

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

from
THE FIELD

“INSIDE [THE QUARRY], IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR OUR CHILDREN TO BECOME DOCTORS OR POLICE ... BUT IT IS POSSIBLE NOW.” – VENKATESH

When a government official was recently alerted to several families held in slavery at a remote rock quarry in South India, he enlisted IJM’s help.

IJM investigators conducted a reconnaissance mission and determined that the facility was actually two separate but connected quarries controlled by powerful perpetrators – one formerly a state-level politician.

Avoiding a tip-off required sweeping, yet precise, simultaneous operations at both quarries. The perpetrators were dangerous, and the plan was logistically challenging, but it worked. **In coordinated dual operations, IJM and local authorities rescued 13 families from slavery. Today, the families live in freedom.**



Venkatesh and his son, Viswanathan

SEE FREEDOM THROUGH ONE FAMILY’S EYES:

Viswanathan, 13, wanted to work for the government when he grew up so that he could create a “robber-free world,” and his big sister Girija, 15, dreamed of becoming a doctor. But they were not free to pursue these goals: Their parents were slaves in the rock quarry where the family had been forced to live for the past eight years.

The children often crushed rocks with the enslaved adults – a taste of the future that likely awaited them. Their father, Venkatesh, feared that the children would be forced into the bondage of daily hard labor. His wife, Sumathi, worried about the danger the machinery and treacherous terrain posed to her family.

All this changed the spring day when IJM and the local government freed their family from slavery.

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March 6, 2009 – The rescue operation that freed Venkatesh and his family takes place



The quarry



Pictured above, the family at IJM Freedom Training.

*Top Row: Venkatesh and Sumathi
Bottom Row: Girija and Viswanathan*

FREEDOM TRAINING: AN OPPORTUNITY TO DREAM

IJM conducts Freedom Trainings for families freed from slavery. IJM Chennai Aftercare Director Pranitha Timothy explains: “The Freedom Training is our best chance to equip clients with tools to work out their freedom and, most importantly, to give them an opportunity to dream.”

These trainings are designed to restore dignity and teach critical skills, including budgeting, opening a bank account, securing sustainable employment and meeting nutritional needs. IJM also provides a set of work tools such as gloves, a bucket and a spade so that former slaves can immediately begin new jobs, and follows up monthly to help families thrive in freedom.

After the rescue, IJM helped the family return to their native village, where Venkatesh built a home equipped with “electricity for the children to study, for their education.” He never had the opportunity to go to school himself, and Sumathi was only able to study until fifth grade. These parents are very proud of the education their children are pursuing.

Viswanathan and Girija are working hard at school. They both like science class the best – Viswanathan because “the teacher teaches us well and science talks about the living things,” and aspiring doctor Girija because, “I score [good] marks.”

And out of school, do the two siblings fight? “Only if she starts it!” laughs Viswanathan.

Their father works in construction and hopes to buy a cow to generate sustainable income for his family. Their mother, who is recovering from an illness, can now access health care and dreams of starting a candle making business.

They are a normal family – with normal struggles. They are budgeting, meeting their new neighbors, dreaming of the future. And they are free.



IJM brings freedom to scores of families living in slavery and helps them achieve their dreams.

