



The Exodus Road

EMPOWERING RESCUE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The Exodus Road helps 21 women realize dream of unlikely wedding

MAY X, INDIA - 21 women in India's sex trade just received a life-changing gift: the one thing that could save them from a life of prostitution. These 21 women, many of whom had been forced into prostitution since childhood, were given a wedding.

A U.S. nonprofit stepped in to help the women, who belong to two of the lowly or "untouchable" castes in India where safety and status are out of reach. In their villages, prostitution is the traditional trade for women. Girls are forced into the sex trade at a young age while their brothers often become their pimps. They are solicited along highways, or in brothels and bars in cities.

Marriage is rare and discouraged for these girls because they are not allowed to take clients once they are married. Beyond the cultural pressures not to marry, the women also face a financial obstacle. The community's elders allow marriage only if a large dowry is paid to the village.

Women from two of these poor villages started petitioning their police and officials to be allowed to marry. According to The Exodus Road's operatives, they wanted to marry their boyfriends and leave the sex trade their families had forced them into. They were not only petitioning for the ability to marry; they were petitioning for their one hope to escape from a life of sex slavery.

When the police looked into the women's complaints, they found that 21 women in these two villages wanted to marry and leave prostitution. The police and officials agreed to marry the women and their partners in one group ceremony. Police reached out to The Exodus Road, a U.S.-based counter-trafficking organization, for help to make the wedding ceremony happen.

The Exodus Road removed the financial obstacle to these women's freedom by giving \$385 to pay for wedding expenses. The nonprofit's gift was used to purchase equipment, food, and tents.

This wedding is a picture of how long-term relationships are critical to providing a full solution to sex slavery. The Exodus Road trains and employs teams of national investigators, who work over years to build effective relationships with police, governments and other organizations.

These collaborative relationships make rescues and arrests more frequent and successful. They're also the relationships that make a wedding and new life of freedom possible for 21 women.

The Exodus Road operates search and rescue teams in Southeast Asia, Thailand, and India. In the last five years, The Exodus Road has helped rescue 808 slaves and helped arrest 296 traffickers.

- **Photos attached; contact for interviews and more media**

We help find and free slaves through strategic action with ordinary people.

The Exodus Road is a registered 501(c)3 charitable organization.