

THE
freedom
STORY

2022

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.**

Dear Friends,

2022 was a year of transition for us. In the Thailand context, the focus was on transitioning out of pandemic mode, as government restrictions relaxed and we could return to more of our usual in-person services. For our organization, it was a time of transition as Rachel Goble passed me the baton of leadership. It had always been one of her goals to be able to pass on leadership to someone working more closely on the ground. We are in a stronger and more sustainable place than we have ever been.

Opening up to a wealth of in-person events again, working on expanding our reach by training other allies on our prevention model, and adapting outreach to harness the power of local volunteers to spread awareness feels like a big inhale of fresh breath after a phase of restrictions and constraints due to COVID. We feel empowered, as an organization, to open our arms wide and embrace new opportunities, update perspectives, and evolve with changing circumstances.

And yet, fundamentally, we remain committed to transparency, dignity, local leadership, relationships, and positivity. We know we will face challenges as we continually adapt to the longer-term effects of the pandemic, rising costs of living, and pressures like the threat of trafficking for online scam centers coming out of places like Cambodia. We are confident that our deep experience founded in relationships with the people most impacted, combined with the rigorous data we're continually collecting, and a commitment to these values will guide us every step of the way.

As ever, we are eternally grateful for your steadfast commitment and support that makes this critical work possible. You provide the foundation from which we can soar.

Yours in gratitude and hope,

Lucy McCray
CEO





our programs

Education

Our comprehensive education program ensures that at-risk youth have the financial and socio-psychological resources to stay in school and develop the life skills to care for themselves and live free from exploitation. Our students maintain a primary school completion rate of 99.6%, while the national average is 87%.¹ Across Northern Thailand, 26.4% of students leave school by the age of 15.²

In comparison, the dropout rate for students of the same age in our program is only 4.9%.

Our resource centers offer after-school programs, academic support, and mentorship, reaching over 1,700 people in 2022. The centers were accessed over 25,000 times, despite long-term closures due to COVID. Our staff members mentor students and their families to ensure they have supportive relationships. Despite the pandemic, we provided 2,072 hours of mentorship in 2022 and 16 students graduated from our program.

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, equipping communities to advocate for their rights. By teaching about legal rights, child abuse, and online safety, we arm communities with knowledge they can use to protect themselves.

We also help children in our program attain the legal status to which they are entitled. Since 2019, we've been expanding the reach of this project to include migrant workers from Burma, with the support of a grant from USAID. Teaching migrant workers their rights and helping them access their due government services decreases their risk of being trafficked for labor purposes.

Our human rights program reached over 5,600 people and was accessed over 6,600 times in 2022.

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The Freedom Story contacted me to say that I had received a scholarship. When she heard, my mom cried as though all the stress, all fear was all taken away.

At that time, it was as if another hand had reached out to help our family in a time of helplessness, like a light that opened a blind, someone to bring us out of hopelessness to see some of the family's hopes."

— SARA, THAILAND (NOT IN PHOTO)

Partnerships

After 14 years, we know that we have a model that works to prevent child trafficking. We have seen how impactful it can be to move upstream to help prevent exploitation before it begins. We are eager to help other organizations learn from our model and grow our impact.

In 2022 we began to intentionally capture our model and programs into a curriculum package that can be shared with others, including our risk factor analysis tool that we developed for screening those most at risk of trafficking. Our goal is to identify partner organizations to build their capacity to prevent child trafficking in their own communities, reaching more students and ensuring more children are prevented from experiencing exploitation.



Education gave me an opportunity to change and gain self-confidence. I could solve my own problems. The Freedom Story gave me space to do what I liked... I appreciate The Freedom Story and its staff that have supported and taken care of me, no matter whether it was an academic or life challenge. Everyone was so nice to me. Thank you to all the sponsors who gave me opportunities to improve my life. I felt so lucky.

— EMI, ONE OF OUR SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS

Sustainable Livelihoods

Our Sustainable Development programming builds on the existing skills of the families we work with and teaches about sustainable farming practices and business development through microloans. We also provide support at the household level, with training, workshops, and access to our Eco Learning Centers. These projects empower communities and raise living standards, thereby tackling poverty as a significant risk factor for trafficking and decreasing the lure of traffickers. .

We worked directly with 80 impoverished families on this project in 2022.



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 honors and treats everyone involved—from beneficiaries to supporters—with dignity. We provide workshops, training sessions, and webinars, and we host a podcast on the subject.

We also identify stories of beauty and hope within our communities and tell those stories through photography and film. Our storytelling serves two purposes. First, it offers healing and dignity to the communities we serve. Second, it expands awareness of the power of prevention and invites others to our work.

In 2022, we provided online training for more than 15 organizations through the Global Learning Community and continued to facilitate the larger conversation about Ethical Storytelling. In addition, we have provided training to representatives of more than 17 organizations within Thailand.

In 2022, we provided online training for more than 15 organizations through the Global Learning Community





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 2022

JANUARY

Distributed COVID tests to over 500 migrant workers.



MARCH

Celebrated our recent scholarship student graduates with a graduation party.

APRIL

Opened up our resource center to resume in-person activities in Chiang Rai.

FEBRUARY

48 parents and guardians of scholarship students attended a training on the dangers of social media and online exploitation.

APRIL

92 students in Nan participated in our Life Skills training, where they learned problem-solving and self-help skills.



MAY

First in-person Parents' Meeting since 2020. 57 scholarship students and 44 parents and guardians attended to learn more about The Freedom Story.

JULY

Our recommendations were included in the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report.

JUNE

Facilitated a training on Human Trafficking Prevention at a local school with more than 250 students in attendance.

SEPTEMBER

Conducted two trainings on Sexual Education to 43 scholarship students.



OCTOBER

45 of our scholarship students participated in a youth tour guide workshop.

AUGUST

Provided all 53 scholarship students in Nan access to the influenza vaccination.

NOVEMBER

Conducted training to 22 migrant workers on the Thai citizenship process.



DECEMBER

Collected produce from families in our Income Generation Program to sell.

our accomplishments

2,072

Hours of mentorship provided, despite social distancing restrictions

600+

Stateless students aided in documentation process to access fundamental rights

5,600+

Reached by our Human Rights program

800+

Home visits conducted

80+

Families supported in creating sustainable alternative sources of income



25,000

Resource centers accessed more than 25,000 times

34

Students Graduated

- 1 from their Bachelor's Degree
- 10 from High School
- 13 from Middle School
- 10 from Elementary School



CASE STUDY

The How Self-Sacrifice Leads to Risk



Self-sacrifice, especially to help take care of family and elders is one of the most honored values in Thai culture. However, an admirable trait is also one that can put youth at risk in families that are desperately insecure. We see that in cases like our student, Buiy.

Buiy is the kind of person to skip meals if it means her younger siblings get to eat. By the time she was 14 years old, she already had a lot of experience in doing without.

Buiy is Akha, an ethnic minority in Thailand, a factor that already puts her at risk of trafficking and exploitation because many ethnic minorities are heavily discriminated against. Her family consists of her parents, an older brother, three younger siblings, and herself.

There was a lot of pressure to drop out of school early, due to costs. Her older brother had already dropped out so their younger siblings could continue their studies.

Her parents believed that Buiy, too, should drop out after graduating from junior high and frequently pushed her to do so, so that she could work at night or work online to help support the family. Her mother didn't believe education was a worthwhile investment for girls who, she believed, would only get married and leave.

Meanwhile, Buiy was very close to the cousin she had lived with. Her cousin would often give her clothes, and she frequently went for sleepovers at their house, which wasn't a safe environment, as there were many friends and boyfriends coming and going. Her cousin also frequently worked abroad, going to Taiwan for a few months, where she earned enough money to get plastic surgery, then Korea for 3 months, then Malaysia for another 3 months—markers that she was engaging in sex work. Whenever she was back in Thailand, she would work at karaoke bars—another well-known hot spot for sex trafficking and exploitation—and she often invited Buiy to spend time together and work part-time there too. She told Buiy, "Higher education doesn't have any benefits. Use your good looks to find money."

Buiy didn't want to work at night, but she didn't know what else to do. By that point, she felt she might have to, if it came to it. She didn't want to give up on her education, though. She asked her parents for permission to stay at a local children's home called the Thai-Akha Foundation, which provides children with housing and transportation back and forth to school, as it would make it easier to continue studying while working part-time to support her family.

After moving to the Thai-Akha Foundation, Buiy heard about The Freedom Story, as many of our scholarship students have ties there. She applied for a scholarship.

*Name changed for privacy.



I WAS VERY GLAD AND THANKED GOD TO GET THIS HELP.

These past two years were so valuable for me because I could go to school and had money to buy lunch at school."

When our staff met Buiy, they were very concerned about this potent mix of poverty and desperation pushing the children to drop out of school at such a young age, plus such a close, influential person already pressuring her into work that puts her at enormous risk for sex trafficking and exploitation. Especially since she already shows so much willingness to sacrifice for her family, it would be a natural next step for her to continue down a dangerous road, willing to go through anything to help her family survive.

The Freedom Story offered Buiy a scholarship in 2020 to help her stay in school. At 16 years old, she is back at home, now studying in a Retail Sales vocational program at a nearby college, and has staff mentors who are always available to give guidance and emotional support, cheer her on, and fortify her confidence.

How The Freedom Story Stepped In

This emotional connection they've forged with her matters as much as the financial support in helping to keep her safe. It helps counterbalance the influences in her life that pressure her to pursue riskier paths. Her staff mentors work with her to develop her assertiveness and her ability to express her desires and needs openly, for hopefully a more healthy balance in her life between her own needs and those of others. They're also supporting her in her desire to learn English.

The staff had heard from others about Buiy's cousin posting on Facebook that she had gambling debts and that people were trying to find her. The staff shared this information with Buiy, and after discussing the matter, she decided she should distance herself from this influence.

Meanwhile, she has been grateful to participate in activities that teach about things such as human trafficking prevention, online media risks, life skills, and volunteering. Buiy is very aware of the changes that connection and support have brought to her life. She says, "I was very happy to attend these activities. They helped me to be more confident and make my own decisions. I gained leadership skills and had more friends. I was very glad to have opportunities to continue studying. I almost quit school, but my mentor gave me advice and encouraged me to continue on studying."

She now combines her studies with part-time work at a local 7-Eleven, which allows her to continue her education while also bringing significant money home to her parents. In doing so, she paid off their 30,000 baht loan almost entirely by herself. She says, "A great big thank you to The Freedom Story for supporting my family. I appreciate all mentors who give me advice about my education and all the problems I encountered."

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 2022.

The Freedom Story and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) partnered from September 2021 to March 2022 to support migrant workers who have been adversely impacted by COVID-19. This community is particularly vulnerable to trafficking and labor exploitation, and many of them have children with them, who have limited access to fundamental rights such as healthcare and education, or are otherwise vulnerable. This partnership primarily focused on conducting a baseline survey, training migrant volunteers, distributing COVID prevention materials, and continuing to develop relationships with local government and the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH).

THE IMPACT OF COVID

The goal of the baseline survey was to assess the impact of COVID-19 on migrant communities' ability to access healthcare in Thailand and determine what kind of support was most needed. Using questionnaires and interviews, we surveyed 169 people from 3 districts, including migrant workers, migrant health volunteers, and employers of migrant workers.

Due to restrictions from the employers of the migrant workers' movements, and the ongoing pandemic, we knew access to the migrant worker's communities would be limited, so we partnered with a volunteer from each community to train them in COVID safety protocols and how to conduct COVID tests.

The Freedom Story was in a unique position to implement this as our Human Rights Program was already heavily involved in training migrant volunteers and had already gained the much-needed support and trust of the migrant communities. Altogether, we were able to train 72 migrant workers to help serve as migrant health volunteers, including 10 people in the Mueang district, 23 people in Mae Sai, and 29 people a partner NGO had identified, and 10 people in Mae Suay. We also created a Burmese language Facebook page to help disseminate information further on a platform they are actively using. At last count, we have 346 followers and over 3,989 visitors to the Facebook page.

With help from the Ministry of Public Health and funding from JICA, The Freedom Story distributed 2,009 sets of COVID relief materials across 10 migrant communities in Chiang Rai. This included masks, alcohol spray, and an ATK test for every migrant worker we tested for COVID, reaching over 1,200 people with a total of 3,400 tests. We conducted three rounds of ATK tests in various sites across the province. We also provided training and training materials on how properly use and care for the COVID-19 prevention materials. These trainings and materials are invaluable because of the lack of training usually provided in the migrant workers' native Burmese language.

The Freedom Story's Human Rights Program staff were in constant communication with officials from the Ministry of Public Health throughout the project, with at least two phone calls per week with MOPH officials and meeting in person at least once per week in addition to joint visits to the local communities. This growing relationship with the local government gave us access to information that we would not have otherwise had and helped us plan this project with all of the available resources and information. It also strengthened bonds that should facilitate further cooperation on projects in the future. This was clearly seen when local government officials began to turn to our staff for help overcoming language barriers in labor exploitation cases. Meanwhile, it also helped us establish more credibility in the migrant worker community. Additionally, we overcame a previous barrier with many of the employers in the area. Previously, it was very hard to get access to many migrant workers due to the employers being rather hesitant and wary of our motives, but now that they better understand our intentions, they are more willing to extend trust and are more willing to work with us to make their employees' lives more comfortable and safe.

Our 23 migrant volunteers actively follow up with COVID-19 prevention in their communities, maintaining a good relationship with the MOPH officers to help each other improve safety.



SPOTLIGHT ON:

Honoring Rachel Goble

Rachel Goble served as co-founder, President and CEO of The Freedom Story from 2008-2022. In her tenure, her unique perspective and capabilities made an indelible impact on both the organization and the field of anti-trafficking in the Asia region.

Goble's strengths as a leader included her willingness to seek out, listen to, and incorporate feedback from beneficiaries, staff, and other peers in the field. She encouraged innovation by giving people the space to try out ideas, and she encouraged flexibility by allowing freedom to pivot as needs and perspectives shifted over time. This adaptability made it possible for The Freedom Story to grow, while responding in real-time to emerging data, challenges, and shifting trends on the ground.



Through this core strength, Goble was able to hear the perspective of a beneficiary – our first scholarship student – about how they wanted their story told, and used it to launch an inquiry into and eventually a movement for more ethical storytelling in nonprofit work. This led to the launch of our sister project, Ethical Storytelling in 2017.

Under her leadership, The Freedom Story has been able to lean even more into working alongside vulnerable populations in a manner that upholds their dignity and has inspired others in the field to pledge to do the same. The respect that The Freedom Story has gained in turn, has also positioned us as a leader in the field, a model for both prevention work as well as ethical engagement.

Rachel also helped to pioneer the discussion around holistic prevention and moving upstream to tackle the issue of trafficking. Through her work, advocacy, and leadership, the anti-trafficking space has been impacted to see the value of prevention work.

We are so thankful for all that Rachel has done for The Freedom Story and are grateful for her continued support as board chair.



Meet the Freedom Family

U.S. board of directors



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BLOGGER AND SPEAKER



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CEO, THE FREEDOM STORY AND CHAIR
OF THE BOARD



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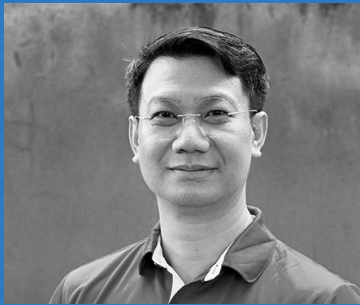
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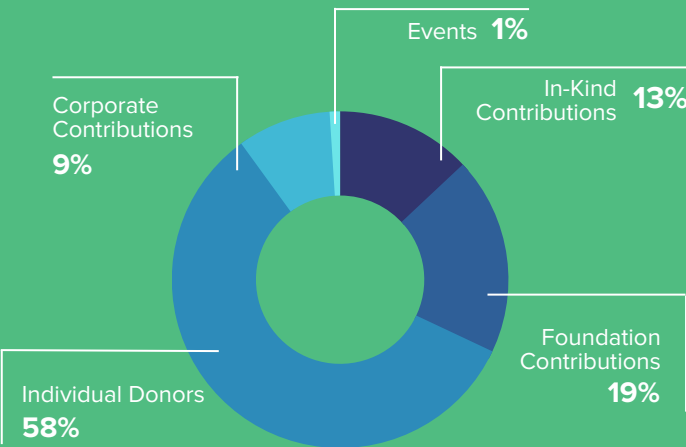
ROMFAH KAEWNOR
TRANSLATOR AND INTERPRETER

FINANCIALS

U.S.A. income and donations

Corporate Contributions	\$	45,707
Foundation Contributions	\$	94,068
Individual Contributions	\$	293,646
Donated Goods & Services	\$	62,640
Events	\$	7,102

Total Income **\$ 503,165**

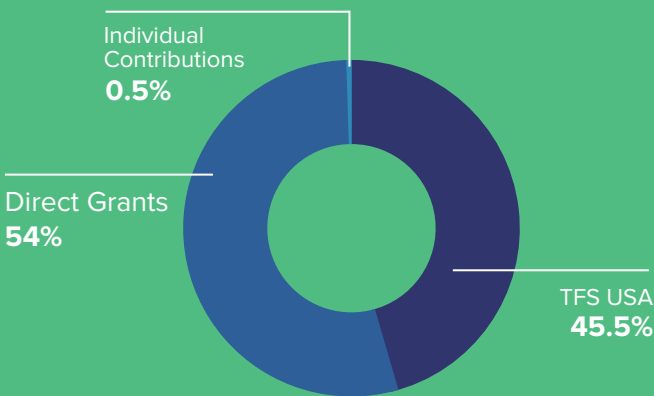


FINANCIALS

Thailand income and donations

Program Transfers from TFS USA	\$	413,632
Direct Grant Contributions	\$	487,581
Individual Contributions	\$	5,053

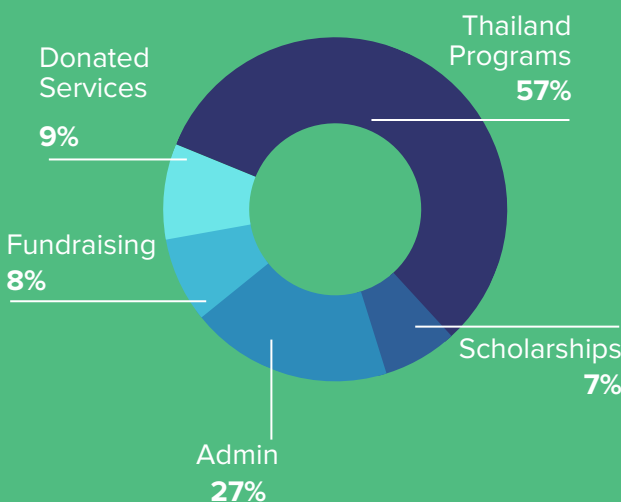
Total Income **\$ 906,266**



Our expenses

Thailand Programs	\$	413,632
Scholarships	\$	47,857
Admin	\$	138,985
Fundraising	\$	60,376
Donated Services	\$	62,640

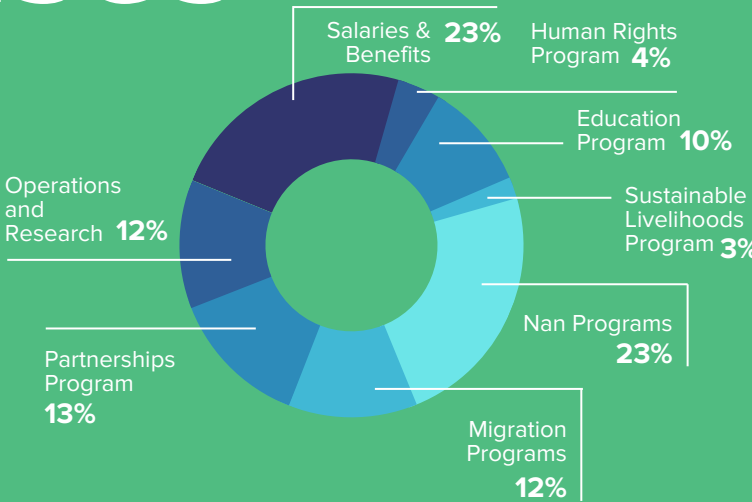
Total Expenses **\$ 723,490**



Our expenses

Salaries and Benefits	\$	141,311
Human Rights Program	\$	20,742
Education Program	\$	64,138
Sustainable Livelihoods Program	\$	11,778
Nan Programs	\$	140,268
Migration Program	\$	73,152
Partnerships	\$	80,467
Operations and Research	\$	69,122

Total Expenses **\$ 600,982**



We couldn't be more grateful for each person who has so generously invested in The Freedom Story in 2022.

ALL SUPPORTERS \$500+

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Alissa and David Watson
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We missed you! Looking forward to seeing you all again soon.

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Press and Networks



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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