

## **Freedom Dividend**

Free the Slaves, working with local human rights groups, has developed community-based methods for ending slavery, preventing slavery, and establishing economic autonomy and human rights for those freed from slavery. Fundamental to this community-based approach is the emphasis on bringing about permanent change in the factors that support slavery.

Our exploratory work over the past 10 years has shown that to ensure sustainable freedom when people are liberated, it is necessary to address other issues relating to livelihoods and citizenship, in addition to physical and/or psychological rehabilitation.

To date, we have implemented these community-based strategies in India, Nepal, Haiti, and Ghana, and are further developing similar work in Brazil, DRC and Uganda. Those in India are the most fully developed and tested. They have tended to take two main forms – the liberation and reintegration of people in slavery, and the “slave-proofing” of communities from which people, especially children, are drawn into human trafficking. Through these projects, thousands of people have come out of slavery and many communities have become vigilant and effective in resisting human trafficking.

In helping to build sustainable freedom for survivors of slavery, we see that in addition to personal liberation, there is a significant *Freedom Dividend* – a range of social and economic improvements that occur with the removal of individuals and groups from slavery.

This freedom dividend is seen in a number of dimensions, including:

- educational participation in girls and boys,
- increased family incomes and payment of wages,
- initiation of family asset formation
- improved access to health services,
- improved status and greater safety from violence of women and girls
- increased political participation,
- reduced corruption at the local level in terms of access to legal justice and in delivery of social and development services (such as access to water),

In addition, because former slaves are able to participate alongside other citizens in using public services and in local economic activity, there are improvements in social integration.

These benefits are most directly experienced by the former slaves, and they also directly affect the families of returning trafficking survivors. It is also believed (though not so far rigorously tested) that increased incomes and more efficient work practices of people coming out of slavery lead to a general upward spiral in local economic activity (including the incomes of those families who were NOT held in slavery). Also, to the extent that groups of people coming out of slavery achieve changes in government behavior, improvements in rule of law, and reduction of violence against women, this benefits a wider group of citizens.