

Request for proposals

PARTICIPATORY SCOPING STUDY FOR A PROGRAM ADDRESSING CHILD LABOUR IN DHAKA

Location	Dhaka, Bangladesh
Start date	September 2026
Application deadline	9 September 2026

About the Freedom Fund

The Freedom Fund is a collaborative fund that invests in frontline organisations and movements to drive a measurable reduction of modern slavery in high-prevalence countries and industries. We fund, support and convene community and survivor-led organisations working to end modern slavery and human trafficking.

The Freedom Fund:

- identifies and funds local organisations in countries with a high prevalence of modern slavery and funds many survivor-led organisations.
- convenes organisations to exchange best practices and build a collaborative ecosystem
- leads efforts to establish the robust evidence base that underpins global anti-trafficking work
- fills a critical gap by bringing donors together and mobilising resources that would otherwise be out of reach for community and survivor-led partners.

Summary

The Freedom Fund (FF) invites qualified individuals, teams or research organisations to submit proposals to design and implement a participatory scoping study for a program addressing child labour in informal industries in Dhaka.

Eligibility

We aim to commission the consultancy by mid-September 2026, with delivery of the final scoping report expected by mid-December. Individuals, teams or organisations are invited to submit proposals. The following are essential:

- Strong track record in use of participatory methods for scoping and planning programs and in strategy development more generally.
- Knowledge of the civil society sector in Bangladesh and familiarity with the context of labour rights and child protection.
- Based in or near to Dhaka.
- Excellent written and spoken English, as well as Bengali.

Budget

A fee of up to USD \$35,000 has been made available and budgets will be reviewed with respect to the strength of the proposal in meeting the project objectives in a cost-effective manner.

Proposal deadline

Proposals should be submitted to jobs@freedomfund.org with **Dhaka child labour** in the subject line by **Wednesday 9 September 2026**. Proposals should be no more than 7 pages, plus CVs and annexes.

Background on the Freedom Fund's hotspot approach

The Freedom Fund supports long-term "hotspot" programs in areas with a high prevalence of modern slavery, through which clusters of community-based organisations come together to identify and address the root causes of exploitation. One example is our [hotspot program](#) addressing Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Dhaka that was started in 2021.

Hotspot programs seek to bring about a sustained and measurable reduction in modern slavery through systemic change, led by the affected communities, workers and survivors. These programs start with an inception year during which several organisations use small grants to pilot and learn from specific components while also co-creating a comprehensive design for a full, long-term program. The full hotspot programs typically have an annual budget of \$800,000 - \$1 million, supporting 8 – 12 frontline anti-slavery organisations. Hotspots are designed to be sustained over approximately 8 – 10 years.

Having completed a rapid assessment study (May – July 2026), the Freedom Fund is now commissioning a participatory scoping study, to enable community, youth and worker-informed planning of the inception year for a program to address child labour in informal industries in Dhaka.

Child Labour in Dhaka – scale and severity

Bangladesh has the second highest burden of child labour in South Asia. Despite successful efforts to strengthen labour standards in first tier export production, child labour has not disappeared but has become embedded within informal production, where economic vulnerability, fragmented supply chains and weak regulatory oversight intersect.

The rapid assessment study confirmed that child labour in Dhaka is not evenly distributed across the city: it is clustered within industrial neighbourhoods where informal production takes place within migrant and low-income communities and where multiple vulnerabilities reinforce one another. Here, the scale of child exploitation is significant: A *CLARISSA (Child Labour Action Research Innovation in South and South Eastern Asia)* study in urban informal settlements in Dhaka in 2022 found that across 1,719 households, 764 children (37% of the children) reported that they work for money. 58% of the working children (aged 5–17) worked for 9–12 hours a day and 62% worked six days per week, including 34% who worked seven days a week. 93% of these working children were engaged in Worst Forms of Child Labour – and more than a quarter of these children were working in the export-oriented garment manufacturing sector. Almost 15% were working in tanneries and leather product

manufacturing industries. Packaging and garment waste recycling were also significant sectors of work.

A study by Medicins Sans Frontieres in 2025 shows the extent of harm and risk to the children: Their study used data from clinics in Kamrangirchar, a peri-urban area of Dhaka that has over 1,000 informal factories, including in the metal, garment, plastics and leather sectors. The study found that out of 10,200 occupational health consultations among children, the average age of children attending their first consultation was 14.7 years. 15% of the children reported living inside the factory. Children worked in all the legally-prohibited categories of the informal sector and almost all the children reported operating machinery. Half of all the children coming to the clinics were malnourished. MSF concluded that despite their economic contributions, the children remain largely invisible and exploited.

Purpose, scope and methods of the consultancy

The scoping study will build on the rapid assessment report completed in July 2026. This high-quality report provided data and analysis of the nature and dynamics of child labour, geographic and industrial concentrations in Dhaka, key drivers and analysis of the current response ecosystem and gaps. It identified a wide range of frontline organisations, government initiatives and funder programs. It made recommendations on the feasibility and opportunities for a Freedom Fund hotspot program, especially encouraging us to strengthen the practical collaboration between existing efforts in the places where children face the greatest risks.

The proposed scoping study will not repeat this analysis but will respond to key design questions that the rapid assessment report highlighted. It will prepare the ground for the inception year for a potential hotspot.

The scoping study will use participatory methods to engage community members, local youth, informal business owners, elected and religious leaders, NGOs and unions in generating evidence and ideas in relation to the questions below. In addition, the consultant will meet with relevant district/upazila government officials and ministry staff to obtain data and take feedback on potential strategies and on their openness for collaboration and public commitment.

Main research questions:

- Targeted locations: Which of the informal production clusters in Dhaka have the greatest concentration of children at risk, sufficient scope for effective interventions and presence of relevant NGOs and labour rights organisations? What does government data (e.g. school attendance rates) tell us about where to work? Are there areas with limited funding from other sources?
- Assets of targeted neighbourhoods: What are the existing networks and strengths within these communities?
- Work profile in the different neighbourhoods: How does work done by adults and children differ? How much of the child labour is home-based production? What are the gender dynamics? What is the presence of trafficked children (including from other parts of the city) in each neighbourhood and what are the perceptions of residents about this? How does the exploitation of these trafficked children differ and are there indications of any geographic concentrations of where the children come from?

- Supply chain leverage: How do the informal production systems connect to export supply chains and are there ways that tracing could take place? Do particular neighbourhoods and manufacturing sectors offer greater potential for this supply chain leverage?
- Access to working youth and engagement with informal employers: What is the scope for working youth to learn how to access help and, if possible, collectivise to address exploitation? Are some informal employers willing to strengthen their businesses through protecting youth?
- Government safety nets: Which government entitlements would make the most difference in reducing risks to families/children (for example, access to birth certificates)? Can these entitlements be activated? What is the status of Child Protection Committees?
- Impact of climate change and other major external factors: Are heat waves or floods (and insufficient mitigation) impeding family income and resulting in child labour? What would locally-led adaptation look like in this context? Are there other major external or security/risk factors affecting the design of the program?

As well as identifying additional themes to be covered in the study, the consultant will design a process that will provide evidence around these themes and will enable working youth, community members, NGOs, labour organisations and other key stakeholders to feed into the planning of intervention components for the inception year, and how those components should come together in specific neighbourhoods. Components to be considered might include: Community organising and social norm change; young worker organising and access to support; strengthening local government child protection and/or legal action; outreach to employers on child labour prevention and worker-led supply chain actions. Importantly, the process should identify gaps in existing work and ensure that new work does not duplicate existing programs.

The co-creation process should also generate several key learning questions to be explored through support for piloting activities during the inception year.

Methodological approach: Kindly include data collection methods, sampling strategies, sample size and sources of information. Please specify whether the research will be conducted in-person, remotely or through a combination of both, and provide the rationale for your chosen approach.

Stakeholder participation: Please outline how you will engage stakeholders at different stages of the process. Describe how a sample of respondents will be obtained and invited to participate.

Community engagement: Please highlight creative data collection methods that preferably go beyond traditional interviews and focus groups. In addition, please consider how you will share the review results back with the community in relevant and accessible ways.

Operational and ethical considerations: Highlight any logistical, ethical and/or safeguarding issues with the proposed methodology, such as encouraging candid responses through in-person and/or remote interviews, handling of potentially sensitive information, confidentiality of respondents, sensitivity and respect to stakeholders, Do No Harm etc. Include details on whether your proposed study would require approval from a Bangladeshi

ethical board, and if so, which board you would engage and how this process would affect the project timeline.

Deliverables and Timeline

The main research deliverable should be a 30 – 40 page report (with any maps, diagrams, copies of research instruments additional) outlining findings on the key questions above and recommendations for program components, a Theory of Change, locations and inception year learning questions – serving as a draft strategy/program plan for an inception year of the potential hotspot.

Assuming that the Freedom Fund contracts with the consultant around 20 September, the requested timeline and deliverables would be:

Initial meeting with the Freedom Fund	Around 22 Sept 2026
Full participatory research design, including proposed tools/activities and targeted participants/sampling delivered	9 Oct 2026
Memo delivered and meeting held with FF to report on completion of workshops/participatory activities/interviews and themes emerging	Around 13 Nov 2026
First draft of report delivered	1 Dec 2026
Final report	15 Dec 2026

It is expected that the consultant will interact with the FF Senior Program Manager, Special Projects during the course of the research. An FF staff person may also come to observe some of the research activities in Dhaka.

How to apply

Informal queries relating to the consultancy may be submitted by 3 Sept 2026 to Ginny Baumann: gbaumann@freedomfund.org.

Applications should include:

- Proposal (not longer than 7 pages) including:
 - Relevant skills and experience;
 - Research plan including detailed information on the types of participatory methods and tools to be used, anticipated sample size for research participants, recommendations for seeking approval from an accredited ethical review board, approach to identifying and recruiting participants, tools for data collection and analysis, research quality control and validation of findings/recommendations, operational, safeguarding and ethical considerations.
 - Detailed budget in USD for completing the research (including role and time commitment of consultant/team members, costs for workshops etc). The budget should consider any costs related to gaining approval from a

Bangladeshi ethical review board. Note that costs relating to research report design and dissemination will be borne by the Freedom Fund.

- CVs of the team/individual consultant
- Two samples of similar participatory research reports completed by the consultant.

All documents must be written in English and submitted electronically in Microsoft Word or PDF form.

Proposal criteria & scoring

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

Technical criteria	Weighting
a. Technical capacity of the team, including:	50%
- Proposed method is consistent with the outlined approach and is feasible for generating meaningful insights. - Experience of conducting participatory research with vulnerable communities, with demonstrable understanding of relevant research techniques. Demonstrated commitment to safeguarding and ethical research. - Experience of multi-partner program design - Experience working with government and affected communities. - Strong research, analysis and reporting writing skills.	
b. Contextual knowledge of the team, including on:	20%
- Strong knowledge of labour rights, child labour and/or forced labour in Bangladesh. Previous work on these issues will be advantageous. - Knowledge of economic, socio-cultural and political environment in Bangladesh.	
c. Team structure, including:	20%
- Adequate staffing levels to deliver quality program outputs within the desired timeframe. - Contribution of Bangladeshi and/or Bangladesh-based researchers, ideally in key roles such as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator where they are recognised as lead authors of the evaluation. Shortlisted candidates will most likely meet this criterion. - Gender diversity among the team members. - Team members with fluency in English and Bengali is essential.	
d. Costs are proportionate to the scale of work being proposed, and consideration of all potential expenses.	10%
Total	100%

Deadline for submission:

Applications should be submitted to jobs@freedomfund.org with **Dhaka child labour** in the subject line by **Wednesday 9 September 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. The awarded contract will be a service agreement between the consultant and the Freedom Fund.

Confidentiality

This 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 RFP and your response with complete confidentiality.