designed to increase awareness of bonded labor, human trafficking, labor rights, and available relief services. Voice messages used in the pilot will be adapted to other contexts and translated into local languages for the new communities. New recorded messages will also provide information on issues relevant to the communities.

FTS and our partner organizations will also send SMS messages to local law enforcement and government officials to ensure that Indian human rights laws are upheld and to strengthen the network of accountability around labor practices. Specifically, officials will receive targeted messages that raise awareness about Indians' legal rights and offer recommendations for implementing laws that address bonded labor. The SMS messages will be drafted diplomatically and tailored to the particular contexts of the recipients.

Local partner NGO field staff will be integral to this project. They will conduct outreach and build trust with communities and government officials, which will help in the collection of phone numbers. In addition, staff phone numbers will be included in the messages so that participants can reach the field staff for more information or to request help in situations of bonded labor.

### **Measuring Impact, and Sustainable Development**

The research team and partner field staff will use call data, phone logs from field staff, (baseline and) follow-up surveys, and focus group discussions to determine the ongoing effectiveness of mobile phone messaging. The research will be integrated into the larger anti-trafficking and anti-slavery efforts in Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, thereby both supporting the wider program and the evaluation of its impact. FTS' prior research indicated that messages sparked conversations at the village level. The vast majority (86%) of survey respondents talked about the messages with their families, and nearly two thirds (63%) talked with other community members. Focus group discussions will take place during Community Vigilance Committee meetings to collect data about the messages, follow-up on these community-level conversations, and identify any next steps for any victims identified.

FTS' mobile phone campaign aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goal 8 to "Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all," and addresses the target to "eradicate forced labour, [and] end modern slavery and human trafficking" of men, women, and children. By increasing awareness of labor rights, available

supportive services, and recommended responses by law enforcement, this project will assist in the prevention and eradication of forced bonded labor – a form of slavery – in 1,000 communities in three states in India.

### **Making the Solution Available to Others**

FTS will share findings from the mobile phone campaign in India, in the U.S., and with other organizations around the world. FTS will publish the mobile phone campaign evaluation, which will be promoted through the FTS website and social media channels. The voice messages used for the campaign will be available for download and hosted on the FTS website with instructions (in English) on how to use technology to disseminate the messages by phone for organizations interested in using them for awareness-raising.

FTS will also share the mobile phone campaign evaluation with its stakeholders, including attendees of FTS’ annual Freedom from Slavery Forum, which hosts more than 50 leaders in anti-trafficking from around the world; Monitoring to Evaluation of Trafficking in Persons Community of Practice (METIP), a consortium that focuses on anti-trafficking monitoring, evaluation, and research; Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST), an anti-trafficking advocacy coalition of 13 organizations; USA-TIP Listserv, a peer-to-peer technical support mechanism that allows service providers and law enforcement to share anti-trafficking practices and strategies; the Child Labor Coalition (CLC), a group of 22 organizations committed to reducing exploitative child labor and child trafficking; and the American Evaluation Association, which has approximately 7,000 members across 60 countries.

### **Budget**

<b>Expense</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Personnel	22,584
Professional Services	44,400
Technology & Communications	57,690
Travel	15,000
Postage, Printing & Supplies	240
Occupancy	3,242
Finance Changes	2,300
Total Direct Expenses	145,456
Subgrants to Implementing Partners	100,000
<i>Indirect Costs</i>	53,632

*Free the Slaves, Mobile Phone Messaging Campaign in India*

<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>299,088</b>
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