

Freedom Line

Problem:

Advertisement and anonymity are crucial to the use of trafficking report systems. The problem is that current trafficking hotlines on the African continent, already rare, are poorly advertised and anonymized. We propose using the Mxit platform to address this deficiency.

Our response:

1. We aim to provide a readily available mobile platform to report cases of human trafficking.
2. We want to do so anonymously and in a way that the target audience learns of its existence quickly and easily.

Benefits:

1. Greater awareness of human trafficking in Africa
 - Seeing Freedom Line on Mxit will cause Mxit users to wonder what it is. The answer to that question raises awareness about the issue.
2. An increase in reports of potential trafficking from victims and bystanders
 - Freedom Line would be more obvious, by virtue of being on the Mxit homepage, than current phone hotlines are, which have no visible component. Its emphasis on anonymity will hopefully increase the level of trust victims have in filing reports.
3. A more consistent method of providing information for intervening organizations
 - Freedom Line would prompt for the same information in all circumstances, which provides a normative element to its reporting strategy.
4. Decreased time to report
 - Sending an instant message happens at a rate much more quickly than a phone call, and people today are much more willing to send an SMS than make a phone call.
5. Decreased danger in reporting an issue
 - Sending an SMS is much less conspicuous than making a phone call, which will protect victims who are reporting their cases from their traffickers.
6. Decreased cost to sending a tip
 - Sending a tip via mobile phone, using text messages or voice minutes, is an additional cost incurred to the reporters of these tips. Mxit provides a free way to carry out the same action.

Project Design:

The first step toward implementing this product is to contact Mxit to request permission to use their social network as a platform. We believe they will be open to such a partnership because of their demonstrated efforts to combat malevolent use of Mxit in the past (SOURCE). Freedom Line, an instant messaging hotline, is designed to facilitate the transfer of information from the Mxit user to anti-trafficking partners.

As a user interface, Freedom Line will appear in Mxit as a “Service”, one of the tabs on the Mxit home screen. Victims and bystanders wishing to report trafficking information need only begin the conversation by sending a message. Freedom Line will respond, confirming receipt of messages and asking questions to prompt for information relevant to investigation and intervention (SOURCE). All information received in messages from the user will be logged. Below is a sample of what a Mxit Freedom Line conversation would look like:

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Freedom Line: English (EN), العربية (AR), Kiswahili (KS),  
Francais (FR), Other (O)  
Reporter: EN  
Freedom Line: For immediate assistance please call the national  
trafficking assistance and prevention center at #####.  
Freedom Line: Please provide your name or send A for anonymous.  
Reporter: A  
Freedom Line: Are you a victim of trafficking (Y/N)?  
Reporter: N  
Freedom Line: What is the nature of the offense you are  
reporting: Labor (L), Sex (S), Labor and Sex (LS), or Other (O)?  
Reporter: S  
Freedom Line: Number of victims?  
Reporter: 5  
Freedom Line: Victim country of origin? (U for Unknown)  
Reporter: Nigeria Romania  
Freedom Line: Location of trafficking?  
Reporter: Address, City, Country or City, Country  
Freedom Line: Would you like to provide a contact number so we  
can follow up on any details (Y/N)?  
Reporter: N  
Freedom Line: Any comments you would like to provide (Y/N)?  
Reporter: N  
Freedom Line: We greatly appreciate your willingness to provide  
this information. Thank you.
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Next, Freedom Line will contact relevant reporting agencies and determine the manner in which they prefer to receive information about trafficking networks. Once this is determined, Freedom Line will be configured to pack its information in that form and use cellular connections to instantly transmit the vital details. Freedom Line will also intelligently sort the data by location in order to send the data to the appropriate groups in the appropriate countries. Finally, in the long term, Freedom Line will be scaled for use throughout Mxit’s entire network in Africa by incorporating a greater variety of reporting networks and a more robust data processing system. The ease of access and promise of anonymity make Freedom Line an effective agent in the fight against human trafficking throughout Africa.