

Ministry Tackles Human Trafficking Challenge in India

The U.S. State Department estimates that as many as 27 million men, women and children around the world are living in as victims of **human trafficking**.

In India alone, there are approximately 2.8 million people trapped in slavery. Government statistics indicate that every year, 70,000 people—largely women and children—go missing in India, with the majority believed to having been trafficked or sold. The most likely victims of this bondage are those living on less than a \$1 a day. Their desperate situations leave them vulnerable to exploitation.

Bright Hope International is working to develop a network of churches in India to raise awareness and build strategic partnerships to take action against these inhumane acts. Bright Hope is working with two churches in Uttar Pradesh State in the north.

“We want to try to reach out to them because they’re in our area,” CH Dyer, president and CEO of Bright Hope, explains. “There are thousands of women right around these two churches that they see on a regular basis, that they talk to, build relationships with, but they didn’t have any means to go and help.”

Dyer says Bright Hope’s mission is to empower the **local church** to be the **hands and feet of Christ**. In this case, they focused on the human trafficking going on right outside the churches.

“Bright Hope said to them, ‘We’ll help you, and we’ll help you do it right so that they understand how to bring these young women out—how to rehabilitate them, provide the kind of

counseling to give them, what kind of job training we can give them so that they never have to return to that kind of work,” Dyer explains.

Bright Hope this month launched a three-pronged approach including awareness, rescue and rehabilitation focused on the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP). Dyer says response has been good because it counters the whole message of slavery.

“The gospel is a story that resonates in their hearts because it lifts up the poor, it lifts up the untouchables. In the caste system, if you’re a lower caste, you’ve always been taught ‘you’re nothing,’” he explains. “But God says, ‘No, at my cross, you’re equal.’”

Rescue means extracting women who want to leave the life and pressuring local authorities to obey local laws and remove underaged women from brothels. It also involves placing them in safe houses where they cannot be found by those seeking to return them to a life of abuse and destruction.

“We targeted during the first six months to have 10 women come out,” Dyer explains. “We’ve gotten four out. One of the young girls, though, is not out, and I’ve really been asking people to pray.”

The girl, named Supna, was essentially sold by a family member. Dyer says, “She started because her father took a \$1,000 loan and couldn’t repay it. So these men forced her to do this work to repay her dad’s loan. She’s 17, and she wants to come out, but she hasn’t been able to.”

In Supna’s case, Dyer got the police involved. “Just last week, we got a letter, stamped by the mother saying, ‘I want my daughter out of this,’” he says. “We’re trying to go through the legal authorities to be able to get her out of that situation.”

Once a girl is rescued, the team will focus on healing through

professional biblical counseling to regain strength, hope, and faith in God and His ability to restore them.

“The counseling is starting soon,” Dyer says. “Then the rehabilitation will start; we’re looking at a longer-term program.”

Opportunities to earn a livable wage will keep these women and girls off the streets. Through job-skills training, girls can have well-paying jobs as they rebuild their lives. A safe house has been set up for them, and healing can begin. Church partners are combining all three of these approaches into a final proposal which will be unveiled later in the year.

Bright Hope initially committed \$5,000. And then, God.

“We did a five-day Facebook campaign; we said we wanted to raise \$5,000 to launch this program,” Dyer says. “We actually raised \$20,000, so God has really provided. That’s what we needed for this first full six months to get going.”