

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Research Service: Assessment of an Ethiopia Employment Program (Thrive)

July 2023

Summary

The Freedom Fund (freedomfund.org) is a global non-profit organisation that identifies and invests in the most effective frontline efforts to eradicate human trafficking and exploitation. In 2021, the Freedom Fund (with funding from Minderoo Foundation's Walk Free Initiative) sponsored a pilot program in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, that focused on vocational training and formal employment for 200 Ethiopian women survivors of slavery. If successful, such a scheme could help to address a significant gap not just in the Freedom Fund's existing Ethiopia Hotspot program but in anti-slavery programs globally – namely the absence of proven pathways to formal employment for survivors and those most vulnerable to slavery. The Freedom Fund is seeking an external evaluator to *assess the impact of the pilot project, provide valuable information to inform project design, and assess the scalability of the model post-pilot.*

The Freedom Fund anticipates this consultancy to commence in July 2023, with a hard deadline to complete all the contractual deliverables by October 2023.

Eligibility

Individuals or organisations with relevant qualitative and quantitative research experience are invited to submit proposals for this evaluation. The lead applicant must be a legally registered entity according to the laws of the country in which it operates.

Budget

A fee of approximately USD\$15,000 has been made available for this research. Proposals with budgets that are higher or lower will still be considered. Budgets will be reviewed with respect to the rigour of the proposed methodology and relevant experience of the team to meet the project objectives in a cost-effective manner - we do not simply prioritise the lowest budget. This is a fee-for-service contract.

Proposal deadline

Proposals should be submitted via email to Matilde Chora (mchora@freedomfund.org) no later than 5pm UK time on 11 July 2023. Proposals should be no more than 4 pages, plus CV(s) and annexes.

Introduction to the Freedom Fund

The Freedom Fund is a global non-profit organisation that identifies and invests in the most effective frontline efforts to eradicate modern slavery in the countries and sectors where it is most prevalent. We work with frontline organisations to help protect vulnerable populations, liberate, and reintegrate those enslaved and prosecute those responsible.

Through our innovative hotspot model, we convene strategically aligned networks of anti-slavery organisations in high prevalence areas of Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Indonesia, Liberia, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria and Thailand to multiply the capacity, impact and influence of frontline partners.

Introduction to the employment project being evaluated

In recent years, Ethiopia has experienced an enormous outflow of labour migration, with Ethiopian women and girls in particular leaving the country in large numbers to pursue work abroad. Whilst some will find decent work, many will be exposed to abuse, exploitation and even servitude in the homes of their employers. On returning home, survivors may experience many barriers to adjusting to life in Ethiopia including health concerns, challenges in reintegrating back into home and community life, and finding and sustaining local employment in the formal sector.

Established in 2015, the Freedom Fund Ethiopia Hotspot Program has supported survivor returnees and provided assistance in finding decent work. In addition to support to returnees, the program has targeted potential migrant workers in raising awareness of safer migration, engaged in livelihoods activities and vocational training to help strengthen the economic status of potential migrants, and focused on building the capacity of local institutions to better respond to migrant worker needs and prevent human trafficking. Although the work to date has sought in part to address the economic needs of potential and returnee migrant workers, there has been a noted gap in the ability of vulnerable women to secure decent long-term employment within the formal job sector in Ethiopia.

The issues outlined above led the Freedom Fund and its Ethiopian Hotspot partners to pilot a three-year employment program, Thrive, for women returnee survivors in Ethiopia. The program uses a pay-for-success model in which payments are made to local service providers, specifically vocational training programs (TVET colleges), upon specific, measurable targets being met.

Evaluation objectives

The Freedom Fund is seeking to understand the impact of the Thrive program on its beneficiaries and the utility of the Thrive model at a larger scale, as well as how to improve long-term outcomes for modern slavery survivors who benefited from Thrive. The Thrive program presently operationalizes “success” as a participant completing the training, being placed in a job, and able to sustain that job for 6 months (which will be the longest post-placement data available at the end of the pilot).

Main evaluation questions

As part of the contracting process, the list below will be further reviewed and refined with the advice of the successful applicant.

- 1) Are the existing Thrive data sufficient to provide evidence about the research questions below (#2 - 5)?
 - a. Are the tools in the Thrive performance management matrix sufficient to accurately and reliably generate evidence about the effect of the program? If there are design flaws that led to evidence gaps, what are the limitations that will be introduced into the final analysis and report?
 - b. What qualitative data could be gathered now to fill evidence gaps?
- 2) Has the Thrive program met its objective of successful, sustained employment for participating women survivors?
 - a. What have been the main outcomes for the project participants?
 - b. Have survivor needs been met to sufficiently support them to succeed?
 - c. Are the jobs that participants are now working indeed decent work that allow women survivors to make a living?

- 3) Beyond employment, what secondary effects, expected or unexpected, have emerged?
 - a. Areas of inquiry could include: systemic change on how the government designs employment programs, influence of private sector business model on service providers, changed perspectives of employers, influence of participation on women's interest in re-migrating abroad, among others.
- 4) How can the unexpected beneficiaries and outcomes be quantified to factor into a cost analysis of the program?
 - a. To inform a future cost-benefit analysis, what are the steps that should be taken to factor and quantify the primary and secondary benefits?
- 5) Based on lessons learned, what special considerations are needed when considering a scale-up of the model?
 - a. What evidence did the pilot project generate to indicate scalability? Specifically, but not limited to:
 - i. Economic factors: business model/cost incurred by service providers and how profitable this remains for them; overall employment market situation/ macroeconomic factors in context of Ethiopia.
 - ii. Design factors: services provided/accompaniment needed to support women, to engage with relevant government structure and employer; what barriers might affect replicability.
 - iii. Regulatory/policy factors: level of prioritisation by government stakeholders relative to supporting to returned migrants, women's employment issues; anything contextual considerations that could enable or undermine replicability.
 - iv. Acceptability factors: demand for the model so far including employers, SPs; government bodies and demand for the scheme itself from returnees and women.
 - b. What additional evidence is needed before a widespread scale-up could be recommended?
 - i. What are the top challenges that would inform program design adaptations for future roll-outs prior to a government-adopted scale-up?

Research methodology

The key methodological steps are as follows:

1. Review of monitoring data collected to-date.
2. Proposal of data coding/analysis and presentation strategy (specifically, the contents of the final report with regards to replicability, scalability, and sustainability) based on available data, including whether or not additional qualitative interview data are warranted.
3. *Based on steps 1 and 2, it is possible that additional funds would be added to this scope of work for the consultant to facilitate additional qualitative data collection (where any interviews/in-person data collection would be performed by a third party in Ethiopia under the supervision of the consultant)*
4. Research and summarise a plan for FF to conduct a future cost-benefit analysis.
5. Data analysis, presentation of draft findings to FF (plus other global experts) and final report.

The proposed methodology should address the below:

Steps to determine an analysis strategy: FF will provide all monitoring data collected to-date, as well as additional outcome data for participants who have completed their respective trainings and are in jobs (data for this component are still being collected monthly and will represent 6 months of follow-up). Data will include service providers’ reports, participants’ case report data, and data from FF’s long-term Hotspot partners who supported the pilot program.

Safeguarding standards: Demonstrate how the methodology reflects an adequate level of sensitivity and nuance. If primary data collection is being proposed, please indicate how you will mitigate response bias. Work planning should allow for sufficient time for input from the Freedom Fund and implementing partners before finalisation. If any non-anonymous data are used as part of the evaluation, describe the data protection process.

Data quality and analysis: Proposals should detail the procedures that will be in place to assess the data quality from each source. Applicants should describe how the quantitative findings (e.g., descriptive summary statistics) will be provided, such as any proposed stratifications by sub-groups of respondents.

Process to share evaluation findings: In addition to formal written reports, we would also like the evaluation team to suggest one or more formats, such as graphical representations of findings, to share the evaluation findings and include this as part of their deliverables.

The research approach should adhere closely to ethical principles and safety concerns of research participants and researchers themselves, including safety protocols to limit the spread of covid-19. If there are any other elements considered to be crucial to a successful evaluation, please include these in your proposal.

The selected applicant will be contracted by, and report to, the Freedom Fund’s Senior Research and Evaluation Manager, based in Washington, D.C. The Freedom Fund anticipates working closely with the research team through all stages.

In summary, the chosen applicant will be responsible for:

- 1) Conducting an independent assessment of how the available data can be used to answer the research questions;
- 2) Undertaking data analysis of all the provided secondary data using appropriate methods of analysis;
- 3) Producing a 15-20 page written report of the research findings, as per a structure pre-agreed with the Freedom Fund; and
- 4) Producing cleaned datasets for each data source.

The Freedom Fund is particularly interested in working with consultants/teams that can demonstrate: (a) a gender-balanced enumeration team, if applicable, ideally with at least half of the team members being female, (b) commitment to survivor-centred research design, (c) prior research experience with survivors of exploitation, and (d) willingness to attend virtual meetings with stakeholders during business hours in Ethiopia.

Main deliverables and high-level timeline

The proposed schedule outlines the main deliverables, with some flexibility to allow for delays in ethical approval being granted:

Main deliverables	Proposed timeline
Internal presentation describing the main recommendations for an analytic strategy	July 2023

Finalised analytic plan incorporating feedback from FF	August 2023
4–6-page memo summarising a roadmap of how FF could conduct a cost-benefit analysis in the next phase of implementation	August 2023
Slide deck and virtual presentation to Hotspot staff and partners	October 2023
Final report outlining the key research findings and recommendations for future implementation and evaluation phases, based on a structure pre-agreed with the Freedom Fund	October 2023
2–4-page brief summarising the main findings and recommendations in a digestible format, to include graphics or other visual representations fit for a lay audience (to be formatted and designed by FF)	October 2023
Final set of analysis files including codebook(s), any raw files such as images, and any analysis notes submitted to FF	October 2023

In addition to the main deliverables listed above, the research team is also expected to discuss with the Freedom Fund any proposed design changes and share regular progress updates.

Budget

The Freedom Fund has budgeted approximately USD\$15,000 for this project. **Budgets will be reviewed with respect to the strength of the proposal in meeting the project objectives in a cost-effective manner; we do not simply prioritise the lowest budget.**

As part of the proposal, please prepare a brief budget with the following breakdown:

- Personnel cost
- Other direct costs (for example, training workshops, refreshments, reimbursements of participant costs or compensation to participants, telecommunications)
- Overheads
- All applicable taxes related to provision of services (for example, VAT or GST)

Proposal format

Interested parties should prepare a proposal of no more than 4 pages plus annexes. Proposals should contain the following sections:

1. **Short biography of project lead(s) and any team members**, outlining relevant subject matter expertise and prior experience leading similar research projects. CV(s) of the project lead(s) should be included in the annex.
2. **Methodology**, addressing the topics listed in the 'Research methodology' section of this RFP.
3. **Team structure**, defining the role and time commitment of key project team members, if there is more than one individual.
4. **High-level work plan** with timing of key project deliverables and proposed format of final report.
5. **Proposed budget** in USD.
6. **Past reports that you have personally written** in English. These can be included as links or in the annex and will not count towards the 4-page limit. Please be assured that we will use the document(s) for the purpose of this selection process only, we will not share it onwards or use the information in any other way.

The proposal must be written in English and sent electronically in Microsoft Office or PDF format.

Criteria for assessing proposals

In reviewing proposals, the Freedom Fund will use the following criteria:

Technical criteria		Weighting
a. Technical capacity of the researcher/team, including:		50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong experience with quantitative data analysis and mixed methods research. - Proven skills in translating technical results into actionable, context-appropriate recommendations. - Knowledge of ethical considerations when researching sensitive topics (such as experiences of violence) and working with vulnerable populations (such as survivors of human rights abuses). - Ability to liaise with a regional subject matter expert as determined by FF. 		
b. Project management and communications skills of the researcher/team, including:		20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proven skills in working independently to deliver high-quality research outputs on time. - Ability to tailor communications to different target audiences, such as civil society groups and policy makers. - Track record of producing well-written, credible research reports in English. 		
c. Contextual knowledge of the researcher/team, including:		20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge of issues relating to migration, decent work, chronic trauma survival, and/or the economic issues faced by workers, specifically women, in East Africa. - Familiarity with issues faced by vulnerable populations in low- and middle-income settings. 		
Financial criteria		
d. Consideration of all potential expenses necessary to deliver this project.		10%
		Total 100%

Proposal timeline and submission instructions

By 11 July 2023	Final proposals due.
5pm UK Time	Please submit all documents to Matilde Chora at mchora@freedomfund.org with "Proposal for Thrive Study" as the email subject line.
14 July 2023	Shortlisted applicants will be notified.