

MORE THAN 550 RESCUED IN IJM'S LARGEST EVER OPERATION



In 2011 IJM rescued more than 500 people from a brick kiln, but the kiln owner evaded prosecution. **Last month, Indian police and IJM staff rescued 564 people from bonded labour slavery at this same massive kiln. Now 6 members of an organised trafficking network, including this owner, are in police custody.**

In response to a frantic call from an escaped labourer, a team of police, government officials and IJM staff entered the brick kiln to find hundreds of families toiling under the hot sun. Many couldn't believe that the rescue was real; when a government officer asked "Who wants to go free?" he was met with a stunned silence. Slowly, one man, then another, then dozens raised tired hands into the air.



As police gathered evidence and arrested the owners, the families packed their few belongings and were taken to safety. 373* individuals received release certificates, dissolving the false debts holding the families in bonded labour slavery.



The families painted a vivid picture: The labourers' day began at 3:00 every morning and was filled with verbal and physical abuse. They were watched at all times, and if injured visited the "doctor" for pain pills before being forced back to work. Pregnant women were forced to work without slowing down. Living in tiny tin-roofed rooms or tents, families received a weekly allowance of 400 rupees (less than £5). Many went without eating for days at a time.



Nearly 200 children lived inside the kiln, almost half under 5 years old. While some attended school, most over age 12 joined the labour.

Many families have now returned to their home villages. IJM will collaborate with the local government to help them resettle and access rehabilitation resources, including a Beneficiary Card granting access to medical care and tool kits, free housing and ration cards for food and other necessities. The Odisha local government has provided survivors with opportunities to be part of a livelihood support programme which guarantees 100 days of employment. For the next two years, IJM staff will meet with families regularly to provide training on basic skills and to ensure children can return to school as well as monthly support meetings in each community.



IJM will support local police in building the legal case to charge the owner under the Bonded Labour Act and newer provisions of the Indian penal code introduced in 2013. This new law has helped bring stronger cases against traffickers and business owners using bonded labourers, and better protects the vulnerable poor from this kind of violence.

This operation highlights a critical need in the fight against modern-day slavery: If criminals remain free, the violence will continue. But if laws are enforced and traffickers go to jail, we can end slavery for good. Help us bring rescue to others in slavery today:
www.ijmuk.org/give

IJM has partner offices in the following countries which support the field work: USA (HQ) www.ijm.org, UK www.ijmuk.org, Canada www.ijm.ca, Netherlands www.ijmnl.org, Australia www.ijm.org.au, Germany ijm-deutschland.de

* The remainder were mostly adults, children or elderly dependents too frail to work in the kiln.