



THE
freedom
STORY

2020

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.**

By March of 2020 the entire world was experiencing the impact's of Covid-19. What we quickly realized was that the most vulnerable, were now even more vulnerable.

The pandemic brought unprecedented changes to our programs in 2020. However, through your generous support we were able to pivot our programs to meet needs in our communities. We distributed over 600 bags of dried goods to the neediest members of the community. We also distributed over 5,800 medical-grade face masks. 78 staff and students received a flu vaccine in 2020.

As one mother of our scholarship students shared “I am HIV positive. I live with my children, one of which also has the virus, and my mother. I couldn’t risk getting COVID-19 and bringing it back to my family. I didn’t work for an entire month. We survived on my mother’s pension from the government of \$20. Even now I work 1-3 days a week down from 5 days a week because no one is hiring. We have no savings. I have to find work. Sometimes I go to work and they haven’t paid me.”





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%.¹** In the region, an average of 26.4% of students leave school by the age of 15. In comparison, drop-out rate

for students of the same age in our program is only 5.7%.² Our resource centers offer after school programs, academic support and mentorship to students in the community, reaching over 1,000 people in 2020, and accessed over 1,700 times. Our staff members mentor students and families to ensure they have the supportive relationships they need. Despite the pandemic, **we provided 1,742 hours of mentorship in 2020. 42 students graduated in 2020.**

1. https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC%20NEP_Thailand.pdf
2. <https://www.epdc.org/country/thailand>

Human Rights

Our human rights programming raises awareness of trafficking and its root causes, and equips communities to advocate for their own rights. By teaching about topics like 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 a grant from USAID.

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 reached over 1,100 people and was accessed over 3,000 times in 2020.

Our human rights program has been accessed **over 3,000 times**, teaching at-risk students and parents about their rights, child protection, and human trafficking.



Without The Freedom Story, my life would be worse than this. I wouldn't have continued studying. I probably would have ended up trafficked. I would have ended up in child labor of some kind.

PHIKUN, THAILAND (NOT IN PHOTO)

COVID-19 is and will continue to put those at risk of trafficking even more at risk.

COVID-19 is and will continue to put those at risk of trafficking even more at risk. Rising poverty, isolation, students out of school for long periods are all causing children to be more at risk of trafficking. In Thailand, poverty rates were already rising, and the economy has taken a huge hit due to lack of tourism, which drives almost 20% of the economy.³ Children are increasingly isolated, as their usual sources of support are taken away due to COVID shutdowns. Children of families who are struggling financially are also more isolated in general.⁴ Online sexual exploitation of children has skyrocketed in the last year, including in Thailand where the Internet

Crimes Against Children taskforce rescued over 100 children, almost double the years prior.⁵ We have seen this disturbing trend increasing in Thailand over the last few years, with a huge increase in 2020. The pandemic brought unprecedented changes to our programs in 2020. However, through your generous support we were able to pivot our programs to meet needs in our communities. We distributed over 600 bags of dried goods to the neediest members of the community. We also distributed over 5,800 medical-grade face masks. 78 staff and students received a flu vaccine in 2020.



I am HIV positive. I live with my children, one of which also has the virus, and my mother. I couldn't risk getting COVID-19 and bringing it back to my family. I didn't work for an entire month. We survived on my mother's pension from the government of \$20. Even now I work 1-3 days a week down from 5 days a week because no one is hiring. We have no savings. I have to find work. Sometimes I go to work and they haven't paid me."

— SHARED ONE MOTHER OF OUR SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS

3. blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/thai-economy-covid-19-poverty-and-social-protection
4. ecpat.exposure.co/covid19?utm_source=Website&utm_campaign=Hero
5. www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-sexcrimes-internet-trfn-idUSKBN23P33K

Sustainable Livelihoods

Our Sustainable Development programming builds on existing skills of the families we work with to teach about sustainable farming practices, and business development through micro loans, support at the household level, and training, workshops, and access to our Eco Learning Center. These projects empower communities 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 underwent significant changes in 2020 and we worked directly with 9 families in the community.



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 2020 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 2020

JANUARY

One student received his Thai ID card, securing his rights for the rest of his life.



FEBRUARY

Our staff of mentors visited students at home 56 times.

FEBRUARY

44 students were trained to prevent child abuse in our program '3-3-5'.

JANUARY

201 people came to celebrate children's and trafficking awareness day.

APRIL

Despite lockdown, staff assist more than 200 migrant workers through relief distribution.

JUNE

Thailand begins to re-open as COVID cases remain low or 0. 116 students receive training on child abuse prevention.

MAY

411 migrant workers are supported through COVID-19 relief.

MARCH

95 people attend our graduation celebration. Shortly after, Thailand goes into lockdown as schools are closed.



SEPTEMBER

30 people attend our Ethical Storytelling workshop.



OCTOBER

68 home visits and 93 hours of mentorship are provided.

SEPTEMBER

96 people are taught about anti-trafficking and rights through two new partnerships.

AUGUST

115 women leaders trained on rights and anti-trafficking. 57 community members join our money management training.

OCTOBER

4 students attend the Thailand COMMIT Youth Forum in Bangkok



DECEMBER

59 home visits and 164 hours of home visits are provided.

our accomplishments

4,000

Times our programs were collectively accessed

30

Community members were trained through our sustainable livelihoods program

1,944

Hours of mentorship were provided

283

People were taught about child abuse prevention and anti-trafficking

xx

Students were trained in 3-3-5, a program that teaches how to **prevent, identify, report and support a friend** who might have experienced sexual abuse.



19

Students Graduated

1,000+

Our human rights program reached over 1,000 people

- 7 from their Bachelors Degree
- 1 from their Associates Degree
- 7 from High School
- 4 from Primary School



CASE STUDY

A Child At Risk



When Mai* was seven, her parents sent her away from their home in Myanmar to live with her aunt in Thailand so she could get a better life.

It was not the promise they imagined it would be. “My life was so difficult. I had to help my aunt with everything. I had to wake up early, make breakfast, get water from the well, wash clothes for her children. I was late to school every day and was hit every day for being late, but they understood what I had to do before school. We didn’t have any money either, because my aunt was addicted to drugs. She would use all the money my parents sent for her addiction,” Mai explains. On weekends, she had to walk two hours to her aunt’s farm to help out. During the week she had to do housework, and if it wasn’t done by the time her aunt got home—for example, if there was an after school activity—Mai would be hit with

bamboo sticks, more than once to the point where she almost died. This was not the life her parents thought they had secured for her.

Mai couldn’t escape.

She had no phone and couldn’t call her mother. Luckily when her older sister moved to Thailand for work, she was able to use a moment when her aunt was out to call her sister for help. Her sister sent money to them, but again her aunt took it all.

When Mai was in 4th grade, her uncle attempted to sexually assault her while she was sleeping. The whole family slept in the same room, a common practice in some parts of Thailand, but one which puts children at high risk of abuse. Mai escaped and slept at a friend’s house for a week afterwards, afraid to go home. She told both her sister and her mom but they did not believe her. They thought she wanted to go back to Myanmar. Finally her aunt admitted it had happened.

At that point Mai moved to a local children’s home. “I felt so much better. When I lived with my aunt, that was a living hell, but when I went to the dorm that was heaven. I was so relaxed, I didn’t have to think about anything,” she explains.

Through the children’s home, Mai became acquainted with The Freedom Story staff. When she was 14, she was accepted into the scholarship program. The financial support allowed Mai to continue in school, and her staff mentor became a source of emotional support in her turbulent life.

To study for her high school vocational degree in tourism and pursue her dream of becoming a

tour guide, Mai moved from the children’s home to live with her sister and her sister’s boyfriend in the city. However this move also proved disastrous. While there, her safety was again violated when her sister’s boyfriend attempted to sexually assault her. At first it started with teasing, and inviting her to do things, until one day he was standing in only a towel in front of her asking, “Do you know how to use a condom? I can teach you, come to my room.” Mai felt beholden to him living in his house, but she refused his advances. Mai reached out to another relative in the city and asked to move in with her.

“I wanted to work to save money... so that I could open my beauty salon, to pull (my sisters) out of that cycle.”

Meanwhile, despite graduating from the vocational degree program, Mai’s hopes of becoming a tour guide were dashed. As an immigrant, she did not have the right legal status to become a guide. She decided to further her education by studying to become a beautician, in the hopes of one day opening her own salon. But her family had no money to support her. She’d have to cover all her expenses herself. Determined to further her education, she decided to study at the open university, as it would allow her to work and study at the same time.

The Freedom Story was able to cover her school expenses, but Mai had to find a way of making enough money to support her living expenses in a way that didn’t involve working in the daytime when she needed to study. Her sister was working in a bar at that time, and invited her to work there too. “At first I told her, ‘I don’t want to do it...I fought with her

so many times...But I needed money.”

At first, working at the bar and making enough money to support herself was a source of immense pride. But it was a double-edged sword because Mai was taking on a lot of risk. To keep herself safe, Mai had to know her boundaries. She is very articulate about how effective the lures of trafficking are. She said, “If you offer money, nowadays, people will go anywhere. If you don’t love yourself, if you don’t see your value, people will go. If you think money is more important than yourself, you will go. I have people who invited me to leave the bar with them for money. [Editor’s note: leaving the bar with someone is generally a euphemism for going home with a client to perform sexual favors in exchange for money.] I always tell myself, ‘No matter how much money it is, I am not going with them.’ It’s just money, you can always find more money. It’s not worth it for the money—we don’t know what they will do.”

How Support Secured Her Freedom

Mai’s incredible resilience and strength is evident in how steadfast she kept to her dreams. She knows her value; it was only support that she needed to pursue her dreams. “The Freedom Story has helped me so much. It helped cover my school expenses. Without the scholarship, I don’t know where I’d be. It has taken so much weight off of me. And I’ve had so much encouragement. And people to ask for advice. I can’t ask my sister anything. She didn’t get a chance to study. I have no one I can ask. If I want to do something, I have to think about it alone, and sometimes I just don’t know what to do. When I come to The Freedom Story, I have people to talk to and I get so much praise and supportNot only that, but I’ve learned so much through the trainings. Last year, I joined a training on legal status and learned a lot about what my options to pursue full citizenship might be.”

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 2020.

In 2020, we were able to begin working in a second location in Nan province due to the generosity of a private foundation.

We began our work with a thorough needs assessment of the local area. We interviewed 84 people (52 adults and 32 children) in the Tha Wang Pha sub-district. This includes the two main ethnic groups in the area: Northern Thais and Hmong populations. Here were our main findings for those that we interviewed. According to the key risk factors for trafficking that The Freedom Story has identified: poverty, low levels of education, and awareness and prevalence of trafficking.

POVERTY

Average annual income for households is \$1,590 although Northern Thais make more money than Hmong households. Northern Thai households average \$1,850 per year and Hmong households average \$1,300 per year. Both are far below the World Bank minimum wage of \$5.50 USD per day for Upper Middle Income Countries based on purchasing power parity.¹

Average household debt for both groups is \$5,320. Average household debt for Northern Thai households is \$9,280, while Hmong households generally have lower levels of debt at an average of \$1,149, and 76% of Hmong respondents reporting no debt whatsoever.

Very high proportions of both groups (71%) reported being unable to save money. 56% of respondents said they can either 'hardly afford basic necessities' or 'are very worried about money and we often don't have enough for important things'. However, despite living in poverty, most families report being able to afford basic needs. 65% of respondents said they have never gone without basic necessities.

EDUCATION

42% of adult respondents (22 of 52 respondents) admitted that at least one of their children has dropped out before finishing high school. The main reason for dropping out was overwhelmingly the cost of educating children.

Of those that admitted that a child had dropped out, 95% (21/22 respondents' children) dropped out before the government mandated 9th grade. It is possible that the dropout rate is higher than reported due to the sensitivity of the question- parents are legally responsible for students who drop out before 9th grade.

The cost of educating children is significant, on average respondents reported paying \$156 per month. This includes the dorm, food, equipment, term fees and travel costs of students.

TRAFFICKING

48% of adult respondents reported knowing someone who was trafficking others. They mostly mentioned people in the village recruiting others to work in restaurants or in construction jobs in southern Thailand.

65% of adult respondents reported that they knew someone who had been trafficked. Again, most mentioned being trafficked to work in restaurants or construction or agriculture in southern Thailand. A few mentioned international trafficking to countries like Japan.

When asked if they would work in a bar, club, karaoke bar or massage parlor (all of which are ways of referring to sex work) if their family really needed the money, 22% (7 of 32) said 'possibly', while 69% (22 of 32) said 'probably not'. The remaining 9% (3 of 32) said 'definitely not'. It is notable that a higher percentage of girls responded 'possibly'; 29.5% vs 13.3% of boys.

CONCLUSION

This is an area with a very high level of poverty, with children at great risk of dropping out of education, and with a high prevalence of active trafficking occurring. We are committed to continuing our work in Nan and are looking forward to deepening our impact in this region.



SPOTLIGHT ON:

Human Rights: Migrant Workers

Thailand has an estimated 4 to 5 million migrant workers in industries such as agriculture, construction and seafood processing.

Seeking a better life for their families, migrants from Laos and Burma (Myanmar) come to Thailand, but are at a high risk of trafficking due to their lack of knowledge of Thai laws and regulations, lack of Thai language skills, and their desperation to improve their situations.

We identified this as a growing issue, particularly in light of Chiang Rai's proximity to Laos and Burma through its land borders. In 2019 we began to work with migrants to raise awareness of Thai labour laws, human rights, and risk of trafficking through USAID's Counter Trafficking in Persons Project.

Our project focuses on raising awareness through workshops and training and in assisting migrants to lodge complaints against their employers or to claim their due rights. As a result of our faithful work in this area, we have seen an increase in migrant's knowledge resulting in them advocating for their rights.



Since 2019 we have trained over 1,190 migrants on their rights. In 2020 alone we trained over 600 migrant workers who have been at greater risk due to COVID-19. We have also trained a network of migrant leaders to help mentor and support their peers to report cases of abuse, wage fraud and to claim their due rights. Since 2019 we have secured over \$48,590 in child allowance, wage fraud or job accident payments with the cooperation of the Thai social security office. \$35,880 of this was secured in 2020 alone.

One example of a mother who we supported to secure her rightful social security payments after giving birth:

Our migrant volunteer leaders recommended that we look into new areas of need near the Mae Fah Luang Hospital maternity ward. When we visited, we found a family living in poverty, who had just had a baby, but was worried about finances because the father had only just started a new job and the mother had to leave her job and didn't have her identity documents.

When we met her, she was out of hope and had been out of work for several months without receiving social security payments. We began to coordinate with the Social Security Office and obtained the mother's labor documents. Through the help of the social security office, we learned she had the right to payments for her maternity leave.

She was advised to open a bank account, so they were able to send payments. We helped her open the account and waited for the funds to arrive, but no money arrived.

We contacted the Social Security Office and learned that they were unable to transfer money to that account but would be able to use a money order payment instead. Our staff was there when the mother withdrew the almost \$1,000 cash at the post office. They shared this: "You could see it in her eyes; a huge weight had been lifted. The Thai government authorities themselves were also happy that everything had worked out and that they were able to assist this family during a difficult time".



Meet the Freedom family

board of directors



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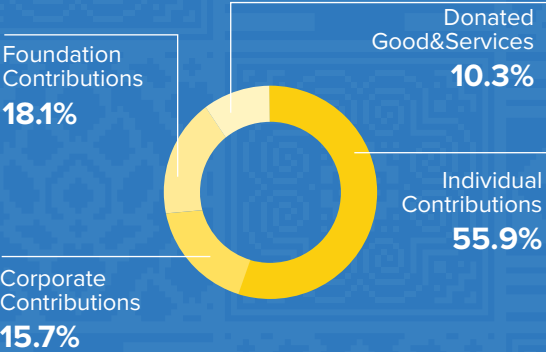
FINANCIALS

U.S.A. income and donations

Corporate Contributions	\$	96,470
Foundation Contributions	\$	111,509
Individual Contributions	\$	343,465
Donated Goods & Services	\$	62,640

Total Income **\$ 614,084**

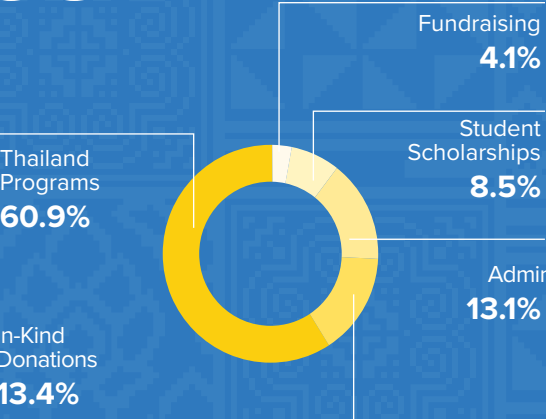
* Two major pledges didn't clear in 2018 and instead posted in 2019, throwing off our income to expense ratio.



our expenses

Thailand Programs	\$	285,271
Student Scholarships	\$	39,785
Admin	\$	61,319
In-Kind Donations	\$	62,640
Fundraising	\$	19,378

Total Expenses **\$ 468,393**



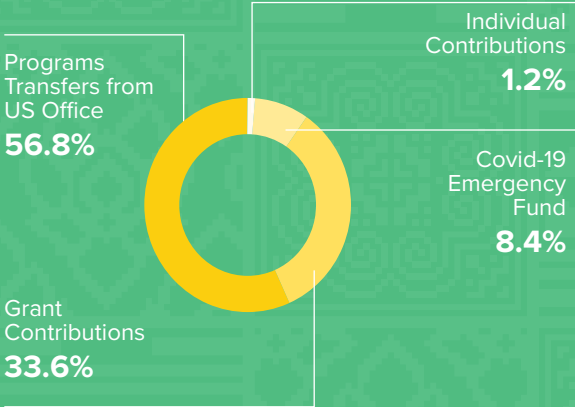
FINANCIALS

Thailand income and donations

Program Transfers from US Office *	6,718,150 BAHT
Covid-19 Emergency Fund	988,492 BAHT
Grant Contributions	3,970,122 BAHT
Individual Contributions	147,032 BAHT

Total Income **11,823,796 BAHT**

*For the Thailand Office, numbers are calculated using the 2020 average exchange rate of 31.28THB to \$1USD

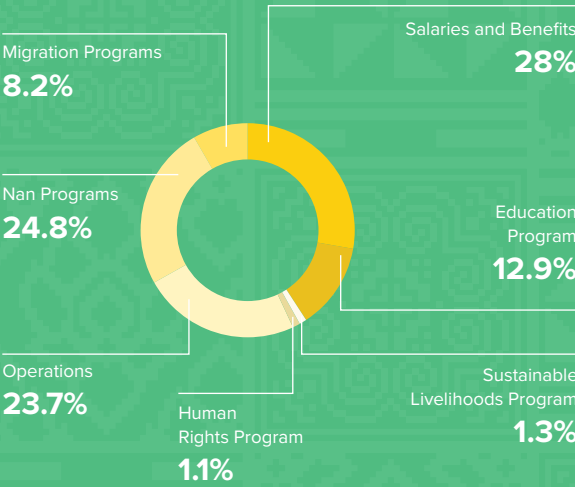


our expenses

Salaries and Benefits	2,560,193 BAHT
Human Rights Program	103,318 BAHT
Education Program	1,179,065 BAHT
Sustainable Livelihoods Program	115,473 BAHT
Operations	2,172,600 BAHT
Nan Programs	2,272,739 BAHT
Migration Program	751,230 BAHT

Total Expenses **9,154,618 BAHT**

*For the Thailand Office, numbers are calculated using the 2020 average exchange rate of 31.28THB to \$1USD



We couldn't be more grateful for each person who has so generously invested in The Freedom Story in 2020.

ALL INVESTORS \$500+

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Adam Berg
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Alissa and David Watson
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Troy Stuart

V

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Y

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Thank you

IN-KIND DONATIONS

- 1: Face Watch
- 3 Steves Winery
- 31 Bits
- Akola
- Bay Area Discovery Museum
- Boa Ventura De Caires Winery
- Causegear
- D’Oliva Olive Oil
- Emily and Gregg Nelson
- Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
- Jen Weaver
- Jeremy Lin
- Kevin Bixler
- Livermore Valley Wine Trolley
- Mitchell Katz Winery
- Oakland Zoo
- Retzlaff Winery
- Roy and D’Aun Goble
- Sam Hara
- San Francisco Ballet
- San Francisco Giants
- SandSilkSky
- Scott & Brianna Bachrach
- Sunol Ranch Honey
- The Taylor Family Foundation
- Wente Vineyards
- Westover Vineyards
- Winchester Mystery House

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- Madelynn Emmerich
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- Sam Hara
- Sarann Olson
- Sika Gasinu
- Tracy Schroeder
- Trevor Cecil

PHOTOGRAPHY & FILM

- Benjamin Edwards Photography
- Kevin Kubota Photography
- Kelly Marie Photography
- Jonathan Hane Photography

* **Want to become a sponsor?** Partnering with us is a perfect way to show that your business is committed to social impact and responsibility. Learn more at: thefreedomstory.org/corporate-sponsorship

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.



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337 17th Street, Suite 102
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