

## Request for proposals

# REALIST EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS ADDRESSING THE EXPLOITATION OF CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS AND MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS

Location	Ethiopia
Start date	April 2026
Application deadline	15 April 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.
- lead 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 invites qualified individuals, research organisations or consortia to submit proposals to design and implement two realist evaluations of a multi-year program to prevent the exploitation of a) child domestic workers (CDWs) and b) migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in Ethiopia. Conducted within the framework of the Freedom Fund's two-arm initiative funded by the Program to End Modern Slavery (PEMS) in the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, the evaluation will cover three phases of complex programming dated from 2023 to present. The budget for this work will be determined in two steps: the first step will be that applicants suggest a budget that maps with their proposal, and the second step will be a revision with the selected evaluator based on post-selection decisions on research questions and data sources. We anticipate contracting in April 2026 and preliminary results available by June 2027, pending discussions with the selected applicant.

## Eligibility

Individuals and organisations with relevant research experience are invited to submit proposals for this study. The lead applicant must be a legally registered entity according to the laws of the country in which it operates. The Freedom Fund strongly prefers applicants that have strong prior experience on conducting research on child domestic work and/or migrant domestic work, possess a strong track record of completing similar realist evaluations of this scale, and have (or will subcontract to) one or more Co-Investigators based in Ethiopia.

## Budget

The expected budget for this study is at least USD 100,000. Applicants are asked to submit a budget that corresponds to the study design they propose in their application, with the understanding that the study design will be iterated following the selection of the successful applicant, resulting in an opportunity to modify the proposed budget. Budgets at the application stage will be reviewed with respect to the strength of the proposal in meeting the research objectives in a cost-effective manner - we do not simply prioritise the lowest budget.

## Proposal deadline

Proposals should be submitted via email to Brittany Quy with "Proposal for realist evaluation in Ethiopia" as the email subject line at [bquy@freedomfund.org](mailto:bquy@freedomfund.org) no later than **Friday, 15 April 2026**, 5pm UK time. Proposals should be submitted in English and in Word or PDF format. Proposals should be no more than **5 pages**, plus CVs and annexes.

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

The Freedom Fund is a global fund with the sole aim of helping end modern slavery. We are a catalyst in the global effort to end modern slavery, working in the countries and sectors where it is highly prevalent. We invest in and partner with organisations and communities on the frontlines of ending slavery and exploitation.

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, capital and will needed to dismantle the systems that allow slavery to exist and thrive. 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.

Since 2015, the Freedom Fund has funded frontline partners in Ethiopia to directly impact the lives of over 200,000 individuals, primarily women and adolescent girls, to reduce their risk of [exploitative child domestic work](#) in Addis Ababa and promote [safer migration for domestic work](#) in the Middle East. Since 2023, this initiative has been supported by the PEMS program.

Among other goals across the three phases of the program, the two arms of the program work to:

- Positively influence the behaviour of key stakeholders including communities, recruiters and employers, and the enforcement action of government to reduce domestic servitude among Ethiopian girls.
- Influence the behaviour of employers to improve living and working conditions of CDWs.
- Hold employers and traffickers accountable through strengthening enforcement actions of law enforcement, labour and social affairs officials.
- Support access to education and livelihood opportunities for child survivors to enable alternative livelihoods in future.
- Provide comprehensive aftercare services to those removed from domestic servitude, enabling sustainable reintegration into the community.
- Improve community understanding of safer migration and tools to prevent domestic servitude in the Middle East.
- Improve the prevention and protection mechanisms of the Ethiopian government, and key recruitment stakeholders, in relation to domestic servitude of Ethiopians in the Middle East.
- Collectivise survivors of transnational domestic servitude to increase their agency, voice and leadership in disrupting the systems that sustain exploitation and servitude.
- Support access to livelihood opportunities for survivors and those at risk of transnational domestic servitude, leading to sustained freedom.

## Purpose of the study

The Freedom Fund seeks an evaluation partner to implement **two parallel realist evaluations** of our PEMS-funded program in Ethiopia that will assess the organisation-level and collective impact of the varied work that our grassroots partners have implemented over the past five years to combat the exploitation of CDWs and promote safer migration, respectively.

The successful applicant will generate two final reports that:

1. Clearly identify which elements of the CDW and Safer Migration programs, respectively, have strong, weak, or no evidence to support replication or scale-up;
2. Provide evidence-based recommendations for permutations of program elements (and frequency of their implementation) that are most likely to create change (including a model of what interventions should move forward with scale);
3. Articulate the spectrum of positive change for program beneficiaries from harm reduction to harm eradication, and whether exposure to particular program elements can be linked to degree of positive change.

While the two program arms are generally distinct, the evaluations should also produce evidence of tangents between the two issues and whether and how our partners' efforts have influenced both forms of exploitation.

The CDW arm of the program will separately be evaluated by a 2027 study on the prevalence of CDW exploitation in Addis Ababa that complements [our 2022 study on the](#)

[same topic](#). The realist evaluation should provide critical pre-fieldwork evidence for the 2027 prevalence study, such as ensuring that any proposed causal pathways emerging from the realist evaluation can be accounted for in data collection tools.

The study should address the questions in the appendix. Multidimensional queries should be used to address each question, including how change has happened, for whom, and under what circumstances. Applicants are encouraged to propose additional questions that are appropriate to a realist evaluation, and/or reframe questions that are not appropriate to a realist evaluation.

## Research approach and methodology

Applicants should propose a realist evaluation design that draws on multiple informant sources as well as existing program documentation, including an existing mid-term review and other studies produced as part of the PEMS program, as well as monitoring data from all three phases of the program to corroborate and support the primary data.

The evaluations should consider evidence from intervention activities conducted by one or more frontline partners under one or more phases of the program to describe "how, for whom, and why" change has occurred. Applicants should propose a list of research participant profiles (e.g., government officials) but this list is expected to evolve during the design iteration phase. At minimum, applicants should propose direct interviews with beneficiary CDWs, former CDWs, returned MDWs, and key stakeholders such as frontline partner staff and volunteers.

If there are any other elements considered to be crucial to a successful review, please include them in the proposal. Applicants may also propose limited quantitative or validation components to contextualise results or triangulate key findings.

### **Stakeholder participation**

Proposals should include at least one validation session with stakeholders identified by the Freedom Fund. Applicants should also describe if they will engage other stakeholders in research roles at different stages of the study. This may include Freedom Fund's local implementing partners, local government offices and community leaders.

### **Operational and ethical considerations**

Proposals should consider the budgetary considerations for appropriately training enumerators, conducting interviews safely, privately and without employer interference, referring participants who may disclose abuse or distress and highlight measures to protect confidentiality, ensuring data security, and following a strict Do No Harm principle. Applicants must provide details on their plan to seek approval from an Ethiopian ethical review body; applicants should plan to cover any institutional review-related costs in their budgets.

The research will be contracted by the Freedom Fund's US entity and supervised by teams in London and New York.

## Budget

The budget for this project will be determined in two phases. The Freedom Fund is expecting budgets above USD 100,000.

For the first budgeting phase, applicants should propose a budget that matches the study design to demonstrate the relative value for money. Budgets will be reviewed with respect to the strength of the proposal in meeting the project objectives in a cost-effective manner.

As part of the proposal, please prepare a brief budget with the following breakdown:

- Personnel costs
- Fees to local research partners or subcontractors, if applicable
- Other direct costs – e.g. travel, software licenses, devices for data collection, honoraria or incentives
- Overheads
- Value Added Tax or Goods and Services Tax, if applicable

For the second budgeting phase, once an evaluator is selected, the Freedom Fund will work with the evaluator and an external peer review panel to iterate the design and its associated costs, after which the evaluator will propose a revised budget if needed.

## High-level timeline and deliverables

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|--|----------------|
| • Kick-off meeting with the Freedom Fund team  | April 2026     |
| • Meeting with external peer review panel of evaluation experts  | April 2026     |
| • Revised research proposal incorporating and/or responding to feedback from the external peer review panel  | May 2026       |
| • Detailed research protocol including detailed methodology, sampling plan, research tools, work plan and ethical procedures                                       | June 2026      |
| • Presentation of desk work, hypotheses, and any modifications to the data collection plan   | October 2026   |
| • Primary data collection completed  | April 2027     |
| • Data cleaning and analysis   | May 2027       |
| • Presentation of preliminary findings for internal review and discussion  | June 2027      |
| • Draft report shared for review and discussion, along with cleaned dataset  | September 2027 |
| • Conduct at least one validation session with stakeholders identified by the Freedom Fund that can be used to inform programming, advocacy and future measurement | September 2027 |
| • Finalise report, based on a structure pre-agreed with the Freedom Fund   | October 2027   |

## Proposal format

Interested parties should prepare a proposal of no more than 5 pages, plus CVs and annexes. Proposals should contain the following sections:

1. Short biography of principal investigator(s) and key team members, outlining relevant subject matter expertise and experience leading similar research projects. CV of the principal investigator should be included in the annex. If key team members will be identified later as subcontractors, such as field data collection leads, include a description of the attributes of those team members and the role they will fill. Past report(s) from similar projects could be included as links or in a separate annex.
2. Research approach, addressing the topics listed in the 'Research approach and methodology' section of this RFP. Proposals should clearly outline a data quality plan (including enumerator training, field supervision and data verification procedures) and a data analysis plan.
3. Team structure, defining the role and time commitment of key project team members. If key team members are to be engaged after contracting with the successful applicant, a role description should be included.
4. Proposed budget in USD, containing the details listed in the 'Budget' section of this RFP.

The proposal must be written in English and sent electronically in Microsoft Office or PDF format.

## Proposal criteria & scoring

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

<b>Technical criteria</b>	<b>Weighting</b>
a. Technical capacity of the team (including local partner and subcontractors if relevant), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proposed method is consistent with the outlined approach and is feasible for generating meaningful insights to answer the research questions.</li> <li>- Experience of conducting similar research projects with children and vulnerable adults, with demonstrable understanding of relevant evaluation techniques.</li> </ul>	50%
b. Contextual knowledge of the team, including on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expert knowledge of child domestic work.</li> <li>- Expert knowledge of risky labour migration, particularly by women.</li> <li>- Ability to gain access into and work collaboratively with communities affected to carry out the research.</li> <li>- Knowledge of economic, socio-cultural and political environment in Ethiopia.</li> <li>- Knowledge of the Program to End Modern Slavery and/or the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, its goals, and its current context.</li> </ul>	20%
c. Team structure, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adequate staffing levels to deliver quality research outputs within the desired timeframe.</li> </ul>	20%

- Contribution of Ethiopian and/or Ethiopia-based researchers, ideally in key roles such as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator where they are recognised as authors of the research.
- Gender diversity among the team members.

**Financial criteria**

d. Costs are proportionate to the scale of work being proposed, and consideration of all potential expenses.	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 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 service agreement 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 Request for Proposal and associated documents are the property of Freedom Fund and confidential. Apart from using Freedom Fund 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.

## Appendix: Preliminary list of research questions

1. Among CDWs or their employers who received one or more services under the program:
  - a. Has access to school enrolment and/or quality of learning improved? How, why/why not, for whom? Describe the impacts.
  - b. Has the number of working hours and/or rest time improved? Describe the impacts.
  - c. How has CDW access to employment contracts changed?
  - d. Has CDW quality of life improved? Describe.
  - e. Have employer-CDW relationships improved? Describe the impacts.
  - f. What is the influence of seed grants on reunified CDWs and their families?
  - g. What will CDWs do when they age out of domestic work, and is the program increasing their range of options?
  - h. What is the impact of legal case support on survivors, families, and perpetrators?
2. Within the wider context that normalises and permits the exploitation of CDWs:
  - a. How have social norms around child domestic servitude changed at the community level?
  - b. Which approach to return-to-education interventions has been most effective and why?
  - c. How has the program influenced the behaviour of key stakeholders?
  - d. What have been the long-term impacts on employers, civil society, or community leaders following the [Chora campaign](#)?
  - e. Are services for survivors trauma-informed, survivor-centric, and culturally acceptable?
  - f. How effectively have partners mobilized communities against the systematic exploitation of CDWs?
3. Among pre-migrant and post-migrant women at risk of exploitation in transnational migrant domestic work:
  - a. What is the impact of community awareness building on potential migrants' ability to avoid the highest-risk MDW situations?
  - b. What is the impact of legal case support and legal system strengthening on survivors, families, and perpetrators?
4. Within the wider context that normalises and permits unsafe transnational migration for domestic work:
  - a. What is the progress (and remaining projected progress) towards handing over CSO-led initiatives to the government by the end of the grant cycle?
  - b. Have the coordinated actions of civil society reduced the likelihood of severe exploitation of MDWs leaving Ethiopia for the Middle East, plus how and for whom?
  - c. Have the coordinated actions of civil society improved outcomes (including community norms and expectations) for survivor returnees who were exploited in the Middle East, plus how and for whom?
  - d. Is the formal migration system better, worse, or the same for migrants vs before the program?

- e. Are the accountability tools (e.g., sanctions and consequences) for traffickers and trafficking facilitators better, worse, or the same vs before the program?
  - f. Have the coordinated actions of civil society reduced opportunities for bad actors (from government, formal and informal recruitment agencies, others) to exploit potential MDWs?
  - g. Has the program been sufficient to disrupt the systems that sustain the (transnational) domestic servitude of women and girls from Ethiopia in the Middle East?
5. Confluence of internal and transnational domestic work by women and girls:
- a. Are former CDWs transitioning to emigrate for domestic work?
  - b. What is the projected regression at the end of the final funding cycle?
  - c. What improvements have been made to local protection and referral systems for CDWs/MDWs, and how sustainable are these mechanisms?
  - d. Is the Freedom Fund operating the most effective and transformational interventions to reduce the prevalence of internal domestic servitude and respond to transnational domestic servitude? Provide recommendations for adaptations or other strategies in line with cultural and corporate contexts.
  - e. Are hotspot actors positively influencing the behaviour of key stakeholders including communities, recruiters and employers, and the enforcement action of government to reduce domestic servitude amongst Ethiopian girls? What are the impact of this?
  - f. How well has the Freedom Fund's co-creation and capacity-strengthening approaches supported effective and sustainable partner implementation?