

WorkFREE 'EXIT' Process

WORKFREE

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Introduction

This document describes WorkFREE's plans for managing the end of the project, and particularly the end of the social experiment at its heart. It is written in full acknowledgement of the fact that the project involves intervening in communities and their on-going lives; that it may have significant impacts on those lives; and that, consequently, its ending must be considered, discussed and managed carefully and openly across the life of the project.

An Ongoing Relationship

Before discussing the varied steps that the team will take, it is important to underline that 'end' here does not really equate to 'exit'. WorkFREE's social partner, MSI, has an existing, ongoing relationship with the communities selected to participate in the WorkFREE project. Indeed, it is only possible for WorkFREE to collaborate with these communities because of the long-standing presence that MSI has in them¹. This presence far pre-dates WorkFREE and will continue after it. In this respect, WorkFREE should be understood and will be framed to its participants as one initiative within the ongoing cycle of initiatives led by MSI in these communities. In this respect, although the project will end, MSI's relationships will not, and the positive outcomes emerging from the project will thus have a strong chance of carrying over into the future.

Preparing for the End of WorkFREE

Nevertheless, given the potential impacts of the project, and particularly its cash element, it is vital that WorkFREE and MSI be proactive in preparing participants for the time when the cash stops and supporting them as necessary after it does. The measures that we intend to take in order to do this have been developed following international best practice guidelines (e.g. Levinger and Mcleod 2002, Gardner et al. 2005, Boardman 2006, Hayman 2016, Villa and Barrientos 2016, World Bank, n.d.²), consultations across the WorkFREE consortium (especially with MSI field staff), and feedback from the WorkFREE Ethics Advisor and Board. They include:

¹ MSI enjoys enormous goodwill in these communities because of the work it has done over the last 15 years fighting for and protecting their housing rights. MSI is the leading member of a Hyderabad-wide federation of organisations working on Housing Rights, called *Chatri*. Slumdweller are usually squatters and the land on which they build their huts is typically government land or land under litigation. This makes them very vulnerable – invariably they face the threat of eviction either by litigating private parties or the government, and Chatri consistently fights this threat. The relationships of solidarity that have developed as a result of this work also extend into social support in times of need. A good example of this is what happened during the 2020 floods, which affected one of the WorkFREE communities living on the banks of Musi river. When all 120 huts were washed away by the floods, MSI managed to provide emergency shelter for every displaced individual in a nearby government school to which access was obtained through negotiating with the government. For a period of nearly one month, these people were supported by MSI, which provided food, water, blankets, clothes and other basic necessities by mobilising funds and government support. It is this kind of engagement that MSI has with the waste collector communities who will participate in the WorkFREE project.

² Available at: worldbank.org/safetynets/howto.

1. Maintaining complete transparency about the project from the moment of gathering informed consent onwards – about its purpose, its objectives, its schedule of activities, and its timeline. As Levinger and Mcleod (2002) and Boardman (2006) have all found, such transparency is essential for managing participant expectations and supporting healthy transitions.

2. Ensuring that all participants are informed and regularly reminded that the WorkFREE project, and particularly the cash transfers, are temporary. Beyond the initial informed consent process, this will involve WorkFREE and MSI field staff:

- regularly checking that participants know and remember the end date/s, for example through household visits (cf. Gardner et al. 2005);
- working through community leaders to ensure the spread of the message.

Research shows that the end of an intervention is less troubling for beneficiaries than how that end comes about. If, for example, participants are excluded because they are no longer eligible, then the change can be emotionally challenging. If, by contrast, they know and are prepared for the fact that the intervention is time-bound, then little frustration develops (Villa and Barrientos 2016).

3. Supporting participants to put in place plans of action to enable them to deal with the post-cash transfer transition. This follows established good practice (Gardner et al. 2006, Hayman 2016) and will involve MSI community mobilisers and the WorkFREE Research Manager working with participant individuals and households to brainstorm strategies for coping with budget changes, to map alternative resource-generating opportunities, and to make connections with service-providers. Sustainability plans will also be put in place to attempt to ensure that positive changes arising from the cash transfers can be long-lasting.

4. Facilitating collective conversations and organising processes with community members about how to manage the end of cash transfers. MSI community mobilisers will be running multiple Participatory Action Research (PAR) processes within WorkFREE communities and will aim to focus some of these on the question of how to ensure healthy transitions beyond the period of cash transfers.

5. Aiming to sustainably build community power. This will take place in a number of ways:

i) Through the inclusion of PAR alongside cash transfers. MSI already uses an Alinsky-inspired, sociocracy-inflected approach to community development. Through its collaboration with WorkFREE, MSI staff are adding PAR to their toolkit, with a view to facilitating PAR processes that focus on:

- identifying community problems and mobilising collective power to address them;

- identifying community goals and mobilising collective power towards them, which will include mapping available non-monetary resources and how to access them;
- strengthening current livelihood systems and, should people so choose, developing alternative sustainable livelihoods, including through the pooling of resources.

In essence, this PAR work will strive to support the development of further resilience and autonomy amongst participant communities, along with capacities for collective action and leadership.

ii) Through consistently sharing (and co-generating, via sense-making meetings) project research findings with community members. This will support people to deepen their understanding of and ability to act on their circumstances.

iii) Through an MSI-led process of community leadership development. MSI envisages developing 20 community leaders (men and women) who will receive special training in leadership skills, analytical knowledge about the role and contribution of waste collectors in the urban eco-system, dynamics of collectivisation and advocacy. MSI envisage that this process could result in a trade union or a cooperative to advocate for community interests.

5. Further building capacity among MSI staff and of MSI as an institution. Since there is no end to MSI's engagement with the WorkFREE communities, we aim to support MSI to better do the work that it does. In practice, this means:

- Supporting the deepening of MSI staff relationships with constituent communities, through the community mobiliser time made available by the WorkFREE budget.
- Supporting MSI to develop PAR skills and to access training from WorkFREE staff and partners in relational tools such as Restorative Circles, Convergent Facilitation and Human Scale Development.
- Supporting MSI to develop research skills and international funding partnerships, in particular around cash transfers, basic income and community-led PAR interventions, and in relation to follow-on projects.
- Working with MSI to deepen its engagement with and access to networks of psycho-social support within Hyderabad, which may be drawn upon in the case of unexpected findings and to mitigate emergent difficulties in the post-WorkFREE transition (e.g. counselling or shelter services that can be provided to participants if necessary after the end of the project).

- Collaborating with MSI on its government-level advocacy efforts, which may prove important if waste pickers decide to act collectively to change their circumstances in ways that involve political mobilisation.

References

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