

THE
freedom
STORY

2019

Impact Report

THEFREEDOMSTORY.ORG



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Our mission is to prevent child trafficking and exploitation through culturally relevant programs for vulnerable children and to share their stories **to inspire creative, compassionate people to act.**

Letter from the CEO

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your support of The Freedom Story throughout 2019. As we reflect on the past year we are incredibly thankful for your partnership to prevent child trafficking in Northern Thailand.

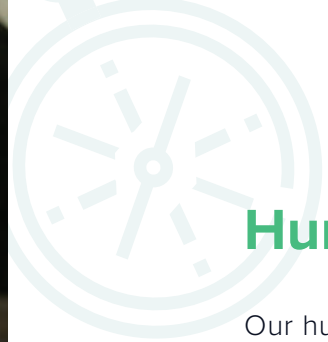
2019 was a year of tremendous growth and change for us. We reorganized our scholarship program to better reflect our values and the needs of our students. Now, groups of sponsors support groups of students to ensure they stay in school. We brainstormed a strategy to scale our impact over the next five years to assist more children and families in Northern Thailand. Collectively we raised \$631,658, 39% more than 2018. Finally, we launched a new expansion project in partnership with USAID Thailand Counter Trafficking in Persons Project to work with Burmese migrant workers, teaching them their rights and advising on access to government services to which they are entitled.

We are encouraged by the continued growth of our programs, impacting more people than ever before. But, trafficking is ever evolving, and we see an increase in threats from online sexual exploitation of children as it's becoming concerningly common throughout Thailand. As a grassroots organization, we are able to continually adjust our model to meet the needs of the populations we serve, and are committed to meeting the changing challenges as they arise. We are grateful for your partnership to make that happen.

Thank you for your support of The Freedom Story in 2019. With your support, we can continue to support at-risk youth in Chiang Rai through our holistic prevention programming, enabling students to pursue education, hope and a bright future, lifting their families and communities out of the cycle of poverty and exploitation.

With hope,
Rachel Goble, CEO





Human Rights

Our human rights programming raises awareness of trafficking and its root causes, and teaches students and community members about the Thai law and their rights to enable them to advocate for themselves.

By teaching about topics like teen pregnancy, drug use, child abuse and online safety, we are equipping communities with the knowledge needed to protect themselves.

We also assist children in our program in attaining the legal status to which they are entitled. In 2019 we expanded the reach of this project to include working with Burmese migrant workers

through the USAID Thailand Counter Trafficking in Persons project. Teaching migrant workers their rights and helping them access the government services they are entitled to decreases their risk of being trafficked for labor purposes.

Our human rights program was accessed over 3,600 times in 2019.

Our human rights program was accessed over 3,600 times, teaching at-risk students and parents about their rights, child protection, and human trafficking.

Our programs

Education

Our comprehensive education program ensures students and families have the financial socio-psychological resources needed to stay in education, develop the life skills needed to care for themselves and live lives that are free from exploitation. Our students maintain a primary school completion rate of 99.5% while the national average is 87%. In the region, an average of 26.4% of students leave school by

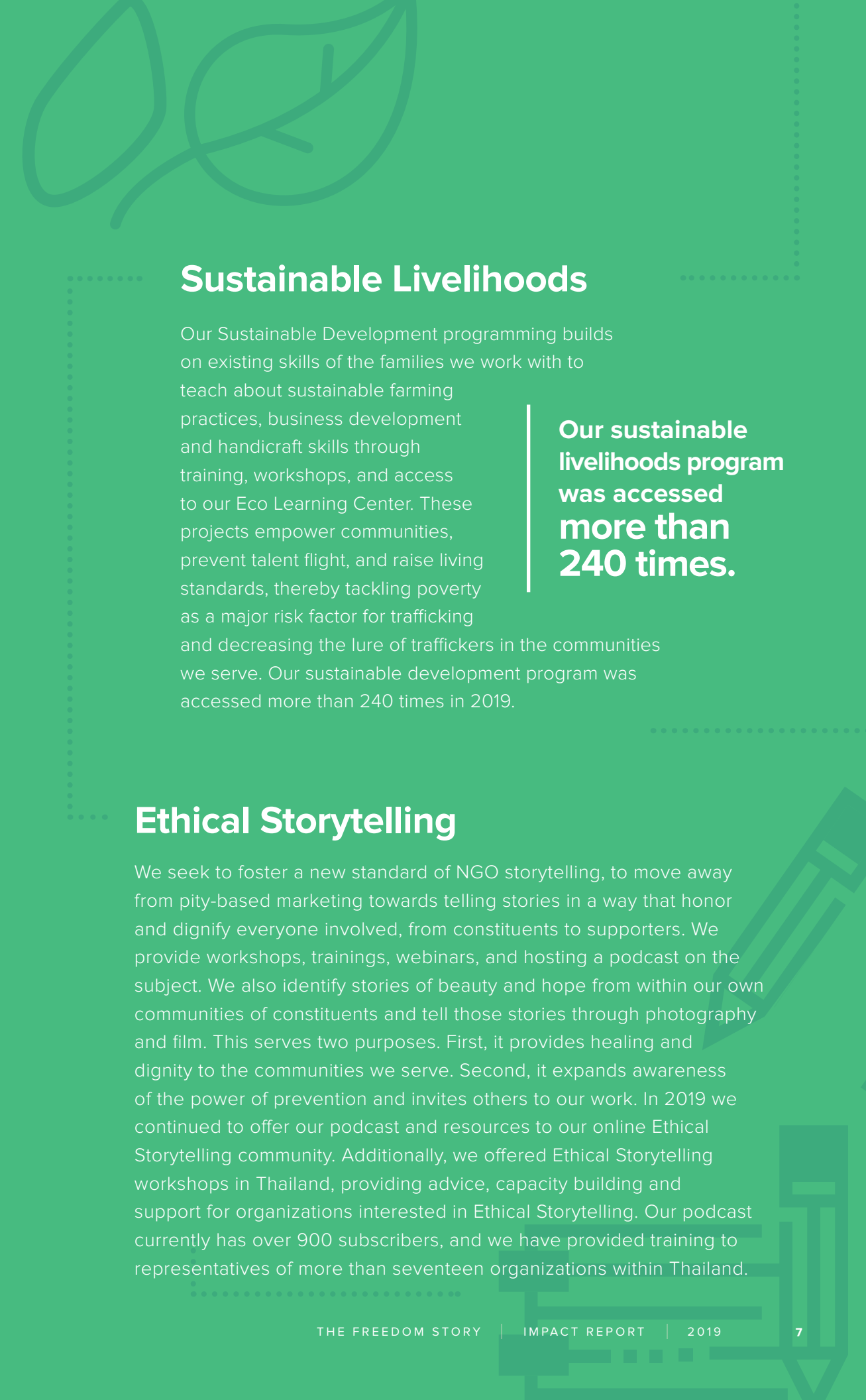
the age of 15. Our dropout rate for students in secondary school is only 5.7%. Our resource center offers after school programs, academic support and mentorship to students in the community, reaching over 1,200 people in 2019, and accessed over 2,670 times. Our staff members mentor students and families to ensure they have the support they need. In a survey from 2018, over 80% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their mentor helps them.



Since joining The Freedom Story, my life has hope. In the past, I only had dreams. But they weren't possible. They were like the wind. But if you have hope, you can do it. The Freedom Story has given me hope. It has helped me take hold of my dreams, so I can walk in the way that I wanted.

SOMYING, GRADUATED SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT





Sustainable Livelihoods

Our Sustainable Development programming builds on existing skills of the families we work with to teach about sustainable farming practices, business development and handicraft skills through training, workshops, and access to our Eco Learning Center. These projects empower communities, prevent talent flight, and raise living standards, thereby tackling poverty as a major risk factor for trafficking and decreasing the lure of traffickers in the communities we serve. Our sustainable development program was accessed more than 240 times in 2019.

Our sustainable livelihoods program was accessed more than 240 times.

Ethical Storytelling

We seek to foster a new standard of NGO storytelling, to move away from pity-based marketing towards telling stories in a way that honor and dignify everyone involved, from constituents to supporters. We provide workshops, trainings, webinars, and hosting a podcast on the subject. We also identify stories of beauty and hope from within our own communities of constituents and tell those stories through photography and film. This serves two purposes. First, it provides healing and dignity to the communities we serve. Second, it expands awareness of the power of prevention and invites others to our work. In 2019 we continued to offer our podcast and resources to our online Ethical Storytelling community. Additionally, we offered Ethical Storytelling workshops in Thailand, providing advice, capacity building and support for organizations interested in Ethical Storytelling. Our podcast currently has over 900 subscribers, and we have provided training to representatives of more than seventeen organizations within Thailand.



our values

RELATIONSHIPS

Whether our relationships with our beneficiaries in Thailand or those with donors and one another, we intentionally invest in our human connections each day.

DIGNITY

Our individual dignity is tied to the dignity of us all. Whether teaching human rights in Thailand or sharing stories in the US, we strive to highlight the dignity of each person.

POSITIVITY

Even in the midst of the darkest situations, positivity inspires hope. And hope inspires action.

RESILIENCY

Systemic problems require long-term, systemic solutions in the midst of a changing world. All of our programs are designed to provide adaptable solutions that last.

INCLUSIVENESS

Inclusion and dignity go hand in hand. We serve those in need without restrictions based on gender, race, religion, sex, age, background, nationality, et cetera.

TRANSPARENCY

From our finances to our needs, from our successes to our challenges, transparency is central in all we do.

Our impact

IN 2019

JANUARY

94 community members came to celebrate Children's Day



FEBRUARY

73 students learned about healthy relationships at our Valentine's Day event

FEBRUARY

Students produced a skit about human trafficking, reaching 61 community members

JANUARY

86 students came to an English camp run by high schoolers

APRIL

19 students graduated from various levels

JUNE

The Freedom Story conducted outreach for 800 people at Anti Human Trafficking Day

MAY

52 people attended our family camp, strengthening ties and communication skills

MARCH

83 ethnic minority women attended a training on human trafficking and depression



AUGUST

99 children were trained in the 3-3-5 child abuse curriculum through a partnership with Compassion International



OCTOBER

Our youth leaders organized an outreach teaching about online exploitation for 59 students

SEPTEMBER

18 students were trained on self esteem, 3 students received individual counseling

JULY

Outreach at a local children's home reached over 135 children, teaching them about human trafficking

NOVEMBER

221 students are trained in the 3-3-5 child abuse curriculum



DECEMBER

25 students and 3 adults attended our training on documentation needed to achieve higher legal status

our accomplishments

7,100 programs were accessed over 7,100 times collectively

581

People attended trainings conducted by our counseling team

243

community members were trained through our sustainable livelihoods program

27

Students have accessed 52 hours of individual counseling

400

Over 400 students were trained in our child abuse prevention curriculum

3,700

Our human rights program was accessed over 3,700 times.

19

Students Graduated

- 7 from Vocational or High School
- 7 from Bachelors Degrees
- 4 from Primary School
- 1 from Associates Degrees



Giving Surachai A Chance



“Because I was a mountain child, my opportunities were little because they thought my abilities were little. But my grades were good. In June, I will get my degree in auto mechanics,” Surachai says, smiling shyly. He has every right to feel proud of his accomplishments, and to reflect on how much he has changed and grown since he first became part of The Freedom Story’s programs.

When Surachai was a baby, his parents separated, putting his family in a difficult financial situation. As a member of an ethnic minority group which faces discrimination, and coming from a rural mountain village, he says, “My life has always been difficult. We never had any money.” Neither of his parents had ever gone to school. As soon as he was old enough, aged 8, his mother could not support him and sent him to a local children’s home.

He struggled as a child, admitting that, “I was very disobedient. I thought I wouldn’t finish 9th grade. I wouldn’t stay at the home. I’d go out at night. They almost kicked me out of the home because I was so naughty.” He carries this self-image so modestly, perhaps not realizing the impact being sent to a children’s home at age 8 might have on a young child’s behavior.

Given A Chance

It was around age 13, in seventh grade, that Surachai first came to participate in The Freedom Story’s activities. He had just begun school in the city 30 minutes away from the children’s home. “I had to study more. I had to work hard to keep up with the other students. That first year in the city, I felt like everyone’s education in the city was better. I didn’t know any of the things everyone else already knew. Some of the teachers don’t care about children from the countryside. In my class there were two of us from the villages, and one dropped out, so it was just me. The teachers would take care of the other

students but not me. I wasn’t sure if I would be able to finish,” he explains.

At the time Surachai was accepted into our Education Program, he lacked confidence about whether he would even finish 9th grade, so he was paired with a mentor and provided with the financial support needed to stay in school. He also said he had a great teacher who told him, “Those who have the chance to get an education should take it because many don’t have that chance.” This support was particularly important when he did finish 9th grade and his parents told him it was time to drop out to work.

“My parents didn’t give me any money. After 9th grade my mom said, ‘You don’t need to study anymore. You can go work now.’ They didn’t have any money to continue to send me to school. But I told them, ‘I want to study, and I’ll find a way to study myself and send myself to school,’” Surachai explains.

“When you only finish 9th grade you don’t have many choices for work, and so I chose to go to vocational school so I could work and study at the same time,” Surachai says. His parents continued to question his choices, but he supported himself through school working as a waiter for \$2 per day, then later at a car dealership, along with the support of The Freedom Story.

His vocational program was a huge challenge, but support from The Freedom Story’s mentors helped him understand how to navigate teenage life safely. He says, “Many kids drop out at this age. Those who finish 9th grade need a lot of support to finish high school. They can’t think clearly. They are still confused about how to behave. Many people get into bad situations because they don’t have anyone to talk to. Advice is important. Other people’s advice helps us see different points of view and to go forward. With The Freedom Story I had a lot of good advice givers who followed up with me.”

Because of The Freedom Story’s support, Surachai was able to navigate high school

successfully despite his challenges in early life. Particularly at the end of his vocational school degree, when he was considering studying further, he was completely out of money, and The Freedom Story was able to assist with his expenses, to help him get his degree off to a good start. “Look How Far I Have Come!”

“After I finished my vocational school degree, I thought I wouldn’t study any more. But my friend had just completed their Associate’s Degree, so that inspired me to pursue that degree. From there, I decided to do my Bachelor’s. Now, my mom says, “Keep studying! You are so close to graduating.” In the past, I thought of dropping out, I was so tired. I had to work and study at the same time and was exhausted, but now I am so proud of myself. Look how far I have come! I never thought I could come this far,” he says, smiling shyly.

We continued to support Surachai through his Bachelor’s degree with finances and mentorship. “My mentor has had these same experiences, so he knows what it is like. I feel like I can talk really easily with him. Once, when I had a financial problem, he advocated for me.”

Surachai finishes his degree in a few months. He is extremely proud of himself, while also being aware of how his life might have been without The Freedom Story. “Preventing trafficking is important. It is very easy to be trafficked. In the evenings now, we see them all the time. Near where I live, you see kids working the streets. They’re younger than 18 and very at risk. Money is very enticing,” he says.

Surachai is thriving. He supports his mother and his younger siblings, who have graduated high school, and he will be able to move up at the car dealership when he graduates. Because of your support, we have been able to walk with Surachai for the last 10 years.

If you can help with a donation to keep our programs running in 2020, we can continue to walk with other at-risk students to help them lead thriving lives.

Our research

We are always seeking to ensure that The Freedom Story's work is put into national, and regional perspective. Here is what we found in our research in 2019.

In Thailand, prostitution and exploitation are prevalent: Thai children are trafficked to be sold for sex abroad to Japan, Australia via Malaysia and Hong Kong, and Thai women and children are trafficked to the Middle East and forced into debt-bondage and slavery. Other estimates suggest that up to 40% of those involved in prostitution in Thailand are under 18 years of age. Notably, the average age of children exploited in the sex industry in Thailand is between 12 and 20. This is 3 years younger than the worldwide average.

There are various causes of trafficking identified in the literature. Here are some that are prevalent in the communities that we work with in Chiang Rai.

POVERTY

Poverty is a major risk factor for trafficking, pushing individuals towards potentially exploitative situations and risky migration patterns. In the Chiang Rai region of Northern Thailand where The Freedom Story works, poverty is higher than the national average, at 17% of the population rather than 7%.

EDUCATION

Low levels of education make people vulnerable to trafficking. In a survey of individuals accessing post-trafficking resources in the Mekong region, only 20%

of all youth under 18 reported they were students before leaving home, with 8.8% saying they never attended school, and 40.5% admitted to finishing primary school. In Chiang Rai, school enrollment is lower than the national average (7.3 for boys and 6.5 for girls), with the highest number of children who have never attended school at 9.8%. When we interviewed the guardians of our students, we found that 18% had no education, and a further 51% had only primary or some primary education.

STATELESSNESS

Thailand is home to over 486,000 stateless people (146,000 of whom are children) and ethnic minority groups that face marginalization and discrimination, including significant barriers to education, health care, land ownership, legal employment and freedom of movement. As a result, statelessness has been identified as the number 1 risk factor for ethnic minority women and children to be trafficked. An estimated 30% of Chiang Rai's population are ethnic minority people, with more than 118,000 registered stateless people currently living in the province.

PRIOR ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Prior abuse and low self-esteem have been linked to increased vulnerability, as well

as the societal sexual objectification of women and girls. 22% of children accessing post-trafficking resources admitted to being exposed to physical or sexual violence prior to their exploitation, a higher incidence than adults (15.1%). Equally, 23.8% of women who were trafficked for sex work experienced physical or sexual violence before leaving home. Pre-departure abuse can play a role in an individual's decision to leave home, and a history of prior abuse is an important risk factor for vulnerability to future abuse and can cause long-term mental health problems.

PRIOR ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Less than half (44.1%) of participants accessing post-trafficking resources from various countries of origin within the Mekong Region reported that they had previously heard about "trafficking," physical or sexual violence before leaving home. Pre-departure abuse can play a role in an individual's decision to leave home, and a history of prior abuse is an important risk factor for vulnerability to future abuse and can cause long-term mental health problems.

ran surveys and reviewed student risk factors to learn more about their situations.

Within our current scholarship students, 12% have experienced sexual abuse. 46% are either single or double orphans. 44% have a parent or sibling who was a victim of trafficking, and 70% have an extended relative who has been a victim of trafficking. 17% of students are stateless, meaning they lack citizenship in Thailand that ensures their access to basic rights like healthcare, land ownership and education. 81% of students live on \$2.10 per person per day.

This paints a very bleak picture in light of our research showing factors that put children at-risk of trafficking. However, a survey of our students demonstrates some of the impact we are having in Chiang Rai. 86% of students agreed that The Freedom Story's support has helped them have higher educational goals than before. 85% say that they are more hopeful about their future as a result of The Freedom Story's support. 97% of students agree it is important for students to finish at least secondary school. Crucially, 89% said that if their family needed them to work and bring in money, then they would go to school and work only if it did not hurt their grades.

Our commitment to be a data-informed organization continues to direct how we design and manage our programs. We are hopeful about the impact we are having amongst our students and thankful for your support.

Impact

We continue to be committed to better understanding of our students and our work's impact on their lives. This year we

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2. ECPAT 2011
3. ECPAT 2008
4. Knoema
5. <https://www.epdc.org/country/thailand/>; Jirada Prasartpornsirichoke and Yoshi Takahashi, "Assessing Inequalities in Thai Education," IDEC DP2 Series Vol. 3, No. 2 (March, 2013). Accessed on 25 August 2015 at http://ir.lib.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/files/public/34542/2014101620264954032/IDEC-DP2_03-2.pdf
6. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-accident-cave-stateless/cave-rescue-highlights-plight-of-thailands-stateless-people-idUS>
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8. Baker 2000; Thai Government Central Registrar, December 31, 2016

9. Konstantopoulos et al 2013
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11. Zimmerman, C. et al. 2014



Press and Networks



The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
MONITOR

CONTRA COSTA
TIMES
CONTRACOSTATIMES.COM

FULLER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC



RED LETTER
CHRISTIANS

RELEVANT

SEWEEKLY

sojourners
Faith in Action for Social Justice

takepart
LIVE

Verily

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Meet the Freedom family



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SUDARAT SEREEWAT

Our partners

Collaborating with and learning from other organizations is essential to our work. Our partnerships and relationships in the anti-trafficking world extend far beyond those on this page. We can't highlight them all here. But we want to give a special shout-out to the organizations we regularly visit during our Field Learning Trips, collaborate with on programing, and partner with to achieve our shared goal of ending modern day slavery. Their dedication to educating and inspiring future activists and their commitment to collaboration make them essential partners in our work of prevention.

**HUG
PROJECT**

Home of
New
Beginnings

LIBERTY ASIA



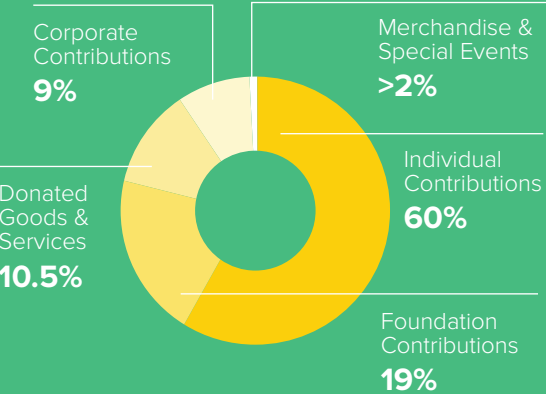


FINANCIALS

income and donations

Corporate Contributions	\$ 53,335
Foundation Contributions	\$ 118,196
Individual Contributions	\$ 361,063
Merchandise	\$ 3,805
Special Events	\$ 4,550
Donated Goods & Services	\$ 65,046

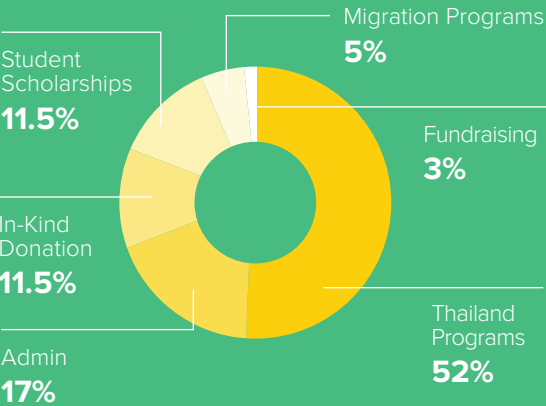
Total US	\$ 605,995
Total Thailand	\$ 28,117
Total Income	\$ 634,112



our expenses

Thailand Programs	\$ 284,343
Migration Programs	\$ 28,469
Student Scholarships	\$ 62,565
Admin	\$ 90,303
In-Kind Donation	\$ 62,640
Fundraising	\$ 14,058

Total Expenses	\$ 542,378
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We couldn't be more grateful for each person who has so generously invested in The Freedom Story in 2019.

ALL INVESTORS \$500+

A

Adam Berg
Aileen Morrissey
Alissa and David Watson
Amanda and Steve Ingold
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