

Request for proposals

## SCOPING OF THE EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN NEPAL

|                      |                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Location             | Madhesh Province, Nepal |
| Reporting to         | Program Manager, Nepal  |
| Start date           | December 2026           |
| Application deadline | 30 October 2026         |

About

### the Freedom Fund

The Freedom Fund is a global fund with the sole aim of helping to end modern slavery. We are a catalyst in the global effort to end modern slavery, working in the countries and sectors where it is most prevalent.

Through our investments and support, we aim to shift power, so that frontline organisations and communities can shape and drive the change required to bring modern slavery to an end. By partnering with survivors and those at risk of slavery as well as visionary investors, governments and anti-slavery organisations, we bring together the knowledge and capital that will be needed to dismantle the systems that allow slavery to exist and thrive.

### Summary

The Freedom Fund invites qualified individuals, research organisations or consortia to submit proposals to conduct a scoping study for an education and professional skill development project for Harawa-Charawa youth in Madhesh Province of Nepal. **The budget for this study is approximately US\$20,000, with the consultancy expected to begin in December 2026 and the final report due in April 2027.**

### Budget

A fee of approximately US\$20,000 has been made available for this task. Budgets will be reviewed with respect to the strength of the proposal in meeting the project objectives in a cost-effective manner. We do not simply prioritise the lowest budget. This is a fixed price contract.

### Proposal deadline

Please submit proposals to [jobs@freedomfund.org](mailto:jobs@freedomfund.org) with 'The Freedom Fund Education and Professional TA (Nepal)' in the subject line by **30 October 2026**. Proposals should be in English and submitted in Word or PDF format.

### Introduction to the Freedom Fund and its work in Nepal

In Nepal, the Freedom Fund has supported efforts to address agricultural bonded labour systems, like Harawa-Charawa. Although the Government of Nepal formally declared the liberation of Harawa-Charawa in 2022, barriers to sustainable rehabilitation persist, particularly for young people seeking educational and economic opportunities. The Freedom Fund therefore seeks to commission a scoping assessment to identify opportunities, barriers and pathways for strengthening the educational, vocational and professional development of Harawa-Charawa youth.

Since 2014, the Freedom Fund has been working with local partner organisations to reduce the prevalence of a traditional form of agricultural bonded labour (known as Harawa-Charawa) in the Terai districts of Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari. Following the historic announcement of the liberation of

Harawa-Charawa in July 2022, the program has recently refocused its strategy to build on success in local and national level advocacy, promoting the rights of Harawa-Charawa labourers for their complete liberation.

## Background

Even after their formal liberation, many Harawa-Charawa families remain vulnerable to forced and exploitative labour due to intergenerational debt, insecure land tenure, caste discrimination and limited employment opportunities beyond agriculture. An ODI and NISER survey of 682 households in Saptari found forced labour prevalence among Harawa-Charawa to be 85%. It also found that 34% of Harawa-Charawa households had inherited debt, while many Haliya and Harawa-Charawa households continued to live on government-owned land without secure tenure.

At the same time, self-reported bonded labour in Saptari declined from 38.4% of households in 2017 to 21.3% in 2022, suggesting some positive change despite the continued risks. The study recommended diversifying livelihood opportunities through market-relevant training, particularly for women and youth. The scoping of the Education and Professional Skill Development Program has therefore been planned.

## Project objectives

The objectives of the scoping study are:

1. To understand the education, career aspirations and professional development interests of Harawa-Charawa youth.
2. To identify the barriers and opportunities affecting their access to higher education, professional training and skilled employment.
3. To map relevant institutions, programs and support mechanisms, and recommend pathways for strengthening the educational and professional advancement of Harawa-Charawa youth.
4. To design a high-level plan for a two-year education and professional development program for Harawa-Charawa youth.

## Scope of the consultancy

The Freedom Fund is seeking qualified individuals, research organisations or consortia to conduct a scoping study for an education and professional skill project for Harawa-Charawa youth in Madhesh Province of Nepal. The consultancy will involve a desk review, primary data collection, and analysis and reporting, as described below.

### Desk review

The desk review will draw on secondary sources, national policies, prior studies, Public Service Commission (PSC) examination frameworks and existing institutional data. It will:

- Review existing studies, reports and data on Harawa-Charawa communities, including available census data, poverty assessments and prior studies commissioned by the Freedom Fund.
- Identify and document available training institutions, course offerings, PSC opportunities, PSC preparation centres and scholarship schemes that could be relevant to the target population.
- Review PSC examination structures, quota provisions for marginalised groups and eligibility criteria.
- Review any prior rehabilitation and reintegration efforts targeting Harawa-Charawa communities specifically.
- Review youth employment and skills development in Nepal.
- Review technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) courses.
- Review higher education and scholarship schemes relevant to the target population.
- Review government, civil society and donor-supported youth programs.

The desk review will directly inform the design of data collection tools and the sampling frame for the primary research.

## Primary data collection

Applicants should suggest methods to engage directly with the community, such as a youth survey, FGDs and KIs with officials and institutions, and field visits to training centres. This is not anticipated to be a large scale research project and will be limited by both time and budget. The consultant will:

- Conduct key informant interviews (KIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with Harawa-Charawa youth (male and female), community leaders, parents and guardians, local government representatives, and TVET and higher education institutions.
- Administer a structured or semi-structured survey questionnaire with a non-representative sample of Harawa-Charawa youth (age 16 to 35) in the target localities, focusing primarily on youth aged 16 to 24 while also including adults up to age 35. Applicants are invited to propose a suitable sample size and approach, based on the time and budget available, an expectation would be approximately 100-150.
- Conduct field visits to training institutions, vocational centres and PSC coaching centres to assess quality, cost, distance and accessibility, considering barriers experienced by the Harawa-Charawa community.
- Document youth testimonies, aspirations and perceived barriers to education and skills training.

## Analysis and reporting

The analysis will use mixed methods, and reporting will include an institution mapping directory, a draft report and a stakeholder validation workshop. The consultant will:

- Analyse quantitative and qualitative data to identify key findings on capacity building needs, gaps and opportunities.
- Prepare a mapping matrix of available training institutions, programs, costs, eligibility criteria, and the support or mitigation measures needed to overcome barriers to success.
- Develop a set of prioritised recommendations for program design, targeting and partnerships.

## Ethics and safeguarding

This research involves youth, including minors within the 16 to 35 sampling frame, and a population with a documented history of exploitation. The consultant will therefore be required to:

- Obtain informed consent and assent (and parental or guardian consent for participants under 18) before any data collection.
- Follow child-safeguarding and do-no-harm protocols consistent with the Freedom Fund's Safeguarding Policy, including safe disclosure and referral pathways should a participant disclose harm or exploitation during fieldwork.
- Ensure data collection is conducted in a manner sensitive to caste-based dynamics and power imbalances between researchers and participants.
- Store and handle personal data in line with Freedom Fund data protection requirements, with participant data anonymised in reporting.

## Deliverables and timeline

The consultant shall submit the following deliverables as per the agreed timeline:

| S.N. | Deliverable                                                                                                                        | Timeline      |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1    | Inception Brief: Finalised methodology, work plan, data collection tools and ethical considerations.                               | December 2026 |
| 2    | Data Collection Tools: Survey questionnaire, FGD guide and KI guide (in Nepali and English).                                       | January 2026  |
| 3    | Memo confirming completion of data collection, cleaning and coding, and preliminary analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. | February 2027 |
| 4    | Internal presentation to the FF Nepal team, before submission of the draft report.                                                 | February 2027 |

| S.N. | Deliverable                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Timeline   |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 5    | Preliminary/Draft Report: Key findings, training institution mapping matrix and draft recommendations for program design.                                                                                                                                                             | March 2027 |
| 6    | Stakeholder Validation Workshop: Facilitation of a workshop to review and validate key findings.                                                                                                                                                                                      | April 2027 |
| 7    | Final Report: Incorporating feedback from the validation workshop, and including an executive summary, methodology, findings, training institution directory and recommendations for program design and implementation. Anonymised raw data also to be submitted to the Freedom Fund. | April 2027 |
| 8    | Training Institution Mapping Directory: Structured database of identified TVET and higher education providers.                                                                                                                                                                        | April 2027 |

## Qualifications and experience

The Freedom Fund seeks qualified individuals, research organisations or consortia capable of working with limited supervision who can quickly establish effective relationships with a wide range of stakeholders. The successful candidate will have deep expertise in scoping and research, including on-time delivery of deliverables.

### Essential

- Advanced degree (Master's level or above) in social sciences, education, development studies, public policy or a related field.
- Minimum 5 years of professional experience in conducting qualitative and/or quantitative research, needs assessments, scoping studies or program design and implementation in Nepal.
- Demonstrated experience working with marginalised, excluded or Dalit communities, particularly Harawa-Charawa or similar groups.
- Strong knowledge of Nepal's TVET system, Public Service Commission processes and higher education structure.
- Proficiency in Nepali and English (both written and spoken).
- Proven skills in data analysis (quantitative and qualitative) and report writing.

### Desirable

- Prior experience in mapping training institutions or labour market assessments in Nepal.
- Knowledge of gender and social inclusion frameworks.
- Familiarity with the Madhesh Province or Eastern Terai context.
- Experience in facilitation of participatory data collection with youth.
- Knowledge and experience working with the bonded labour movement in Nepal, and/or forced labour, human rights, anti-human trafficking or modern slavery initiatives.
- Familiarity with agricultural bonded labour in the eastern Terai region.
- Experience of child-protection and safeguarding challenges and risk management strategies.
- Experience in program design.

## Personal attributes

### Essential

- Excellent written and verbal communication in English and Nepali.
- Verbal communication in Maithili is highly desirable.
- High proficiency with Microsoft Office tools (especially Word and Excel).
- Detail oriented, with the ability to manage and track data across multiple sources.
- Strong group facilitation skills and community organising skills.
- Strong program management experience.
- Strong problem-solving, analytical and organisational skills.

- Ability to manage multiple deadlines and ensure deliverables stay on track with the timeline.
- Ability to take initiative and work independently.
- Ability to form good working relationships with survivor groups, local partner organisations, government, INGOs and other local stakeholders.
- A positive attitude and a willingness to support team members to meet short-term needs in a fast-paced environment.
- Proven experience working effectively in a cross-cultural team.

## Location

The scoping study will be conducted in Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari. Strong preference will be given to candidates who reside in Madhesh Province.

## Proposal format

Applicants should submit proposals by the deadline above. Proposals should include:

- A description of the activities to be performed, as outlined in the deliverables.
- Indicative daily rates and service costs.
- Estimated time for the task.
- Contact details of three references.

## Proposal criteria and scoring

In reviewing proposals, the Freedom Fund will use the following criteria:

- Compliance with ToR instructions.
- Relevant experience and understanding of the scope.
- Cost-effectiveness and ability to meet deadlines.

## Commissioning timeline

- TOR published: 14 October 2026
- Proposal deadline: 30 October 2026

## Payment and Jurisdiction

Applicants should observe that the Freedom Fund is a United States 501(c)(3) public charity. The awarded contract will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York, United States of America, without regard to principles relating to conflicts of law. All payments to the consultant under the awarded contract shall be agreed upon therein, in compensation for the services provided, and directly related to the approved costs of the required services when/if applicable. Contracts will always be drafted in United States Dollars.

## Confidentiality

This Terms of Reference/Request for Proposal and associated documents are the property of Freedom Fund and confidential. Apart from using FF documents to respond to the request, you shall not disclose any details to any other person or organisation, and shall treat this ToR/RFP and your response with complete confidentiality.