



# Because of **You**

**Survivors Can Thrive  
in Life After Rescue**



Freedom  
Partner





Freedom  
Partner

Dear Freedom Partner,

It takes a certain kind of person to commit to the long, persevering work of justice day after day. A decision like that means having courage to confront injustice, refusing to look away when the work gets difficult. It requires a certain level of hope to believe that we can build a safer future together and a relentless spirit to help make it happen.

That's why I'm so grateful for you and our Freedom Partner community. Through the radical generosity and joyful participation of people like you, the goal of protecting half a billion people is not just a dream. It's a fast-approaching reality.

Since IJM first began 25 years ago, you've helped bring over 76,000 people out of daily abuse and exploitation. Just let that sink in for a moment. You could fill a football stadium with the number of people you've helped rescue.

But rescue is the tip of the iceberg. What follows rescue is a beautiful journey of healing and restoration, for survivors and their communities. Our most committed supporters make it possible to create lasting change that strengthens justice systems and creates safer communities where vulnerable people are protected and everyone can thrive in freedom.

I have been a Freedom Partner for 14 years, and I'm so proud to be part of this beautiful community that ensures the work of justice continues after rescue – for a lifetime. As you experience the stories shared in this magazine, I hope the joy of freedom will move you, and I invite you to celebrate the progress you've helped create. May the beauty of life after rescue inspire you to keep pursuing a better future day after day, until everyone is safe, protected and free.

Until all are free,



**Melissa Russell**

*Regional President, IJM North America*





# The Freedom Partner community is making a world of difference.

As a Freedom Partner, you belong to a community of more than 26,000 passionate monthly donors across the continent. As this movement continues to grow, more children are rescued, more survivors are restored and more people can thrive as they are protected from violence.

In 2021, you collectively gave the equivalent of the total cost of our work in **India, Romania, Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar!**

The steady growth and commitment of this passionate community has fueled the work of IJM in practical ways that enable holistic justice to take root all over the world.

## In 2021, with your help:

**9,967 victims of violence became survivors** and are safe from abuse and exploitation today.

**430 survivors were restored** to safety and health.

**31,800+ community members and other NGO staff were trained** to better recognize and respond to violence.

Thank you for being a crucial part of this unstoppable community that stands up for the inherent value and dignity of people everywhere.

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# A survivor's courage leads to a new era of police accountability.



Penina's faith, courage and zeal for truth are as radiant as her smile. It's why her peers unanimously appointed her as interim leader of the Kenyan Champions of Justice, a local survivor network she helped start only a few days after the landmark conviction of her husband's killer.

At face value, the conviction of a killer in court might not sound anything like a landmark situation. But in Penina's case, the man who killed her husband was a high-ranking police officer. Prior to this conviction, rulings like this were exceedingly rare.

Nine years ago, Penina learned that her husband had been taken into custody at the local police station. When she went to find out what happened, she was told to check the hospital.

Penina arrived at the hospital just in time to see her husband before he passed away on a stretcher in a hospital corridor. She was told he got into a fight with a fellow inmate, and that this inmate would be charged with the crime.

After the autopsy revealed information that contradicted the police report filed by the senior officer, she insisted on learning the truth about what really happened to her husband. Penina reached out to IJM for help with the case.

As Penina worked with IJM and other members of the community, evidence started to mount against the senior officer. It was uncovered that he had threatened and extorted the falsely accused inmate to sign a fake report admitting to the crime. They also found proof that the officer used his power to bribe and intimidate witnesses to cover up his crime.

*"At that time, I was so distressed," Penina says. "I felt lost, angry and confused and I lived many days in numbness not knowing if I will ever get justice."*

As more evidence emerged, Penina noticed that she was being followed often. Strangers would monitor her movement in the streets and unfamiliar cars would follow her near her home.

Fearing for her safety, IJM supported Penina as she was moved to a safe house for the duration of the trial.

The move meant she would lose her job – a huge sacrifice for Penina. As a widow and a single mother, she needed that income to support her daughter. But she was determined to seek justice for her family and fight for truth in court.

**"I see how far I have come; I now know that life can blossom even at the toughest time when you have faith."**

— Penina Kaumbutho

In Kenya, police abuse of power is rampant. "You hear a police officer has shot an innocent person every day," Penina explains. She tells us it's a constant reminder of "the non-stop violence that continues to shake poor communities."

But Penina was not deterred, and her courage led to the conviction of her husband's killer. With the help of local prosecutors and IJM, Penina presented an airtight case that set a standard for police accountability across the country. Following the conviction, an unprecedented number of police have been convicted for crimes they once committed without fear. This was the dawn of a new era for police accountability.

Today, Penina is a beacon of hope for Kenyans who are survivors of police abuse of power. Together with the Kenyan Champions for Justice, she continues to empower those like her to use their voices and fight for the accountability they deserve.

*"I would like to tell others who may find themselves in a situation similar like mine, to never lose hope," Penina says. "They should fight on until justice is served."*

**Thanks to you, our government partners, and Penina's bravery, communities in Kenya will thrive in safety and freedom.**



Kenyan Champions of Justice member Josephat speaks to a church congregation in Nairobi.

## Kenyan Champions of Justice

Founded in 2019 and supported by IJM, the Kenyan Champions of Justice is a survivor-led group that empowers other survivors to use their voices to advocate against police abuse by speaking with influential leaders in the government concerning their experiences and challenges.

They work together to build up social demand for police accountability, support victims in court, encourage communities to report police misconduct and center survivor voices.



# Generational Justice

**When she was young, Josefina's parents instilled in her a heart for protecting vulnerable people. Today, as the partnerships and mobilization coordinator for the Dominican Republic field office, she is equipping the next generation to become champions for justice in their country.**

*"I was a sweet, fearless dreamer..."* Josefina says as she recounts her childhood. She grew up in the Dominican Republic, surrounded by loving siblings and parents who provided them with education, care and protection.

Though Josefina's family experienced seasons of economic hardship, her parents always emphasized the importance of caring for those in need. As she grew older, she became more attuned to the suffering of those in her community, especially the children.

*"They lived unprotected, some had to work on the streets, others were even abused and exploited by their own families,"* Josefina says. *"Modern slavery is a reality that increases every day."*

Josefina refused to passively stand by as kids were trafficked in her community. She spent years helping her community as a volunteer. When a job at IJM opened up in 2016, her passion and spirit made her the perfect fit!

As part of her role, Josefina helped church leaders equip their congregations for the pursuit of biblical justice by actively combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Before long, a church staff member trained by Josefina recognized signs that suggested

a 14-year-old girl was likely being trafficked. Thanks to Josefina's training, he took immediate action and the girl was rescued.

*"My dream is that the church and civil society of the Dominican Republic are so empowered that they become champions of justice, who are proactively executing, applying and multiplying what IJM does,"* Josefina says.

**Thanks to her hard work, our partners and your continued support, more children thrive today in life after rescue and so many more will never be trafficked in the first place.**

And that means Josefina's dream is looking a little more like reality every day.



## Transformation, from Within

**The timeline of IJM's work in the D.R. gives us a model for how slow and steady change can usher in a new, lasting era of protection through justice system transformation.**

- **October 2013** – IJM opens a field office in the Dominican Republic.
- **June 2017** – IJM trains local NGOs on how to identify and report abuse, as well as accompany survivors through the legal process, paving the way for stronger partnerships to follow.
- **September 2017** – 70 churches participate in IJM's first Freedom Sunday in the D.R., reaching more than 7,000 people with the message of freedom and calling the church to protect vulnerable people.
- **April 2018** – IJM collaborates with Plan International to develop sex trafficking prevention tools, build community leadership capacity, develop advocacy activities and support our system reform program by co-financing police training.
- **2020** – 175 pastors and religious leaders participate in a webinar on child marriage and advocate for the protection of the rights of girls and adolescents.
- **Early 2021** – Thanks to the advocacy of IJM and over 15 other civil rights organizations, the local government introduces a bill to ban child marriage. This marks a historic shift in government response, building stronger protection for an entire generation of young girls vulnerable to this crime.
- **June 2021** – IJM in the Dominican Republic trains 1,326 members of civil society on how to recognize and prevent sexual exploitation and human trafficking.



# Restoration:

## A Closer Look

For survivors of forced labor, rescue marks a significant pivotal moment in their lives that opens the door for restoration. Thanks to the ongoing support of Freedom Partners, IJM and our in-country partners can **walk with survivors on this journey of healing until they can thrive again.**

**Restoration is the process of helping survivors begin a journey of healing from the trauma of their abuse so they can thrive again in their communities.**

### What does restoration look like, practically?

Starting on the day of rescue, IJM closely supports survivors by pairing them with experienced aftercare teams who can walk with them through their journey of recovery. On this journey, aftercare workers help survivors meet their practical needs. When these needs are met, survivors are put in the best position to heal and thrive once again.

- **Immediate needs** like food, urgent medical care, shelter, emotional support and trauma-informed care
- **Short-term needs** like housing, basic food and necessities, access to community resources and pathways to employment
- **Long-term needs** like sustainable housing, ethical employment, education for children and essential life-skills training
- **Psychological needs** like empowerment, emotional support, decision-making skills and help with long-term planning



Former bonded laborers gathered for a graduation ceremony to mark their exit from IJM's two-year aftercare program.

### When is a survivor considered officially “restored”?

A survivor is considered fully restored when they can function independently in society again. At the end of a two-year program, families and survivors celebrate their restoration together with a big party! After the program concludes, survivors remain connected with each other through a survivor support network. These survivor networks often give back to their communities by leading various skill-building activities, training sessions and family events.

# Like a phoenix, Kasthuri rose from the ashes.

## A Story of Sustained Restoration

Rescue is the life-changing moment where a survivor's journey of healing and restoration can begin. But Kasthuri's transition from victim to survivor was not easy.

She and her family had been enslaved at a brick kiln for four years before they were rescued. In that time, **they endured backbreaking work for 17 hours a day, seven days a week.** They were underfed, barely paid and under the constant threat of violent abuse.

When they were rescued by IJM and government authorities, Kasthuri and her family went home to find it completely collapsed and unliveable. In addition to having no home, they had to deal with intense trauma that had built up through the years of physical, emotional and mental abuse.

**Without proper support, survivors fresh out of bonded labor are still extremely vulnerable to being re-victimized.** IJM's aftercare program is specifically designed to prevent this by meeting the urgent needs of survivors. In India, IJM's dedicated team of experts serve forced labor survivors through a two-year aftercare program called Freedom Training.

Through this program, Kasthuri and her family received one-on-one support to help connect them with employment opportunities, community resources and government funding that they were lawfully entitled to receive to help get them back on their feet.

Thanks to the support they received through this program, Kasthuri's family continues to thrive years after their initial rescue. Her husband has a steady job that pays a fair wage, and their 13-year-old son is in school. Kasthuri has overcome her trauma and fear, and now works at an ethical brick kiln.



But the impact of restoration goes even further. When Kasthuri heard about another family enslaved in a nearby brick kiln, she connected IJM to the case and played a crucial role in their eventual rescue.

**Today, Kasthuri is a shining example of how aftercare empowers survivors to thrive in life after rescue.** An IJM caseworker who walked closely with the family through aftercare says, *“Kasthuri is like a phoenix. She has risen from the ashes.”*



# What's Your Why?

Every Freedom Partner has a story – something that excites them about the work of justice, something that compelled them to find and join a community dedicated to protecting the vulnerable. So we asked, *what's your "why" for supporting IJM?* Here's what some of you had to say:



*The work that IJM does in rescuing, restoring, and protecting the most vulnerable people is outstanding. Being a Freedom Partner has allowed our family to connect to this work in a way that has **deepened our understanding of and heart for the injustice** experienced by vulnerable people.*

*My wife and I believe strongly in IJM's mission to seek justice for the oppressed. We know that our donations are well spent, and that IJM's work is of immeasurable value! We are proud to **play a small role in the absolutely life transforming work that God is doing** in the world through IJM.*

*It started when I saw their faces. The pain of being trafficked weighed heavily in my 'yes.' When I first read IJM's rescue mission stories, my heart sank. The accounts from children, women, and men were unfathomable. Abuse, rape, beatings, slavery. Then another word was used – hope. **After IJM rescued and provided aftercare for victims, they had hope.** I became a Freedom Partner shortly after.*

*I started giving as a Freedom Partner a few years ago because I believe in IJM's mission and institutional integrity. I know my money is being stewarded well, by people I trust, **for the sake of justice!***

## We want to hear from you!



What's your "why"? We love hearing about your passion for justice. Tell us why you love being a Freedom Partner.

- Fill out our quick Freedom Partner survey by scanning the QR code!
- On Instagram Stories, use the hashtag **#FreedomPartner** and tag **@IJM**

BECAUSE OF YOU,  
SURVIVORS  
can thrive in  
life  
after  
rescue

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart. **Because of your generosity, we can see lives and destinies changed forever.** Every life that is saved also saves generations that follow, who otherwise would be born into bondage and slavery. You are part of something massive.”

– **Stephen Dev Sunder**  
Manager, Training and Partnership in South Asia office



“**My IJM family helped me a lot in my growth.** You all are my roots and support on which I’m standing today. Whatever I have achieved in my life...is because of my IJM family. Thank you so much.”

– **Mahila\***  
Survivor of sex trafficking in Mumbai

## Our work often begins with rescue,

but it doesn’t end until **survivors are restored** and vulnerable people are protected.

Thanks to your support, survivors, communities and justice systems can help **cultivate a life after rescue – where everyone can flourish and thrive in freedom.**



# When justice perseveres,

Healing and restoration can begin *after rescue*

Children and families reunite, *safe from being separated again*

Survivors become advocates, and *help forge the path toward a safer future*

Justice systems are **strengthened** to *protect entire communities from violence*

Fewer people need rescue, *because they are protected from violence in the first place*



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**INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION** is a global organization that protects the poor from violence throughout the developing world. IJM partners with local authorities to rescue victims of violence, bring criminals to justice, restore survivors and strengthen justice systems.

Highlighted as one of 10 non-profits "making a difference" by *U.S. News and World Report*, IJM's effective model has been recognized by the U.S. State Department, the World Economic Forum and leaders around the globe, as well as featured by *Foreign Affairs*, *Forbes*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Times of India*, *The Phnom Penh Post*, National Public Radio and CNN, among many other outlets.

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\*To protect IJM survivors, we have used pseudonyms, obscured some images and included photos that do not depict actual victims where appropriate. Consent gathered for all images.



[give.org](http://give.org)