

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Research service: Multi-country evaluation of an unrestricted funding model directed at survivor-led organisations

INTRODUCTION

The Freedom Fund (freedomfund.org) is a global fund with the aim of helping end modern slavery, working in the countries and sectors where it is most prevalent. Through our investments and support, we aim to shift power so that frontline organisations and communities can shape and drive the change required to bring modern slavery to an end. By partnering with survivors and those at risk of slavery, as well as visionary investors, governments and anti-trafficking organisations, we bring together the knowledge, capital and will needed to dismantle the systems that allow modern slavery to exist and thrive.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Survivor Leadership Fund (SLF) is a pioneering initiative by the Freedom Fund that is aimed at shifting power and resources to survivor-led organisations working to end modern slavery. It provides unrestricted grants, allowing these organisations to use the funds as they see fit to enhance their capabilities and improve their impacts. Since its launch in 2021, the SLF has been rolled out in thirteen countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Peru, the Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand and Uganda.

SCOPE OF CONSULTANCY

The Freedom Fund is seeking applicants to conduct an external evaluation of the SLF to examine its impact and influence, including exploring decision-making processes, assessing programmatic impacts and its sustainability, uncovering distinctive advantages and obstacles, and identifying potential areas for improvement from the grantees' perspectives. The evaluation will aim to yield key insights to inform the future funding strategies of the SLF so that it can better serve the Freedom Fund's mission in supporting an anti-slavery movement led by lived experience. The selected applicant will assess the SLF's impact against the outcomes that were developed during its latest theory of change framework review, which will serve as the main guideline for the evaluation. The evaluation will be conducted in two phases (further details provided in the Research approach and methodology section). The Freedom Fund anticipates this project will take up to ten months, with planning commencing in April 2024 and the final report and dissemination activities due by January 2025.

ELIGIBILITY

Individual researchers, organisations and consortia are invited to submit proposals for this evaluation. The Freedom Fund is particularly interested in working with consultants/teams that can demonstrate (a) having strong research and evaluation experience (b) having strong local links/partnerships in at least six countries where SLF is present, preferably in Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Nepal (c) a gender-balanced team, if applicable, ideally with at least half of the team members being women and non-binary individuals, and (d) strong commitment/experience of working with communities affected by human rights violations. The lead applicant must be a legally registered entity according to the laws of the country in which it operates and should demonstrate

high levels of ethical standards, prioritise safeguarding considerations, and apply trauma-informed approaches in its research methodologies and processes. The applicant needs to have experience working globally, and preferably have established or previous collaborators in the countries of interests. These collaborators can be engaged as subcontractors for this project.

BUDGET

A fee of up to USD 100,000 has been made available for this evaluation, to be divided between phase one and two. 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. This is a fixed-price contract.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FREEDOM FUND AND SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP FUND

The Freedom Fund (FF) is a global non-profit organisation that identifies and invests in the most effective frontline efforts to end modern slavery in the countries and sectors where it is most prevalent. By partnering with survivors and those at risk of exploitation as well as visionary investors, governments, and anti-trafficking organisations, we bring together the knowledge, capital and will needed to dismantle the systems that allow modern slavery to exist and thrive. Through our investments and support, we aim to shift power, so that frontline organisations and communities can shape and drive the change required to bring modern slavery to an end.

The Freedom Fund recognises its responsibility to not only support individuals who have experienced exploitation and oppression but also to support and uplift their leadership. It recognises the need for those with lived experience to take leadership positions within the movement to address the needs of those exploited and to provide lasting solutions to modern slavery. The Survivor Leadership Fund (SLF) is a pioneering initiative by the Freedom Fund that is aimed at shifting power and resources to survivor-led organisations working to end modern slavery. It provides unrestricted grants, allowing these organisations to use the funds as they see fit to enhance their capabilities and improve their impacts. Since its launch in 2021, the SLF has been rolled out in thirteen countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Peru, the Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand and Uganda.

Survivor-led organisations are uniquely positioned to offer expertise and leadership in combating the systems and practices that perpetuate modern slavery. However, organisations with survivors in key leadership roles are scarce, and their struggle to secure funding for sustainability and growth is evident. To overcome these challenges, the Freedom Fund introduced the SLF as a new, innovative and trust-based funding approach to support survivor-led organisations. This approach marks a significant step in re-establishing agency and shifting the power back to those most impacted, enabling them to take the lead in the global movement to end modern slavery.

The SLF adopts a trust-based approach to grant-making that seeks to minimise power disparities and barriers to funding for survivor-led organisations. The fund deliberately employs a straightforward application process and minimal reporting requirements, making it accessible for small-scale organisations and enabling it to distribute funding quickly and efficiently. All application materials are translated into organisations' local languages to facilitate their engagement in the application, selection and grant-making process. Each grantee receives up to US\$20,000 in unrestricted funds, which they can use as they see fit to support and grow their organisations or operations. The Freedom Fund asks only that grantees report after six months how they have spent or intend to spend the funds, in a format of their choice, including written or video reports.

BACKGROUND TO THIS EVALUATION

The scope of this evaluation is to examine the impact and influence of SLF, including exploring the decision-making processes, assessing programmatic impacts and its sustainability, uncovering distinctive advantages and obstacles, and identifying potential areas for improvement on the Fund from the grantees' perspectives. The evaluation will aim to yield key insights to inform the future funding strategies of the SLF so that it can better serve the Freedom Fund's mission in supporting an anti-slavery movement led by lived experience. The selected applicant will assess the SLF's impact against its three main outcomes, which will serve as a guideline for the evaluation.

Outcome 1: Organisations receiving grants from the Survivor Leadership Fund increase their organisational capacity, including size, scope, and sustainability.

Outcome 2: Survivor leaders and their organisations increase their power, influence, and agency, both internally within their own organisations and across the anti-slavery sector and other related sectors.

Outcome 3: Survivor led organisations attract more funding, resources and support within the anti-slavery sector.

Based on the outcomes, the main objectives for the evaluation are to:

- A. Guide the Freedom Fund's future programmatic decisions about 'who', 'how' and 'in what ways' the SLF can improve its support to survivor-led organisations;
- B. Assess the real-world impact of the SLF, looking at if/how survivor-led organisations are using their grants to strengthen their work and drive change in their communities; and
- C. Inform a broader set of donors about the distinct value of providing trust-based funding to survivor-led organisations and its limitations.

Main evaluation questions

As part of the contracting process, the evaluation questions will be refined with the advice of the selected research team. Some indicative questions are included below to support the proposal evaluation design.

Phase 1 - based on document review and remote interview with SLF grantees and relevant FF staff:

1. Based on the document review, what is the profile of all the SLF grantees, what are common characteristics and differences? *(Note, by doing this, we can then select a more representative "sample" for remote interviews, in order to answer Q2)*
2. Based on remote interviews, are there notable differences in the impact of SLF for certain "subgroup" of grantees, for example, by:
 - a. Geographies - especially in countries where FF has other larger programs has other larger programs (that is "hotspot programs" vs. no programs);
 - b. Organisations' degree of alignment with FF strategy in that location;
 - c. Size of organisation (by staff level, by budget, etc);
 - d. Form of organisation (for example, registered/unregistered, NGO/association/collective etc);
 - e. Types and amounts of organisations' other sources of funding (for example, national/international, restricted/unrestricted, government/foundation) and size of SLF grant as a proportion of the organisations' total funding;

- f. Organisations that have received additional forms of support from the FF besides the SLF grants (such as funding for convenings, references for funding applications); and
 - g. Degree and type of engagement between grantees and the Freedom Fund.
3. As the SLF grows, are there key factors that we should consider when selecting "where", "who", "how" and "when" it provides support, in order to meet the goals of the SLF better? (for example, geographical scope, grant size, selection criteria, level of post grant programmatic support from FF etc.)

Phase 2 - based on additional key informant interviews plus community-level data collection:

1. What has been the observed progress towards the SLF outcomes? Please consider how the Fund's relevance aligns with the implementing contexts, identified problems, and needs of the grantees in different countries. For each outcome:
 - a. What concrete changes were observed - at the individual and organisational level?
 - b. (that is, when we say "Survivor leaders and their organisations increase their power, influence, and agency, both internally within their own organisations and across the anti-slavery sector, and other related sectors." what does that actually look like on the ground?)
 - c. How much progress has been made, and what are the sources of evidence for this?
 - d. Does progress differ by subgroup (e.g. by region, by gender, by survivor status, by leadership status, size of org)
 - e. How was the grant used to improve internal processes and programs by the grantees (as well as challenges that inhibited them from making the best use of the Fund)?
2. What have been the contributions of the SLF program towards the above outcomes – are there components that are strongly linked to the progress observed, and conversely, are there components that are less so? Please also consider the factors that are likely to affect not only the sustainability of grantees new program activities but also the broader impact on the organization's sustainability as a result of the grant.
3. Is the SLF program on a likely trajectory to achieve its stated outcomes?
 - a. What should it continue to do / what shifts are needed over the next 2-3 years (if any)?
 - b. What are the internal and external barriers or opportunities that it should be mindful of?
4. What were wider benefits and challenges associated with the unrestricted and trust-based funding model of SLF? Please make practical recommendations to improve the SLF based on the evaluation findings and lessons learnt.

PROPOSED RESEARCH APPROACH

Scale of data collection: The research comprises two distinct phases:

In Phase One (April - June 2024), a formative study will aim to gather preliminary insights from SLF's core team and select grantees' leaders based on the three outcomes. This phase should include at least 20 remote interviews with different SLF grantee organisations across 13 countries, as well as relevant FF staff, along with extensive document review to address evaluation questions stated above for phase one. All interviews will be remotely conducted in this phase.

Phase Two (June 2024 – January 2025) will entail a more thorough evaluation employing diverse research methodologies and engaging a broader spectrum of stakeholders. This phase will involve remote data collection with the majority of the 77 SLF grantee organisations, followed by in-person, community-level data collection with approximately 10 SLF grantees in 4 countries in

order to further assess the impact of the grant on each organisation, its frontline personnel, as well as community members who engage with or receive services from them.

Mixed-methods approach: The Freedom Fund invites applicants to propose a suitable methodology for achieving the objectives of both phases of the evaluation. We seek to obtain both quantitative and qualitative findings from the evaluation, therefore, applications that describe a comprehensive mixed method approach would be given preference. Kindly include the data collection methods and sources of information. Please note the choice of methodologies and measures that need to be taken to ensure that the data collection process is not burdensome on grantees, community members and other stakeholders. We are not expecting ethical approval to be necessary for Phase One, however please clearly state whether you would undergo ethical approval for data collection activities in Phase Two of the study.

Stakeholder participation: Please outline which stakeholders you will engage with at different stages of the evaluation process and justify your proposed sample and its size. Describe how a sample of respondents will be obtained; consideration should be given to how these individuals can be accessed and engaged with in a manner which encourages honest responses and minimises grantee burden. The evaluation is not expected to exhaustively cover all locations in which the SLF operates, but rather, selection of an appropriate set of respondents.

Operational, safeguarding and ethical considerations: Highlight any logistical, ethical and/or safeguarding issues with the proposed methodology, such as encouraging candid responses through in-person and/or remote interviews, handling of potentially sensitive information, confidentiality of respondents, sensitivity and respect to stakeholders, Do No Harm etc. Please indicate how you will monitor responses provided and mitigate response bias that may influence the evaluation. Note that we expect the team (or its subcontractors) to include fluent local language speakers to administer data collection.

Data quality and analysis: Describe the procedures that will be in place to ensure a high level of data quality, and tools used for (qualitative and/or quantitative, as relevant) data analysis. Describe the data analysis plan, including data analysis software and rationale for its use, proposed analysis methods and a rough timeline. The work plan should allow for sufficient time for inputs from the Freedom Fund before finalisation.

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

The research will be contracted by the Freedom Fund US, and supervised by our Research & Evaluation Manager based in London. The FF anticipates working closely with the research team through all stages of the project.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES & HIGH-LEVEL TIMELINE

Main deliverables	Proposed timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kick-off meeting with the FF team. ● Complete desk review of SLF documents and discussions with the FF team. 	Apr 2024
Phase One	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finalise suitable evaluation/research methodology for phase one to answer the evaluation objectives outlined above, presented as a research protocol, which includes a realistic sampling strategy, all relevant data collection tools, work plan and ethical considerations. 	Apr 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Memo confirming data collection for phase one of the evaluation. 	May 2024

• Complete data cleaning and analysis.	May 2024
• Presentation of preliminary findings for internal review and discussion.	Early Jun 2024
• A 5-6 page preliminary findings report submitted.	2024
Phase Two	
• Complete desk review of relevant literature to understand different modalities of unrestricted and trust-based grants-giving models.	Jun 2024
• Finalise suitable evaluation/research methodology for phase two to answer the evaluation objectives outlined above, presented as a research protocol, which includes a realistic sampling strategy, all relevant data collection tools, work plan and a detailed overview of ethical considerations.	Jul 2024
• Complete ethical approval for phase two of the evaluation from appropriate ethical approval bodies, chosen in collaboration with the Freedom Fund.	Aug 2024
• Memo confirming data collection for phase two of the evaluation.	Oct 2024
• Cleaning, coding, and preliminary analysis of data completed; presentation of preliminary findings.	Nov 2024
• Finalise report, including an executive summary, based on a structure pre-agreed with the Freedom Fund.	Dec 2024
• Participate in dissemination activities with the Freedom Fund.	Jan 2025

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 updates on the progress of field activities.

BUDGET

The FF has budgeted up to USD 100,000 for this project, to be divided between phase one and two. 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 costs
- Fees to local research partners or subcontractors, if applicable
- Other direct costs – e.g. interpretation cost for remote and in-person interviews, travel, software licences, devices for data collection
- Overheads
- Value Added Tax or Goods and Services Tax, if applicable

Please note that costs related to research report translation, design and printing will be borne by the Freedom Fund.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Interested parties should prepare a proposal of no more than 5 pages, plus CVs and annexes. Proposals should contain the following sections:

1. Short biography of principal investigator(s) and key team members, outlining relevant subject matter expertise and experience leading similar evaluation projects. CV of the principal investigator should be included in the annex. Past report(s) from similar projects could be included as links or in a separate annex.
2. Research approach, addressing the topics listed in the 'Research approach and methodology' section of this RFP.

3. Team structure, defining the role and time commitment of key project team members.
4. High-level work plan for key project phases and deliverables.
5. Proposed budget in USD, containing the details listed in the ‘Budget’ section of this RFP, for both phase one and two of the evaluation.

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

EVALUATION CRITERIA & SCORING

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

Technical criteria	Weighting
a. Technical capacity of the evaluation team (including local partner and subcontractors if relevant), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience of conducting evaluations, with an advanced understanding of relevant quantitative and qualitative research techniques (dependent on the proposed method). - Demonstrated experience of conducting research and evaluation on sensitive topics and with marginalised communities (such as experience of working with individuals with lived experience of human trafficking and/or modern slavery). - Proven experience producing detailed reports in English. - Links / partnerships with local researchers in countries where SLF grantees are present, preferably in Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Nepal. - Fluency in English and relevant local languages. 	40%
b. Contextual knowledge of the research team, including on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarity with issues relevant to modern slavery. - Familiarity with how different funding modalities impact frontline organisations’ development in diverse ways. - Knowledge of the importance of supporting survivor leadership initiatives within the anti-trafficking movement. 	20%
c. Team structure, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate staffing levels to deliver quality project outputs within the desired timeframe. - Contribution of national researchers, ideally in key roles such as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator where they are recognised as authors of the evaluation. - Established connections in countries where the SLF operates for collecting data. - Diversity among its team members, including but not limited to gender and race. - Team members with fluency in English. Proficiency in local languages would be advantageous. 	30%
Financial criteria	
d. Costs are proportionate to the scale of work being proposed, and consideration of all potential expenses.	10%
Total	100%

COMMISSIONING TIMELINE

- 08 March 2024 Release of this Request for Proposal.
- 26 March 2024 10am UK time Proposals due.**
Please submit all documents to Kehinde Ojo at kojo@freedomfund.org with “Proposal for External Evaluation: SLF” as the email subject line.
- 02 April 2024 All shortlisted research teams will be notified, and interviews will be scheduled.

THE FREEDOM FUND

- 08 April 2024 Clarifications/discussions with shortlisted research teams.
- 12 April 2024 Contract signed with the selected research team.

DEADLINE & SUBMISSION

Proposals should be submitted via email to Kehinde Ojo with “Proposal for External Evaluation: SLF” SLF as the email subject line at kojo@freedomfund.org no later than **26th March 2024, 10am UK time**. Proposals should be submitted in English and in Microsoft Office or PDF format. Proposals should be no more than 5 pages, plus CVs and annexes.

PAYMENT AND JURISDICTION

Applicants should observe that the Freedom Fund is a United States 501(c)(3) public charity. The awarded contract will be governed by and constructed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York, United States of America, without regard to principles relating to conflicts of law. All payments to the consultant under the awarded contract shall be agreed upon therein, in compensation for the services provided, and directly related to the approved costs of the required services when/if applicable. Contracts will always be drafted in United States Dollars.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This Request for Proposal and associated documents are the property of Freedom Fund and confidential. Apart from using FF documents to respond to the request, you shall not disclose any details, to any other person or organisation, and shall treat this RFP and your response with complete confidentiality.