

Annual Report 2010

Ooty, India - Pune, India - Hopkins, U.S.A. - Hildenborough, U.K.



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

Annual Report 2010

International Headquarters

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

Letter from the Director



The end of 2010 finds the political parties of India embroiled in high-level corruption. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra was caught allotting prime property to his friends and family, next was the Union Minister for Communication who was favouring his “friends” with 2G (cell phone) spectrum allocations. These political figures are connected to the ruling Congress Party, so in predictable fashion the opposition party (BJP) raised the alarm at these

disturbing disclosures, taking the high moral ground to undermine their opponents.

In the last few days more corruption involving the Chief Minister of Karnataka surfaced, evidently he was also allotting real-estate to his friends and family. However, he belongs to the opposition BJP, taking the bite out of the party’s national “We’re not corrupt!” campaign. At first the party leaders considered removing him, just like the Congress Party did for their erring leaders, however they changed their mind when they realized how little there was to gain from taking a moral stand.

I quote from a senior party leader as reported in The Hindu on November 24: “It is veering round to the conclusion that it would be foolish to endanger its only government in the south to get some brownie morality points that do not count on the ground.” What has become of integrity? What has become of doing the right thing? We always suspected that political leaders made decisions without regard to morality but now they’re coming out in the open and saying so! What an indictment of the political environment we live in - morality no longer counts!

What a privilege to be engaged in God’s work of bringing rescue, restoration, and justice to the oppressed; to take a moral stand in the midst of deteriorating standards; to say to the authorities, “What is happening to young women in the brothels is wrong, so let’s do something to stop it!” At Freedom Firm we have said this to local authorities in Maharashtra and Karnataka, and over the past five years they have taken on the challenge and partnered with us to rescue girls and arrest traffickers. In the last year alone four of those criminal cases resulted in the conviction of six perpetrators! I am proud that the staff of Freedom Firm are taking a moral stand in each of these situations, that justice is being done, and that the oppressed are being set free. Plain and simple, this is the work of Freedom Firm - loosening the chains of injustice, untying the cords of the yoke, setting the oppressed free.

Despite this simplicity, when I look back at 2010 I remember how complicated it was! By the end of 2009 a slow-brewing conflict in Freedom Firm leadership led to an impasse. We reached out for assistance, and in March 2010 a wise man of God met with our leadership and helped bring about a difficult but amicable resolution. Though the outcome was positive, it resulted in some casualty; key people left Freedom Firm, and I found myself needing to restructure and recharge the organization. And then in early June, my wife Mala stepped down from her role as Director of Aftercare, so again we faced significant transition.

As we exit 2010, the organisational restructure is yielding significant results. The Pune office, under the leadership of Evan Henck, is growing and reaching new levels of (stability and) success. Despite the difficulty of a threat on our senior investigator’s life, we had five convictions and several rescues in this past summer and fall. And then in late November the team rescued 19 young women and girls in Nagpur, Maharashtra, after receiving unprecedented cooperation from the police.

The aftercare team in Ooty, led by Anik Tungshangnao, is now divided into several programs: education, micro enterprise (now called Ruhamah Designs), and residential care (Roja home). Horse therapy continues to be a part of the program, offered through the Freedom Firm partner, Leg Up. These programs are growing in strength and effectiveness as we continue to learn. I am happy to report that the expansion of Roja, Freedom Firm’s aftercare home, is in progress. After nearly two years of waiting for permission to add on to the existing structure, we are finally able to proceed and provide space for up to 10 more girls! I delight at the progress I see in the lives of the six young women now in the program. It is a joy to be part of their lives and to share in their victories and their struggles.

Throughout these times of growth and transition I am grateful for Jayson Palm, Director of Operations, who has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with me as we face challenges. He oversees the building project at Roja, leads our recruiting efforts, manages our communications, prepares the budget, and hones our staff development program.

Gretchen Merritt, Freedom Firm U.S. Director, has represented stability and continuity. She tirelessly works to raise the resources that keep us going in India. A tough economic climate and the transition of our development staff in India has resulted in lower income this year. In early 2011 a new Associate Director of Advancement will join us in India, so I look forward with anticipation for how God will provide in the year to come.

Thank you for your prayers and support for Freedom Firm in 2011.

Warmly,

Greg Malstead



Mission and Strategy

The Mission

Rescue, Restoration, and Justice. Freedom Firm seeks to eliminate child prostitution in India by rescuing minor girls, providing effective rehabilitation, and prosecuting the perpetrators of sex trafficking.

The Strategy

Rescue: Freedom Firm undercover operatives locate minor girls enslaved in brothels, document the crime, and report it to the police. With assistance from our operatives the police raid the brothels, rescue the girls, and arrest the brothel keepers and traffickers. The rescued girls are then placed in aftercare, and the police file criminal complaints (or charges) against their oppressors.

Restoration: Freedom Firm's aftercare home provides rescued girls with job training, education, counselling, and health care in a safe, family-style setting. The creative program includes summer camp, animal therapy, and micro enterprise job opportunities that help the girls grow in confidence and become independent. Freedom Firm also partners with other rehabilitation homes throughout India to provide for the well-being of all the girls we rescue.

Justice: In aggressive pursuit of conviction, Freedom Firm lawyers assist public prosecutors at each stage of the criminal trial. Rescued girls are empowered to testify against their abusers and help bring them to justice. Every trial and every conviction creates a deterrent and raises the cost of sex trafficking in India.



"This is the first time in the history of Nagpur that (an organisation) has come, showing concern, going to the higher authorities. In my 15 year career in the social field, it has never happened."

*- Samir S., Programme Coordinator
& Counsellor, ACCEPT*



The Story of Freedom Firm

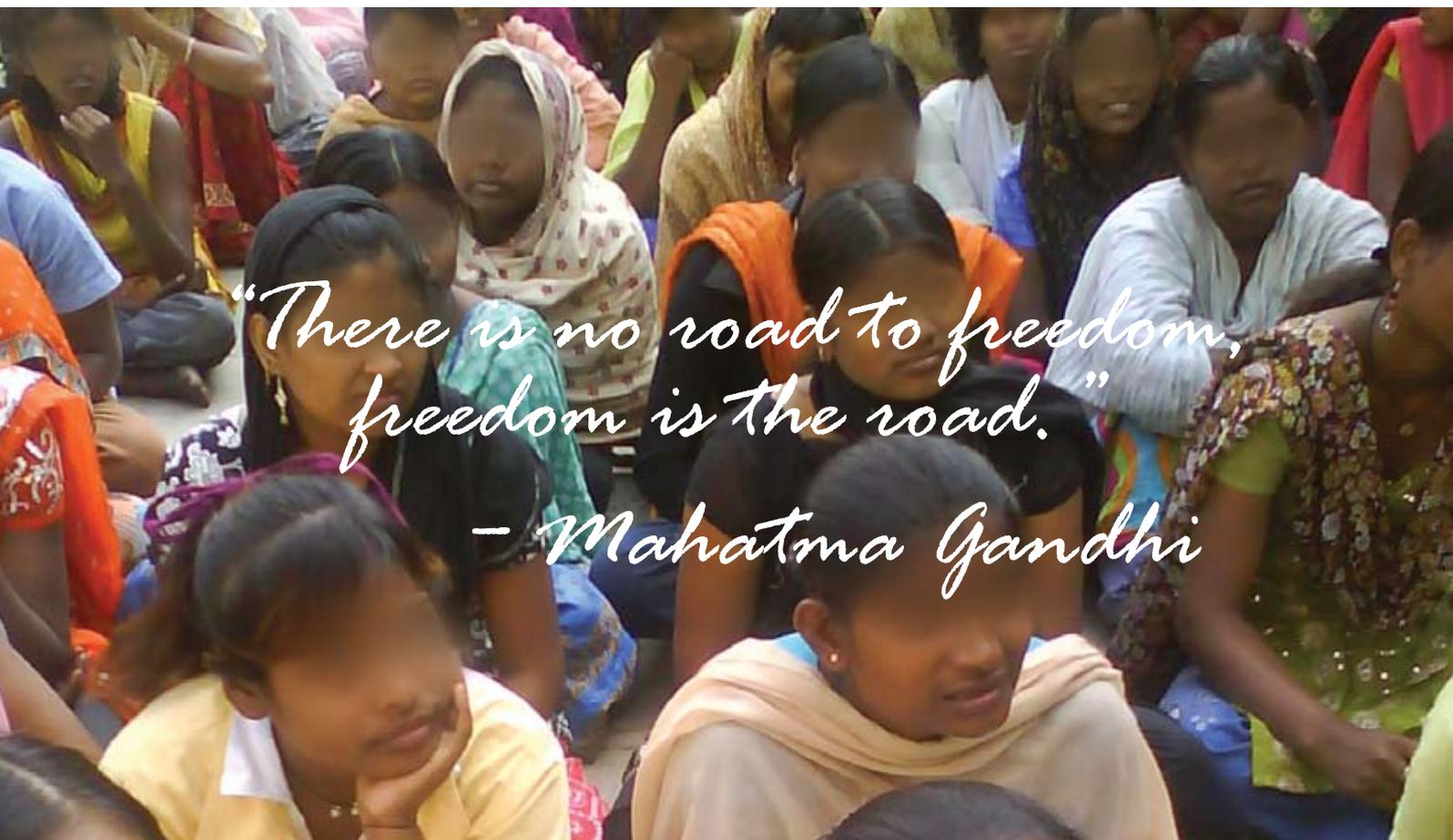
It was 2000 when Freedom Firm Founders Greg and Mala Malstead moved their family to Mumbai, India, and Greg became Director of International Justice Mission, Mumbai. An attorney, Greg established IJM's first India office and built a team of investigators, lawyers, and social workers who partnered with local authorities to bring rescue and justice to victims of sex trafficking. In his five years with IJM, Greg led and participated in interventions that resulted in the rescue of over 450 victims, prosecution of more than 180 perpetrators, and conviction in 6 groundbreaking cases.

Despite this success in rescue and justice, the Malsteads wanted to do more for victims of the sex trade. Combining Greg's legal experience with Mala's creative passion and teaching background, they envisioned an organization that not only rescues girls and brings their perpetrators to justice but also restores these girls to lives of physical, emotional, and spiritual wholeness and equips them for a future of self-reliance. They also wanted to target their rescue and justice efforts in areas of Maharashtra and Karnataka that as yet had no major anti-trafficking NGO (non-government organization) presence. But they needed help.

The Malsteads contacted attorney Glen Parks and his wife Rebecca, two friends who were eager to share their expertise and vision and willing to move half way around the world. So in 2006, the Malsteads and the Parks founded Freedom Firm in Ooty, Tamil Nadu.

Freedom Firm's investigation team was soon on the ground in Maharashtra rescuing minor girls, while the aftercare program began to take shape in Ooty. The holistic program includes a family-style aftercare home as well as counselling, health care, education, and job training in the micro enterprise jewellery business. Also as part of aftercare, Freedom Firm has developed a horse therapy program, called Leg Up, which incorporates the use of horses in building trust and self-confidence.

Since 2006, Freedom Firm has rescued over 130 underage girls from commercial sexual exploitation and is actively involved in restoring these girls to lives of wholeness and self-sufficiency. As supporters, you are a vital part of our history and our future. Thank you for sharing our vision.



*"There is no road to freedom,
freedom is the road."*

- Mahatma Gandhi

Rescue: Each Girl So Precious

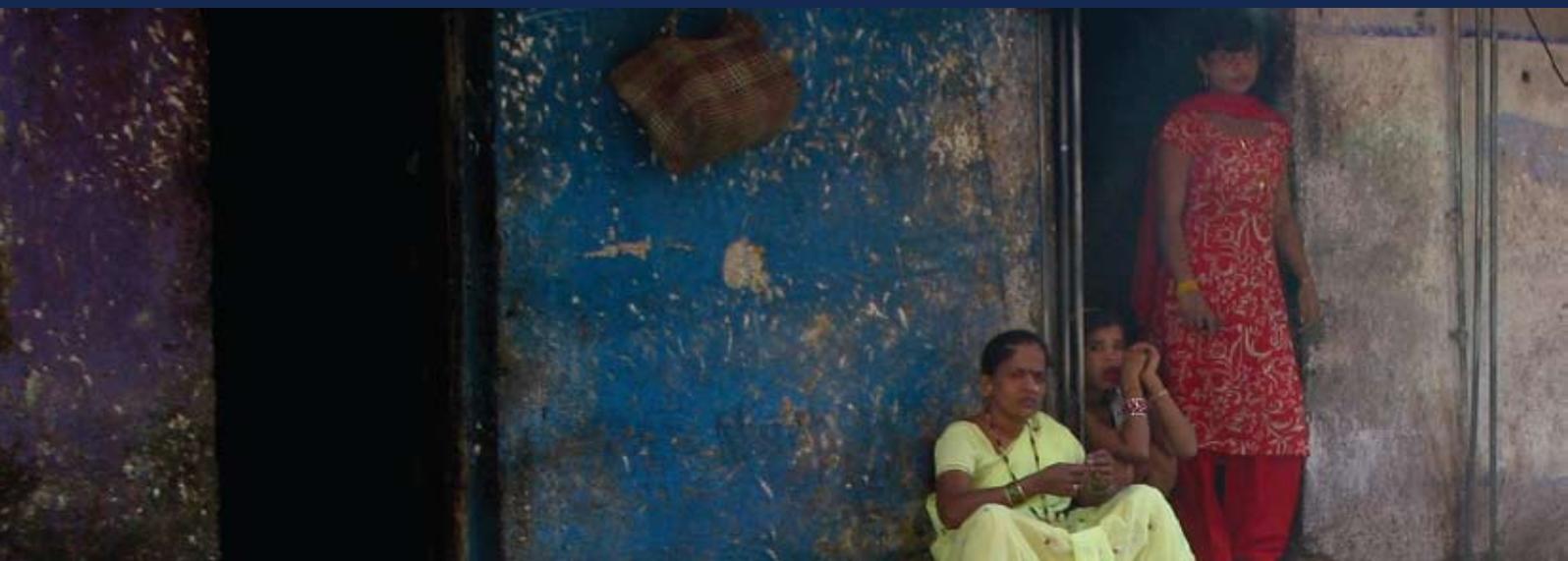
"This is the best thing that happened to me. If I would not be trafficked, if I would not be rescued. If I would not be here, I would still be a stupid village girl. Now I know what is life and now I know how I want to raise my daughter when I go back. And I promise you I will not leave the ones who did this to me."

- Rescued girl speaking with a Freedom Firm Social Worker

Expanding the Reach of Freedom Firm

Part of the strategy of Freedom Firm's investigative team in Pune is to search in new areas for minor girls. In October 2010, the team conducted investigations for the first time in Nagpur, a city of 2.5 million (in eastern Maharashtra) that has a prolific red-light area. The area is quite poor, and girls are available for as little as Rs. 50 (1.10 USD, 70 GBP). What the investigators also found troubling was the fact that brothels in Nagpur are organized in such a way that could potentially make raids and rescues unusually difficult and dangerous.

In their initial investigations, the operatives found minor girls in need of rescue, and with the help of police, their first raid was successful in rescuing one girl. Their second raid, however, failed. Knowing there were many minors in the area, the team returned several weeks later for another attempt. This time however the police provided unprecedented support – three high-ranking police officials joined the team on a large-scale raid – and nineteen girls were rescued! Two brothel agents were also apprehended and were later refused bail, which kept them out of work for weeks rather than merely days.



Success Once Again in Sangli

Early in our history Freedom Firm conducted several successful rescue operations in Sangli, a city of 500,000. In the first effort, seventeen girls were rescued. In the following two raids, four more girls were rescued. Since then we have checked for more minors and not found any – a testimony to the fact that Freedom Firm has created a deterrent in that red-light area.

As part of keeping vigilance in Sangli, Freedom Firm leaders met with The Salvation Army anti-trafficking team in August for an initial meeting to see how we might cooperate in the fight. In that meeting, their team shared intelligence about a minor girl who had been trafficked to Sangli and was now somewhere in the red-light area. Freedom Firm operatives were soon on location and began their investigation. Within 48 hours they located the minor girl. The next night, in concert with The Salvation Army and local police, the girl was rescued. Her name is Priya.

Victimized a young age, Priya had spent years being sold for sex in Goa and other tourist destinations. Her mother was a devadasi (a religious practice where women are tied to a deity and practice prostitution), and like many casualties of the devadasi system, Priya now believes prostitution is her fate. She emotionally clings to her life of slavery. But we believe Priya can have a different life, and we won't give up on her!

When meeting with rescued girls in a government home, one of the girls pulled Freedom Firm Social Worker Sunayana aside and asked for her help: her sister was still trapped somewhere in a brothel in Pune and needed rescue. The only information she could give was her sister's name, Niramayee. On a raid and rescue that very night Sunayana held the hands of the three girls in the brothel – and one of them said, "My name is Niramayee"! The sisters were soon reunited and are now back home and doing well.

Restoration: From Brokenness to Healing

Simple Home Visit, Unexpected Results

The following amazing “re-rescue” occurred during a home visit in West Bengal. Two Freedom Firm Social Workers were meeting rescued girls for a number of purposes, one of those being to inquire into their safety. This is an excerpt from a Freedom Firm social worker’s “Aftercare Report” after visiting Shradhdha:

“Shradhdha’s father took us to where Shradhdha was, i.e., her ‘husbands’ house. When Shradhdha saw us she burst into tears. On inquiring with her, she told us that she was forced to marry Ajoy. I asked her if she wants to come away, she said ‘yes’ and had all her belongings packed in two plastic bags. Shradhdha told me that her ‘husband’ raped her and beat her every day. There was total commotion in the neighbourhood. The constable and I questioned the neighbours as to how they allowed a small girl to get married and never reported the matter. The man’s mother was yelling abuses and shouting at all of us. I told the police to take Shradhdha, the father and the man Ajoy to the police station. Ajoy’s sister Seema Shirpi Lali seems to have planned the re-trafficking of Shradhdha by getting her married to him. According to Shradhdha, Lali is a prostitute in Kanchi Tamang’s brothel and also dances in dance bars.”

Shradhdha is now in a government home in Maharashtra and is doing very well. The same Kanchi Tamang mentioned in this report was sentenced to seven years in prison on 30 April 2010.



Freedom Firm Social Workers Sunayana and Ameer on a typical home visit

Every graduate from the Ooty “Standing Strong” aftercare programme is a celebration, and in 2010 both Esther and Mala graduated! Esther remains in Ooty and plans to attend a YWAM training school in 2011. Mala returned home shortly after her graduation and, unfortunately, has not been in touch since. We continue to pray for both of these girls and the future God has for them.

Karishma Returns "Home"

Karishma was Freedom Firm's first rescue. The twelve-year-old had been forced into prostitution by her grandmother, who lived off Karishma's nightly earnings. After rescue and living in a government home, she was angry at the world and became violent and unmanageable. We sought and were granted permission to bring Karishma to Roja, our aftercare home in Ooty, but before we could make much identifiable progress with her, the government reclaimed her.

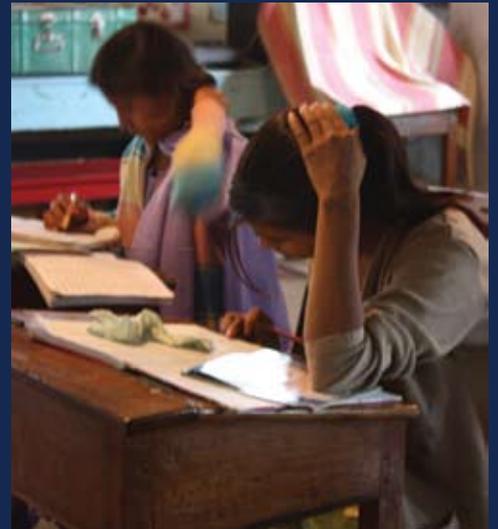
Over the next three years, Karishma was transferred to four different rehabilitation homes, and none of them could control her. This year, the government finally allowed Karishma come home to Freedom Firm. But now she was older, stronger, still defiant, and uneducated as ever, since she had turned her back on any schooling.

The first month back in Ooty, Karishma staged many efforts to control the staff and other girls. Although just sixteen, she is a true leader, and many of our older girls looked up to her and followed her blindly. Thankfully, God has brought us determined and wise staff. Freedom Firm Aftercare Manager Anik has guided the staff in handling Karishma with a positive approach, disciplining her when needed, and giving encouragement and love in a hundred different ways.

For three months Karishma waged war against her rehabilitation. Finally Anik drew the line. She gave Karishma a choice: either shape up and get with the program, or leave Freedom Firm. It was a risk. We knew Freedom Firm was the best hope for Karishma, but we also knew it had to be her choice to stay.

At first she reacted negatively, giving us the silent treatment and even venturing into town alone without telling anyone where she was going. It looked like she would be gone again. But one day her hardness began to crumble. Karishma opened up said she wanted to stay. Soon she accepted counselling and we began to see a new side of her. There is a softness in her demeanour now, and clear evidence of engagement with the program. She obeys most of the rules these days, although she can't refrain from testing the boundaries once in a while. What teenage girl doesn't?

She works hard at making jewellery, and is doing very well in her math studies. She learns English reluctantly, having some fierce allegiance to her native language Marathi. But she's learning. It's amazing progress from a girl who adamantly refused to learn anything in a classroom. Her violence is diminishing. Peace, self-control, and true moments of happiness are emerging. Karishma has stopped fighting those that love her the most, and she is embracing her own rehabilitation.



Karishma in the Freedom Firm classroom



Karishma (lower right) enjoying a day out

Justice: A Big Year in Court

After two convictions in our first three years, we were overjoyed to see six brothel keepers and traffickers sentenced to five or more years in prison during 2010! The groundwork laid in these cases by our advocates and social workers over several years paid off. Considering that over 130 girls have been rescued, resulting in over 60 cases, we are preparing for even more cases – and hopefully more convictions – in 2011.

“The risk is increasing for (the perpetrators). The risk is increasing for us as well.”

*– Rohit T.,
Freedom Firm Partner Advocate,
Pune Sessions Court*



A newspaper article showing the brothel keeper (left) and trafficker (right) in one of the 2010 Freedom Firm convictions

The Conviction That “Shouldn’t” Have Happened

The case against Puja and Yellama was a difficult one. For one, it had been a struggle to get Lali to testify because she was coming from a long distance and the court continually postponed the hearings. But unlike most girls, Lali had been eager to tell the judge what the two accused had done to her. She was especially angry at Yellama, a distant relative from her village who she felt needed to be punished. She did finally get her day in court and gave a powerful testimony.

After this, Freedom Firm Senior Investigator Shyam encountered severe opposition while giving his testimony. Like many cases, the police had written many things into the statements which were blatantly false. Shyam wanted to tell the true story of what had happened during the raid and rescue, but knew this would derail the case since the truth did not match the police report. When Shyam finally did testify, the Public Prosecutor declared him hostile! Still, he held to his convictions and told the truth.

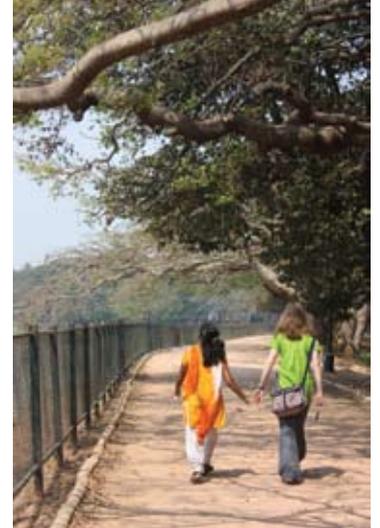
Then there was Jayavanti, the second victim. She had been sent back to a rehabilitation home in West Bengal. We thought the case was a loss due to Shyam’s testimony and therefore decided not to disturb her. But much to our surprise, the Thane Police brought Jayavanti back from West Bengal on their own initiative. She testified in court very strongly in spite of the fact that the judge opened the court to the public and several local pimps were there to intimidate her!

Every case is worth the effort, even if the end result is an acquittal. But this one was sweet not only because of the strong stance all these witnesses took, but both brothel keepers were convicted! What a testimony to the power of the truth.

Finances 2010

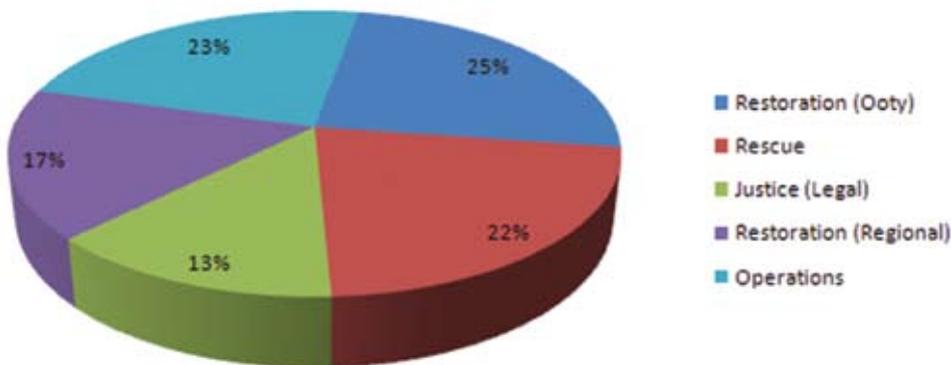
One of our core principles is Achieving Results. We allocate our resources with an uncompromising drive to achieve results balanced by a responsibility to steward our resources. We are diligent about stewarding finances given by donors, not just because accountability matters, but also for the sake of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

In 2010 Freedom Firm continued to expand, laying the groundwork for opening a new regional office in 2011, expanding the Roja aftercare home capacity from 4 girls to 14, and developing a fully staffed Interventions Team in Pune. Without your generous and sacrificial gifts, Freedom Firm would never be able to do the work we do. We rely entirely on the financial contributions of generous people like you to meet our operating budget, and we are so grateful that you believe in this work and contribute to its success!



Expenses

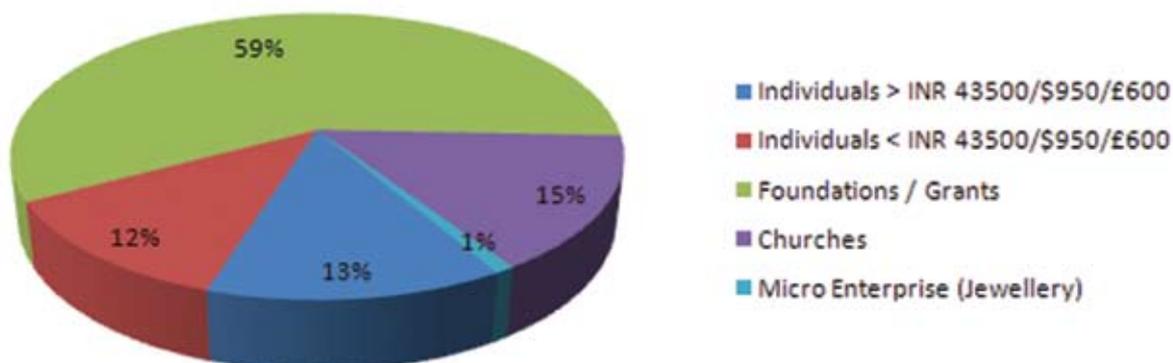
January-December 2010



Income Sources

January-December 2010

Total income: INR 98,38,397 / \$215,778 / £132,682



Freedom Firm Boards

Freedom Firm Board

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*“Willingly no one chooses
the yoke of slavery.”*

– Aeschylus