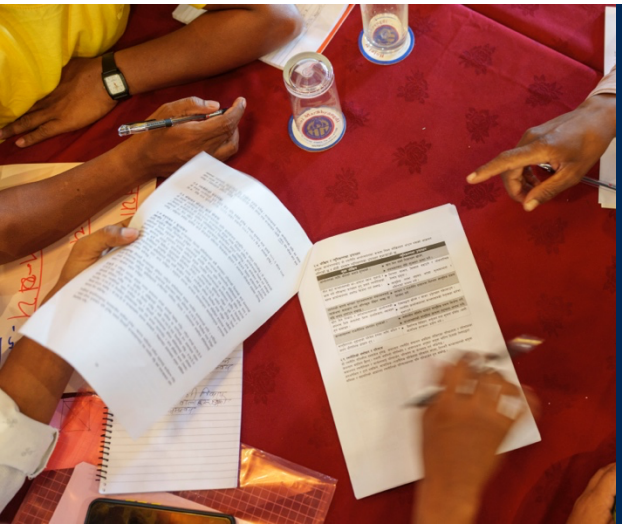
# FREEDOM FUND EXIT STRATEGY

## Revised June 2026



This document outlines the Freedom Fund's principles of responsible exit for exit from a grantmaking program, which for us typically means closing down a 'hotspot' program in a specific geography. These principles have been developed over the course of several years and are intended to guide Freedom Fund staff in making exits in a manner that minimises harm to partners and communities and aligns with our values of transparency and respect.

The Freedom Fund's exit strategy covers various types of exits and is focused around several core principles.

### Types of exits:

- Voluntary exit: When the Freedom Fund's four exit criteria for hotspots have been met. (See following section.)
- Forced exit: When loss of donor funding / challenging circumstances on the ground that mean implementation is no longer possible.

### Exit principles:

The Freedom Fund will try to commit to the following principles, whether the exit is voluntary or forced. The principles are intended as practical guidance, not as 'operating instructions'.

- Do no harm - As far as is possible, work to reduce the detrimental effects of the exit on partner staff, communities, and survivors.
- Realistic timeframe - Give necessary time for exit, gradually phase out support if necessary.
- Supported exit – Provide financial and human resource support for partners, including for staff support.
- Partner engagement - Engage partner leadership and staff in exit planning and monitoring process.

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- Community engagement – Freedom Fund and partner staff should engage with project communities during exit process to share information and seek feedback on process.
- Monitoring & learning – Be prepared to adjust planned exit process to respond to partner needs.

## VOLUNTARY EXIT

**Criteria for voluntary exit**

We recognise that the causes of modern slavery are deep-seated and require long-term attention. However, we also need to assess at what point partners and communities are self-sufficient enough to no longer require our support and at what stage our funding can be better utilised elsewhere. Broadly, we will aim for our programs to meet four criteria before voluntarily exiting. These are general criteria, but each program may have more specific criteria, for example specific policies that are being sought or laws that they are trying to achieve.

1. There has been a significant reduction in the prevalence of slavery in the hotspot.
2. There has been a step change in the strength and sustainability of civil society, including in their capacity, ability to work together, and ability to self-sustain through other funding sources.
3. There has been a significant shift in the practices of government or business - or the policy and regulatory environment in which these actors operate - such that a key part of the system underpinning slavery has changed.
4. We have identified well-evidenced intervention models that are known to be successful at scale, or have the potential to be scaled, so that others can carry them on after the Fund has departed.

The more specific we can be around program objectives, and the more that sustainability is built into program design from the very start, the more likely it is that we can carry out a sustainable and effective exit.

## FORCED EXIT

The Freedom Fund may be forced to exit from a hotspot due to a donor pulling out, or due to unforeseen circumstances, such as conflict that makes its presence in a region unsustainable or government clamp down on civil society or foreign donors that makes continuation of the hotspot impossible.

It may not be possible to commit the same level of time and support in the case of a forced exit, but we will try to mitigate as much as possible any negative effects on survivors, vulnerable individuals, and the wider community.

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## Things to consider when planning a program exit

### 1. Timeframe

### 1.1 Phase out period

- At minimum for both forced and voluntary exits, there should be a 3-month notice period for partners. However, where funding is available, we recommend that phase-out activities last one year or more. A gradual phase out beginning at an earlier stage allows sufficient time to ensure gains are embedded and sustainable.
- When exiting voluntarily, it may be possible to give more time for program exit and gradually phase out support if necessary. Forced exits may necessitate a shorter timeframe.
- The length of the phase out period may be influenced by the type of programmatic intervention. For example, in central Nepal, phasing out of activities such as community groups and education/livelihood support was more straightforward than for partners providing shelters. For such types of intervention, we would ideally seek alternative donors or more sustainable long-term support from government.

### 1.2 No-cost extensions

- No-cost extensions may be possible so that partners can stretch current budget over a longer period so exit has a longer timeframe. This may mean that some planned activities won't happen, however it could free up funds to support aspects of work that promote longer term sustainability.

### 2. Supported exit

### 2.1 Analyse effect of exit on individual partners

- Prior to determining what kind of support to provide, we recommend looking into how individual organisations may be affected when funding is withdrawn. This will vary and be influenced by the extent of other funding sources available, organisation leadership and culture, staffing structure etc. The information gathered should inform subsequent engagement with partners on a case-by-case basis. For example, in central Nepal, sustainability assessments were conducted with each partner.

### 2.2 Financial planning and new funding sources

- Ideally, we will work with each partner well in advance of any exit to build capacity in fundraising and diversify their donor base.
- Assist partner organisations to review their finances or link them with a financial consultant to plan for the period following the Freedom Fund's exit. Availability of funding for this purpose will depend on the situation of the hotspot.
- Reach out to other donors working on the similar issues or in the same project area to inform them of our exit and highlight gaps in partner funding.
- For example, the central Nepal team connected partners with Accounting for International Development (AfID) to strengthen their financial management systems and improve sustainability.

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### 2.3. Maintaining a Community of Practice

- Hotspot teams could also focus on forming or strengthening a structure for coalitions of partner organisations to continue to work together as a Community of Practice (CoP). The coordination of the CoP might be handed over to representatives from the partner organisations, whose capacity could be strengthened through training or consultation with Freedom Fund staff.
- Providing funding for these CoP may also be an option.

### 2.4 Handover of program functions to government

- Consider whether it is possible to hand over some activities to government. For example, in central Nepal, partners handed over management of child clubs to local municipalities and savings and credit groups were supported to register as formal cooperatives with local government. This meant they were able to run independently and gain access to government training and grants. Local government have also provided funding to build community halls for the groups to hold their meetings.

### 2.5 Capacity building

- Capacity building is normally a part of all Freedom Fund partnerships, so partners are likely doing capacity building already. However, Freedom Fund staff can consider whether there are specific areas of capacity building that may be relevant in light of exit, for example fundraising may require enhanced capacity building.
- Consider whether the partner will be able to absorb capacity building activities alongside pressures of Freedom Fund withdrawal.

### 2.6 Exit fund

- The Freedom Fund may be in the position to provide an exit fund for partners after officially exiting.

## 3. Partner engagement

### 3.1 Address funding assumptions

- In long term partnerships, we recommend that teams address assumptions about continuity of funding early on and bear in mind not to overpromise to partners about future funding.
- Keep partners informed about the security of funding we have available.
- Give consideration to who communication with partner should come from and when.

### 3.2 Partner staff support

- If roles are at risk, find out national legislation on redundancy and redeployment, and review partner's own policies and procedures on redundancy/redeployment (if in existence). We recommend discussing with the partner how they will comply with any national or organisational policies in place.
- Depending on availability of funding, hotspot teams could think about providing funding for one of the following:

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- Learning and professional development, for example formal training or contributions towards higher education courses.
- CV writing and interview skills training.
- Staff care and wellbeing sessions.
- Human resources capacity building.

### 3.3 Complaints mechanism

- Where appropriate, remind partner staff of the details of the Freedom Fund's complaints reporting mechanism.

## 4. Community engagement

### 4.1 Notice period

- We recommend that partner organisations give communities 3 months' notice if it is necessary to finish work there.

### 4.2 Clear communication

- We recommend that partners clearly communicate with communities and try to prevent news circulating as a rumour. Information should be consistent and shared widely with as much explanation as possible.
- The partner could consider providing some information in writing about the ending of the program.

### 4.3 Community plan

- Partners could help communities to develop a plan for the period before the NGO discontinues support. This can include priorities for learning how to sustain their activities independently and key issues that they want to make progress on while they still have access to staff. Communities could be encouraged to think how they can sustain their efforts beyond the end of the program.

### 4.4 Support for survivors

- Hotspot teams may advise partners on the actions that can be taken by community workers before withdrawing from a community in order to try to stabilise the situation for survivors and other individuals who may face increased risks.

### 4.5 Connect with other NGOs or government

- The partner could find out about other NGOs or local government whose work in the area will continue and see if these organisations could extend any of their activities into the hotspot communities or to help individuals within those communities. Also see if NGOs/government agencies are providing any support or entitlements that community members can access.

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### 4.6 Restructure funding

- The partner organisation could propose to restructure its program activities in order to maintain a reduced level of outreach over a longer time period. For example, one field worker could visit a larger number of groups on a less frequent basis over 6 months to scale down support in a more sustainable way. This arrangement may help some communities to sustain the project structures and activities as they transition to working independently.

## 5. Monitoring & learning

### 5.1 Monitoring exit

- Hotspot teams may consider monitoring exit process as it progresses. This may involve developing exit indicators to track progress against. Consider bringing in expertise to help outline monitoring plan.
- Consider ring fencing budget to conduct a post-exit evaluation 2 or 3 years in the future.

### 5.2 Document learning

- We recommend teams allocate time to document learning from program exits for the Freedom Fund's records. Make sure learnings are incorporated into organisational strategy.
- We also recommend that teams encourage partner organisations to document learning. This may require allocation of resources, either funds or Freedom Fund staff time.

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