



Rehabilitation

Key to Sustained Freedom



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Human trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes in the world. According to the National Crimes Record Bureau's Crime in India Report, 2016, bonded labour and labour trafficking form a significant portion of India's trafficking victims. Although bonded labour was outlawed by the government in 1976 through the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, it continues to prevail across several industries in India today.

Bonded labour has existed for hundreds of years and is illegal in all its forms. Often entire families must work to pay off the debt taken by one of its members. Sometimes, the debt can be passed down generations and children can be held in debt bondage because of a loan their parents had, and the exploitative interests and calculations charged on those loans by the perpetrators taken decades ago. Other times, bonded labour is perpetrated not even on basis of debt but on basis of social obligation due to custom or birth in a particular caste or community.

Assisting the government in combatting this crime, International Justice Mission (IJM) collaborates with the central and state governments and partners with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across the country to support their engagement with the government on this issue. Organisations like the Foundation for Sustainable Development, Jan Sahas, Jai Bhim Vikas Shikshan Sansthan, Justice Ventures India Trust and Volunteers of Social Justice have rich field experience that have translated into relief and rehabilitation for bonded labourers and protection against violence through prosecution of offences committed against them.

In over the last ten years, IJM and its partners have assisted the government in rescuing more than 18,000 victims of bonded labour and believes in the importance of restoration of survivors. Once the victim has been rescued, IJM and its partners, with informed consent, provide a two-year rehabilitation programme that addresses both the immediate and long-term needs of the individual/family. Timely rehabilitation services are critical for newly released labourers as they are more vulnerable to returning to bonded labour within the first two to eight weeks of freedom. This programme consists of various components such as home visits by the on-field rehabilitation team, monthly meetings of the survivors, and meetings with the block and district government officials for access to various government schemes. Collaboration among NGOs and the government ensures a more coordinated and effective response against the crime of bonded labour.



Here, we present a booklet that contains 12 stories of rehabilitation of bonded labour survivors from eight states of India. These stories have been drawn from amongst the thousands of survivors who are looking to a better future for them and their families. Through these stories, we present facets of rehabilitation practices that have resulted in a better life for these survivors owing to access to government benefits. We believe that legal protection of the rights of victims of bonded labour and trafficking together with access to a wide spectrum of government benefits holds great potential for transformation and sustained freedom of thousands of survivors in our country. We have seen that rehabilitation with a holistic focus on needs of individuals, families and communities is key to creating empowered survivors and safe communities.

With each story, we present themes from the rehabilitation work that IJM and its partners have done over the last several years that can provide holistic care and protection and ensure citizen security.

Rehabilitation Themes for Care and Protection



COMMUNITY-BASED
REHABILITATION



COMMUNITY
LEADERSHIP



FAMILY-BASED
REHABILITATION



ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT



EDUCATION



INFRASTRUCTURE
DEVELOPMENT



LEGAL
PROTECTION



Date of Rescue: April 2016

How many rescued: 25 labourers

Industry: Brick kiln

Place of rescue: Rajasamand, Rajasthan

Organisation involved: Jai Bhim Vikas Shikshan Sansthan (JBVSS) in Rajasthan



Infrastructure Development

Barjubai received an initial rehabilitation money under the Bonded Labour Rehabilitation Scheme and has been accessing various government welfare schemes due to the release certificates issued by the government. Release certificates are used as identity proof for availing rehabilitation benefits.

Barjubai applied for a house under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (central government's housing scheme) and received money to start constructing her house after a year of applying. She also rears livestock to supplement her income and has bought a plot of land to further her livelihood opportunities.



Community Leadership

With constant support from local authorities, Renu Devi and Raj Kumar have had opportunities to grow and rise from poverty and exploitation. Some of the compensation they received from the Labour and SC/ST departments was invested in a bank deposit while some of it was used to buy livestock. They decided to educate their oldest son Rahul at a residential English medium school. Raj Kumar is now a contractor for road laying in the village and provides employment opportunities to 45 other rescued bonded labourers. Renu Devi contested for the panchayat elections in her village and won against the candidate of an owner of facilities like the one from which Renu Devi was rescued.



Date of Rescue: 2014

How many rescued: 164 labourers (an entire village)

Industry: Agriculture

Place of rescue: Gaya, Bihar

Organisation involved: Justice Ventures India Trust in Bihar



Date of Rescue: January 2016

How many rescued: 15 labourers

Industry: Sugarcane farming

Place of rescue: Bagalkot, Karnataka

Organisation involved: Jan Sahas in Madhya Pradesh



Family-based Rehabilitation

The survivors, who are from Khargone, Madhya Pradesh, received their rehabilitation money from the government. Lal Singh and his family were able to buy back the land his father had mortgaged years ago. They now cultivate different crops on it, including peanuts. They also bought a motorcycle and a pair of cows. 'I dream of digging a well close to our field so that my sons will always have water required to grow things,' says Lal Singh with a broad smile.



Community-based Rehabilitation

Rescued bonded labourers bought nets with the rehabilitation amount they received and invested the rest of it in goat-rearing. The women have set up self help groups (SHGs), learning to save and invest money and support the group.

Amaragiri Fishing and Agri Farmers Producers Company Limited, a Released Bonded Labourers' Association (RBLA), was formed in the village with leaders elected from the community. The Fisheries Department, Government of Telangana, provided the survivors with nets, ice boxes and two wheelers to help them sell their fish and earn better.

In a classic example of community-based rehabilitation, FSD supported the community and mentored the leaders on various fronts. Ashok, a survivor, was elected to deal with all banking and external affairs. Another survivor Kurumaiah represents the community at government meetings and discussions. Lingamma is the leader who speaks up and represents the women in the community in all matters.



Date of Rescue: January 2016
How many rescued: 96 labourers of 38 families
Industry: Fishing
Place of rescue: Amaragiri, Telangana
Organisation involved: Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD) in Telangana



Date of Rescue: November 2017

How many rescued: 10 labourers

Industry: Poultry farm

Place of rescue: Ramanagar, Karnataka

Organisation involved: International Justice Mission (IJM) in Karnataka and Odisha





Infrastructure Development

Damru works on his farm, and he and Hemanthi take on other daily wage jobs around the village to make ends meet. Their nephew Bhujbal has found a job making tents in a nearby town. Their son Durga has joined a village school.

They live in a small clay house in Nuapada, Odisha, but IJM helped them apply for a house under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, the Central Government's scheme for affordable housing.

They are learning how to apply for other government benefits and how to save their money better. Hemanthi shares, "We aren't better off financially, but we have a roof over our heads and food to eat when we get home. We can spend quality time with our son, go to the market together, visit our relatives occasionally—all of the small things matter."



Legal Protection

Three years after the rescue, the brick kiln owner was found guilty of bonded labour and human trafficking, and was sentenced to ten years of rigorous imprisonment and a penalty of Rs 16,000 under the Indian Penal Code 370 (Trafficking of Persons) and Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. The verdict is the first of its kind in Karnataka where a perpetrator has been convicted under IPC 370 for a bonded labour trafficking crime, and is no longer free to continue trafficking and exploiting other bonded labourers.

Today, the survivors have their own daily wage jobs, celebrating their freedom and standing up for their rights to combat this serious crime of bonded labour.



Date of Rescue: August 2014

How many rescued: 13 labourers

Industry: Brick kiln

Place of rescue: Ramanagar, Karnataka

Organisation involved: International Justice Mission (IJM) in Karnataka



Date of Rescue: October 2016

How many rescued: 2 boys

Industry: Sheep grazing

Place of rescue: Indore, Madhya Pradesh

Organisation involved: Jan Sahas in Madhya Pradesh





Education

After the rescue, the boys were produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), an authority that looks after the care, protection, treatment, development and rehabilitation of the children in need of care and protection. At the shelter home, Dilip started his studies and passed fifth grade. The shelter home in-charge suggests he should work at the home after his education so that his livelihood is guaranteed.

Mohan, on the other hand, got enrolled in a bridge course – a course to give out-of-school children the opportunity to take informal classes for one year as a bridge into the formal school system under the Government of India's National Policy on Education (1986). He is elated to study, knowing he doesn't have to walk endless kilometres tending sheep.

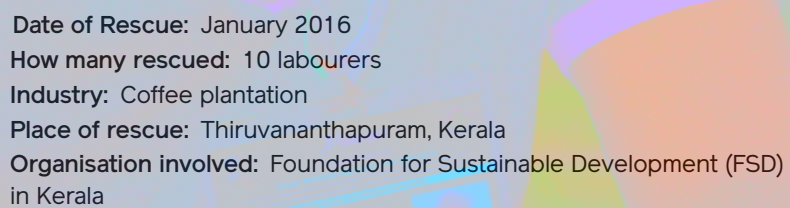


Economic Empowerment

FSD intervened and helped the labourers receive release certificates and initial rehabilitation money in January 2016.

Even as FSD supports the boys in their rehabilitation and access to government schemes, Babu completed a three-month Retail Industry Sales and Customer Care course under *Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojna* (DDU-GKY), a scheme under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. He is the president of a youth organisation in his ward.

He is also the president of a local self help group, *Adimavela Mojida Swasthreyaya Sangam* (Released Bonded Labourers Association). The members leased a small plot of land for three months, to grow crops. 'We are so happy that there is an alternate way for us to improve our quality of life without having to depend on anyone else. This is definitely the more sustainable way,' says Babu. Today, Babu works with an organisation that provides relief and rehabilitation to victims affected by the August 2018 floods in Kerala.



Representational image

Date of Rescue: November 2018

How many rescued: 2 boys

Industry: Duck rearing

Place of rescue: Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu

Organisation involved: Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD)
in Tamil Nadu



Education

The Revenue Divisional Officer enrolled the boys in an English medium residential school on the same day, not wanting them to miss out on fulfilling their dreams. Eventually, other boys who were trapped in bonded labour were rescued. Today, they are 11 years old and are looking at a bright future that awaits them. With the help of a proactive government official, the boys don't have to toil and work hard at an age where alphabets would interest them.



Economic Empowerment

Shanmugam is a member of the local Released Bonded Labourers' Association and a cultural troupe helping identify bonded labourers nearby.

He makes and sells bamboo products and wire baskets with his wife. With the money they earn, they take care of their family. Their son is in the 9th grade, while their 12-year-old daughter switches between wanting to become a doctor or a lawyer. Shanmugam encourages the school dropouts in his village to get enrolled in schools again. He believes every child has the right to education without any discrimination. From being a bonded labourer to becoming a community leader, Shanmugam proves a better future is possible for those free from the shackles of bonded labour.



Date of Rescue: March 2013

How many rescued: 5 families

Industry: Brick kiln

Place of rescue: Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Organisation involved: International Justice Mission (IJM) in Tamil Nadu





Date of Rescue: 2013

How many rescued: 1 family

Industry: Brick kiln

Place of rescue: Patiala, Punjab

Organisation involved: Volunteers of Social Justice in Punjab



Economic Empowerment

The family never received the wages due to them or release certificates that would entitle them to government rehabilitation money. However, Raju found a new job of loading and unloading materials at a paper mill in Punjab. He earns Rs 7,500 a month. Pindar works for a factory making screws, earning Rs 4,500 a month.

'I have bought a new bike now and hope that I will be able to get more things that my family needs,' Raju said. 'Things are looking better. I'm so happy with the way things are slowly shaping up,' says Raju, beaming.



Community-based Rehabilitation

FSD and IJM assisted SWELECT Energy Systems Limited, a global solar power systems company, in its project to support bonded labour survivors set up sustainable livelihoods. Their project was launched to reduce vulnerability of survivors to exploitation through establishing sustainable livelihoods.

Many of them have received livestock for milk supplies, vehicles for transportation, petty shops, boats and nets, raw material for production of bags and screen-printing units. Some of them have also received access to housing and borewell units. Through this project, the survivors are encouraged to repay a partial value of the investment cost to promote ownership.



Date of launch: 2016

How many benefited: Over 500 survivors

Places of implementation: Kanchipuram, Thiruvannamalai and Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu

Organisations involved: Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD) and International Justice Mission (IJM) in Tamil Nadu

