



Study On Missing Children In Delhi

Submitted to



Submitted By



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List of Abbreviations

ACP	Assistant Commissioner of Police
AHTU	Anti-Human Trafficking Unit
BBA	Bachpan Bachao Andolan
CCI	Child Care Institution
CCTNS	Crime and Criminal Network Tracking and Systems
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
CHD	Child Help Desk
CPCR	Commissions for Protection of Child Rights
CPS	Child Protection Services
CPSU	Central Project Support Unit
CrPC	Code of Criminal Procedure
CRY	Child Rights and You
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
CWPO	Child Welfare Police Officer
DCPCR	Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights
DCPU	District Child Protection Unit
DCRB	District Crime Records Bureaus
DD	Daily Dairy
DLSA	District Legal Services Authority
DMPU	District Missing Persons Unit
DSLSA	Delhi State Legal Services Authority
DWCD	Department of Women and Child Development
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FIR	First Information Report
FRS	Facial Recognition Software
FRT	Facial Recognition Technology
GRP	Government Railway Police
ICPS	Integrated Child Protection Scheme
IDIs	In-depth Interviews
IO	Investigation Officer

IP	Internet Protocol
IPC	Indian Penal Code
JJ	<i>Jhuggi Jhopri</i>
JJ Act	Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015
JJB	Juvenile Justice Board
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LSA	Legal Services Authority
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MPS	Missing Persons Squad
MWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
NAFRS	National Automated Facial Recognition System
NCCDC	New Concept Centre for Development Communication
NCIC	National Crime Information Centre
NCPCR	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NCRB	National Crime Records Bureau
NCT	National Capital Territory
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PLV	Para Legal Volunteer
POCSO	Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012
RPF	Railway Protection Force
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCRB	State Crime Records Bureau
SHO	Station House Officer
SJPU	Special Juvenile Police Unit
SLSA	State Legal Services Authority
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPUWAC	Special Police Unit for Women and Children
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UOI	Union of India
ZIPNet	Zonal Integrated Police Network

Executive Summary

Background

The year 2021 recorded the maximum number of missing children (1,21,351) reported in the past five years in India, an 11% rise in cases from 2020. Girls account for a disproportionate share of missing children in the country. Over the past five years, the percentage of missing girls has ranged between 65%-74% of the total, while the recovery percentage of missing children has been almost constant at about 60%.

Missing children come under the category of children in need of care and protection under Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJ Act) 2015. Thus, the entire process from registration of the complaint to complete rehabilitation of the child should be guided by the provisions of the JJ Act. Rule 92 of the Model JJ Rules provides a comprehensive definition of missing children - "*A missing child is a child, whose whereabouts are not known to the parents, legal guardians or any other person or institution legally entrusted with the custody of the child, whatever may be the circumstances or causes of disappearance.*"

While the Crime in India Reports present annual statistics on missing children in the country, the causes for such children going missing still remain unclear. There are various Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in place for tracing missing children, but these SOPs become operational only after a child goes missing. Therefore, it is important to explore the underlying reasons behind a child going missing. This study, with limited scope to understand the phenomenon of missing children in Delhi, was conducted with the objective of understanding and assessing the system of delivery of justice in National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi and exploring the reasons for children going missing. The study was conducted in six police districts¹ of Delhi—three with high incidences and three with low incidences of missing children. The sample size for the

¹ High incidence districts- Outer North, North East, Outer
Low incidence districts- New Delhi, Central, South

study (166) was determined as the average number of First Information Reports (FIRs) shared by Delhi Police for the years 2019-21 in the sample districts.

Key Findings

Why children go missing?

The study shows that majority (73%) of the missing children who were traced back were runaway children. These children ran away from their homes due to a variety of reasons—elopement/love relationships, influence of peer groups, study related pressures, and argument/dispute at home. In cases where kidnapping was reported, the reasons for the same were child labour, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced marriage and family dispute. 17% of the children were reported to be missing as they had gone to a familiar place without informing their guardians/parents or had either lost their way to home. In the sample, the median age of missing female child was found to be 16 years while that of the missing male child was 14.5 years. 71% of the missing children were girls while 29% of the missing children were boys, close to the overall gender distribution of missing children in Delhi for 2021 (72:28).

In-depth analysis of the cases show that there was a lack of communication between the parents and children which may have further lead to development of feelings that cause children to run away. Qualitative analysis support that children tend to run away from their homes when they develop feelings of resentment towards their parents, which may be often triggered by pressure of scoring good marks, corporal punishment and lack of freedom. It was also found that in 51% of the cases children ran way during their school time or while going or coming back from their schools or tuitions.

Response of key stakeholders and gaps therein

The study highlights that there are multiple guidelines and SOPs providing guidance on processes to be followed in cases of missing children. Police continue to be a key stakeholder in this scenario and the officials follow the Standing Orders on missing children, released from time to time by Delhi Police, the recent one being the Standing Order No Crime/18/2022. The Standing Order highlights the roles and responsibilities

of police and Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLSA) in cases of missing children. The Child Welfare Committees are primarily responsible to ensure that the children are properly rehabilitated and reintegrated back into the society, under Section 39 of the JJ Act.

In terms of registration of complaints related to missing children, all complaints of missing children in Delhi are reported under Section 363 of IPC (Kidnapping)². While the process of registration of FIR and updating of data on TrackChild Portal was found to be followed seamlessly, gaps were found in the process of investigation, follow up and rehabilitation. It was found that long term cases of missing children were not followed up appropriately and parents in such cases felt that much more should have been done by police officials. The study also found that follow up with the families of the child, once found or returned home, was not done in majority of the cases.

It is observed that there is a lack of understanding on rehabilitation measures which need to be taken after a child is found or returns home. The existing SOP by MWCD and Delhi Police Guidelines do not have adequate measures which may ensure complete rehabilitation of the child.

In Inter-State cases, the process of investigation takes more time than usual. The Standing Order of Delhi Police provides for sharing information of missing children to Police Stations of neighbouring States. Details of cases of missing children in Delhi are uploaded in ZipNet which is linked to TrackChild Portal, which can be accessed by all police stations.

² Section 363 of IPC- 363. Punishment for kidnapping—Whoever kidnaps any person from India or from lawful guardianship, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Recommendations

The study recommends various administrative and procedural changes that could lead to better response to cases of missing children. These include better categorisation of missing children cases so that the causes get reflected in Crime in India Reports of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB); streamlining of SOPs/guidelines on missing children to avoid confusion and overlap; conducting risk assessment of missing children to understand their vulnerabilities and take preventive action accordingly. It was found that measures for rehabilitation of child were inappropriate in existing guidelines/SOPs and the same should be incorporated in the Standing Order of Delhi Police. A holistic approach to rehabilitation of children should be aligned with JJ act 2015 and Model JJ rules and should include social, educational and economic components.

Risk assessment is an important step which could determine the actions taken by concerned officials during the investigation and rehabilitation stage. It is recommended that Delhi Police adopt the risk assessment form as per the SOP formulated by MWCD and integrate it within the Standing Order No. Crime/18/2022. This would not only help in increasing the effectiveness of action, it can also help in understanding the background of the child- whether he/she had gone missing before, whether the child had been a victim of any crime, whether child would need immediate medical attention in case he/she is suffering from any illness etc.

The study also highlights the need for developing a protocol for investigation and follow up of long-term cases of missing children. In such cases, where a child has been missing for multiple years, it is important to ensure that proper transfer of cases takes place and biases based on assumptions, especially in cases of run-away children, are not allowed to influence the investigation.

In terms of prevention interventions, it is recommended that special programs on positive parenting be designed to engage with parents and children/adolescents which may focus on skill development of parents and using available platforms such as NCC, NSS, NYKS etc. for engaging with youth.

Further areas of study

The current study focused on missing children only in Delhi. A nation-wide study should be conducted to understand the causes of children going missing so that appropriate interventions could be designed accordingly. This study focused only on reported cases of missing children, thus omitting non-reported cases or cases which would have been clubbed under other crimes such as human trafficking. Thus, further study on non-reported cases of missing children and analysis of cases which involved other crimes against children such as sexual abuse, human trafficking, child labour, child marriage etc. needs to be carried out.

1. Introduction to the Study

1.1 Background

India is home to 472 million children under the age of 18, which accounts for 39% of the total population (Census, 2011). Moreover, India accounts for 19% of the world's children. While children are a nation's greatest human resource, they remain vulnerable if their basic rights such as access to better health, nutrition, education and opportunities are not fulfilled. The vulnerability of children can be exacerbated by a number of circumstances, such as abandonment, physical or mental impairments, poverty, powerlessness, lack of defence, etc. In such circumstances, the government and law enforcement agencies have a major role to play and ensure that children grow up in a secure environment.

According to NCRB's Crime in India Report, 2021, 1,21,351 children were missing in 2021, out of which 44,524 remained untraced. As many as 74% of the missing children were girls. While the Crime in India Reports do not explain the cause of children going missing, the reasons could be ascertained based on independent studies conducted on the matter. A 2012 report by Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) on missing children noted that both endogenous (compelling factors and vulnerability factors that make one to leave home such as unhappy family relations, destitute parents) and exogenous factors (kidnapping, abduction, lure, coercion, deceit) have direct relation with missing children (BBA, 2012). A study of missing children in Chandigarh in 2019 shed light on the living conditions of the families, areas prone to incidences of missing children and occupations of caregivers/parents (Rohta, 2019). The study revealed that majority of the cases of missing children were reported from slums and peripheral areas of the city which are generally populated by migrant labourers (*ibid*). The study also noted that about 90% of the cases of missing children were related to love affairs and elopement (*ibid*).

Various other studies have examined the issue of missing children in India. A 2022 study by Child Rights and You (CRY) shows that there has been an increasing trend in the number of missing children between 2016 and 2019 with the numbers dipping in 2020

(CRY,2022). The study points that the proportion of girl children in total missing children has been rising from about 65% in 2016 to 77% in 2020 at the all-India level (*ibid*). A 2019 report by NCRB on missing persons states that the reasons for going missing can include mental illness, miscommunication, misadventure, domestic violence, and being a victim of crime.

1.2 Need/Rationale for the Study

1.2.1 Data pertaining to missing children

While the Crime in India Reports present annual statistics on missing children in the country, the causes for such children going missing still remain unclear. As per the records received from Delhi Police for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021, 16,739 children were reported missing in Delhi. The FIRs for all these cases were registered under Section 363 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which corresponds to kidnapping of any person from India or from lawful guardianship. The maximum punishment under this offence is seven years of imprisonment.

The following table presents the district wise total number of cases reported in Delhi from 2018 to 2021, based on the data from NCRB.

Table 1a: District wise total number of cases reported in Delhi from 2018 to 2021. Source: NCRB

S.No	Police District	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Crime Branch	0	0	0	0
2	Economic Offences Wing	0	0	0	0
3	IGI Airport	0	0	0	0
4	Special Cell	0	0	0	0
5	Special Police Unit for Women and Children (SPUWAC)	0	0	0	0
6	Vigilance	0	0	0	0

7	Metro	3	6	0	0
8	RAILWAY	29	39	7	14
9	New Delhi	76	51	22	38
10	North	273	248	174	255
11	Central	296	281	186	266
12	Shahdara	285	348	168	215
13	East	400	288	217	310
14	West	337	346	270	322
15	South-West	399	364	235	339
16	South	580	457	276	308
17	South-East	545	501	327	508
18	Dwarka	553	525	390	492
19	North-West	651	517	314	396
20	North-East	613	559	393	535
21	Outer	698	515	389	534
22	Rohini	803	567	373	490
23	Outer North		743	558	750
Total		6541	6355	4299	5772

1.2.2 Existing legal framework and gaps therein

As per the advisory of MHA, released in 2012, a missing child is defined as "*a person below 18 years of age whose whereabouts are not known to the parents, legal guardians or any other person who may be legally entrusted with the custody of knowing the whereabouts/well-being of the child whatever may be the circumstances/causes of disappearance. The child will be considered missing and in need of care and protection, until located and/or his/her safety/well-being is established.*"

While the definition provided by the aforementioned advisory and reiterated by Rule 92 of the Juvenile Justice Model Rules 2016 and Standing Order No. Crime/18/2022 of Delhi Police are comprehensive, the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders responsible for rehabilitation of children and ensuring justice are scattered across

various SOPs and guidelines. For instance, the Standing Order released by Delhi Police from time to time focuses on roles of police and DLSAs. The SOP released by MWCD in 2016, formulated in compliance with the directions issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in Bachpan Bachao Andolan vs. Union of India (WP (Civil) 75 of 2012), provides for role of police, CWC and JJB. These include compulsory registration of cases, preparation of SOP to deal with cases, JJB to direct police to register cases, ensuring availability of free legal aid etc. Moreover, judgements from the Hon'ble Supreme Court and Delhi High Court have highlighted necessary actions for police, State Governments, Central Government, SLSAs/DLSAs etc. such as appointment of PLVs in police stations, action against officials who do not register FIRs, use of facial recognition technology etc. These multiple guidelines/ orders have created duplicity in roles and responsibilities of stakeholders.

1.2.3 Exploring why children go missing

It is also important to explore and unearth the situations and events unfolding before a child goes missing. This necessitates understanding the causes, risks and protective factors at play in case of missing children. These may relate to the child, family and community or one or more of these.

Moreover, there is a dearth of studies in Delhi to understand:

- the context of why children go missing
- the immediate reasons which create situations that lead to children going missing
- the response of police and other child protection functionaries towards ensuring rehabilitation of the children
- the gaps in implementation of existing laws and SOPs and guidelines developed by
 - Delhi Police
 - Ministry of Home
 - Ministry of Women and Child Development
 - National Commission of Protection of Child Rights

- Ministry of Railways
- Ministry of Labour & Employment.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to assess as to how the system for delivering justice for missing children functions at all levels in the NCT of Delhi. This included exploring the reasons (social, economic, administrative, and political) as to why children go missing and the legal and procedural failures that take place in the process of the system's response to the missing children resulting, often, in the lack of access to justice. The specific objectives included:

- To find out reasons why children go missing
- To carry out a zone-wise mapping of areas in NCT of Delhi from where children go missing and from where they are recovered
- To examine the systematic barriers and challenges in ensuring justice for missing children
- To focus on prevention, protection and rehabilitation
- To examine whether the basic rights of children are violated in the response from various stakeholders
- To identify the process followed in cases requiring inter-state and intrastate coordination and cooperation between the concerned authorities and the challenges that need to be overcome
- To assess the service delivery mechanisms related to child protection and allied sectors as provided by the policy and legal framework with particular emphasis to access and quality
- To identify measures for fixing accountability of response mechanisms/all stakeholders including police, courts, etc.
- To make recommendations for strengthening/making changes in the systems.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Missing children in India

The oldest report of NCRB with data on kidnapping and abduction can be dated back to 1952, which included kidnapping for ransom or sale of minor girls to brothels or houses of entertainment. In 1996, hidden linkage of 'missing children' to child trafficking was identified in a report on child prostitution by UNICEF (BBA, 2012). The 2007 Report of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Committee on missing children identified a number of problems with respect to missing children, including abductions/kidnapping by family members, abductions/kidnapping carried out by non-family members or strangers, children who ran away on their own or were forced to run away due to compelling circumstances in their families and extended surroundings, children who faced unfriendly and hostile environment and were asked to leave home or who were abandoned, children who were trafficked or smuggled or exploited for various purposes, and children who were lost or injured.

A wide variety of interconnected sociologies contribute to the phenomenon of missing children – multi-dimensional levels of poverty, unemployment, insurgency, communal conflicts, loss of livelihood resulting from floods and erosion, migration from rural to urban areas (Bhattacharya, 2017). Missing children, majority of whom are from poor households, continue to remain at high risk of falling prey to criminal activities such as bonded labour, domestic help, trafficking and forced into begging or sex work, or for illegal organ trade (*ibid*). Studies also suggest that children from both urban and rural poor households run away from their homes to escape poverty and (or) physical abuse (*ibid*).

A 2012 report by BBA noted that out of the many causes of children going missing, the more prominent ones include trafficking of children for forced labour/bonded labour and slavery, commercial sexual exploitation, adoption rackets, organ trade/illegal medical testing, forced marriages and for other crimes like begging/drug peddling (BBA, 2012). Social perceptions including gender bias, demographical issues like lack of

education, poor socio-economic conditions are some other compelling reasons that could be attributed to missing children (ibid). Thus, several push and pull factors operate simultaneously and fuel the problem of missing children in India.

A recent paper titled *Geospatial Hotspot Analysis and Endemicity Trends of Missing and Unrecovered Children in India* presents a cross-sectional analysis of study of missing children in India (J T, Kumar, Panda, et al., 2023). The study consisted of state-wise missing boys and girls across India for the past five years, ranging from 2017 to 2021. The study shows that **Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh remained consistent hotspots** (high risk of missing cases) for boys across all five years of study while Karnataka was a hotspot in 2020 and 2021 (ibid). Among the cold spots (low risk of missing cases), Andaman and Nicobar Islands was found to be a cold spot across all five years of study (ibid). The data shows that **Uttar Pradesh was consistently the hotspot for missing girls** while Chhattisgarh was the hotspot from 2019 onwards (ibid). Jharkhand, Gujarat, Sikkim, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands were cold spots for all the five years and can be considered as areas with low risk for missing girls (ibid).

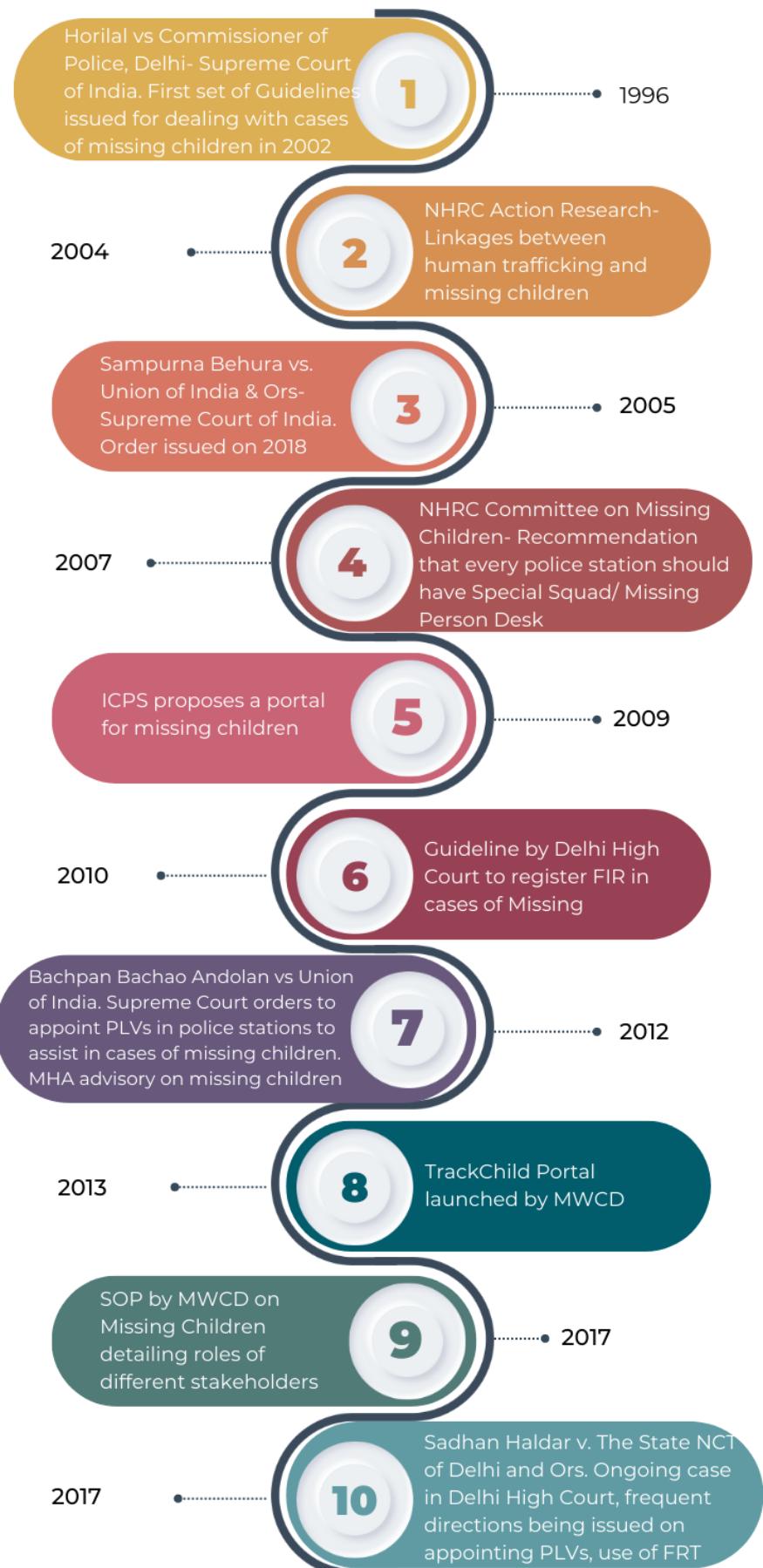
A similar study was conducted by CRY with a limited geographical scope in 2022 to highlight the status of missing children and their vulnerabilities in the northern States of Delhi, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (CRY, 2022). The report showed that girls constitute a significantly higher proportion of missing children in India (ibid). The proportion of girl children in total missing children has been rising from about 65% in 2016 to 77% in 2020 at the all-India level (ibid). The report also notes that the number of children missing in Delhi in the age group 12-18 years is significantly higher than the corresponding number for the age group 0-12 years across all the police stations (ibid).

A study in Chandigarh on missing children in 2019 noted that about 75% missing children were reported from slums and periphery of Chandigarh, areas that are largely populated by migrant labourers (Rohta, 2019). The study showed 97% of children reported missing were the cases of runaway children who leave their homes due to reasons such as love affairs, elopement, family fights, financial crisis at home, deprivation of parental love and care, etc. (Rohta, 2019). More girls were reported

missing as compared to boys. Elopement was found to be a major reason for the girls going missing or running away while boys ran away from their homes due to fights, scolding by parents or elders (*ibid*).

The existing studies shed light on the gravity of the issue and the geographical scope of the problem of growing number of cases of missing children in the country. However, besides a contextual study of the situation in Chandigarh, there are not enough studies focusing on finding the causes of children going missing, the systemic response, gaps in current legislations and the roles of various law enforcement agencies and child protection functionaries in ensuring that proper rehabilitation of children takes place, keeping in view the best interest of the child.

Figure 2a: Timeline of interventions related to missing children in India



2.2 Data on missing children

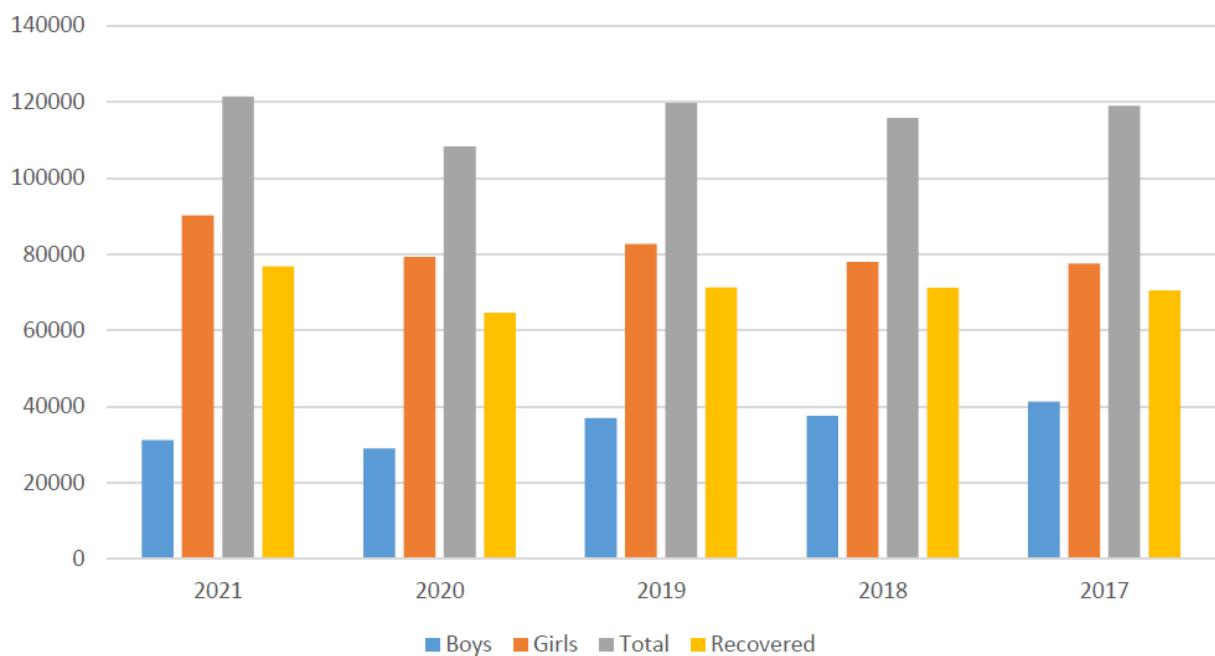
The cases of missing children in India have remained consistent (ranging from 59-63%) over the past five years as per the data from NCRB's Crime in India Reports. The year 2021 saw the maximum number of missing children (1,21,351) reported in the past five years, with an 11% rise in the cases from 2020. Girls account for a disproportionate share of missing children in the country. Over the past five years, the percentage of missing girls has ranged between 65%-74% of the total, while the recovery percentage of missing children has been almost constant at about 60%.

Madhya Pradesh (16,221), West Bengal (16,130), Bihar (11,869), Tamil Nadu (8,168) and Odisha (7,404) emerged as the States with largest number of missing children reported in the country in 2021. Together these States account for almost 50% of the total missing children in the country.

Table 1a: Gender wise distribution of missing/recovered children in India over the last five years

Year	Boys	%	Girls	%	Trans	%	Total	Recovered	Recovery %
2021	31224	26	90113	74	14	0.01	121351	76827	63
2020	28976	27	79233	73	25	0.02	108234	64573	60
2019	36972	31	82619	69	26	0.02	119617	71253	60
2018	37543	32	77952	67	161	0.14	115656	71176	62
2017	41268	35	77523	65	180	0.15	118971	70440	59

Figure 1b: Gender wise distribution of missing/recovered children in India over the last five years



2.3 Definition of 'missing child'

According to the *Advisory on missing children-measures needed to prevent trafficking and trace the children* by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), 2012³, a missing child is defined as -

"a person below 18 years of age whose whereabouts are not known to the parents, legal guardians or any other person who may be legally entrusted with the custody of knowing the whereabouts/well-being of the child whatever may be the circumstances/causes of disappearance. The child will be considered missing and in need of care and protection, until located and/or his/her safety/well-being is established."

Section 2 (14) (vii) of the JJ Act 2015 states that a child in need of care and protection means a child—

"(vii) who is missing or runaway child, or whose parents cannot be found after making reasonable inquiry in such manner as may be prescribed"

³ Ministry of Home Affairs O.M. No. 15011/60/2011, dated 31st January 2012

Rule 92 of the Juvenile Justice Model Rules 2016 defines a missing child as stated in the 2012 advisory by MHA.

The SOP for Cases of Missing Children, 2016, released by Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has clarified terminologies used while following processes related to missing children. These include-

- Missing child - *a child who is lost (separated from family), has left home on his/her own without a notice or has been abducted or kidnapped or trafficked or abandoned.*
- Traced child - *a child who is traced by the police on the basis of a missing child report/FIR.*
- Found child - *a child found by the police on the streets/in a market place/at railway platforms/at bus stops/in trains/at a port/at airports/on a bus or other public transport/in a hospital/during rescue operations or at any public place and/or is brought before/referred to the police by Juvenile Justice Board ("JJB") /Child Welfare Committees ("CWC") /Childline/any other Non-Government Organisation (NGO) or any individual.*

The SOP further clarifies that missing children may also include the following:

- Found Children
- Runaway children
- Abandoned children
- Kidnapped children
- Lost children
- Trafficked children
- Children missing/lost/found due to accidents, disaster, calamity, and other miscellaneous reasons
- Children missing from Child Care Institutions (CCIs)

2.4 Legal framework

As a missing child falls under the category of a *child in need of care and protection*, missing children directly fall under the purview of JJ Act 2015. Section 32 of the JJ Act provide for **mandatory reporting of a child who has been found separated from guardian**. The provision states that anyone who "finds and takes charge, or is handed over a child who appears or claims to be abandoned or lost, or a child who appears or claims to be an orphan without family support, shall within twenty-four hours (excluding the time necessary for the journey), give information to the Childline Services or the nearest police station or to a CWC or to the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU)".

Rule 92, JJ Model Rules

Rule 92 of the JJ Model Rules, 2016 lays down detailed procedures for inquiring/investigation in cases of missing children. The process is listed below:

Figure 2c: Procedures for inquiring/investigation in cases of missing children as per Rule 92 of JJ Model Rules



Gaps/ Missing links

- Coordination and Timelines: The rule emphasizes immediate action, but it would be appropriate to specify timeframes for each step to ensure prompt response. Additionally, the coordination among different agencies, such as the CWPO, SJPU, and DLSA, needs to be well-defined to prevent delays or confusion.
- Technology Integration: While the text mentions using social media and SMS alerts, it may be helpful to specify the integration of modern technologies, such as facial recognition software or advanced data analytics, for more effective and efficient tracing of missing children.
- Training and Awareness: The JJ Rules provide for trainings of all personnel involved, including police officers. However, to ensure that such trainings take place, the frequency and duration should also be specified.
- Victim Support Services: While the rule mentions counseling and support services, it's important to detail the nature and extent of these services. For instance, listing out the parameters of 'support services' (which may include shelter, food, legal aid, linking to government schemes, compensation etc.). Providing comprehensive support for both the child and the family is crucial for the successful reintegration of the missing child.
- Data sharing: The coordination with national and neighboring state agencies is emphasized, however, there should be a protocol/ mechanism for efficient data sharing and integration to facilitate a unified and timely response.
- Review: A provision for regular review and feedback to assess the effectiveness of these procedures is missing in the Rule. This could involve periodic evaluations, case studies, and feedback from involved agencies to identify areas for improvement.
- Community engagement: Engaging the community through neighborhood watch programs or other initiatives could enhance the effectiveness of locating missing children. The rule could include provisions or suggestive mechanisms for involving community members in the search efforts or highlighting its importance.

Direction of Hon'ble Supreme Court- Bachpan Bachao Andolan v Union of India

In Bachpan Bachao Andolan v Union of India (UOI) (2014) SCC 616, the Hon'ble Supreme Court held the following with regard to missing children:

*"We make it clear that, in case of every missing child reported, there will be an initial presumption of either abduction or trafficking, unless, in the investigation, the same is proved otherwise. Accordingly, whenever any complaint is filed before the police authorities regarding a missing child, the same must be entertained under **Section 154 Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)**."*

Other important set of guidelines set by the Supreme Court in this case:

- Compulsory registration of cases by police of all those children who are still untraced
- Police will prepare SOPs in all the states to deal with the cases of missing children
- Appointment and training of Special Child Welfare Police Officers (CWPOs) in every police station to deal with the cases of missing children
- Police will maintain records of recovered children along with photographs and MHA to facilitate the maintenance of records of missing children.

SOP for cases of missing children, MWCD

The SOP for cases of missing children, released by MWCD in 2016, provides detailed guidelines for law enforcement agencies (police, CWC and JJB) for cases of missing children. The SOP was formulated in compliance with the directions issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in Bachpan Bachao Andolan vs. Union of India (WP (Civil) 75 of 2012) on 10th May 2013.

In addition to the responsibilities laid down under Rule 92 of the JJ Model Rules, 2016, the SOP highlights the following additional role for police officials:

- The traced child should be examined by a team of medical experts, including psycho-social experts
- Proper home verification should be carried out before the child is reunited with parents/legal guardians through the CWC

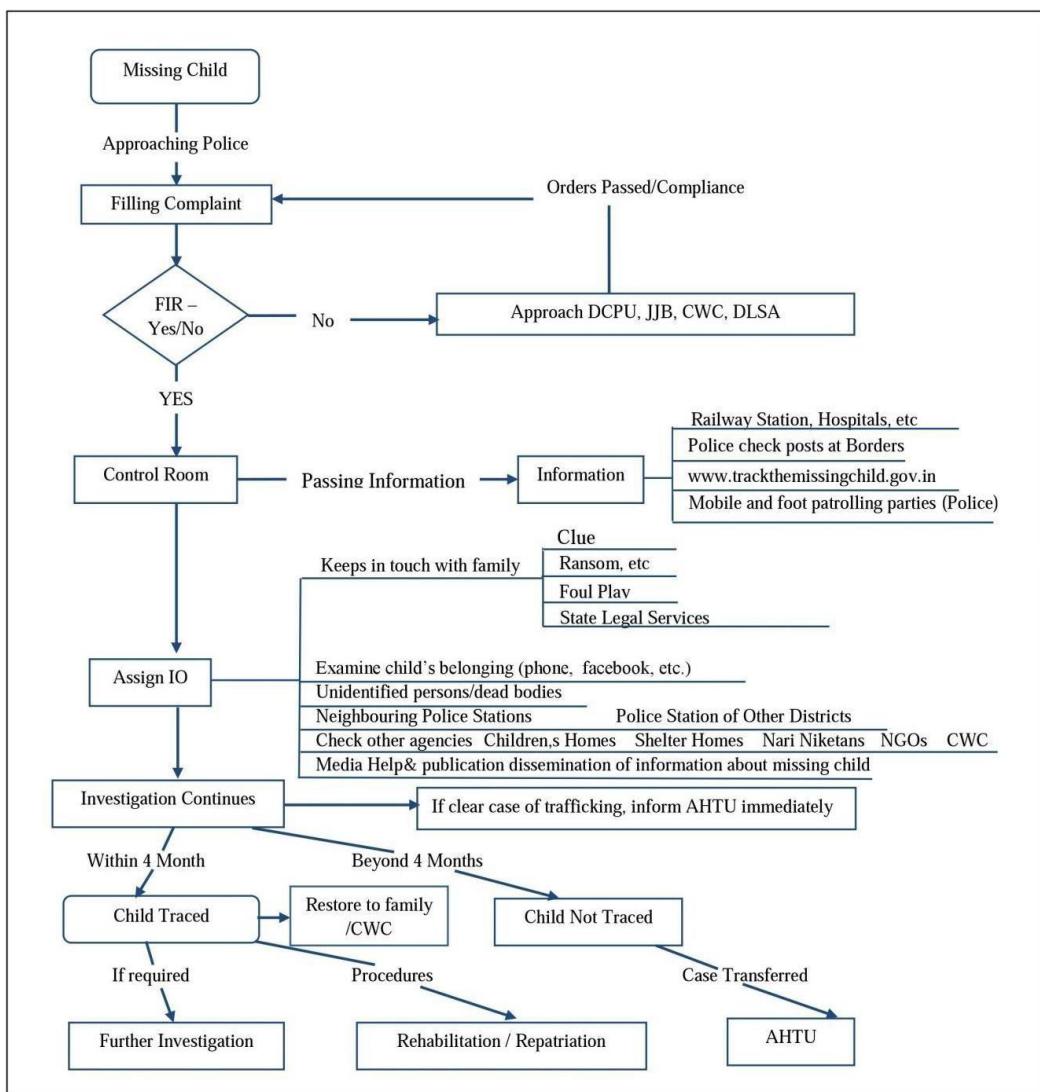
- The recovery form “R” on the TrackChild portal must be filled and data be updated in www.trackthemissingchild.gov.in

The Supervisory Officer to ensure that necessary cooperation is provided to Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) and District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) are provided

- Role of CWCs when a missing child is found:
 - Any three members of the Committee can take *suo moto* cognisance of any case of missing child and report to the police or AHTU and initiate process of providing care and protection to the child
 - If FIR is not registered, forward the complaint to JJB, who then can direct the police for registration of FIR
 - Keeping in mind the best interest of the child, pass orders with respect to repatriating or placing the child in a fit facility or with a fit person, or declare free for adoption or foster care, or any other arrangement
 - Facilitate smooth and effective rehabilitation of the child by establishing linkages with DCPU and DLSA
 - Issue directions for age determination test of the child, if needed
 - In case of forced/bonded labour, issue orders for recovery of back-wages
 - Direct PO/Police/CWPO/Childline /DCPU/Other organisation for necessary action and follow up.
 - Perform all duties specified under Section 30 of the JJ Act, 2015 and the rules therein, and send regular updates and report to the appropriate agency at the District/State level
- Role of JJBs when a missing child is found:
 - Redirect the missing child to the concerned CWC if produced before JJB
 - Direct police for registration of FIR for offences committed against the child, in case FIR is not registered
 - Ensure availability of free legal aid for the child through DLSA
 - Create an individual care plan for the child

The following flowchart represents the ideal processes to be followed on receipt of a complaint of a missing child, according to the SOP by MWCD:

Figure 2d: Processes to be followed on receipt of a complaint of a missing child, according to the SOP by MWCD



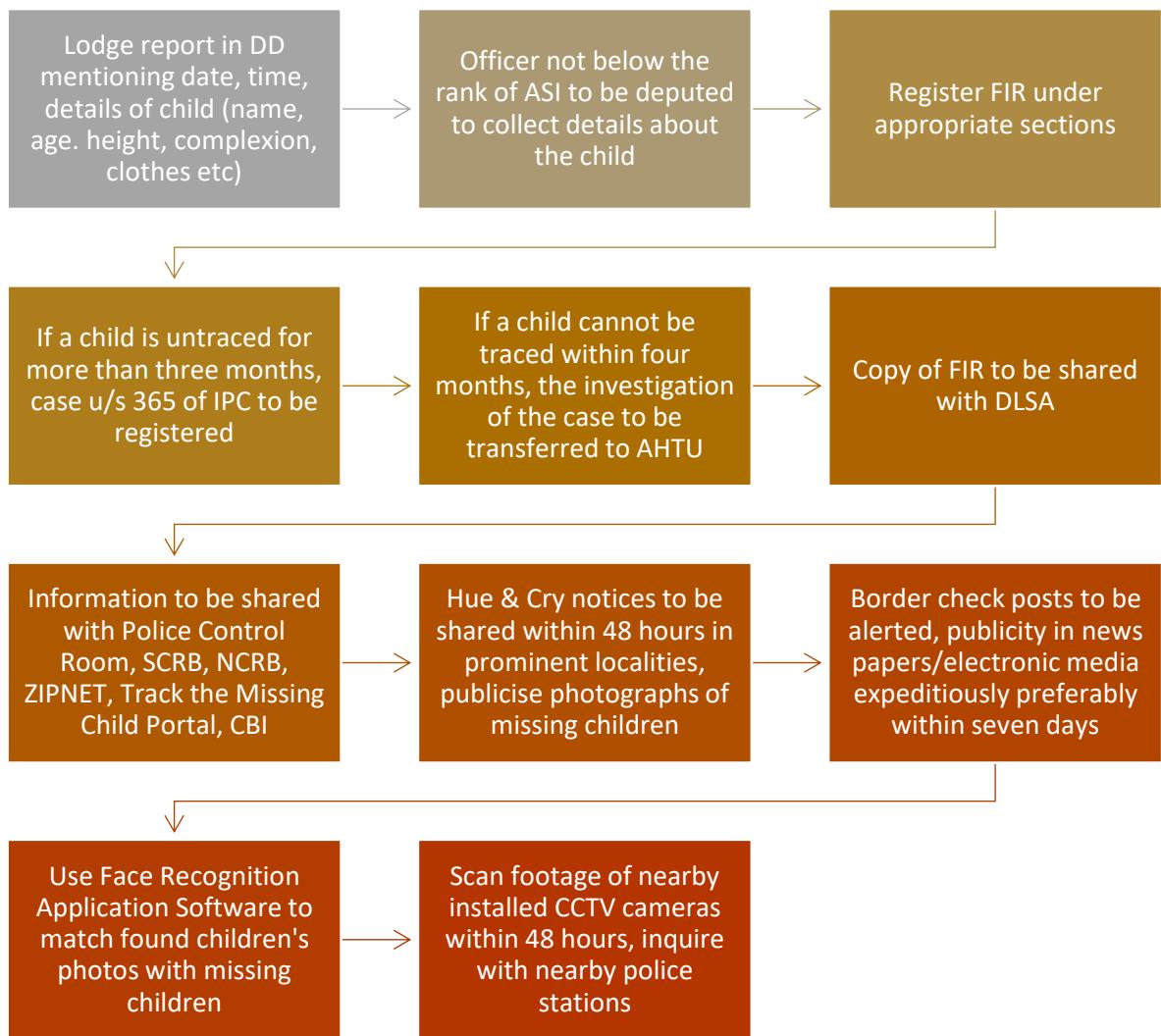
Gaps in the SOP

- Home Verification: The SOP mentions that proper home verification should be carried out before the child is reunited with parents/legal guardians through the CWC, there should be specific guidelines on what constitutes "proper home verification." This could include the verification process and criteria to ensure the child's safety and well-being upon return.
- Data Updating: The SOP emphasizes the importance of filling the recovery form on the TrackChild portal and updating data on www.trackthemissingchild.gov.in. However, instructions on the timeline for updating the data to ensure accuracy and efficiency should also be provided.
- Coordination with PLVs and DLSA: The SOP mentions that supervisory officers should ensure necessary cooperation with Para Legal Volunteers and District Legal Services Authority (DLSA). Guidance on the nature and extent of this cooperation, including the roles of PLVs and DLSA in the context of missing children cases is also needed.
- Follow-Up: The SOP mentions that JJBs and CWCs should send regular updates and reports to the appropriate agencies at the District/State level. There is a scope for specific guidance on the frequency and format of these updates, ensuring that the reporting process is streamlined and effective.
- Collaboration: The SOP mentions directing various agencies (PO/Police/CWPO/Childline/DCPU/other organizations) for necessary action and follow-up. It might be appropriate to provide clearer coordination mechanisms and guidelines for effective collaboration among these entities.

Standing Order No Crime/18/2022, Delhi Police

The process of investigation in cases of missing children, and therefore the role of police officials are primarily guided by the procedure laid in recent Standing Order No Crime/18/2022.

Procedure when a complaint is received



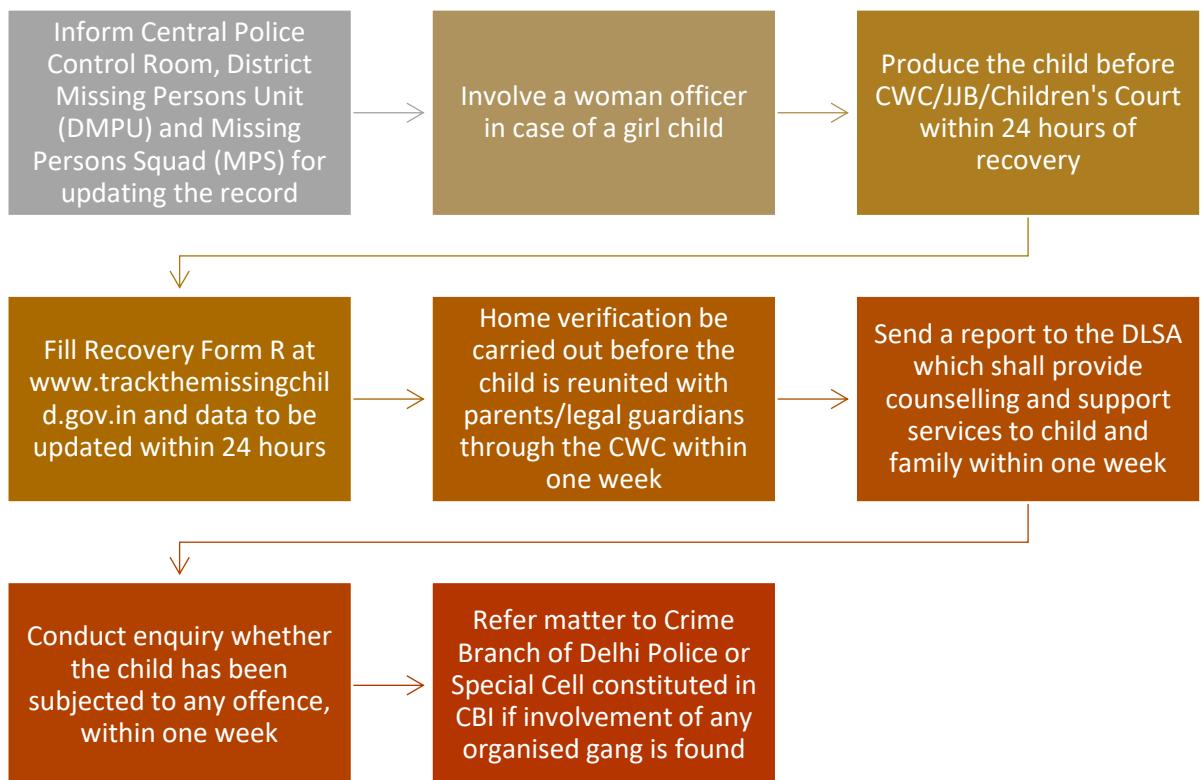
Additional considerations

For children aged 0-5 yrs: All helpers/servants, persons frequently visiting victim's family, friends of child, creche owner & last seen, to be examined, government/private hospitals in Delhi be also alerted/intimated online about the missing child with details within 24 hours.

For children aged 5-14 yrs: All social media/online application companies may be approached for tracing any online activity, IP address, GPS location of the child.

For children aged 14-18 yrs: Friends, teachers, tuition centres and other places visited by the child should be searched and people questioned. Question suspected person/relatives in case of false promise of marriage.

- **Procedure when a child is found**



Role of DSLSA

The Standing Order No Crime/18/2022 of Delhi Police lists down the following roles and responsibilities of DLSAs in cases of missing children, in accordance with the directions issued in Writ Petition [Crl.] No. 249/2009 by Delhi High Court:

- A copy of FIR should be shared by post/e-mail to the DSLSA
- DLSA to constitute a team comprising of a lawyer and a social worker to follow up the case with Delhi Police. The team will not only provide legal aid to the parents and families of missing children but will also act as an interface between the parents of missing children and Delhi Police. DLSA will also maintain a record of all cases of missing children
- Ensure that the Supreme Court's interim directions/guidelines pertaining to missing/kidnapped children in Writ Petition [Cri.] No. 610/1996 (Horilal vs. Commissioner of Police, Delhi) and in the case of Lalita Kumari vs. State of U.P. & Ors. (Writ Petition [Cri.] No.68/2008) are strictly complied with⁴.

Gaps in in the Standing Order

FIR Registration: While the order specifies to register FIR in the cases of missing children, there is no instruction on under which section of IPC or law the FIR should be registered. The order provides for registering the FIR under Section 365 for adult missing cases.

Information Sharing: Detailed instructions on the process of sharing information with various entities, such as Police Control Room, SCRB, NCRB, ZIPNET, Track the Missing Child Portal, and CBI is missing in the order.

Involvement of Woman Officer: While the order mentions involving a woman officer in case of a girl child, emphasizing the importance of sensitivity and gender-specific considerations throughout the investigation is needed, in line with Rule 86 of JJ Model Rules 2016.

⁴ There is no specific direction for DSLSA in both these orders. It can be inferred that the role of DSLSA is to monitor and ensure that all the directions in these orders issued for police are complied with.

2.5 Key court orders and their implications

2.5.1 Review of key court orders

The table below mentions the highlights from court orders/ judgments on missing children and the status of their implementation.

Table 2b: Key court orders and their implications

S.No	Case	Key directions/observations	Status of implementation
1	Bachpan Bachao Andolan v. UOI & Ors (Writ Petition 75/2012) - Supreme Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a SOP to handle the cases of missing children and to invoke appropriate provisions of law where trafficking, child labour, abduction, exploitation and similar issues are disclosed during investigation or after the recovery of the child • Protocol should be established by the local police with High Courts and also with the State legal Services Authorities (SLSA) for monitoring the case of a missing child • Utilisation of PLVs recruited by the LSAs for better tracking of missing children cases in the police station • Measures needed to prevent trafficking and for tracing of missing children • In case a missing child is not recovered within four months from the date of filing of the FIR, the matter may be forwarded to the AHTU in each State 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOP has been developed by MWCD • Revised Standing Order No. Crime/18/2022 released by Delhi Police outlining detailed processes and roles of police and DLSA • PLVs appointed in 50 police stations across Delhi • Standing Order provides for transfer of cases to AHTU if a child is untraced for four months

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases where FIR has not been lodged at all and the child is still missing, an FIR should be lodged within a month for further investigation • The state authorities shall arrange for adequate Shelter Homes to be provided for missing children • Any private home, being run for the purpose of sheltering children, shall not be entitled to receive a child, unless forwarded by the CWC and unless they comply with all the provisions of the JJ Act, including registration 	
2	Sampurna Behura v. UOI and Ors. Civil Original Jurisdiction, Writ Petition (Civil) No. 473 of 2005 - Supreme Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MWCD must continue to make creative use of information and communication technology for collecting data and information, database of missing children, trafficked children and for follow up of adoption cases, etc. • State Governments and Union Territories must ensure that all institutional homes are registered so that children can live a dignified life in these institutions and issues of missing children and trafficking are also addressed. • Use of technology is extremely important by JJBs and CWCs. It is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facial Recognition Software (FRS) being used to match missing children with unidentified persons • Mission Vatsalya Portal launched to integrate different portals

		<p>disheartening to note from the affidavits and submissions made by MWCD that there is an acute shortage of computers and peripherals with the JJBs and CWCs.</p>	
3	Sadhan Haldar v. The State NCT of Delhi and ORS, W.P. (CRL) 1560/2017, 2018 - High Court of Delhi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft SOP enclosed with the affidavit of the Special Commissioner of Police, Legal Cell, PHQ, Delhi does not carve out categories of different age groups of missing children from 0 to 18 years and the procedure required to be followed in respect of each category • A dedicated team for tracking missing children under the Crime and Investigation Division can be constituted in all police stations • Establish in all police stations in each district, a 'Missing Persons Desk' • PLV Scheme to be rolled out, restricting its functioning only to matters relating to missing children and matters involving minors; and expansion of the role of PLVs may be considered at a subsequent stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Standing Order provides for special processes for children in the age group of 0-5 years and 5-14 years • Missing Persons Desk has been constituted in all police stations
4	Horilal v. Commissioner of Police & Ors.(Writ Petition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish photographs of missing persons in newspapers, and telecast them on television promptly. Photographs be given wide publicity at all prominent outlets of the 	The Standing Order complies with the order

	<p>610/1996 - Supreme Court</p>	<p>city/town/village concerned i.e. at the railway stations, inter-state bus stands, airport, regional passport office etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make inquiries in the neighbourhood, the place of work/study of the missing girl, from friends, colleagues, acquaintances, relatives etc. • Contact the Principal, Class Teacher and students at the missing person's most recent school/educational institution. If the missing girl or woman is employed somewhere, then contact the most recent employer and her colleagues at the place of employment • Conduct an inquiry into the whereabouts from the extended family members, relatives, neighbours, school teachers including school friends of the missing girl or woman • Make necessary inquiries whether there have been past incidents or reports of violence in the family • Diligently follow up to ensure that the records requested from the parents are obtained and examine them for clues • Hospitals and mortuaries to be searched immediately after receiving the complaint • Hue and Cry notices should be given within a month 	
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concerned police commissioner or the DIG/IG of the State Police would find out the feasibility of establishing a multitask force for locating the missing child 	
5	Lalita Kumari vs. State of U.P & Ors. (Writ Petition (Crl.) No. 68/2008) - Supreme Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration of FIR is mandatory under Section 154 of CrPC The police officer cannot avoid his duty of registering offence if cognisable offence is disclosed. Action must be taken against erring officers who do not register the FIR if information received by him discloses a cognisable offence. All information relating to cognisable offences, whether resulting in registration of FIR or leading to an inquiry, must be mandatorily and meticulously reflected in the General Diary/Station Diary/Daily Diary (DD) and the decision to conduct a preliminary inquiry must also be reflected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIRs are being registered in all cases of missing children Details about missing children cases are being entered in DD at police stations
6	Neetu through Rewati Ram Versus State [W.P. (Crl) 869 / 1998, Delhi High Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direction to use facial recognition software in cases of missing children 	Delhi Police is using Facial Recognition Technology

2.6 Using facial recognition technology for tracing missing children

Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) is an automated process that compares two facial images to determine if they are of the same person (Hickok, Bedi, Nair et al., 2021). The FRS receives a picture, which is then uploaded, and through the use of a feature analysis algorithm, converts the image into a mathematical representation known as a face template. This representation includes the face's distinguishing features, such as the nose, eyes, lips, and distance between the eyes and chin or lips. In order to determine whether law enforcement agencies can find a match, this is then compared against the facial data gathered in a database. Additionally, it can be used for face verification, which involves comparing the captured image to a known template. The user is then given a score or percentage by the software (ibid).

The quality of the image uploaded or captured (in the case of live automatic facial recognition technology), the use of makeup, the quality of the lighting, and the distance/angle from which the picture was taken are some of the variables that can affect how accurate the results are (Hickok, Bedi, Nair et al., 2021). The accuracy of automated facial analysis can also be negatively impacted by variations in pose, illumination, and expression, among other things (ibid).

In March 2020, MHA, Government of India, gave its approval to the National Automated Facial Recognition System (NAFRS) to be implemented by NCRB. Once implemented, NAFRS is envisaged to function as a national-level search platform that will use FRT to facilitate investigation of crime or for identifying a person of interest (e.g., a criminal) regardless of face mask, makeup, plastic surgery, etc.

Delhi Police has been using the Face Recognition Software since 2016⁵ to track missing children. However, in W.P.(CRL) 1560/2017 Sadhan Haldar vs the State NCT of Delhi & Ors. the Hon'ble High Court noted in 2019 that,

"It is a matter of grave concern that apart from the above 3202 children, whose faces have been verified by using 'FRS', there still remain 6415 children, whose faces have yet to be matched and verified."

⁵ [https://mercurydocs.sgp1.digitaloceanspaces.com/docs/DHC_Order_14-12-2018_W.P.\(CRL\)_1560_2017.pdf](https://mercurydocs.sgp1.digitaloceanspaces.com/docs/DHC_Order_14-12-2018_W.P.(CRL)_1560_2017.pdf)

The Court also noted that due to hazy pictures, the process of making physical matches has proven to be difficult.

While there are procedural hiccups in terms of implementing the FRS, there are other concerns too. First, there are no legal or regulatory frameworks governing the use of FRT in India and existing legal frameworks for surveillance in India do not clearly extend to the use of FRT (Hickok, Bedi, Nair et al., 2021). In Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) & Anr. vs. Union of India & Ors. (2017), the Hon'ble Supreme Court has already held that the right to privacy is a fundamental right, being subject to reasonable restrictions and these restrictions need to comply with a three-fold test; (i) legality; (ii) legitimate state aim; and (iii) proportionality (*ibid*).

2.7 Other SOPs

Standard Operating Procedure for Care and Protection of Children in Street Situations, 2020, NCPCR

The SOP categorizes children in street situations (CiSS) as: children without support living on the streets all alone; children stay on the streets in the day and are back home in the night with their families who reside in a nearby slum/hutments; and children living on the streets with their families. As per the SOP, children without support living on the streets all alone can also include missing children.

Following considerations can be kept in view in cases of a missing child is found living on street:

In case the child is alone

- If a child living alone is produced before CWC, and if CWC is satisfied that the child is a CNCP, CWC can exercise its discretion for the restoration of the child to parents or guardian under Section 37(1 and 1[b]), Section 39(1) and Section 40(3), Section 37 (1.h) of the JJ Act.
- If the child cannot be restored back to family or cannot be declared legally free for adoption, the child can be provided long-term institutional care till the

completion of 18 years and after that, financial support (as per Section 46 of JJ Act, 2015) can be provided till the age of 21 years in order to facilitate the child's reintegration into the mainstream of society.

In case the child is working

- In case the child is found to be picking waste, working in a roadside tea stall/fruit cart, selling newspapers, balloons, pens, pencils, etc., then these acts should be considered as acts of child labour. Any person who buys scraps/ collection from the child or engages children in such activities should be booked under the relevant provisions of the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 as well as Section 79 of the JJ Act, 2015.
- If a child is a victim of substance abuse and is produced before the CWC, the CWC should send the child to a fit facility identified for care, detoxification, treatment and rehabilitation of such children. Girl children should be sent to "fit facility" meant exclusively for girls. The CWC should direct the DCPU and district administration to create such facility for drugs de-addiction in an appropriate institution or in an appropriate manner. In case there is unavailability of such institution or any appropriate facility of the Government, it is the responsibility of the District Magistrate to refer the child to the other district or to a private institution, in which case the District Magistrate would arrange the required resources.

Standard Operating Procedure for Enforcement of Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, MoLE

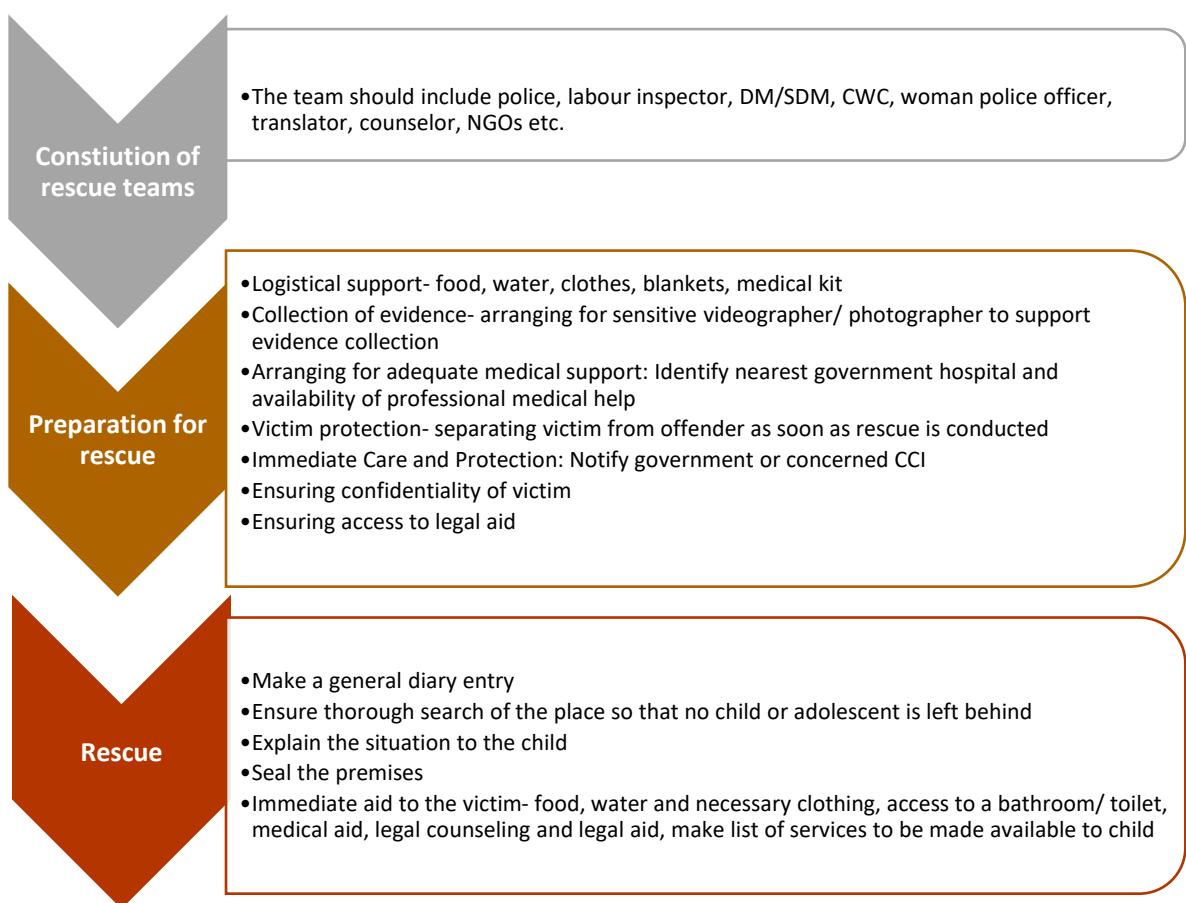
The SOP was conceived as a working tool on law enforcement for practitioners and specialists of governmental, non-governmental and civil society organisations at different stages of intervention in cases of child and adolescent labour. In case the child is reported missing and is found to be working, the following definition of child/adolescent labour would apply to child, as stated in the SOP,

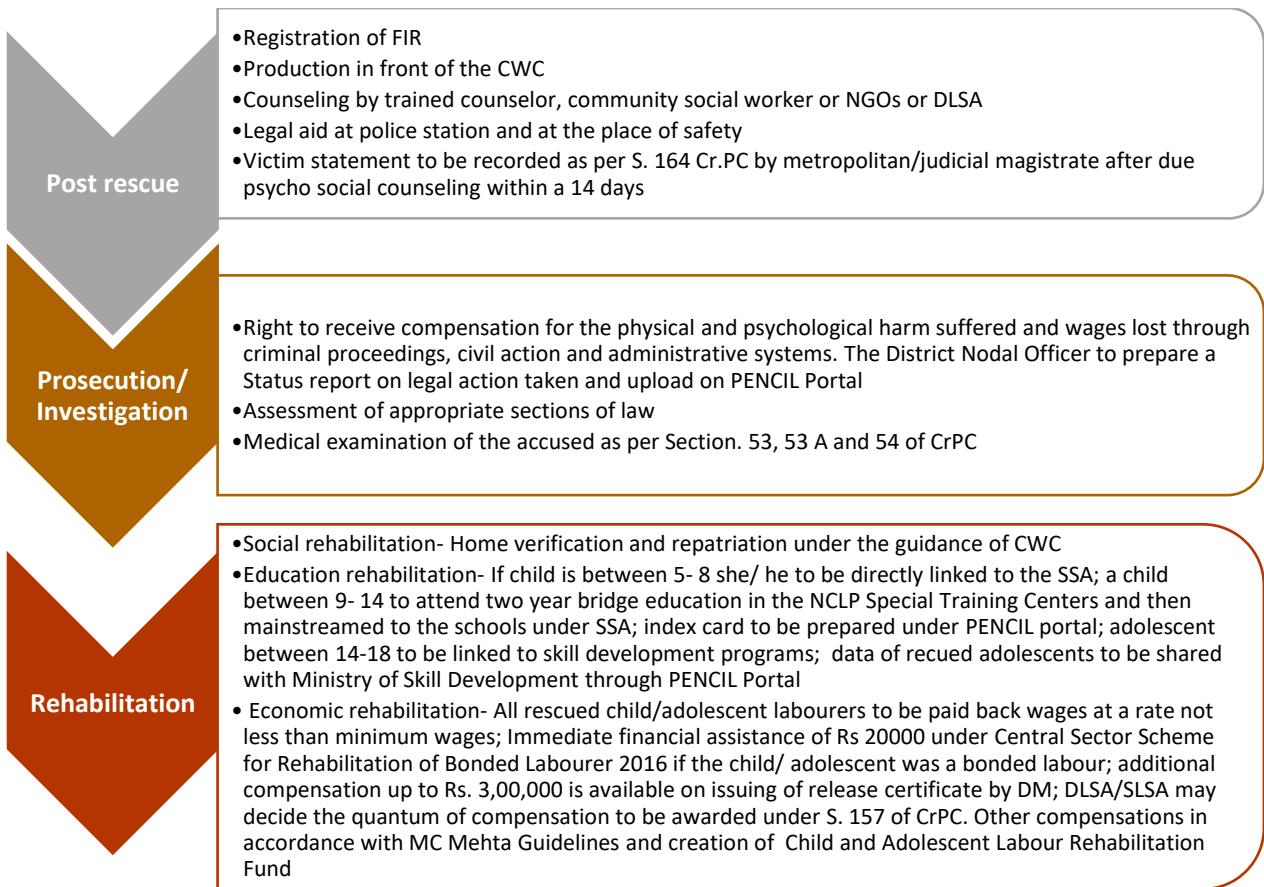
A child below 14 years if found employed or working in any occupation or processes is a child labour. Employment of children below 14 years in any form in any occupation

and process is prohibited and attracts the penalty provisions under Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986.

Any adolescent in the age group of 14 to 18 years is prohibited to work or employed in any occupation or process set forth in Part A of the Schedule of Hazardous Occupations and Processes in the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986.

As in case of child labour, the following steps would be relevant in cases of missing children who are found to be working as child/adolescent labourers:





Standard Operating Procedure for railways to ensure care and protection of children in contact with railways

The SOP defines a child in contact with the railways as a child defined in section 2(12) of JJ Act requiring care and protection and also includes any child travelling, living, working or in conflict with law, on any part of the railway premises or in any train or railway vehicle. This also includes missing children found at railway stations or in moving trains.

The SOP includes instructions for railway officials, RPF and GRPs in case they come in contact with children. The roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders are summarized below:

Child Help Group

Child Help Groups are supposed to be constituted in stations where Child Help Desks are operational. These comprise Superintendent/Station Master/Station

Director/Station Manager, the SHO (GRP), Inspector (RPF), Chief Ticket Inspector (CTI), representative of Railway Childline and SSE (works). Station Master/Station Superintendent/ Station Manager/Station Director has been designated as the convener of the CHG and is required to hold the CHG meeting at least once every month. Duties of CHG include-

- MWCD to identify and nominate NGO who will facilitate all matters pertaining to the child in contact with the Railways at selected stations. The manning the CHD shall be done by staff of Child Helpline/ NGO nominated by MWCD
- Railways to provide space of 6x6 feet for setting up of a CHD
- Telephone facility for Child Helpline to be provided at CHD by MWCD
- The rest room facilities in the waiting rooms at stations to be made available free of cost to the rescued child

Responsibilities of Station Master/Station Superintendent/ Station Manager/Station Director

- Record details of child, the person who brought the child and convey to RPF who in turn ensure that it is conveyed to local police station in which the parents/guardian/ relative of the child lives
- Maintain details (name, address, phone no.) of CWC/JJB members, CCIs, SJPU, CWPO, GRP, RPF
- Use station imprest for providing meals, taking photographs of the child by RPF, meeting medical expenses, if any, and production of child to CWC
- Take the child to the nearest Aadhaar centre to verify personal details
- In case of a rescued girl child, female constable of RPF to provide security

Responsibilities of SHO/GRP/Inspector/RFP

- Discharging role of SJPU under JJ Act 2015 for SJPU (Station Juvenile Protection Unit)
- Provide access to the nominated NCO to view the CCTV surveillance network round the clock, for monitoring/ identifying children at station/platforms, yard, etc.
- Keep unobtrusive surveillance on the suspected child/group of children travelling with or without any adult member

- Inform the SS/SM/SD, GRP & RPF of the next major station in which the train halts, about such child/ children on board

2.8 Portals for information sharing on missing children

2.8.1 Government Platforms

TrackChild Portal

Track Child Portal was set up in compliance with the provisions of Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), now Mission Vatsalya, to facilitate data entry and matching of missing and found children, and enable follow up of children who were beneficiaries under the Scheme.

TrackChild Portal provides an integrated virtual space for all stakeholders & bodies under Mission Vatsalya including Central Project Support Unit (CPSU), State Child Protection Society/Units and DCPUs, CCIs, police stations, CWCs, JJBs, etc. in all the State/UTs of the country. It provides a networking system amongst all the stakeholders and citizens to facilitate tracking of a "Child in distress". It requires data entry and updating at various levels such as police stations, CCIs/Homes, Shelters, CWCs, and JJBs etc.⁶. The software provides facilities for mapping of vulnerable locations that report a large number of missing children so that corrective actions can be taken in these areas.

⁶ <https://trackthemissingchild.gov.in/trackchild/index.php>

Figure 2e: TrackChild Portal⁷

NATIONAL TRACKING SYSTEM
for
MISSING & VULNERABLE CHILDREN

TrackCHILD 3.0
NATIONAL TRACKING SYSTEM FOR
MISSING & VULNERABLE CHILDREN

HOME ABOUT TRACKCHILD NOTICE BOARD STAKEHOLDERS' LOGIN FEEDBACK CHILDREN RELATED LAW

Stake Holders' Login

LEVEL WISE LOGIN

Central Level

WCD
Police
Legal

State Level

WCD

District Level

STAKE HOLDER WISE LOGIN

WCD

Central Level
State Level
District Level

Police

Central Level

ZIPNet

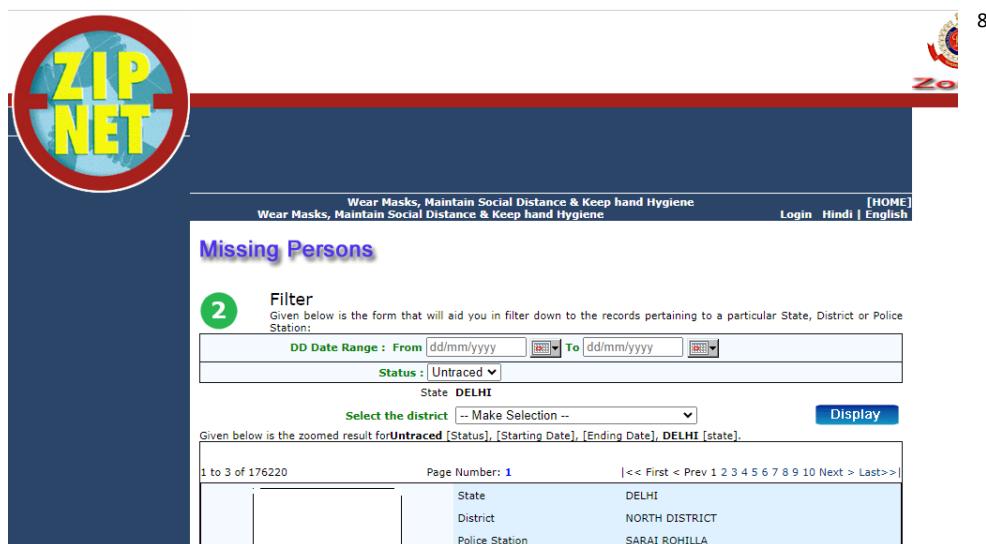
Zonal Integrated Police Network (ZIPNet) was introduced by Delhi Police in 2004. Its objective was to share real time information related to crimes and criminals. Prior to ZIPNet, such information was circulated through offline channels like papers, wireless communication. It provides for search engines to match information from the central repository online only. Initially, it involved collaborative efforts of Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan Police. Subsequently, in the year 2008, Punjab and Chandigarh Police also joined it. Uttarakhand Police has also joined it in the month of October, 2008. It contains the following modules:

- FIR (Heinous Cases: Murder, Dacoity, Robbery & Snatching)
- Arrested Persons (Heinous Cases: Murder, Dacoity, Robbery & Snatching)
- Most Wanted Criminals
- Proclaimed Offenders
- **Missing Children**
- Children Found
- **Missing Persons** (including action taken module for Authenticated Users Only)
- Unidentified Dead Bodies
- Unidentified Person Found (Unconscious, Minor, Abandoned, Mentally Disturbed)

⁷ Source: <https://trackthemissingchild.gov.in/trackchild/index.php>

- Stolen Vehicles
- Unclaimed/Seized Vehicles
- Missing/Stolen Mobiles
- Police Alerts
- Daily Police Bulletin (Authenticated Users Only)
- Jail Releases (Authenticated Users Only)
- Bail Out (Authenticated Users Only)
- Press Releases (Authenticated Users Only)
- Messaging (Authenticated Users Only)

Figure 2f: ZIPnet



The screenshot shows the ZIPnet homepage with a red banner at the top. Below the banner, there's a large circular logo with 'ZIP NET' in yellow and blue. To the right of the logo, the text 'Wear Masks, Maintain Social Distance & Keep hand Hygiene' is displayed. On the far right, there are links for 'Login', 'Hindi | English', and a small 'HOME' link. The main content area has a dark blue header with the text 'Missing Persons' in blue. Below this, there's a 'Filter' section with a green circular icon containing the number '2'. It includes fields for 'DD Date Range' (From dd/mm/yyyy to dd/mm/yyyy), 'Status' (Untraced), and 'State' (DELHI). A dropdown menu for 'Select the district' is shown with '-- Make Selection --'. A 'Display' button is also present. At the bottom, a table shows search results for page 1, with columns for State (DELHI), District (NORTH DISTRICT), and Police Station (SARAI ROHILLA). Navigation links like '<< First < Prev 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Next > Last >>' are visible.

⁸ Source: https://zipnet.delhipolice.gov.in/index.php?page=missing_person

Khoya-Paya Portal

⁹Khoya-Paya is a citizen-focused portal for missing children. Any citizen can register with the portal and provide details about a lost or found child. After quick moderation, the citizen's information is made available for public viewing, saving time. By comparing the characteristics of the lost/sighted child, the citizen can further search the database of children. A dashboard is made available for citizens to find information related to missing and found children. Once the child is traced, the same information is updated in the portal. An illustration for the same is provided below.

Figure 2g: Khoya-Paya Portal



A screenshot of the search results page on the Khoya-Paya portal. On the left, there is a sidebar with sections for "Filter your Search" (dropdowns for State, District, Police Station, Type of Person, Height), "Special ID Marks" (checkboxes for Face, Nose, Speech or Voice), and "Disabilities" (checkboxes for Head / Face, Other Parts of body, Disabilities). The main content area shows a search result for a missing person. It features a placeholder image with a magnifying glass icon and the text "NO IMAGE FOUND". Below the image are details: "Guardian: [REDACTED]", "DoB: 14/10/2004", "Age: 16 years", "Current Age: 19 Years 6 Months 10 Days", "Gender: Female", and "Recovery Date: 15/10/2020 at 10:10 hrs.". There is a "View Details" button and a small icon of two people.

⁹ Source: <http://khoyapaya.gov.in/mpp/home>

Missing Persons Search - Crime and Criminal Network Tracking and Systems

¹⁰This facility enables citizens to match missing persons with unidentified found persons from the national database of Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS). Citizens can provide identifying parameters of missing persons such as gender, age, height, identification marks, etc. and system generates results from police database.

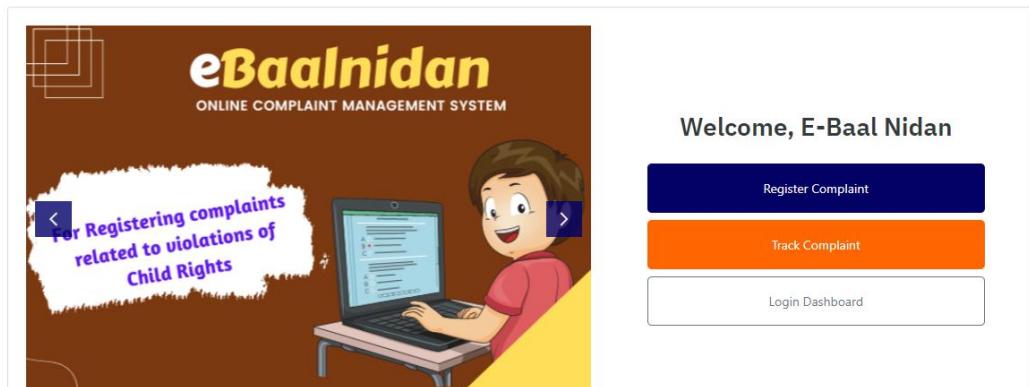
Figure 2h: Citizen Portal for matching missing persons with unidentified persons

The screenshot shows the CCTNS (Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems) Citizen Portal. At the top, there is a logo and the text "CCTNS Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems". On the right, it says "Welcome Akhil Date 10/06/2023 Time 17:40". Below the header, a breadcrumb navigation shows "Home » Missing Person Search in Recovered Unidentified Found Person/ Dead Body". A house icon and a lock icon are also present. A note at the top right indicates "*Indicates Mandatory Fields". The main form is titled "Person Matching Details (Match the Missing Person with Unidentified Found Person / Unidentified Dead Body)". It contains two sections: "Matching Details" and "Search Parameter". In "Matching Details", there are fields for "State(for matching)*" (dropdown menu showing ANDAMAN & NICOBAR, ANDHRA PRADESH, ARUNACHAL PRADESH), "Incident Date Range*" (date range input fields "From" and "To"), "District" (dropdown menu), and "Police Station" (dropdown menu). In "Search Parameter", there are dropdown menus for "Gender*", "Age Range*", "Lips", "Identification Mark Type", and "Deformity(if any)", along with height and weight input fields ("Height Range-From", "Height Range-To", "feet", "Inch", "cms"). At the bottom, there are "Submit", "Clear", and "Close" buttons.

eBaalnidan

¹¹eBaalnidan is an online Complaint Management System launched by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) for lodging complaints related to any

Figure 2i: E-baal nidaan portal by NCPCR



¹⁰ <https://www.digitalpolicecitizenservices.gov.in/centercitizen/login.htm>

¹¹ Source: <http://www.ebaalnidan.nic.in>

violation of child rights under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005. The complainant is informed about action being taken on his/her complaint through email/SMS and can also view the latest status of complaint by accessing eBaalnidan.

Mission Vatsalya Portal

MWCD, Government of India was implementing the Integrated Child Protection Scheme since 2009-2010. The scheme was renamed as “Child Protection Services” (CPS) Scheme in 2017. The CPS Scheme has been now subsumed under Mission Vatsalya from 2021-22 onwards. In 2022, MWCD release the implementation guidelines for Mission Vatsalya. The guidelines proposed to provide a unified digital platform for various MIS related to children in difficult circumstances which include missing, orphaned, abandoned, and surrendered children, as these vulnerable children need to be mapped with the government institutions/services so that their care and development can be ensured.

The Mission Vatsalya Portal was launched in June 2023. Currently, the portal has integrated the following portals under a single platform:

- TrackChild
- Khoya-Paya
- POCSO eBox
- Adoption related matters

- ¹²E-Baal Nidaan

Figure 2j: Mission Vatsalya Portal

2.8.2 Independent Platforms

Homelink Network System (HLK), Don Bosco

Homelink is a web-based service launched by Don Bosco YaR Forum to facilitate their work for children and adolescents at risk, enabling them to maintain and share information on child related issues. The system generates instant reports based on child profile, missing children, staff centre, sub-centre, and various analyses of reports at local and national level. To trace missing children, the network partners use the website www.missingchildserach.net. The website is currently non-operational.

Complaint Cell, BBA

BBA, a not-for-profit organisation, runs a 24*7 complaint cell wherein anyone can call at 1800-102-7222 if they see any child in distress (child labour, trafficking, abuse etc.)



¹² Source: <https://missionvatsalya.wcd.gov.in/>

2.9 Other initiatives of government

Operation Smile

Operation Smile, also called as Operation MUSKAAN, is an initiative of the MHA to rescue/rehabilitate missing children. It is a dedicated campaign for a month where several activities are taken up by the State Police personnel to trace and rescue missing children and reunite them with their families. Assistance from media was taken to share information of missing children.

A series of activities are undertaken – starting from screening of children in institutions, platforms, religious places; training the police to extract information without intimidating the child in accordance with the provisions of JJ Act, POCSO, Cr.PC, IPC, advisories; putting details of the child on missing child portal and undertaking rehabilitation measures in coordination with relevant departments. Operation MUSKAAN was designed, based on the successful operation titled "Operation Smile" taken up by the Ghaziabad Police during September 2014.

Recently, the Telangana State police rescued 2,814 children, which included 2,421 boys and 393 girls, in January 2023 during the ninth phase of Operation Nidhi.

Analysing Operation Smile from a child rights approach, following points can be noted:

Child Rights Recognition: As the program focuses on tracing and rescuing missing children and reuniting them with their families, it acknowledges the right to protection, survival, and development of children.

Best Interests of the Child: The operation aims to prioritize the best interests of the child by rescuing them from situations of danger, exploitation and abuse. This is in line with the principle that decisions and actions should consider the child's well-being above all else.

Non-Discrimination: Operation Smile seeks to rescue all missing and exploited children, regardless of their background, emphasizing the principle of non-discrimination and equality of rights.

Protection from harm: It aligns with children's rights by providing protection from various forms of harm, including trafficking, child labor, and sexual exploitation, which violate children's rights.

Accountability: Operation Smile holds those involved in child exploitation and trafficking accountable for their actions, aligning with the child rights approach's emphasis on accountability for violations.

Areas of improvement

Rehabilitation and Support: A child rights approach emphasizes not only rescuing children but also providing them with appropriate care, support, and rehabilitation. While Operation Smile involves reuniting children with their families, there are no specific guidelines on ensuring rehabilitation of children in the guidelines or preventing children from falling back to similar vulnerable situations.

Child Participation: While the primary focus of Operation Smile is rescue and protection, it is important to involve children in decisions affecting them, to the extent possible, in line with the child rights principle of participation.

Awareness and Prevention: Beyond rescue and enforcement, Operation Smile can also contribute to awareness and prevention efforts by educating the public and communities about the risks of child exploitation and trafficking.

Child Helpline

The Mission Vatsalya Scheme aims to establish a Child Helpline that will operate in collaboration with state and district authorities, and it will be integrated with the Emergency Response Support System 112 (ERSS-112) helpline managed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The Ministry has assigned the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Kerala, the role of being a Total Solution Provider (TSP) for automating the Child Helpline -1098 and integrating it with ERSS-112.

As per the latest annual report of MWCD, currently, Childline services are operational in 569 districts, and there are Child Help Desks at 137 railway stations and 11 bus stands.

Between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2022, Childline received a total of 52,87,659 calls, of which 3,60,150 calls involved direct interventions of various types.

Child Helpline is an important mechanism for ensuring that children's rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled, and that they have a voice and access to support when facing challenges or violations of their rights. However, continuous efforts are required to strengthen the initiative, improve its reach, and ensure that it remains sensitive to the diverse needs of children across the country. Reviewing the program from a child-rights approach, following points can be noted:

Child Rights Recognition: The program acknowledges children's rights to protection, survival, development, and participation.

Best Interests of the Child: The Child Helpline aims to prioritize the best interests of the child by providing a platform for children to seek help and support when they are in distress or facing rights violations.

Non-Discrimination: The service is available to all children, regardless of their background, including factors such as gender, caste, religion, or socio-economic status.

Protection from harm: The primary purpose of the Child Helpline is to protect children from various forms of harm, including abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. It is envisaged as a lifeline for children in crisis situations and connects them with appropriate services and authorities.

Child Participation: The Helpline encourages children to express their concerns, seek assistance, and participate in the resolution of their issues to the extent possible.

Accountability: The initiative holds those responsible for violating children's rights accountable for their actions. It connects children with the necessary legal and protective mechanisms to ensure their rights are upheld.

Areas of improvement

Preventive Measures: Beyond providing assistance during crises, the Child Helpline should also contribute to preventive measures by raising awareness about child rights, child protection, and available support services.

Capacity Building: Ensuring that helpline operators and support staff are trained in child rights and child protection principles is essential to effectively respond to children's needs.

Data Collection: Maintaining an accurate and up-to-date database of cases and issues reported through the helpline can help identify trends, gaps in services, and areas where child rights are frequently violated.

Accessibility: The Helpline should be easily accessible to all children, irrespective of their location or background, to ensure that even the most marginalized children can seek assistance when needed.

Safe Cities Project

Safe Cities Project is an initiative launched by MHA, to ensure safety of women/girls in large/metro cities. It will be first piloted in eight cities – Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Lucknow. The initiative takes into account the recommendations of Justice Verma Committee Report, 2013. The objectives of the project are:

- Civil amenities for women in public places
- Facilitating easy access for women to counsellors, legal aid and law enforcement agencies
- Use of information technology for surveillance in hotspots, tracking of offenders, response to women in cases of sexual assault
- Community sensitisation on gender issues, including awareness on safety measures, report of assault and community support to victims

Minimum desirable input components in the project include:

- Smart surveillance
- Safe zone cluster (smart lighting)
- Sanitation facility for women
- Enhanced safety in public transport for women
- Community outreach and awareness on gender neutrality and sexual crimes
- Integrated Support Centres for women and children
- GIS based crime mapping

The Safe Cities Project, when viewed through a child rights lens, serves as a critical initiative to protect and promote the rights of children in urban environments. It addresses various aspects of child rights, including *protection, non-discrimination and accountability*, while striving to create safer and more inclusive cities for all residents, including children. However, it is also important to ensure that the project's strategies and interventions take into account the unique vulnerabilities and needs of children to maximize its positive impact on their well-being and also include them as active participants in the programme.

Key initiatives by Ministry of Home Affairs

- MHA launched the "National Database on Sexual Offenders" (NDSO) on 20th September 2018 to facilitate investigation and tracking of sexual offenders across the country by law enforcement agencies.
- MHA launched an online analytic tool "Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences" for Police on 19th February 2019 to facilitate them to monitor and track time-bound investigation in sexual assault cases in accordance with Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2018.
- MHA has taken steps to strengthen DNA analysis units in Central and State Forensic Science Laboratories. These include setting up of State of the art DNA Analysis Unit in Central Forensic Science Laboratory, Chandigarh. MHA has also sanctioned setting-up and upgrading of DNA Analysis Units in State Forensic Science Laboratories after gap analysis and demand assessment.

- MHA has also approved two projects for setting up and strengthening of Women Help Desks in Police Stations and Anti-Human Trafficking Units in all districts of the country.

2.10 Interventions in other countries

United States of America

In 1980, the US Congress passed the Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act, all the 50 States passed the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Act, and all jurisdictions made interstate parental abduction a crime. In 1982, Congress enacted the Missing Children Act which required the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to record missing children in the National Crime Information Centre (NCIC) computer to aid law enforcement agencies. The Act was one of the key federal legislative actions that helped transform the USA's modern law enforcement's approach to missing children, which includes runaway children as well as those who have been abducted (Levesque, 2014). It also called for the creation of guidelines to avoid jurisdictional competition and conflict with courts of other states in matters of child custody, promote cooperation of state courts, and facilitate the enforcement of custody decrees of other States (*ibid*). Section 403 of the Missing Children's Assistance Act defines a 'missing child' as '*any individual less than 18 years of age whose whereabouts are unknown to such individual's parent*'.

A 2000 study by U.S. Department of Justice categorised missing children in the following way (Hanson, 2000):

- **Runaway/thrown-away:** Runaway children are children who leave home voluntarily without the knowledge of their parents and/or without permission, and who stay out of home overnight. Thrown- away children are those who have been abandoned, who do not leave voluntarily, and are not allowed to return.
- **Family abduction:** Children who have been taken from their residence by a family member (often a parent) in a manner that violates a custody agreement.
- **Non-family abduction:** This refers to children who have been taken by someone who is not related to them and in a manner that violates the law and the consent of the child's guardian.
- **Custodial interference:** These are children who have been taken from or not returned to their legal custodian by a parent or relative, or some other agent

acting for a parent, in violation of a legal or verbal custody agreement or other living arrangement.

- **Lost and involuntarily missing:** These are children who are lost and involuntarily missing and fail to return home or make contact with a parent, guardian, or other caretaker.
- **Missing due to injury:** These are children who are missing due to an injury and fail to return home or make contact with a parent, guardian, or other caretaker.
- **Missing due to false alarm situations:** This refers to children who are notified as missing by their family/caretaker but no actual harm has come to the child.

United Kingdom

The Guardianship (Missing Persons) Act 2017 created a new legal status of guardian of the affairs of a missing person, enabling someone to act in the best interests of a person who has been missing for 90 days or more. As per the Act, a person is missing if they are absent from their usual residence and daily activities and they satisfy one of the following conditions (Fairbairn 2019):

- *their whereabouts are either unknown or not known sufficiently precisely for them to be contacted for the purpose of making decisions about their property and financial affairs*
- *they are unable to make or communicate decisions about their property and financial affairs for a reason beyond their control (other than illness, injury or lack of mental capacity)*

Missing Persons Unit is the United Kingdom's national and international point of contact for all missing persons and unidentified body cases.

2.11 Analysis from literature review and gaps

Legal framework

- The literature review shows that the existing laws are well equipped to tackle the situation of missing children. The processes listed in the existing Standing Order of Delhi Police takes care of the steps from registration of FIR to locating the child. However, response mechanisms listed therein and the SOP by MWCD did not emphasise on follow up and rehabilitation of child. Moreover, since 'missing' is not defined as a crime in itself under IPC or any other local law, Delhi Police registers cases of missing children under Section 363 of IPC. While this practice ensures that FIRs are timely registered and investigation is carried out, it may also create confusion as cases of missing children might get recorded as cases of kidnapping in reports of NCRB.
- Currently, the Standing Order of Delhi Police uses the definition of missing children as stated in Rule 92 of JJ Model rules 2016. The SOP by MWCD issued in 2016 uses a different definition focusing more on the causes which would have led to the child going missing. In the absence of any homogeneous and comprehensive definition of missing children in India, the task of bringing together authentic data concerning them would a challenging task.
- The literature review analysed other relevant SOPs such as SOP by NCPCR on care and protection of children in street situations, SOP by MoLE for implementation of CALPRA and SOP by Ministry of Railways to ensure care and protection of children in contact with railways. Relevant provisions from these, especially related to rehabilitation of children and surveillance and monitoring at railway stations and moving trains could be incorporated within the SOP/guidelines for missing children.

Programmatic Interventions

- It is evident from the literature review that there is an absence of strong safety net at the village and panchayat level for children.

- Programmatic linkages with Child Protection Services/Mission Vatsalya should be strengthened in the entire process of finding and rehabilitation of missing children. With the integration of all portals related to child protection under the umbrella of Mission Vatsalya portal, it remains to be seen if seamless delivery of services to traced children can be ensured and if effective and faster tracing and matching of missing children is possible.
- The literature review also points out the lack of consistent programs for sensitising community on adopting social actions that can prevent children from going missing could be identified.
- Programmes such as Operation Smile have proven to be effective. However, they are sporadic in nature and are implemented by different States independently. A regular country-wide initiative would prove to be more effective.
- While socio-economic reasons for children going missing have been highlighted in various studies/reports, the administrative and systemic reasons or the response therein are missing.
- The literature review could not find any guidelines that focuses on improving interaction of law enforcement agencies with parents to ensure better sharing of information and transparency, especially in cases of missing children where parents/caregivers are constantly under stress.
- In 2018, a national consultation on child protections¹³ services highlighted the following key gaps in child protection services in India:
 - Limited capacity to prevent abuse
 - Focus mostly on complying with the JJ Act 2015
 - Low payment structures in place
 - Absence of a dedicated cadre of child protection professionals
 - Challenges in capacity building and sensitization efforts
 - Insufficient database for tracking vulnerable children
 - Lack of coordination and synergy among stakeholders

¹³<https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Review%20of%20Child%20Protection%205th%20June%20by%20JS%20.pdf>

- Scarce resources available for child welfare
 - Lack of strategies for rehabilitation
 - Inadequate expertise for providing psychosocial support
 - Grants often serving as employment opportunities rather than benefiting child welfare
 - Increasing rates of crimes involving children, both as victims and perpetrators
- Some of these gaps have been addressed in the Mission Vatsalya Guidelines through initiatives such as-
 - Proposing a convergence strategy for intra and inter-ministry convergence, convergence with States/UTs and convergence with corporates
 - Launch of SAMVAD (Support, Advocacy and Mental health Interventions for children in Vulnerable circumstances And Distress) centre under a in collaboration with NIMHANS
 - Grading of CCIs at fixed intervals
 - Supporting a National Child Resource Centre at National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development
 - Conducting a National Child Survey and development of Child Index in collaboration with Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
 - Working with other Ministries, departments and States to adequately invest/ budget for children under their schemes and maintain a child sensitive disposition while designing the programmes

3. Methodology

A cross-cutting approach to understand reasons, risk and protective factors, enablers and barriers to prevention and response across stakeholders and structures are needed to comprehensively understand the problem of missing children in India. Therefore, a mixed method framework for the study rooted in adapted version of Global Model Missing Child Framework developed by International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children¹⁴ was adopted. Originally the model has eight essential elements viz., definition, reporting mechanism, investigation, data management, entry and exit requirements, public notification, prevention and awareness and problem analysis. The interagency or intersectoral collaboration was a cross-cutting theme. (See figure 3a)

All elements were viewed with a lens of child rights, child's best interest and intersectionality. It is also understood that right from problem analysis to reporting, investigation, tracing and rehabilitation - child's best interest should be kept in mind and his/her rights must be protected.

Sensitively handling each case of missing child and adopting a child-friendly approach wherein child is not victimised or blamed by family, community, child protection functionaries and duty bearers is critical. Therefore, the study also focused on adoption/non-adoption of child friendly processes by various actors involved and strengths, lapses and variations in the same.

Given this framework, a mixed method approach focusing on both quantitative data and qualitative data collection through primary and secondary sources of data was adopted. The quantitative data collection helped in bringing out the reasons, response of stakeholders and the lived experiences of the children. The qualitative data collection was done with the objective of explaining, triangulating and complementing quantitative trends and in eliciting perceptions, gaps and recommendations of stakeholders.

¹⁴ <https://www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Model-Missing-Child-Framework.pdf>

Based on the research objectives outlined in Chapter 1, the following research questions were finalised for the study:

1. Which are the major areas/locations in Delhi from where children go missing?
2. What are the major reasons for children going missing?
3. What are the steps/processes followed by different stakeholders while handling cases of missing children? What are the gaps in these processes when compared to existing laws, guidelines, orders and SOPs?
4. What is the impact on rights of children who go missing?
5. What type of services are provided to children who are traced and assessment of their adequacy in terms of existing provisions of laws and schemes?
6. What are the overall gaps and challenges in ensuring rehabilitation of missing/traced children?

Figure 3a: Technical approach adopted for the Study (adapted from Global Model Missing Child Framework developed by International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children)



3.1 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study was carried out across six police districts of Delhi - three with highest number of reported missing children and three with lowest reported number of missing children. This was done so as to prevent over representation from areas which record higher cases. The districts with highest and lowest number of reported missing children are as follows:

Highest	Outer North, North East, Outer
---------	--------------------------------

Lowest	New Delhi, Central, South Delhi
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Quantitative Sample

A sample of 10% of the average annual reported cases of traced children was taken from each of the sampled districts.

Table 3a provides data of traced children, based on the FIRs registered by police for the years 2019, 2020, 2021¹⁵. The data for these years was shared by NHRC.

Table 3a: Data of traced children in Delhi based on FIRs from 2019 to 2021

District	No. of children traced back	3 year average	10% of children traced
Outer North	1166	389	39
North East	1299	433	43
Outer	1263	421	42
New Delhi	84	28	3
Central	626	209	21
South	464	155	15
Total	4902	1634	163

For the quantitative sample for each district, 10% of the 3-year annual average of number of children traced in each district was taken. This was done so that the number of incidences from previous years could also be represented in the sample, instead of limiting to just the data from 2021. Thus, the total quantitative sample for six districts added up to 163. Three additional cases were taken as buffer and the final sample was **166**.

The sample was taken from the years 2019, 2020 and 2021. Purposive sampling was followed for collecting quantitative data, wherein researchers visited various police

¹⁵ Data for 2021 is given only for South district

stations in all the districts and conducted visits to the addresses shared by police stations. The respondents were interviewed based on their availability and consent.

At the inception of the study, a stratified random sampling was proposed. NHRC issued letter to Police Commissioner, Delhi; Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), Government of NCT of Delhi; DSLSA; MHA among other stakeholders so that requisite permissions could be given to the research team. However, during the course of study it was found that the contact details (phone numbers and addresses) mentioned in the FIRs were outdated or did not match with actual contact details of respondents.

Qualitative Sample

The qualitative sample was selected purposively for children and parents. Children who were traced after going missing were selected. Parents whose children went missing and were traced were interviewed. Besides these, five parents of untraced children were also interviewed. The qualitative sample distribution is provided below:

Table 3b: List of stakeholders for KIIs

Sr.No	Stakeholders	Sample size
1.	<i>IDIs</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Children b. Parents c. Functionaries of CCIs 	48 48 6
2.	<i>KIIs</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Community Leaders b. Childline c. Police (Including AHTUs) d. Judiciary e. CWC f. School teachers g. Nodal Officers under Child Labour Act h. Civil Society Organisation (CSO) representatives i. State and District Legal Services Authority j. DCPCR k. PLVs l. Portal Administrators m. DWCD representatives n. MHA representatives o. Railways representatives/Childline 	6 12 18 2 6 6 6 6 6 6 2 1 1 2 2
3.	<i>Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Children b. Parents 	6 6

3.2 Tools

The research tools were prepared keeping in view the objectives of the study. Key areas of enquiry for each stakeholder were prepared as per the research questions of the study. The questions in quantitative and qualitative tools were categorised as:

- circumstances and reasons for going missing
- impact on rights of children
- barriers in ensuring justice
- impact on rights of child

It is pertinent to mention here that each respondents' roles and responsibilities do not fall under all the eight elements. Accordingly questions under relevant elements were included for the respondents.

Quantitative Tool

A quantitative tool was developed for traced children. The tool focused on lived experiences of children, circumstances of incidence and the experiences of interacting with police and other officials.

Qualitative Tools

In-depth interviews/Key informant Interviews

Qualitative tools were developed to carry out in-depth interviews with traced children, parents of traced children and parents of untraced children. Besides these, KIIs were conducted with key stakeholders involved in various processes concerned with missing children such as police, Childline, CSOs, CWCs, CCIs, PLVs, DLSA etc. (see table on qualitative sample).

A meeting with Working Group members of NHRC was conducted to finalise the tools.

The tools are attached as Annexure 1.

3.3 Data Collection

A half-day training session with researchers was held at New Concept Centre for Development Communication (NCCDC), explaining the objectives of the study and each question was discussed in detail and the researchers were guided on how to ask questions to children, keeping in view their vulnerability. The researchers were advised to not pressurise the child if he/she was not willing to answer.

A pilot was also conducted in Sangam Vihar with two traced children, before beginning the data collection. The following observations were made during the pilot test:

- Suitability and appropriateness: The children/parents were able to understand all the questions. Questions were not required to be modified.
- Sequence/Flow of the questions: The sequence of the questions was found to be appropriate.

For data collection, the researchers were divided in teams of two. Since the details of cases were available with the team, New Concept prepared a list of police stations in each district from where details of cases and respective addresses of respondents (children or their parents) could be obtained.

As the research team conducted visits to different police stations in the districts, it was noted that the addresses and contact details of majority of the respondents were outdated or incorrect. This could be due to the following reasons:

- the respondents in these cases mostly live in informal colonies/settlements and are prone to changing their addresses frequently
- the FIR copies didn't record the correct contact details of the respondents.

To overcome this problem, researchers took cases of missing children available with the police stations within the same time period (2019-2021) and conducted quantitative and qualitative interviews with the respondents who were available at their respective addresses. This was a time consuming process and took more than two months for complete the sample size as compared to the original plan of one month.

For interviewing relevant stakeholders such as officials of CWCs, CCIs, DLSAs etc., assistance of NHRC was taken so that requisite permission letters could be obtained

from the concerned departments. For instance, to interview the CWCs and CCIs, the DWCD, Government of NCT of Delhi issued letters to the concerned CWCs to allow for the interview to be conducted. Similar permissions were obtained from SLSA, MWCD and MHA.

For interviewing children, consent from both parents and children was taken prior to the interview. In cases where the children or parents were hesitant to interact, they were not forced to give the interviews. Researchers were trained on different ways to ask questions to children including how to make children comfortable, asking about their daily routines, what they like and dislike, instead of asking the questions from the questionnaire directly. This helped the children to open up and answer questions comfortably.

3.4 Analysis

Researchers were trained to input data collected from quantitative interviews into google forms. This was done every day by researchers and were reviewed by senior researcher and principal investigator periodically so that any inconsistency could be handled and rectified at the earliest. The data was housed in NCCDC's server to ensure that adequate security was maintained and data was not shared with anyone.

Data collected from quantitative interviews was imported into an excel sheet using google forms. The responses were then gathered under relevant sections and themes such as profile, circumstances, reasons for missing, lived experiences, response of stakeholders, barriers in ensuring justice and service delivery. The qualitative interviews were also divided in similar themes and the insights were used to support the quantitative data or present an alternative view.

KIIs were analysed keeping in view the roles and responsibilities mentioned under various SOPs and the JJ Act. The Global Model Missing Child Framework was referred to analyse the steps taken by the stakeholders at each step and noting the gaps found, if any. The Framework helped in identification of gaps at each of the following levels:

- Reporting
- Investigation
- Data Management
- Public Notification
- Rehabilitation
- Awareness

3.5 Limitations

The study involved only reported cases of children going missing, based on the FIR details collected from various police stations. Hence, the study does not represent the non-reported cases of missing children or possible cases where cases of missing children were clubbed with other crimes. Initially, systematic random sampling was proposed to conduct the study based on the details of cases shared by police stations across the six districts of Delhi. However, during data collection it was found that most of the addresses and contact details listed in FIRs were found to be either incorrect or outdated. Therefore, a purposive sampling was done, based on the availability of the respondents. In many cases, the respondents rejected to be interviewed, possibly because of the sensitive nature of the issue. This also led to an increase in the time period for data collection.

Challenges in data collection

The research team faced a lot of challenges during data collection. As the research team started visiting police stations in the districts, it was found that the addresses and contact details of majority of the respondents were outdated or incorrect. When called on the phone numbers listed in the FIR copies, most of the numbers did not match with the correct respondent. This could be due to the following reasons- the majority of the respondents in these cases were found to be living in informal colonies/settlements and are prone to changing their addresses frequently; the FIR copies may have recorded the incorrect contact details of the respondents.

In few cases, where the contact details were correct, the scheduling of the interviews had to be changed based on the availability of both the parents and children both in the house. In some cases the permission for conducting the interviews was denied as the parents didn't want their children to undergo the process of remembering the incidence.

Mapping of areas from where children are recovered

One of the objectives of the study was to carry out mapping of areas in NCT of Delhi from where children go missing and from where they are recovered. Mapping of areas from where children go missing was done through data available from Delhi Police and available secondary sources. However, mapping of areas from where children are recovered was not possible as the data for the same was not available from the information received from police and other secondary sources on missing children.

4. Findings

This section presents the key findings of the study. Based on the objectives and the research questions the findings have been categorised under the following themes:

- Mapping of areas from where children go missing
- Profile of children
- Categories of missing children
- Why do children go missing?
- Barriers and challenges in ensuring justice
- Impact on rights of children
- Response of key stakeholders

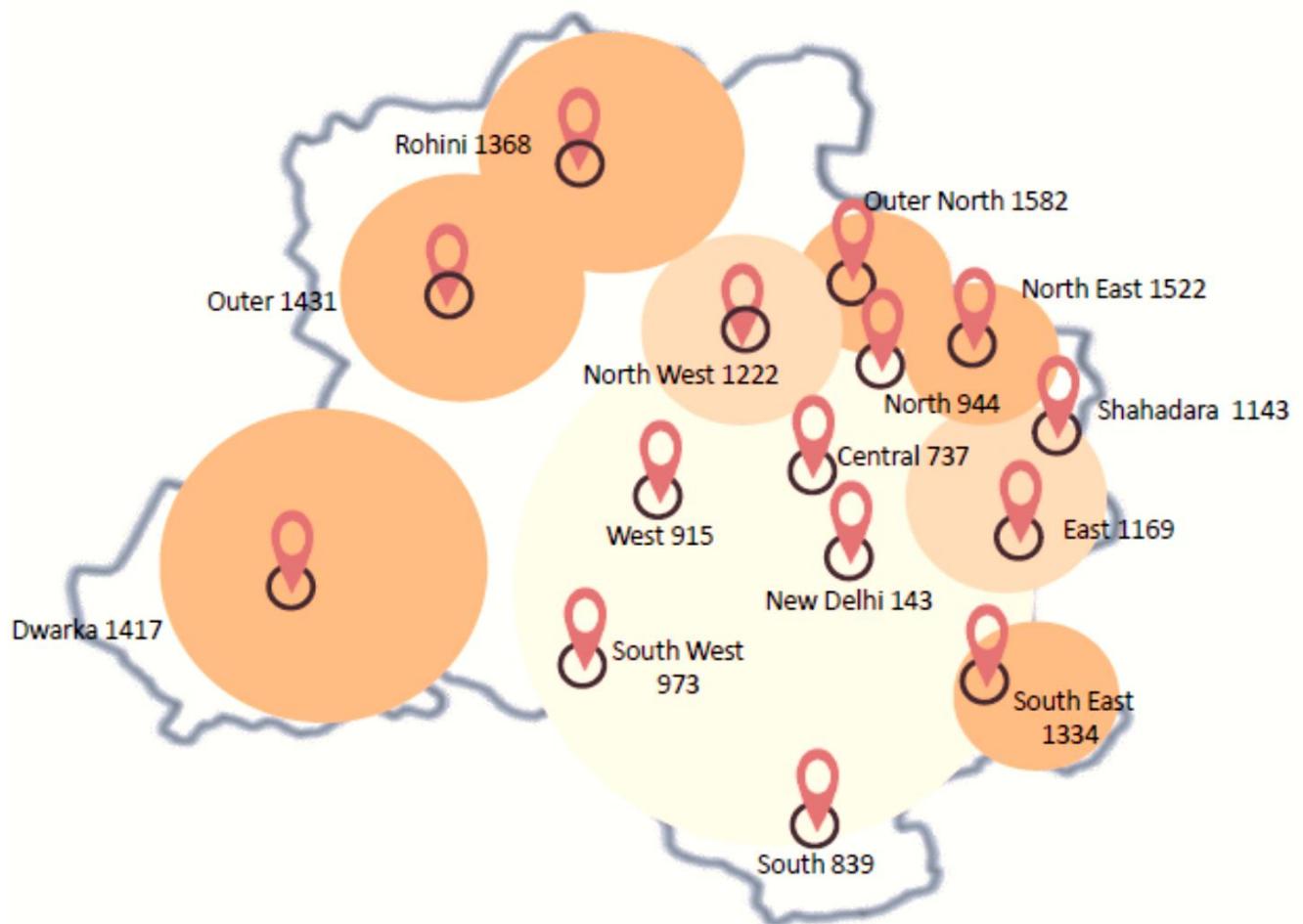
4.1 Mapping areas in Delhi from where children go missing

As per the 2021 Crime in India Report, the following police districts reported the maximum number of cases of missing children in Delhi: Outer North, Rohini, Outer, North East, South East, North West and Dwarka. Data collected by DCPCR from Delhi Police for the period 2014 to 2017 to analyse vulnerable areas under the jurisdiction of respective police stations on missing children showed that eight police stations came under this category - Narela, Shahbad Dairy, Jaitpur, Vijay Vihar, Khajuri Khas, Dabri, Uttam Nagar and Mehrauli (DCPCR, 2019). It was also noted that most of these vulnerable police stations were situated in border districts of Delhi and most of the vulnerable areas had a large migrant population (*ibid*). These districts are Rohini, South East, West, South, North West, Dwarka and North East.

Further insights into these districts show that the percentage of poor populations in these districts is higher. The recent National Multidimensional Poverty Index released by NITI Aayog shows that the district North Delhi witnessed the biggest increase in multidimensional poverty (NITI Aayog, 2023). In 2016, 2.4% of North Delhi's population faced deprivation across various indicators. However, in 2021, this increased to 6.3% (*ibid*).

Data received from Delhi Police for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 show that a total of 16,739 cases of missing children were reported in Delhi. Outer North, North East, Dwarka and Rohini reported the highest number of cases. The zone-wise mapping of areas based on the data is presented below:

Table 4a: Mapping of areas from where children go missing



4.2 Profile of sampled children

- In accordance with the gender ratio of missing children noted in FIRs across New Delhi, the gender distribution ratio of missing children in the sample was **29% males and 71% females**.
- Based on the sample distribution, more male children were missing in early teenage, while the number of missing female children rose towards the mid-teens. In the sample, the median age of missing female child was **16 years** while that of the missing male child was **14.5 years**.
- Correspondingly, incidence of going missing in male children was twice as high as that of female children in middle school while the incidence of going missing was higher by over 15% amongst female children during high school years.
- In the FIRs **25% of the sampled children** were reported to have dropped out of school. Majority (81%) of these were girls.
- Of the total children interviewed, 83% were Hindus while 13% were Muslims. Around 64% of the children belonged to General category, 20% belonged to Other Backward Classes (OBCs), 9% belonged to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 3% belonged to Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- In **89%** of the cases, both parents of the child were alive and living with the child. 59% of the sampled children were born in Delhi. 60% of the parents interviewed informed that they were migrants.

Table 4b: Gender distribution of children

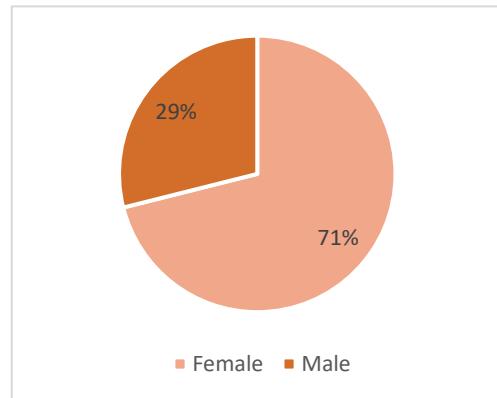


Table.4a: Gender distribution of children

Gender	Distribution	Percentage (%)
Female	118	71
Male	48	29
Total	166	100.00%

- More females reported missing than males. The gender distribution of the respondents is comparable to the Crime in India Statistics for 2021 for Delhi (70:30)

Table 4b: Drop out percentages of children

Did you drop out of school?	Female	%	Male	%	Total	Percentage (%)
No	84	68	40	32	124	75
Yes	34	81	8	19	42	25
Total	118	71	48	29	166	100

- 25% of the respondents reported dropping out of school, after being found or returning to their homes. More females dropped out of school than males.

Table 4c: Age when children went missing

Age (when the child went missing) ¹⁶	Sex of Missing Child				Grand Total	Percentage (%)
	Female	%	Male	%		
12	1	14	6	86	7	4
13	3	33	6	67	9	5
14	15	56	12	44	27	16
15	30	83	6	17	36	22
16	38	83	8	17	46	28
17	29	76	9	24	38	23
18	2	67	1	33	3	2
Grand Total	118	71	48	29	166	100

- 28% of the children were 16 years of age when they went missing. 23% of the children were 17 years of age. 32% of the girls were 16 years of age, while 25% of the boys were 14 years of age when they went missing, the highest percentage for both categories.

Table 4d: Education level of children

Row Labels	Total	Percentage (%)
Class V	1	1
Class VI	5	3
Class VII	5	3
Class VIII	13	8
Class IX	29	17
Class X	50	30
Class XII	60	36

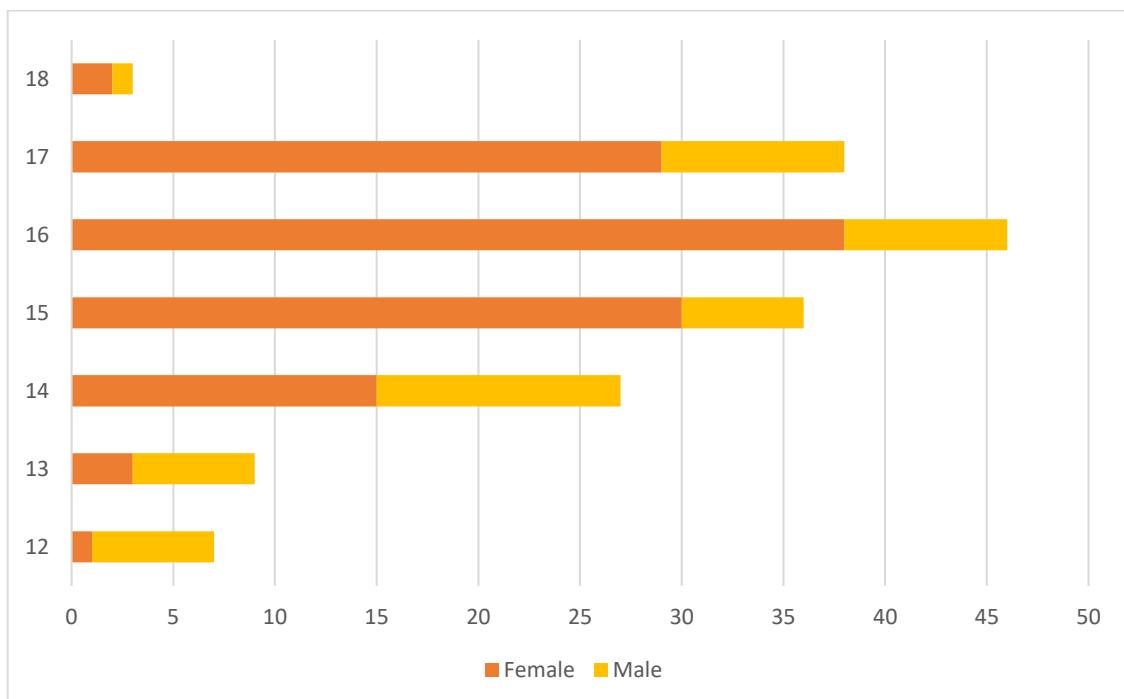
¹⁶ Children below 12 years of age could not be identified for interview.

Table 4e: Age when children went missing

Birth State of child	Distribution	Percentage (%)
Delhi	98	59
Other States	68	41
Total	166	100.00%

- 41% of the children reported that they were not born in Delhi.

Figure 4c: Age of children who went missing¹⁷



¹⁷ This pertains to the sample of the study and does not represent the entire population of missing children.

4.3 Categories of missing children

The SOP for Cases of Missing Children, developed by MWCD in 2016, lists out the following categories of missing children:

- Traced Children
- Found Children
- Runaway Children
- Abandoned Children
- Kidnapped Children
- Lost Children
- Trafficked Children
- Children missing/lost/found due to accidents, disaster, calamity, and other miscellaneous reasons
- Children missing from CCIs

Although, the Crime in India Report, 2021 does not outline the categories of missing children, it categorises the data on kidnapping and abduction based on the '*purpose*' in its Chapter on Kidnapping and Abduction. These include, but are not limited to:

- For Marriage
- Missing Deemed Kidnapped
- Left Home by own will/Scolding by parents
- Elopement/Love Relationship
- Family Disputes

Based on the responses from children and interviews with other stakeholders including parents, police, CWCs etc., the following categories of missing children are being used for the purpose of this study:

- **Runaway**- Children who run away from their home/place of residence out of their own will
 - **Elopement/Love Relationship**- Children who run away from their home/place of residence with their partner due to a love affair or relationship
 - **Family Disputes**- Children who run away from their home/place of residence due to an argument or dispute with family member/s
- **Lost**- These include children who lost their way to home/place of residence
- **Kidnapped**- Children who are kidnapped by any person as stated in Section 363 of IPC

4.4 Why do children go missing?

Runaway children

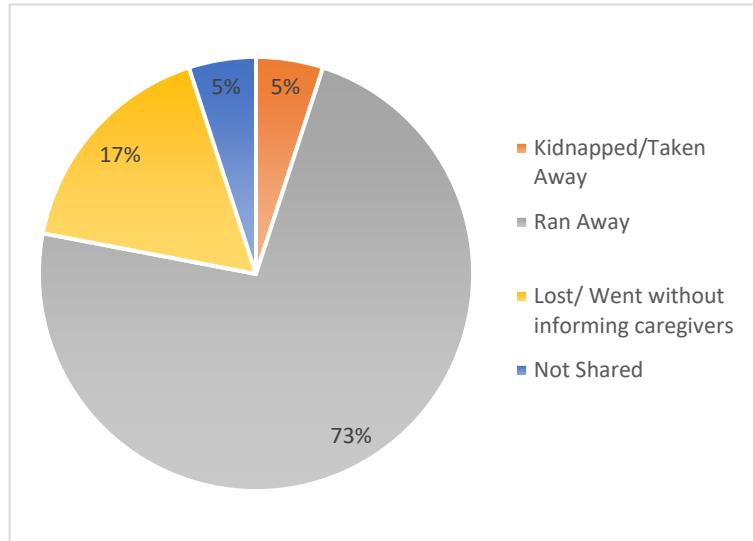
Interviews with children using a quantitative questionnaire reveal that majority of the children (**73%**) ran away from their homes. The primary reason given by the sampled children to go missing is presented in the Table 4d below:

Table 4f: Reason for Going Missing (Gender-Wise and Age-Group Wise)

Primary Reason for Going Missing	Sex				Age Group				Total	Percentage (%)
	Female	%	Male	%	12-14	%	15-18	%		
Ran away	88	72	34	28	25	20	97	80	122	73
Went away without informing caregivers/Lost ¹⁸	18	64	10	36	10	36	18	64	28	17
Kidnapped	5	63	3	38	5	63	3	38	8	5
No response	7	88	1	13	3	38	5	63	8	5
Total	118	71	48	29	43	26	123	74	166	100

Figure 4d: Reasons for going missing

¹⁸ This includes cases where the child did not run away from his/her house but instead had gone to some place without informing his/her parents/caregivers or lost his/her way to home. Here, it is important to note that the intention in this case was not to run away



- It can be noted that out of all the children interviewed, 74% were in the age group of 15-18 years.
- Interviews with police officials also suggest that majority of the children reported missing are runaway children.

"In most of the cases children run away from their homes over a minor dispute with parents. They get angry over things such as: if parents would not allow them to use a mobile; if they would compel them to study; if they would not allow going out with their friends for a trip/outing etc. In majority of the cases where missing girls are reported, they are related to elopement."

Police Official, Mandir Marg Police Station

Kidnapping

In cases of kidnapping, the reasons mentioned by children and parents were: kidnapped for labour, marriage, trafficking, sexual exploitation, kidnapped for family dispute. More girls were found to be victims of kidnapping.

Table 4g: Reason for kidnapping

Reason for Kidnapping	Sex		Total
	Female	Male	
Child labour		1	1
Family dispute, Personal enmity	1	1	2
Marriage	1		1
Sexual exploitation	1		1
Trafficking	1		1
Not shared/Don't know	1	1	2
Total	5	3	8

In Delhi, all cases of missing children are reported under Section 363 of IPC. This deals with kidnapping and abduction.

Section 363 of IPC states:

"Punishment for kidnapping

Whoever kidnaps any person from India or from lawful guardianship, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine."

Section 365 of IPC states:

"Kidnapping or abducting with intent secretly and wrongfully to confine person

Whoever kidnaps or abducts any person with intent to cause that person to be secretly and wrongfully confined, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine."

The FIRs of cases of missing children mention IPC 363. However, data from Crime in India Report 2021¹⁹ do not reveal the causes of children going missing as well as the crime heads under which the cases were registered. It should be noted that Crime in India Report 2021, under its Chapter on Kidnapping and Abduction, mentions various purposes²⁰ of kidnapping. These include: ransom, marriage, prostitution, begging,

¹⁹ Crime in India 2021. Statistics. National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs

²⁰ The meaning is limited to as stated in Crime in India 2021.

forced labour/slavery, adoption, deemed kidnapped, missing deemed kidnapped, left home by own will/scolded by parents, elopement/love relationship, family disputes, etc. Total child victims of kidnapping in Delhi for 2021, as per this report were **5888**.

The key data points for child victims from the report are presented below:

Table 4h: Purpose of kidnapping from Crime in India Report, 2021. Source: NCRB

Purpose	Child Victims		
	Male	Female	Total
Marriage	143	12788	12931
Missing deemed kidnapped	4929	18090	23019
Left home by own will/Scolding by parents	2115	4856	6971
Elopement/Love relationship	531	7376	7907
Family disputes	466	1420	1886

However, it cannot be verified as to whether data tabulated above has been included within the Missing Children Chapter of Crime in India Report or is presented separately. Therefore, more in-depth analysis of kidnapping cases needs to be done so as to estimate correctly the number of missing children in India and Delhi and causes thereof. Specifically, it needs to be analysed as to what type of cases have been categorised under 'missing deemed kidnapped' and what is the criteria for such categorisation.

Going away without informing parents/caregivers

In **17%** of the cases, it was found the children had gone to a familiar place (for instance-their friends place, their relatives etc.) without informing their parents or caregivers. In such cases the parents filed a FIR with the police and they were categorised as missing. However, the child in such cases had no intention of running away and was neither kidnapped. In all these cases, the child was located or returned back the same day.

4.5 Causes of running away

Elopement

Analysis of data using the quantitative questionnaire shows that elopement/love relationship (**33%**) is one of the major reasons behind children running away. Key reasons are displayed in the Table 4h.

Since all the cases of elopements/love relationships were reported for girls, it is understood that parents/caregivers of girls registered a complaint of missing child when their daughters went missing. In such cases, parents invariably felt that their daughter was '*lured*' by a boy.

"My daughter ran away with a boy working in the same factory I am working in. They ran away in the evening. She did not say anything."

Parent of a traced child

"I was on day trip with my friends. We were all playing cricket, there was no plan of running away. I liked a boy and we both thought to go away for marriage. I did not discuss about this at home; however my mother was aware that I like someone."

Traced child

Table 4i: Reasons for running away

Reason for running away and going away without informing ²¹	Female	Sex		% Male	Total	Percentage
		% Female	Male			
Elopement/Love Relationship	45	100	0	0	45	33
Other (outing, lured by others, drugs, for work, influenced by friends etc.)	21	48	23	52	44	32
Study related reasons	17	68	8	32	25	18
Family arguments	9	69	4	31	13	10
Isolation	7	78	2	22	9	7
Total	99	73	37	27	136	100

IDIs of children and parents reveal that while in some cases the children returned home, in other cases they went on to marry their partners. Parents expressed their helplessness in such cases as they could not do anything about it.

It was observed from interviews that marriages in such cases could result in unforeseen consequences as the boy could be charged under relevant provisions of POCSO Act, 2012. In one such case, a girl reported that the boy was charged under POCSO and was jailed.

²¹ This also includes children who went away from home without informing their parents or where parents were not aware about the whereabouts of the child.

"My husband was jailed for two months. I was upset due to my husband's condition. I married him according to my wish, he didn't force me. We even had a child but they didn't listen and charged him for sexual assault."

Traced child

Social media can also play a major role in such instances. With easier access to smartphones, children register their presence in various social media platforms and often befriend strangers. It was noted in one case that the child decided to marry a boy whom she interacted over *Instagram*.

"I met a guy on Instagram and both decided to run away for marriage. I was just 16 years."

Traced child

Police and other stakeholders suggest that **lack of appropriate parental care** and influence by social media are major causes of children running away, especially in cases of elopement. It was also pointed out that the forced confinement to one place due to COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown would have also led to an increase in instances of running away.

"There is a lack of cordial relationship among family members. Parents don't even know what their children are up to or which class they are studying in. There is also a lack of parental support. Parents may not understand the child's needs. During COVID-19 we were all locked up in our homes. Now children want to roam around and go for outing with their friends which is not allowed in their families. This leads to children running away from home."

CWC Chairperson

Difficulties with studies

Around 18% of the children interviewed informed that they ran away as they were facing difficulties in their studies.

IDIs with children reveal that in many cases the trigger for running away was being scolded by parents for not studying enough. In case of girls, in a couple of cases, it was observed that the added responsibility of household chores frustrated them and triggered them to run away.

"I was scolded by my mother for not studying and not doing household chores. I impulsively ran away to my uncle's house."

Traced child

Children showing a general non-interest in studies and preferring to spend more time with their friends outside was observed in both boys and girls.

'I was at my home and I was watching TV. My dad saw me and got very angry because I was not studying. He started shouting at me and that's why I decided to run away. It was in a fit of rage.'

Traced child

Interviews with parents show that they were aware about the stress and difficulties which their children were facing due to the pressure of studies. However, they did not feel responsible for the pressure which was created on their children. They highlighted that it is their responsibility to ask children to study properly.

"[He] is a stubborn child. He is in bad company and always roams around with his friends and doesn't want to stay at home. He was studying in class 9th but dropped out He always had a rebellious nature; if we would tell him to focus on his studies he would refuse. He treated us like his enemies."

Parent of a child

Parents also expressed that they don't have enough time to focus on their children due to their work. In addition, the environment where their children are growing also makes them more vulnerable.

"What can parents do? We are all day busy working and we keep telling children to focus on studies and stay away from drugs and bad company. But how much can we do? The police and the government should do something about this problem. "

Parent of a child

Family argument/Scolding by parents

In 10% of the cases, the children shared that they had an altercation at their homes with their parents which triggered them to run away. The arguments were on the issues ranging from watching TV, smoking, drug abuse, bad company of friends etc.

"Before he ran away there were a few problems which he was going through like he was not doing well in school and his teachers also complained. He was also caught smoking. As a father worried for his future I used to scold and sometimes slap him. But he got involved with bad friends. Finally, all this added up and he ran away."

Parent of a child

"I have always had anger issues. During that time also my anger was triggered. I did not plan it before running away. I had my friends with me and we just decided to go away."

Traced child

In all these cases where children ran away after being scolded, the children informed that they did not talk to their parents about their feelings before running away. In some cases it was also noticed that children had ran away from their home after getting beaten up by their parents.

"A missing case was reported of a girl aged 12 years; her parents filed the missing complaint. During the interaction with the child it was found that she ran away with a friend to save her life from her parents who had brutally beaten her. It was not the case of lover affair or elopement. She got multiple external injuries, boils and marks. The child was placed in CCI, the parents were called who denied that nothing happened. CWC decided not to restore the child to family but provided her stay in CCI. The child is in CCI."

CWC Member

Other reasons

Some other reasons highlighted by children for running away included being influenced by friends, looking for work opportunities, being influenced by movies etc. IDIs with police officials also suggest that the prevalence of drug abuse amongst teenagers in informal settlements/JJ (*Jhuggi Jhopri*) colonies is also a contributing factor for children running away.

"He did not have many friends but when he ran away we tried to find his friends and then one of his school mates said that he used to hang out with one of the boys from the neighbourhood. We all knew that this kid is mostly involved in consuming alcohol, weed and other things. So, we got even more upset that he keeps bad company."

Parent of a child

Impact of crimes in neighbourhood

SHO, Tigri Police Station, shares his experience while tackling cases of missing children:

"If we look at the record of the criminal cases lodged in our police station, the maximum number of criminals would be from the age group of 15 to 25 years. Children/adolescents in this age group are susceptible to bad influence, and places like Tigri and Dakshinpuri provide an environment to them where they can easily get in touch with influential criminals at a young age. The leaders of the criminal gangs such as '*cobra gang*' in these areas are also aware about the provisions of JJ Act and they use it to their advantage, as children below 18 years cannot be treated as an adult criminal and punishments are much lenient.

Children/adolescents also get motivated to get involved with these criminals as it gets them recognition within their peers and community. Many times this can also a reason to run away from their homes as parents may object to such activities. "

Categorizing causes for running away

The findings suggest that runaway children can be categorized into five major categories:

Elopement/Love Relationship

- Elopement due to love relationships emerged as a significant cause (33%), with all reported cases involving girls. Parents often perceived their daughters as being 'lured' or influenced by boys.
- Some elopements also resulted legal consequences for the boys involved, such as charges under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.
- Social media played a role in some of these instances, with cases reported where children decided to run away with individuals they met on platforms like Instagram.

Difficulties with Studies

- Around 18% of runaway cases were attributed to difficulties in studies. Children reported being scolded by parents for academic performance, and some girls cited added responsibilities like household chores as triggers for running away.
- Both genders displayed a general lack of interest in studies, with instances of children preferring to spend time with friends rather than focusing on academics.
- Parents acknowledged the stress on their children but felt it was the child's responsibility to study properly. Lack of parental time and a challenging environment were also cited as contributing factors.

Family Arguments/Scolding by Parents

- Arguments and scolding at home were identified as triggers for 10% of the runaway cases. Issues ranged from watching TV to smoking, drug abuse, and bad company.
- Parents expressed concerns about their children's behavior, with some resorting to scolding and physical punishment. In some cases, children ran away after being beaten up by their parents.

Isolation

- Approximately 7% of the cases involved children running away due to isolation. The study suggests that the forced confinement during the COVID-19 lockdown may have contributed to an increase in such instances.

Other Reasons

- Other reasons for running away included influence from friends, seeking work opportunities, and being inspired by movies. Drug abuse, particularly prevalent in informal settlements, was identified by police officials as a contributing factor.
- The findings also highlight the role of social media, lack of parental care, and the impact of COVID-19 restrictions in instances of elopement. They also sheds light on the complex relationship between parents and children, where

communication gaps and external pressures contribute to the problem of runaway children.

4.6 Response /Service delivery

The section will focus on the response of key stakeholders, specifically police and CWC in terms of providing immediate relief and care and protection services to children. This section will also highlight the gaps in the response and delivery of services to children and their families, vis-à-vis the SOP for Cases of Missing Children by MWCD and Standing Order No 252 on *duties of police regarding missing persons and unidentified dead bodies* and Standing Order No Crime/18/2022 by Delhi Police.

Registration of FIR

IDIs with parents and police officials show that FIRs are registered in all cases of missing children, in compliance with the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in Bachpan Bachao Andolan vs. Union of India (WP (Civil) 75 of 2012). As per the data received from Delhi Police, all the cases of missing children were registered under Section 363 of IPC. The FIRs covered details such as age, height, complexion, any identification marks, colour of clothes that the child was wearing, school name, circumstances under which child gone missing, mobile number (if child has any mobile) or any other relevant information shared by their family members.

As per the Standing Order No 252 of Delhi Police on *duties of police regarding missing persons and unidentified dead bodies*, "a Missing Report should be lodged in the Daily Diary, clearly mentioning the date and probable time when he/she was noticed to be missing. In this Report, all the details of the missing person including name, parentage, age, height, complexion, sex, clothes worn and any special mark of identification etc. should be incorporated".

A snapshot of a sample Daily Diary entry in case of missing children is presented below:

Figure 4e: Sample Daily Diary Entry in cases of missing children

The DD entry shows that the date and time when the child was noticed to be missing are clearly recorded in the register. Other details such as complexion, clothes worn, identification marks are not mentioned. However, these details are recorded in the FIR. As per para V point 2 of the Standing Order No Crime/18/2022, registration of a case is mandatory in cases of missing children. While all cases of missing children are registered under Section 363 of IPC, in cases of elopement, a case under POCSO is also registered. A snapshot of the FIR is also presented below for reference:

Figure 4f: Sample copy statements noted in FIR

12. F.I.R. Contents (attach separate sheet, if required) _____
Statement of _____ व्यान किया कि मैं पता उपरोक्त पर सफिरवार रहता हुं औ
_____ Delhi, Age 42 Years, _____ काम करता हुं जो मेरे तीन लड़की व एक लड़का है जो मेरी सबसे बड़ी लड़की _____ Age 16 साल Height 5' F
Complexion-Shallow , Face- Round , Build - Strong जिसने Grey Color की Jeans व Black S
दे _____ महनी है जो कल दिनांक 16/8/2020 को समय करीब 5.00Pm पर से बिना कुछ बताए चली गई जिस
मेरी त्रिमुखीया है कि मेरी बेटी कोई पता नहीं चल सका है मुझे शक है कि मेरी बेटी को ह

"As soon as we receive a complaint, the police officers are informed through our system and also through WhatsApp. A photo is also shared with information about what they were wearing, what they look like, etc. We also upload everything on the ZIPNet²². This system is also checked every 1-2 hours."

Police official

Point 3 of para V of the Standing Order No Crime/18/2022 states that assistance of a woman police officer should be taken, if required during investigation. IDIs with police officials reveal that a CWPO counsels the child, once the child is found. However, women police officers are also involved as per their availability.

Updating Information in TrackChild Portal

As per the Standing Orders of Delhi Police and SOP by MWCD on missing children, all cases of missing children need to be updated on TrackChild Portal. The portal is updated by the police stations, CCIs, CWCs and JJBs. As per the 2021-22 Annual Report of MWCD, till 31st December 2021, 12,500 police stations and 5,191 CCIs were making entries of missing/recovered children in the TrackChild Portal. Since its inception, information of 3,32,844 children has been matched through the system. Around 12,500 police stations have entered the information of 4,69,599 missing children and 3,68,594 recovered children in the portal.

According to the information shared by MWCD, 93% of the FIRs registered all over the country are reflected in the portal.

²² ZIPNet (Zonal Integrated Police Network) was introduced by Delhi Police in 2004. Its objective was to share real time information related to crimes and criminals. Prior to ZIPNet, such information was circulated through offline channels like papers, TPM, Wireless Communication. It provides Search Engines to match information from Central repository in online environment. Initially, it was brought forward with the collaborative efforts of Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan Police. Subsequently, in the year 2008, Punjab and Chandigarh Police also joined it. Uttarakhand Police has also joined it in the month of October, 2008

Investigation

The process of investigation in cases of missing children, and therefore the role of police officials is primarily guided by the procedure laid in Standing Order No 252 Standing Order No Crime/18/2022. The SOP on missing children by MWCD as well as Rule 92 of the JJ Model Rules also provide considerable guidance on the process to be followed during inquiry and investigation.

The following table presents a comparative analysis of the key process of the Standing Order No Crime/18/2022 and the SOP on missing children by MWCD²³ and the observations based on interviews from police officials, parents of children and other stakeholders:

Table 4j: Comparative analysis of the key process of the Standing Order No Crime/18/2022 and the SOP on missing children by MWCD

Process	Whether covered in Standing Order	Whether covered in SOP	Observations from study
Registration of FIR	✓	✓	✓
Inform the CWPO and forward FIR to the SJPU for immediate action	✓	✓	✓
Update information in the TrackChild Portal	✓	✓	✓
Send the copy of the FIR by post/email to the office of nearest LSA along with addresses and contact phone numbers of parents and legal guardians of the missing child	✓	✓	DLSAs check missing person's report on e-Sampark portal
Hue and Cry notice containing photograph and physical description of the missing child to be sent for publication	✓	✓	✓

²³ Rule 92 and SOP on missing children by MWCD are largely similar, therefore, SOP by MWCD is being considered for comparison here

Scan the recordings of the Close Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras installed in the vicinity of the area from where the child was reported missing and on all possible routes, transit and destinations.	√	√	CCTVs used but police official suggested to increase the number of CCTVs for efficacy
Inform Railways and other transport authorities and municipal agencies, and any NGOs involved in service delivery for spotting and recovering/rescuing the missing children	√	√	Not observed during IDIs
Search nearby spots of interest such as malls, amusement parks, games parlours etc.	√		Beat officers are informed but specific focus on these areas not highlighted during interviews
Where a child cannot be traced within a period of four months, the investigation of the case shall be transferred to the AHTU	√	√	√
Medical check-up of child when found/rescued	√	√	√
Risk Assessment		√	Not observed during IDIs

The following table presents the number of days taken to find the child or days taken by the child to return on his/her own.

Table 4k: Comparative analysis of the key process of the Standing Order No Crime/18/2022 and the SOP on missing children by MWCD

Cause of going missing	Average no of days to find the child
Run away ²⁴	3
Kidnapped	2
Went away without informing/ lost	1

In 29% of the cases in which children ran away, they returned to their homes on their own. In 28% of the cases of runaway children, the children were found or located by persons who were known to the child. These included parents, neighbours, relatives or friend of parents of the child. In 38% of the cases, police directly found or located the child and repatriated them to their families.

Table 4l: How were run away children located

Runaway children located/found by	Number	Percentage
Police	47	38
Returned on their own	35	29
By known persons	34	28
Don't know	4	3
Other unknown persons (e.g. NGO)	2	2
Total	122²⁵	100

²⁴ Two outliers have been removed from this list so that the average does not get skewed. In one case the child got back after 4 months while in other case the child got back after 2.5 years.

²⁵ Includes only runaway children

Rehabilitation

Missing or runaway children are children in need of care and protection under Section 2(14)(vii) of the JJ Act:

"child in need of care and protection" means a child—

(vii) who is missing or runaway child, or whose parents cannot be found after making reasonable inquiry in such manner as may be prescribed"

Therefore, the process of rehabilitation of the child, once found, should be guided under Section 32 and Section 39 of the JJ Act.

Section 32 of the Act provides for mandatory reporting within 24 hours to the *Childline services or the nearest police station or to a CWC or to the DCPU, or hand over the child to a CCI.*

Section 39 of the JJ Act provides for rehabilitation and social integration of the child based on the *individual care plan of the child, preferably through family based care such as by restoration to family or guardian with or without supervision or sponsorship, or adoption or foster care.*

As per the SOP on missing children by MWCD, the police have been assigned minimal role on rehabilitation of the child. The Supervisory Officer is supposed to provide cooperation to the PLVs at the police stations and also to the DLSAs so that all grievances or issues are ironed out and addressed.

Quantitative data shows that in 24% of the cases, children were provided with a temporary shelter or stay arrangement after being rescued or found. In 42% of the cases, follow up with the families was reported after being found.

The CWC has an important role in rehabilitation of the child. The SOP lists the following roles for CWC with respect to rehabilitation of the child:

- Assess the needs of the child and pass orders with respect to repatriating the child or placing the child in a fit facility or with a fit person, or declare the child free for adoption or foster care

- Engage services of the DCPU/DLSA in the source district of the found/traced child, to facilitate smooth and effective rehabilitation of the child
- Pass directions to link the child to the appropriate medical facility/institution, if needed
- Pass orders for recovery of back-wages of the child, in case the found or recovered child was trafficked for forced or/and bonded labour

IDIs with CWCs suggest that follow up with families of missing children happens based on the requirements of the case.

"For all the cases where the child is restored to the parents we give orders to come before the bench for follow up once in a month. The follow up is done as per the requirement in the case. If we feel that the child is happy in the family, he/she has adequate clothing or care, going to school, attending regular classes, attending vocational training, then we stop calling them. However the family or child can reach out to us for any support."

Member, CWC

"The follow up is done in three stages - first follow up takes place within a month, second is after three months and then we do quarterly follow up. The follow up is also done by the DCPU and CCI."

Member, CWC

It was also noted that in case the CWC feels that it is not in the best interest of the child to be restored to parents, the child is sent to a CCI.

"A missing case was reported of a girl aged 12 years; her parents filed the missing complaint. During the interaction with the child it was found that she ran away with a friend as her parents had brutally beaten her. It was not the case of love affair or elopement. She got multiple external injuries, boils and marks. The child was placed in CCI, the parents were called who denied that anything happened. CWC then decided not to restore the child to her family but provided her stay in CCI. The child is currently in CCI."

Member, CWC

Paragraph XVI of Standing Order No Crime 18/2022 of Delhi Police states the joint responsibility of Delhi Police and DLSA, in accordance with the direction issued in Writ Petition [Crl.] No. 249/2009 by Delhi High Court. It states that DLSA shall constitute a team comprising of a lawyer and a social worker to follow up the case with Delhi Police. The team is responsible for not only providing legal aid services to the parents and families of missing children but also act as an interface between parents and Delhi Police. Besides this, a copy of FIR should be shared by post/email to DLSA.

In January 2023, Delhi High Court issued directions to DLSA for engaging PLVs to trace missing children. This was pursuant to the directions issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Writ Petition (Civil) no. 75 of 2012, which stated that:

"Para legal volunteers, who have been recruited by the Legal Services Authorities, should be utilised, so that there is, at least, one paralegal volunteer, in shifts, in the police station to keep a watch over the manner in which the complaints regarding missing children and other offences against children are dealt with."

IDIs with DLSAs show that PLVs have been appointed in some police stations. For instance, PLVs have been appointed in two police stations in New Delhi district and eight police stations in North district. PLVs work in these police stations in three shifts (6am to 2 pm, 2pm to 10 pm and 10 pm to 6 am). If any missing complaint is registered, PLVs provide legal assistance to complainants as well as conduct follow up with police officials on the investigation.

Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DLSA) has also appointed a dedicated panel of two advocates with each CWC in Delhi to assist parents and caregivers of children in need of care and protection, including missing children.

"Parents seek legal aid and counselling service from DLSA. We call them and ask their need. If they agree we provide them Front Office Lawyer who conducts the follow up in the court. We have PLVs who are working 24 hours to assist the parents of missing children."

Secretary, DLSA

The process followed by DLSAs in missing children cases is shown below:

Figure 4g: Process followed by DLSAs in Delhi



**Note: The compensation under the Delhi Victim Compensation Scheme, 2018, is provided in case of loss of life, rape, sexual assault, loss of limbs, victims of burning, victims of acid attack etc, as per the Scheme Guidelines.*

Key takeaways from the reported response of officials

Efficient Registration of FIRs

The registration of FIRs in all cases of missing children, in compliance with the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, is being carried out. The use of technology, such as WhatsApp and the ZIPNet system, to promptly inform police officers and share relevant information, enhances the efficiency of the process.

Potential Gap: While the Standing Order emphasizes the importance of including details like complexion and identification marks in the Daily Diary entry, these details were found to be not recorded consistently.

Investigation Process

The comparative analysis of key processes between Standing Order No Crime/18/2022 and the SOP on missing children by MWCD indicates a comprehensive approach by the police. This includes actions such as sending Hue and Cry notices, scanning CCTV footage, and informing relevant authorities.

Potential Gap: Despite the proactive measures, there was a suggestion to increase the number of CCTV cameras for better efficacy. Additionally, the involvement of NGOs and other service delivery agencies was not observed during interviews of police officials.

Recovery and Rehabilitation

Potential Gap: While 93% of FIRs are reflected in the TrackChild Portal, there's room for improvement in the coordination and communication among different agencies involved in recovery efforts. The absence of risk assessment during investigations is a noticeable gap that could impact the overall approach to the welfare of the child.

Rehabilitation Process

Potential Gap: The limited role assigned to the police in rehabilitation, leaves scope for improvement.

Role of Legal Services

The engagement of paralegal volunteers (PLVs) and a dedicated panel of advocates with each CWC by DSLSA illustrates a collaborative effort between legal services and law enforcement.

Potential Gap: While PLVs provide legal assistance and follow-up in some police stations, the consistency of such services across all districts was not clear. Additionally, the issuance of directions by the Delhi High Court for engaging PLVs signifies a need for more systematic integration of legal support in missing children cases.

The findings indicate a mixed landscape of effective responses and existing gaps in cases of missing children.

4.7 Impact on rights of children

Lived Experiences

About 57% children experienced negative emotions upon running away and another 8% had mixed emotions. These included feelings of fear, confusion and missing home. In 9% of the cases, children had expressed feelings of wanting to run away from their families/friends.

40% of the cases where children were happy after running away were cases of elopement. 87% of these children informed that they never talked to their parents about their feeling which caused them to run away. This also suggests that lack of communication between the parents and children can further lead to development of feelings that cause children to run away.

In cases of children who were kidnapped, all of them felt intimidated while they were in captivity. In one instance the child noted that she was denied proper food while she was held by someone. One of the child was also found to a victim of sexual abuse.

Table m: Lived experiences of children

Experience after running away	Number
Scared	17
Happy	30
Missed Home	37
Don't know/Mixed/ No response	38
Total	122

"The kidnapper did not give me food properly. He would only give me something to eat once. And most of the time I was always feeling dizzy or sleepy. I only remember crying and shouting for help."

Traced child

In one case the child reported to have faced physical abuse. This was in a case of kidnapping.

In 50% cases, children decided to run away while they were supposed to be out of home for school or tuition.

Table 4n: Time when the child ran away

When did you run away?	No.	Percentage
During/after school/tuition	62	51
In the evening	35	29
After everyone went to sleep	7	6
Morning (before 12 PM)	7	6
Afternoon	6	5
Didn't share/don't remember	5	4
Total	122	100

Response and follow up

Around 27% of the children interviewed informed that they did not receive any refreshment or food while they were present in the police station. In 58% of the cases no follow up was conducted with the families of children, either by police or other authorities.

Table 4o: Response and follow up after being found/rescued

Response after being found/rescued	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Food/Refreshments offered	121	73	45	27	166
Whether counsellor/support person present	109	66	57	34	166
Follow up conducted	70	42	96	58	166

In 53% of the cases, the children shared that officials in police uniform interacted with them.

Table 4p: Interaction of police with children

Whether any one in police uniform talked to you?	Number	Percentage
Yes	88	53
No	78	47
Total	166	100

Children had largely positive responses to the question of the nature of their interaction with police officials. While 58% of the children that they were comfortable during their interactions with the police officials, 18% felt either confused or uncomfortable.

Table 4q: Experience of interaction with officials

Experience of interaction with officials	Number	Percentage
Comfortable	97	58
Uncomfortable	29	18
Don't remember	40	24
Total	166	100

Untraced children

IDIs with parents of untraced children show their frustration with the police officials for not conducting proper investigations and follow ups. In one case, the parent of an untraced child noted that there was improper investigation and not enough efforts were made to rescue the child.

"We informed the police. They found the child within a day but did not take any action. They told us that the child is living with the woman with his own determination and we cannot do anything. "

Parent of an untraced child

In another case, the parents felt that their case was not being followed up properly as they were poor.

"He has been missing for four years. I have lost count of the number of times we have visited the police station. We think that the delay is because of the fact our son belongs to a poor family. Nobody wants to help a poor family. If this would've been a rich person's child, the police would've found him/her in two days. But that is not the case for us."

Parent of an untraced child

"The government must not treat the poor and rich differently. A child is a child for everybody, irrespective of the money. We have also tried to nudge the police in the right direction to find our child. We know somebody who could've kidnapped him and taken him for begging on the streets. But the police did not do anything. I have personally visited so many chowks to see if my child is also begging there. But it has been to no avail. A poor man can only do so much. "

Parent of an untraced child

Parents of an untraced girl in one case also sought help of a local influencer but did not follow up due to demand of one lakh rupees from the influencer. It shows that while

the untraced child's safety and security are at risk, parents of untraced children are also vulnerable to being exploited.

"Someone told me to talk to Bobby Kataria. I video called him and he said he will take one lakh rupees fees and will get their child rescued within 24 hours. We couldn't gather one lakh rupees, we also didn't trust him fully."

Parent of an untraced child

Understanding the findings from a child rights perspective

Emotional Impact on Runaway Children

The emotional experiences of 57% of children, including feelings of fear, confusion, missing home, highlight potential violations of the child's right to protection, well-being, and emotional development. Addressing emotional well-being is crucial for fostering resilient and emotionally healthy children, aligning with the right to development.

Communication Gap and Elopement

The lack of communication between children and their parents leading to elopement suggests that the children are denied right to expression and participation in decisions affecting their lives. Encouraging open communication between parents and children is essential for respecting the child's right to be heard and involved in decisions concerning their welfare.

Experiences when kidnapped

Children were subjected to intimidation, denial of proper food, and an instance of sexual abuse during kidnapping highlighting severe violations of the rights to protection, safety, and freedom from violence.

Vulnerability in school hours

The vulnerability of children during travel to and from school emphasizes the need to ensure a safe environment for education, aligning with the child's right to education.

Implementing safety measures during commute is vital for safeguarding children's right to education in a secure setting.

Response and Follow-up

The absence of refreshments and follow-up in a significant number of cases highlights the violation of the child's rights to protection, care, and recovery. Strengthening post-rescue support and ensuring basic needs are met aligns with the child's right to an adequate standard of living and protection from neglect.

Interaction with Police

Negative or uncomfortable interactions with police officials may influence a child's perception of justice or security. Ensuring child-friendly police interactions is essential for upholding the child's right to be treated with respect and dignity.

Untraced Children

Poor follow-up and improper investigations violate the child's right to equal protection under the law.

4.8 Barriers and challenges in ensuring justice

Lack of follow up

Both quantitative data and IDIs with children and parents suggest that lack of follow up during investigation and post rescue is a challenge. As stated earlier, in 58% of the cases no follow up was conducted with the families of children, either by police or other authorities, once the child was found or rescued. In cases of untraced children, parents expressed that the police was not serious about their cases and there was a lack of initiative from their end to pursue the case.

Transportation

IDIs with police officials show that one of the major challenges they face is arranging for quick transport facility, if the location of the child has been found. The process to get approval might take some time, more so in cases of inter-state travel. Moreover, police officials who travel are reimbursed for their expenses later. Thus, the immediate expenses have to be borne by the concerned officials themselves.

"In case there is information that the child is now in a location which is far away, then the police inspector might not get the train ticket and has to either take his own vehicle or hire a cab. He has to pay from his pocket and get reimbursed later. Keeping a track of the bills is a challenge for officers in the field, so many times reimbursements do not happen."

Police official

Inter-State Cases

In cases where children run away or are taken away to another State, the investigation becomes a time-taking process. In one of the cases, the parent of the child highlighted that how lack of prompt response from police caused a delay in recovery of the child.

"The inspector at that time said that it will take us a few hours before we even leave from Delhi, which was very wrong because we were relying on the police to help us. I even told them that I will take my car, you just come along. We were also able to get the

number of the relative with whom both of them were staying. I informed them about the situation and requested them to not let them leave. We also requested them to call police in case they try to run away again. When we reached there we found out that both had left again."

Parent of a traced child

Paragraph VII of the Standing Order No Crime 18/2022 of Delhi Police states that all concerned ACPs/SHOs will ensure that the details of missing children/ persons and victims are sent through special messengers to neighbouring District Crime Record Bureaus and also to SOs of Police Stations of neighbouring states. In case of any information or clue to be followed up, the team needs to be immediately dispatched to tie up with the concerned police station of a neighbouring state/district. In appropriate cases where involvement of any organized gang is suspected, the anti- kidnapping section of the crime branch will maintain necessary liaison with the police of other states and the CBI.

Interaction with police officials show that police send a team to the concerned location in another State or district if they receive a communication regarding the whereabouts or rescue of the child. However, police officials were not aware about any specific steps that need to be taken in such cases. It was noted that the details of cases are uploaded in ZipNet which is linked to TrackChild Portal, which can be accessed by all police stations. No specific effort is made to reach out to other States when a case of missing child is reported.

"The senior officers coordinate with each other. If somebody tells us that a boy has been found in a state, the information is shared with us. We send a team along with the parents to identify the child. In case paper work is involved, that is done in the court."

Police official

"We contact the local police in that location. There is no inter-state protocol as such."

Police official

Key takeaways from the observed barriers in dealing with cases of missing children

Follow-up

The absence of follow-up, during investigations and post-rescue, poses a significant challenge, as highlighted by 58% of cases lacking follow-up with families. Lack of sustained engagement and proactive measures may hinder the delivery of justice and support to affected families, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive and continuous approach.

Transportation Issues

Reported delays in arranging quick transport, particularly in inter-state cases, create challenges for police officials, impacting the swift response to the location of missing children. Adequate logistical support, including timely approval and reimbursement of allowances is essential to enhance the efficiency of police operations and improve results in locating missing children.

Inter-State Cases

It was reported that investigation involving inter-state travel face delays, as illustrated by a case where a slow police response contributed to a child's prolonged absence. Streamlining protocols and response times for inter-state cases is critical to ensuring prompt and coordinated efforts, reducing the risk of further harm to missing children. The findings highlight lack of specific steps or protocols for handling cases involving missing children across state boundaries. Establishing clear and standardized protocols for inter-state coordination and communication is vital to address jurisdictional challenges and enhance the effectiveness of cross-border investigations.

Police officials expressed a lack of awareness regarding specific steps to be taken in inter-state cases, relying on ad-hoc coordination rather than established protocols.

5. Discussions

In this section, we attempt to explain the major findings emerging from the study, as per the key research questions outlined previously. These findings are also later contextualised to the Global Model Missing Child Framework developed by International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children.

5.1 Major reasons of children going missing

The study clearly suggests that majority of the cases of missing children were cases of runaway children. Elopement/love relationship was one of the major causes of children running away from their homes. There can be various reasons for children/adolescents taking such action at an early age. A study suggests that poverty, marginalization and lack of opportunities for girls (as well as boys) are important factors that push adolescents and youth into early adulthood (Mehra & Nandy, 2019). The study noted that girls who ran away completed no more than primary or middle school before being pulled out to support their families in household work. The fifth National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019-21) shows that the main reasons for girls dropping out of school were the **requirement of household work, cost of education and lack of interest in studies**. For boys, the lack of interest in studies was over 14 percentage points higher than girls, as per the data from NFHS-5.

Besides elopement, the other major reason was found to be study related issues. Around 18% of the children noted that they ran away as they were facing difficulties in their studies. IDIs with children reveal that in many cases the trigger for running away was being scolded by parents for not studying enough. In few cases of girls, it was also observed that the added responsibility of household chores frustrated them and triggered them to run away. A similar study of runaway children in Pakistan highlighted that a large number of runaway children were poor regarding their educational performance (Achakzai, 2011). Moreover, children were punished/tortured for their

poor performance in school. Thus, it was noted that there was a positive relationship between children running away and poor performance and harsh treatment at school (*ibid*).

Family disputes or arguments with family members also triggered many children to run away. The arguments were on the issues ranging from watching TV, smoking, drug abuse, bad company of friends etc. Global studies on runaway children have also identified negative family environment as one of the major reasons of children running away. High rates of family abuse (physical or sexual) among runaway children/adolescents have been documented (Kipke, Palmer, LaFrance, & O'Connor, 1997; Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Ackley, 1997). In a study of runaway adolescents and their parents, it was found that 41% of the adolescents attributed their runaway behaviour to poor relationships with their parents (Tucker et al, 2011). However, only 7% of the parents agreed with the adolescents and 89% believed that their child was solely responsible for running away (*ibid*). Studies also indicate that poor parenting practices and physical abuse increase risk and likelihood of a child running away (Tyler & Bersani, 2008; Tyler, Johnson, & Brownridge, 2008).

The current study shows that very few cases (eight cases) of missing children were cases of kidnapping in Delhi. Among the cases of kidnapping, the causes of kidnapping included kidnapping for child labour, marriage, trafficking and personal enmity within families. In 63% of the cases, the perpetrator was known to child. A deeper analysis of Crime in India Report of 2021 shows that 12931 child victims in India were recovered in 2021 who were kidnapped for the purpose of marriage, out of the total 69014 child victims of kidnapping.

5.2 Gaps in processes

The study shows that FIRs are being registered in almost all cases of missing children in Delhi, under Section 363 of IPC. The study also shows that existence of various SOPs and Standing Orders notwithstanding, the prime responsibility of ensuring justice and rehabilitation has been rested with police. As missing children are children in need of care and protection, the rehabilitation measures, provided under Section 39 of the JJ

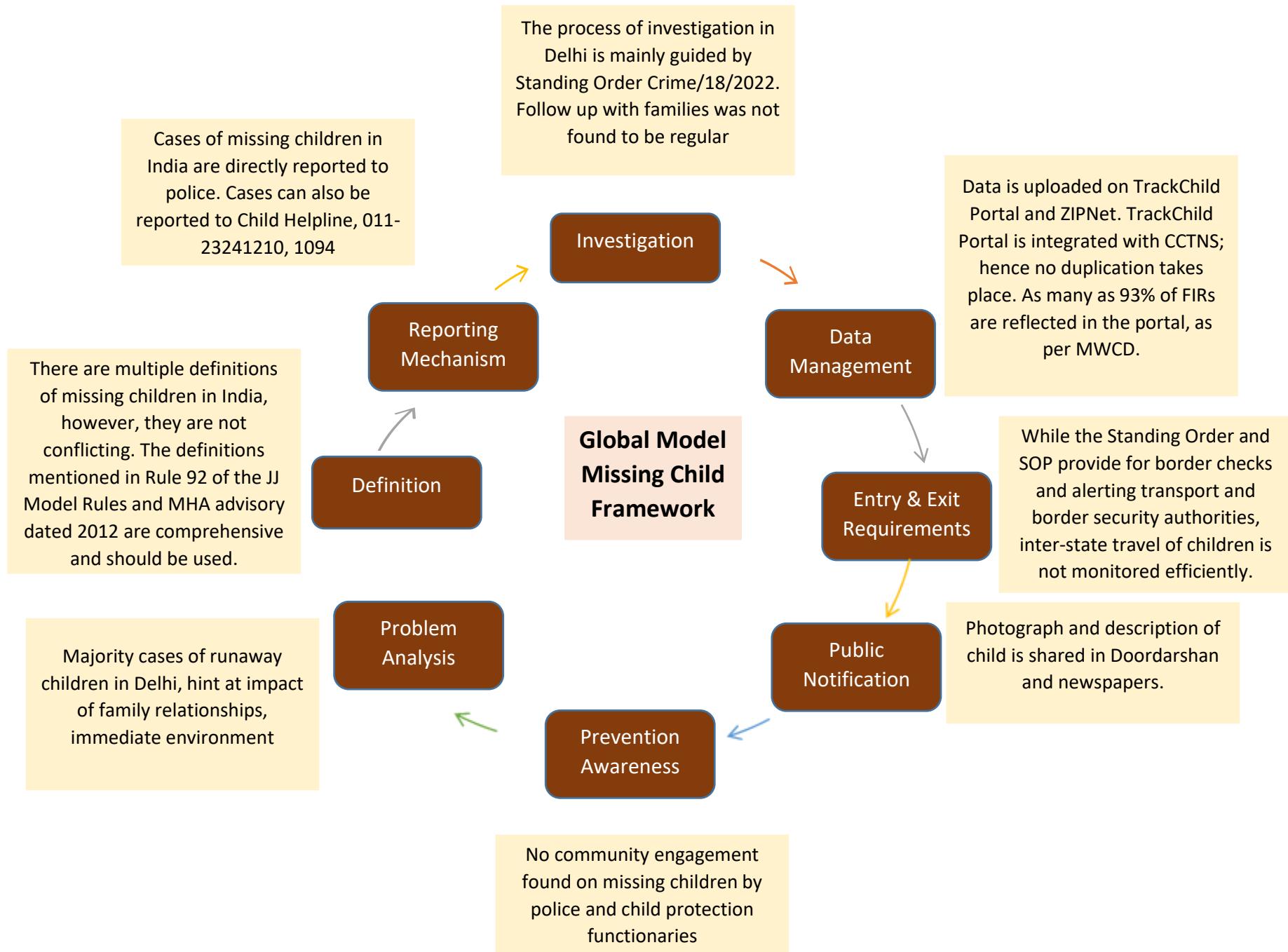
Act, are not being implemented completely once the child is traced or returns back to his/her home.

The study reveals that there is minimal awareness within the police personnel about the 2017 SOP on missing children by MWCD and the provisions of the same have not been integrated within the Standing Orders of Delhi Police concerning the processes to be followed in cases of missing children, especially related to the categories of missing children and follow up steps needed. Other concerned SOPs by NCPCR, MoLE and Ministry of Railways present different scenarios which are applicable to missing children. Assessing the risks involving missing children was an important step which was suggested in the SOP by MWCD. Its incorporation in the Standing Order of Delhi would enhance the effectiveness of investigation.

Delay or lack of follow up, especially in inter-state cases was found to be one of the major issues. The delay might occur due to a variety of reasons. The interactions with police officials show that arranging quick transport facility, if the location of the child has been found, is a major hurdle. The process to get approval for such arrangements take time, and hence crucial leads on the whereabouts of the child are lost. The police officials who travel for such follow-ups are later reimbursed for their expenses. However, the reimbursement process is also time-consuming, thus acting as a disincentive to take proactive steps to conduct rescue operations in case the child is thought to be in far-off places.

It is also understood that the officials tasked with carrying out investigation of cases of missing children are tasked with various responsibilities and qualitative interviews with police officials support this assumption. Better management of cases within the department and allocation of cases to those with experience and training in JJ Act would be desirable but it is possible at all times.

The diagram below contextualises the findings from the study to the Global Model Missing Child Framework.



5.3 Analysing findings from the lens of child rights

Analyzing the findings of this study within the framework of a child rights-based perspective highlights important insights:

Children in need of care and protection: The study recognizes that children who run away from home, independent of the reasons, are in need of care and protection. This aligns with the child rights approach, which emphasizes the right of children to be safe from harm and exploitation.

Best Interests of the Child: The study identifies various reasons for children running away, including elopement, study-related issues, and family disputes. In each case, it is important to consider the best interests of the child, whether it involves reuniting them with their families or providing alternative care and support.

Non-Discrimination: The study highlights that both boys and girls face challenges that lead to running away, such as academic difficulties and family conflicts. This highlights the importance of non-discrimination and equal protection of the rights of all children.

Protection from harm: The study reveals that some children run away due to harsh treatment within their families or pressure of education from school. This emphasizes the need for protection from physical and emotional harm.

Child Participation: The study implies the importance of understanding children's perspectives and experiences in situations leading to their running away. Involving children in solutions would be key to minimize cases of running away.

Preventive Measures: The study underscores the need for preventive measures, such as improving school environments and parenting practices to reduce the incidence of children running away. Prevention is an important component of child rights-based approaches. Improving the bonds between the children and parents, non-violent communication, family therapeutic care in cases where there is domestic violence will prevent children from parental – family loss.

Rehabilitation Measures: The study highlights the importance of the implementation of rehabilitation measures as per the JJ Act. Ensuring that children receive appropriate care and support upon their return or tracing is crucial from a child rights perspective.

Inter-State Cases: The study notes the challenges in handling inter-state cases, including delays and administrative hurdles. This underscores the need for efficient coordination and cooperation among different states and agencies to protect children's rights.

Capacity Building: The study implies the need for better training and capacity-building among police officials to handle cases of missing children effectively, aligning with the child rights approach's emphasis on competent and knowledgeable authorities.

The research offers valuable perspectives on the factors contributing to instances of missing children in Delhi and the difficulties associated with tackling them. Additionally, it underscores the significance of embracing an approach grounded in child rights. This approach would consistently prioritize children's best interests, safeguard them from harm, and establish robust measures for prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation.

6. Recommendations

Based on the objectives of the study, the key recommendations are presented below for various stakeholders categorised as administrative, procedural and preventive. These recommendations address key gaps identified in the study.

6.1 Administrative

Key research questions addressed:

- What are major reasons of children going missing?
- What is the impact on rights of children who go missing?
- What type of services are provided to children who are traced and assessment of their adequacy in terms of existing provisions of laws and schemes?

Recommendations

- **Categorisation of cases:** It was noted during the study that majority of the cases of missing children were cases of runaway children. Therefore, once the investigation is completed and the child returns back or is found, the case file or DD entry should record the cause of child going missing. It is suggested that the police should categorise the cases of missing children under various heads and this categorisation should be shared with State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB)/NCRB so that accurate data is reported on missing children. The following categorization has been designed based on the findings of the study as well as existing categories used by NCRB under various crime heads such as trafficking, kidnapping and other crimes against children.

The suggested categorisation could be:

- Ran away for elopement/love relationship/marriage- Children who run away from their home/place of residence out of their own will for eloping with their partner or for marrying their partner
- Ran away due to drug addiction- Children who run away from their home/place of residence to get access to drugs

- Ran away due to family dispute- Children who run away from their home/place of residence due to a dispute or argument with family member/s. This dispute could be, but not limited to, due to the following reasons-
 - Education/Study - This includes disputes that are caused due to pressure to perform academically well or to the satisfaction of his/her caregivers/parents or the child feeling responsible for not performing as per the expectations of the parents
 - Drug abuse related dispute- This includes disputes that are caused due to the involvement of the child in drug / substance abuse
 - Dispute with siblings- This includes disputes of the child with their siblings
 - Other disputes
- Lost while coming home or going somewhere- Children who lose their way to their home/ destination and had no intention of running away
- Kidnapped for ransom- Children who are kidnapped by any person for ransom as stated in Section 364A²⁶ of IPC
- Kidnapped for trafficking²⁷- Children who are kidnapped for trafficking as stated in Sections 370 and 370A of IPC. These include, but not limited to,
 - Trafficking for child labour
 - Trafficking for bonded labour
 - Trafficking for begging
 - Trafficking for forced labour
 - Trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation
 - Trafficking for removal of organs
 - Drug trafficking

²⁶ Kidnapping for ransom- *Whoever kidnaps or abducts any person or keeps a person in detention after such kidnapping or abduction and threatens to cause death or hurt to such person, or by his conduct gives rise to a reasonable apprehension that such person may be put to death or hurt, or causes hurt or death to such person in order to compel the Government or any foreign State or international inter-governmental organisation or any other person] to do or abstain from doing any act or to pay a ransom, shall be punishable with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.*

²⁷ These categories are taken from NCRB Crime in India Report's Chapter on Human Trafficking.

- **Prioritising one guideline:** MWCD, MHA and Delhi Police have released their own set of guidelines/SOPs to inform the process to be followed in cases of missing children. Moreover, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India and Hon'ble High Court of Delhi, issue directions from time to time in cases related to missing children.

Based on the review of guidelines and SOPs related to missing children, it is observed that the Standing Order No. Crime/18/2022- *Procedure to be followed on receipt of information about missing children* covers the provisions mentioned in the SOP for cases of missing children issued by MWCD. It is suggested that the said Standing Order by Delhi Police *on procedure to be followed on receipt of information about missing children* be prioritised and shared with all relevant stakeholders for implementation. It is also suggested that the provisions related to rehabilitation of the child, as stated in the SOP for implementation of CALPRA, issued by MoLE, be adapted and incorporated in the Standing Order. A suggested section on rehabilitation is presented below for illustration:

- *Social rehabilitation- Once the child is restored back to his/her home, police should inform the corresponding CWC so that the CWC can decide if follow up is needed and for how long as per Rule 19 sub rule 18 and 20 of JJ Model Rules, 2016.*
- *Education rehabilitation- The child should be linked to formal school and necessary follow up to be conducted with the school authorities, as per the directions of CWC.*
- *Economic rehabilitation- If eligible, SLSA may decide the quantum of compensation to be awarded to the child under Section 157 of CrPC.*

Moreover, the Standing Order should be updated, from time to time, incorporating recent directions issued by concerned courts, advisories by MHA and SOPs/Guidelines by MWCD and SLSA.

- **Adding other crimes with kidnapping:** It was noted that all cases of missing children were recorded under Section 363 of IPC in Delhi. Thus, cases of missing children in Delhi are being reported as 'kidnapping' cases in NCRB Crime in India Reports. However, in cases where other crimes are also included, along with kidnapping,

they are not recorded as different categories within the missing children cases. Thus, it is not possible to estimate how many missing children are trafficked or are victims of child labour, child abuse or any other crime.

Currently, the methodology used by NCRB for counting crimes is based on "Principal Offence Rule' which suggests that If many offences are registered in a single FIR case, only the most heinous crime i.e. the one that attracts maximum punishment is considered as counting unit. Since, this is universally accepted standard, it is suggested that police keep data of all connected crimes related to missing children at the station level so that further analysis can be done, whenever needed.

6.2 Procedural

Key research questions addressed:

- What are the steps/processes followed by different stakeholders while handling cases of missing children? What are the gaps in these processes when compared to existing laws, guidelines, orders and SOPs?
- What are the overall gaps and challenges in ensuring rehabilitation of missing/traced children?
- What is the impact on rights of children who go missing?
- What type of services are provided to children who are traced and assessment of their adequacy in terms of existing provisions of laws and schemes?

Recommendations

- **Risk Assessment:** The study shows that Delhi Police followed the Standing Order No. 52 (now updated by Standing Order No. Crime/18/2022) in cases of missing children. While the Standing Order provides for process to be followed by police officials in cases of missing children, it does not have any provision for assessing the risk that the child could be in.

It is suggested that Risk Assessment Form as per the SOP formulated by MWCD be integrated within the Standing Order No. Crime/18/2022 of Delhi Police for cases of missing children and should be filled by the Station House Officer (SHO) in charge to structure inquiries and to assist the level of risk posed to the missing child. The assessment focuses on additional vulnerabilities of the child (age, economic conditions, gender, prior victim of any crime, medical condition, drug abuse etc.)²⁸.

The form is produced below:

²⁸ Please refer to Annexure 1 for detailed checklists for police officials

No.	Investigative considerations	Details and circumstances	Persons giving that information
1.	Whether the child is under the age of 14 years		
2.	If the missing person is a girl child		
3.	If the child comes from the Economically Weaker Section(EWS)		
4.	If the missing child has been a subject of prior missing persons reports; or previously disappeared and suffered or was exposed to harm whilst missing		
5.	If the missing child has previously been a victim/witness in any criminal investigation		
6.	If the missing child suffers from a mental or physical impairment or serious illness; or requires essential medication or treatment not readily available to them e.g. asthma inhalers or insulin?		
7.	If the child is known to associate with adults or children who present risk of harm e.g. sexual offenders, drug peddlers etc.		
8.	If the child had been associated with any known criminals		
9.	If the child had been interacting with adults on the internet		
10.	If the child was subject to drugs and alcohol dependency		

11.	If the complainants have reason to believe that the missing child has been abducted or kidnapped for ransom		
12.	If there are suspicions of suicide or self-harm		
13.	If the child was involved in violent incidents prior to crime		
14.	If the child has had a history of abuse at home		
15.	If the child is being compelled/manipulated into a situation of bonded or exploitative child labour with or without knowledge of the parents/family/legal guardian		
16.	If there is a high likelihood that the child may get lured into trafficking		
17.	If the child is being threatened by related or non-related adults to take up inappropriate work		
18.	If there is a likelihood that the child may get “sold” by related or non-related persons		
19.	Inclement weather conditions where exposure would seriously increase the risk to health		

- **Long-term cases of missing children:** Paragraph XIII of the Standing Order No Crime/18/2022 provides for transfer of the investigation of the case to AHTU where a child cannot be traced within a period of four months. However, it was found in some cases that the children had been untraced for more than two years. In such

cases, where all the substantive leads have been diligently followed and all the likely places to look for the child have been searched, a set of protocols should be formulated to guide future course of action. Even when children leave voluntarily, it does not mean that they are safe, and the situation cannot be treated lightly. The National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention under the US Department of Justice provides a detailed guide on useful strategies for finding long term missing children.

Following considerations, based on *Long-term missing child guide for law enforcement: Strategies for finding long-term missing children* could be used to design the protocol for such cases:

- **Proper transfer of case:** When police officials leave a case, they might take away with them critical information not necessarily found in the case files, especially information gathered in the early and most critical stages when the investigation was most intense. The Investigation Officer (IO) should ensure that he/she is present during handing over of the case to AHTU and spends a considerable amount of time with the new team to explain details about the cases.
- **Countering 'tunnel vision':** Sometimes, police officials may focus too closely on a particular scenario without fully considering or examining other possibilities. This is called *tunnel vision*. This is more likely to happen in cases of runaway children where it is assumed that children have eloped for marriage or for living together. The IO should be periodically reminded of this bias and should be encouraged to explore all possible scenarios instead of focusing on only one.

6.3 Preventive

Key research questions addressed:

- What are major reasons of children going missing?
- What is the impact on rights of children who go missing?

The study shows at 28% of the children ran away from their homes either due to study related challenges or because of some altercation with their parents at their homes. Other studies have also shown that youth from families experiencing high levels of conflict or ineffective supervision and communication might be more likely to act out, associate with negative peers, or cope using drugs or alcohol (Kim, Tajima et al, 2009). It is known that adolescent years are the most difficult years of child raising as it is in this developmental stage that individual, cognitive, social, emotional, and contextual changes come together (UNICEF, 2018). Moreover, direct and indirect consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have also re-emphasized the importance of quality parenting programmes to ensure the well-being of adolescents.

Studies suggest that better understanding of the risk factors for runaway behavior can guide prevention efforts and help in targeting needs of children/adolescents who may be at risk (Holiday, Edelen et al, 2017).

Family based parenting programmes can address multiple concerns leading to better outcomes and lifestyles for both parents and adolescents, thus reducing risk of children opting out for delinquent behaviours or running away. Programmes that strengthen family relationships and improve parenting skills are can be effective strategies for addressing youth problems. These could include engagement at family as well as school level:

- Parents' skill training, especially on themes such as positive interaction, group building, stress management, anger coping, encouraging desired behaviors using humour, reasonable consequences, and positive attention and reinforcement etc.

- One to one engagement with adolescents facilitated by civil society organisations, youth groups such as Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Cadet Corps (NCC) and National Service Scheme (NSS).
- Virtual interaction with parents and adolescents through tele-counselling, by Counselors or Child Welfare Committee.
- Schools should have life skills sessions with adolescents on sex, sexuality, relationships, to cope with emotions such as stress, anxiety, low self-confidence, anger, disappointments, self-image as well as relationships with parents with regard to studies and unrealistic expectations. There should be sessions on laws such as POCSO, JJ Act, CPCR Acts etc. so that children are aware of their rights and entitlements.
- It is also important to have school counsellors and safe spaces in schools for children and adolescents to share their views, thoughts, experiences without fear, or shame, and treated with respect and where required support given to the child/adolescent to overcome the crisis.
- Sensitising school administration that It is part of the responsibility of the school to find out if a child is absent from school for a long period of time.

6.4 Further areas of study

- The current study focused on missing children only in Delhi. A nation-wide study should be conducted to understand the causes of children going missing so that appropriate interventions could be designed accordingly.
- This study focused only on reported cases of missing children, thus omitting non-reported cases or cases which would have been clubbed under other crimes such as human trafficking. Further study on non-reported cases of missing children, untraced cases of missing children and analysis of cases which involved other crimes against children such as sexual abuse, human trafficking, child labour, child marriage etc. needs to be carried out.
- Age-wise causes of children going missing can be further studied to develop targeted interventions.

- The study reveals that various technological interventions such as ZIPNet and TrackChild Portal are being used by the government. Evaluation of effectiveness of such portals/technologies, including duplication of data entry, if any, how CCIs enter/ access information of missing children could prove helpful in developing better monitoring platforms/tools, especially in cases where multiple states are involved.
- As the new Child Helpline 112 becomes functional across the country, a country wide analysis on the number of calls related to missing children received on the Helpline and the action taken therein is suggested.
- Comparison of the data relating to unclaimed dead bodies with the data relating to missing children is suggested.
- Further analysis of the cases handled by AHTU related to missing children is needed.
- Evaluation of cases listed under ‘missing deemed kidnapped’ under the Chapter on Kidnapping and Abduction of Crime in India Report by NCRB is suggested.

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Annexures

Annexure 1: Investigative Checklist for Law Enforcement When Helping Unsupervised and Runaway Children

The following checklist has been taken from National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children²⁹, a private, non-profit corporation based in United States of America, whose mission is to help find missing children, reduce child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimization. The checklist can help police officials in India when they come in contact with unsupervised or runaway children. The checklist can be further adapted to integrate the principle of best interest of the child.

²⁹ <https://www.missingkids.org/ourwork/publications>

INVESTIGATIVE CHECKLIST FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

WHEN HELPING UNSUPERVISED AND RUNAWAY CHILDREN



This checklist provides an investigative framework for officers when coming in contact with unsupervised and/or runaway children¹ while on patrol. This information is offered to enhance the officer's ability to make educated decisions when helping to safeguard unsupervised and/or runaway children. Officers are encouraged to rely on the laws in their jurisdiction as well as their intuition and experience when making decisions regarding the best interest of the child and community.

Field Interview: Initial Phase

The initial phase of the field interview should be conducted in a manner so as to establish the child's statements, which will form the basis in assessing the child's level of risk.

- [] Conduct a field interview. If the child is in the company of other people, **separate** everyone before conducting the field interview(s).
- [] Obtain identifying information, such as name and address, and descriptors such as height, weight, and age. Remember the child may be reluctant to provide the information or may provide incorrect information.
- [] Query information obtained through the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) database and the state/territorial law-enforcement system counterpart. If a record is located, determine the child's status, such as missing or a charged offense, and determine whether grounds exist to immediately place the child in protective custody and transport the child for proper investigative follow-up, placement, or disposition. If no record is located, proceed with the field interview.
- [] Develop a timeline of the child's **whereabouts** and **activities** by asking
 - [] Who have you associated with while on the street?
 - [] What is your relationship with this/these individual(s)?
 - [] Where have you stayed?
 - [] With whom have you stayed?
 - [] How long have you stayed with them?
 - [] How long have you spent time on the street, and what have you done while on the street?
- [] Ask the child, in a **direct** manner, if he or she is missing, he or she is a runaway, or it is **possible** someone may be looking for him or her. Focus on deviations in behavior, both verbal and non-verbal, exhibited by the child during this initial interview phase. Keep in mind the child may be deceptive or fail to disclose information due to concerns such as fear, intimidation, or threats of reprisal.
 - [] If the child indicates **yes**, consider placing him or her in protective custody and transporting him or her for proper investigative follow-up, placement, or disposition.
 - [] If the child indicates **no**, proceed with the second phase of the field interview.

Field Interview: Second Phase

An **in-depth** interview of the child should be conducted based on information obtained during the initial phase of the field interview in order to further **assess the child's level of risk** if allowed to remain unsupervised. Continue to look for discrepancies in information obtained in the initial phase of the field interview with information obtained during the second phase of the interview.

- [] Obtain **detailed** information about the child including
 - [] Full name.
 - [] Nickname(s).
 - [] Full physical description to include clothing, body piercings, tattoos, and any personal items such as a backpack and wireless device. **Note:** NCIC online searches should be conducted on personal items.
 - [] Date of birth/age. **Note:** Children 13 years old or younger do not have the survival skills necessary to protect themselves from exploitation on the streets.
 - [] Place of birth.
 - [] Addresses, both current and prior.
 - [] Home phone number.
 - [] Cell phone number.
 - [] Last time the child was **seen** at home.
 - [] Name of school attending or has attended.
 - [] Date last attended school.
 - [] Employment information, if the child is employed, including name, address, and phone number of the employer.
- [] Obtain full name, address, and home/business phone number(s) of last person/people to **see** the child at
 - [] Home.
 - [] School.

¹In this checklist the term "child" is used to refer to anyone younger than the age of 18 or the legal age of majority.

- [] Ask the child if he or she is under the care of a doctor. If so obtain the doctor's name, address, and phone number.
- [] Determine if the child is taking any prescription medication and/or other drugs, ranging from over-the-counter medications to illegal substances, and if he or she is in possession of any. Note any drug dependencies putting the child at risk.
- [] Ask the child if he or she has been involved in or the victim of any crimes since leaving home. Potential risk factors and/or indicators of trafficking and exploitation include
 - [] History of emotional, sexual, or other physical abuse.
 - [] Signs of current physical abuse and/or sexually transmitted diseases.
 - [] History of running away or current status as a runaway.
 - [] Appearance of expensive gifts, clothing, or other costly items with no valid explanation of their source.
 - [] Presence of an older boy-/girlfriend.
 - [] Drug addiction.
 - [] Withdrawal or lack of interest in previous activities.
 - [] Gang involvement.
- [] Ask the child for information about family members, both immediate and extended, including name, address, home/business phone number(s), and place(s) of employment.
- [] Determine the relationship(s) the child has with the identified family members.
- [] Identify and explore any dysfunctional relationships between family member(s) and the child. Keep in mind the child may have left home due to mental, physical, or sexual abuse or exploitation at the hands of a family member or individual otherwise known to the child.
- [] Ask the child to provide names, addresses, and phone numbers of friends who live or lived nearby and those with whom he or she attends or attended school.
- [] Identify and determine if the child is out of his or her zone of safety based on the child's age, the child's level of maturity, and environment in which the child is found. If so consider placing the child in protective custody and transporting the child for proper investigative follow-up, placement, or disposition.

Field Interview: Final Phase

Additional information must be obtained, based on the initial and secondary information gathered, in order to make a determination about allowing the child to remain unsupervised or placing the child in protective custody.

- [] Ask communications to check for any prior contact or calls for service with the child or child's family members
- [] Check with surrounding jurisdictions for prior contact with the child and the child's family members

- [] Check with homeless shelters for any prior contact with the child
- [] Check with the person/people the child identified as the last one(s) to see him or her at home
- [] Check with the person/people the child identified as the last one(s) to see him or her at school
- [] Check with the child's family members to obtain additional information about the child
- [] Check with the child's friends to obtain additional information about the child
- [] Check with the child's school to obtain additional information about the child
- [] Check with the child's place of employment, if employed, to obtain additional information about the child

Annexure 2: Quick-Reference Guide for Families

The following checklist has been taken from the published resources of National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children³⁰.

MISSING-CHILD, EMERGENCY-RESPONSE, QUICK-REFERENCE GUIDE FOR FAMILIES



- [] Contact your local law-enforcement agency as soon as you have determined your child is missing or has been abducted. Do not delay in reporting your child missing to law enforcement.
- [] Search any area into which a child could crawl or hide and possibly be asleep or unable to get out. This includes closets, piles of laundry, in and under beds, inside large appliances, in vehicles including trunks, or any other space into which a child might fit. Check areas where your child was last seen or may have played such as open or abandoned wells, caves, sheds, buildings, and crawl spaces.
- [] Provide law enforcement with the date, time, and location where your child was last seen, if known.
- [] Provide law enforcement with the name(s) of the last person/people who saw your child, if known.
- [] Determine the names or descriptions of companions or associates last seen with your child.
- [] Secure your child's room and personal belongings until law enforcement has the opportunity to conduct a search.
- [] Identify and secure any computers and wireless devices used by your child, but do not attempt to conduct a search of these devices on your own. Ask law enforcement to look for clues in any chat and social-networking websites your child has visited or hosts.
- [] Provide law enforcement with information about your child's general health and any medical conditions or concerns.
- [] Compile descriptive information about your child and have the information available to provide to the first-responding, law-enforcement investigator. Descriptive information should include items and information such as a recent, clear, color photo of your child; video of your child; a description of the clothing worn at the time the child was last seen; cell and other phone numbers; date of birth; hair and eye color; height; weight; complexion; identifiers such as eyeglasses or contact lenses, braces, body piercings, tattoos; and/or other unique physical attributes.

[] AMBER

- [] Ask the responding officer if a neighborhood canvass will be conducted.
- [] Restrict access to the home, no matter where your child was last seen, until law enforcement has arrived and had the opportunity to search the home and surrounding area.
- [] Try to keep all phone lines open.
- [] Provide law enforcement with information regarding custody issues, if any, including court-ordered visitation conditions.
- [] Provide law enforcement with information about any recent changes in your child's behavior.
- [] Provide law enforcement with information about any individuals who have recently shown unusual attention to or interest in your child.
- [] Obtain the name of and contact information for the primary investigator assigned to your child's case.

³⁰ <https://www.missingkids.org/ourwork/publications>

Annexure 3: Tools

Quantitative Tool

For Traced Children

Q. No.	Basic Profile	Options
1.	Name (optional)	
2.	Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Male ● Female ● Transgender
3.	Age (when the child went missing)	
4.	Current Age	
5.	Parents/Caregivers (Tick)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mother ● Father ● Others, specify _____
6.	Family structure (family members staying together under the same roof) <i>(select all applicable)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Father ● Mother ● Sister ● Brother ● Relative, specify _____ ● Grandparents ● Others, specify _____
7.	Number of Siblings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sister: _____ ● Brother: _____
8.	Birth order (amongst siblings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1st ● 2nd ● 3rd ● 4th ● 5th
9.	Caste category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● General ● OBC ● SC ● ST ● Don't Know
10.	Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hindu ● Muslim ● Christian ● Sikh ● Jain

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others, specify _____
11.	Birthplace (district & state)	
12.	Place from where the child went missing	
13.	District currently living and locality	
14.	Educational level (studied till class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never attended school • Class I • Class II • Class III • Class IV • Class V • Class VI • Class VII • Class VIII • Class IX • Class X • Class XII
15.	Do you go to school currently?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
16.	Did you drop out of school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
17.	Type of locality <i>This is an observer question</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-urban • JJ Colony • Urban Slum • Gated colony (apartment) • Gated colony (standalone houses) • Other, specify _____
I. Circumstances and reasons for going missing		
18.	Can you tell us how did you go missing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ran away, skip to question 24 • Lost in the way while going somewhere, skip to section II • Kidnapped • Don't want to share • Other, please mention _____
19.	Do you know why were you kidnapped? <i>Reasons for prevalence of these crimes</i> <i>(Prompt- Did you know the perpetrator. Simplify the options to the child so that she/he can choose one)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ransom • Child labour • Begging • Sexual exploitation • Trafficking • Prostitution • Marriage • Family dispute • Personal enmity • Don't know

20.	Can you remember the number of people who kidnapped you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, specify_____ No
21.	Did you know the person who kidnapped you? <i>Potential perpetrators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes No, skip to Section II
22.	How do you know that person? (skip to Section II)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lives in neighbourhood Family friend Relative Other, specify_____
23.	Can you share why you decided to run away? <i>(Can mark multiple options)</i> <i>Prompt only once</i> <i>(Reasons for children running away)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scolded by parents Beaten by parents Argument with family members, siblings, parents Felt no one loved at home Felt isolated Fight with friends/classmates in school Low marks in some subject Scolded by teachers in school Influenced by friends Influenced by media, movies, etc. Ran away to work Lured by an acquaintance Lured by stranger Other, specify_____
24.	At what time did you run away? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Potential triggers and push and pull factors for running away</i> <i>Warning signs for such children likely to runaway</i> <i>Prompt only once</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Left home for school but did not went to school After school time In the evening After everyone went to sleep Don't remember Other, specify_____
25.	Did you ever talked to your parents/caregivers about your feelings before running away? <i>Vulnerability of child</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes No
26.	Did you tell anyone before running away?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, specify_____ No
27.	Which mode did you choose to run away?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking Cycle Auto rickshaw Took city bus service Metro

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle of acquaintance/friend/accompaniment • Train
28.	Did you have money for travel and food?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No- skip to Section II
29.	How did you get this money?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pocket money from parents • Took out of parents wallet • Saved money • Friend/sibling loaned the money • Accompanier had money
II. Lived experiences- impact on rights of children		
30.	<p>Can you share your experience when you were kidnapped /ran away/lost?</p> <p>Can mark multiple options Prompts- Where did you go? Did you meet someone?</p>	<p>If Kidnapped</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tied and eyes blindfolded • Beaten up • Scolded to keep quiet • Intimidated • Not offered food • All the above • Other, specify_____ <p>If ran away/lost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scared • Happy • Missed Home • Missed Parents/Siblings • Other, specify_____
31.	Were you forced to work (as child labour)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
32.	Did you face any physical abuse?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
33.	<p>Did you face any other type of abuse?</p> <p><i>Prompt- Notice for signs of the child. Use a picture of the body to point which body part was hurt.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, specify_____ • No • Physical signs shown by the child_____
34.	<p>Did you know the place where you were kept captive?</p> <p><i>Prompt- Any landmarks that you remember of that area?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. If yes, where? • No
35.	<p>Can you recall how far it is from your residence?</p> <p>If yes, please specify...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • No

	<i>Prompt to share hours/minutes it took to reach the location.</i>	
36.	Which person you immediately recalled for help apart from parents/guardian? <i>Trusted response or reporting mechanism which they reached out or would reach out to</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police • Childline • Common people on road • Others, _____
37.	Did you know how many days/hours it took for others to find you?	
III. Interaction with law enforcement- barriers in ensuring justice, impact on rights of child		
38.	Can you tell us who rescued or found you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police • Others unknown- NGO, Childline etc. • Others known- Family/Relatives/Neighbour • Don't know
39.	After rescue, how many people talked to you about the incident? <i>Experience of interaction with law enforcement agencies, child protection functionaries and CSOs.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One • Two • More than two • Don't remember
40.	Was there a counsellor during the interaction?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
41.	Did the people who rescued you talked to you nicely?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
42.	Whether any one in police uniform talked to you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
43.	Whether any one from NGO talked to you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Don't know
44.	How did you feel while interacting with them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxed • Comfortable • Not comfortable • Confused • Don't remember
45.	Did you receive shelter or stay arrangement by those who rescued you or found you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
46.	How was the stay arrangement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable • Uncomfortable

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't say
47.	Did you receive food or refreshments?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
48.	Has anyone from police/any other agency questioned you after you were sent back home?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
49.	How many times police/other authorities visited your home after rescue?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 time • 2 times • More than 2 times
IV. Other information- prevention, protection, suggestions		
50.	Do you see police regularly in your locality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Sometimes
51.	Do your parents/caregivers discuss or talk to you about your routine, study or play?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
52.	Do your parents/caregivers inform you about precautions to be taken when travelling alone?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
53.	Is there anything else that you would have wanted the authorities to do for you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, please describe_____ • No

Qualitative Tools

Traced Children

I. General background

1. Please tell us about your family background (how many family members, their occupation, native place, migrant status)

II. Reasons for going missing and circumstances

(If the child was kidnapped /lost)

2. Can you explain the circumstances before you were kidnapped /lost?

Prompts- What were you doing? Where were you? Had you informed anyone about your whereabouts? Were your friends aware where you had gone?

3. Did the kidnapper inform you where and why he was taking you? What did he tell you while taking you away?

Prompts- Ask the child to narrate the events of that time, if possible, but do not force.

(If the child ran away)

4. Can you explain the circumstances before you ran away?

Prompts- When did you decide to run away? What caused this action? Had you informed anyone about your whereabouts? Were your friends aware where you had gone? Had you thought where you will be going prior to running away?

5. How do you like your home?

Prompts- Is there anything you dislike about your home? Do you think anything at your home or neighbourhood should be improved or different? Do you talk to your parents/caregivers or siblings about your feelings? What is their response?

6. Please tell us about your friends.

Prompts- How many friends do you have? At what time do you all get together? How much time do you spend with your friends? Do you discuss about your home with your friends?

III. Experiences while missing- impact on rights

7. How was the behaviour of the kidnapper/s with you?

Prompts- Did they offer food/refreshments? What kind of language was used- e.g. threatening, abusive or non-threatening? Did the child face any kind of violence?

IV. Response- impact on rights, barriers in ensuring justice

8. Please tell us about your experience when you were found?

Prompts- Who found you? Where were you taken? How did the rescuers talk to you? Did they offer food and shelter? How many people talked to you?

9. Did you find anyone's behaviour not appropriate or good?

Prompts- Were you asked too many questions? Were you asked to wait somewhere for long? Did someone scold you?

V. Prevention, protection, rehabilitation and suggestions

10. What are the risks and dangers to children you have observed/noticed in your locality?

11. What do you know or have heard about kidnapping of children? What may the commonly known reasons?

12. Do you know the likely reasons for children to run away and go missing?

13. Did anyone from the authorities come to meet you after you were sent back home? What was their behaviour with your parents/family members?

Prompts- Did the officials argue with your parents/family members? Were your parents/family members happy with the officials?

Parents of traced children

I. General Background

1. Please tell us about your family background.

Prompts- How many family members, their occupation, native place, migrant status.

II. Reasons for child going missing and circumstances

(If the child was kidnapped /lost)

2. Can you explain the circumstances before your child was kidnapped?

Prompts- What was your child doing? Where were you? Did your child inform you where he/she was going? Did you send your child to someplace? If yes, why did you send him/her?

3. Did the kidnapper/s contact you? If yes, how soon and what were their demands?

Were they known to you? Did they threaten you

Prompts- Did the kidnapper/s threaten you? Did they abuse you?

(If the child ran away)

4. Can you explain the circumstances before your child ran way?

Prompts- Did your child tell before about leaving or running away? Did you notice any change in the behaviour of the child before he ran away?

5. What do you think caused your child to run away?

Prompts- Was the child angry about something? Is your child bullied by siblings or friends?

6. How is your child's behaviour towards you?

Prompts- Does he/she share about his/her problems with you? Is he/she often angry with you?

7. Can you tell us about the friends of the child?

Prompts- How many friends the child has? Have you met them all? What kind of influence do you think the friends have on your child- good/bad (any example)?

II. Reporting and response- impact on rights, barriers in ensuring justice

8. Whom did you inform first about the missing child? What was their response?

9. Did you face any challenges in reporting the missing child to police/other agencies? If yes, can you specify them?

Prompts- Was your complaint quickly recorded? Was the behaviour of the officials appropriate?

10. Did the authorities register an FIR or only a DD entry was made? In case of DD entry, did you ask why FIR was not registered? What was the reason given for not registering the FIR?

Prompts- Explain what a DD entry is.

11. Besides police, did you interact with any other law enforcement agency? What did they ask or inform you? How was their behaviour towards you?

12. Please inform if any public notification for your missing child was published? If yes, are you aware of the platforms on which the information was published?

III. Investigation- barriers in ensuring justice, delivery of services, protection, impact on rights

13. How long did it take for the authorities to find your child? Do you think the time taken was long or appropriate? During the process of investigation, how many times did you visit the police station or other government office?

14. Are you aware (if applicable) if the perpetrators were caught? Did the police inform regularly about the follow up of the case? If yes, how often?

15. Was any compensation awarded to you or your child? If yes, under what scheme and what was the amount? Did any agency link you with any of the government welfare schemes? If yes, please specify.

16. Did you notice any sign of physical harm in your child after returning back? If yes, please specify.

17. Was any medical test carried out by the authorities? If yes, was any kind of abuse reported in the tests?

18. Was there any change in the behaviour of your child after returning back? If yes, what were the changes?

19. Did your child discuss with you his/her experiences when he/she was in captivity or lost? Did he/she share details about any abuse which he/she had faced? Please specify..

20. What was the experience of your child, as told to you, after interacting with law enforcement officials?

Prompt- Please share what your child told you after returning back? Did he/she complain about any specific official? Did he/she praise any specific official?

IV. Prevention

21. Have you noticed any awareness campaign undertaken by local community members/leaders, police or any other agency on missing children? Please share details.

V. Suggestions & Recommendations

22. In your opinion, what role parents/communities can play in preventing incidents like kidnapping, trafficking against children and improve child safety?
23. In your opinion, what role government can play in preventing incidents like kidnapping, trafficking against children and improve child safety?
24. Please share your suggestions to improve response from law enforcement officials like police during reporting, investigation and follow up?

Parents of untraced children

I. General Background

1. Please tell us about your family background.

Prompts- How many family members, their occupation, native place, migrant status.

II. Reasons for child going missing and circumstances

(If the child was kidnapped /lost)

2. Can you explain the circumstances before your child was kidnapped?

Prompts- What was your child doing? Where were you? Did your child inform you where he/she was going? Did you send your child to someplace? If yes, why did you send him/her?

3. Did the kidnapper/s contact you? If yes, how soon and what were their demands?

Were they known to you? Did they threaten you

Prompts- Did the kidnapper/s threaten you? Did they abuse you?

(If the child ran away)

4. Can you explain the circumstances before your child ran way?

Prompts- Did your child tell before about leaving or running away? Did you notice any change in the behaviour of the child before he ran away?

5. What do you think caused your child to run away?

Prompts- Was the child angry about something? Was your child bullied by siblings or friends?

6. How was your child's behaviour towards you?

Prompts- Did he/she share about his/her problems with you? Did he/she often angry with you?

7. Can you tell us about the friends of the child?

Prompts- How many friends the child has? Have you met them all? What kind of influence do you think the friends have on your child- good/bad (any example)?

II. Reporting and response- impact on rights, barriers in ensuring justice

8. Whom did you inform first about the missing child? What was their response?
9. Did you face any challenges in reporting the missing child to police/other agencies? If yes, can you specify them?

Prompts- Was your complaint quickly recorded? Was the behaviour of the officials appropriate?

10. Did the authorities register an FIR or only a DD entry was made? In case of DD entry, did you ask why FIR was not registered? What was the reason given for not registering the FIR?

Prompts- Explain what a DD entry is.

11. Besides police, did you interact with any other law enforcement agency? What did they ask or inform you? How was their behaviour towards you?

12. Please inform if any public notification for your missing child was published? If yes, are you aware of the platforms on which the information was published?

III. Investigation- barriers in ensuring justice, delivery of services, protection, impact on rights

13. How long it has been since your child went missing? During the process of investigation, how many times have you visited the police station or other government office? Why do you think there has been so much delay?

14. Are you aware (if applicable) if any perpetrators have been caught? Does the police inform regularly about the follow up of the case? If yes, how often?

15. Did any agency link you with any of the government welfare schemes? If yes, please specify.

IV. Prevention

16. Have you noticed any awareness campaign undertaken by local community members/leaders, police or any other agency on missing children? Please share details.

V. Suggestions & Recommendations

17. In your opinion, what role parents/communities can play in preventing incidents like kidnapping, trafficking against children and improve child safety?

18. In your opinion, what role government can play in preventing incidents like kidnapping, trafficking against children and improve child safety?

19. Please share your suggestions to improve response from law enforcement officials like police during reporting, investigation and follow up?

Community leaders

I. Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, why do you think children go missing?
2. What are the risks and dangers for children you see in your locality/community?
3. What are the potential factors at household and community level that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?

II. Reporting Mechanism- impact on rights, barriers in ensuring justice

4. Have you observed/know personally any incidences of missing children in your locality? If yes, please explain what had happened.
5. What do you think are the challenges in reporting the cases of missing children?
6. Do you know the process to report the cases of missing children? If yes, please explain. Which agency should be contacted to report the cases?
7. Have you personally interacted with law enforcement agencies, child protection functionaries and NGOs for any such incidences? If yes, please share your experience? *Prompts- what was the response from such agencies? Was any solution provided?*
8. Have you noticed any public notification (miking, posters) for missing child? If yes, are you aware of the platforms on which such information is published?

III. Protection and Prevention

9. Have you undertaken any awareness campaign on missing children? If yes please share details.
10. Have you noticed any awareness campaign undertaken by citizens, police or any other government body? Please share details.

IV. Suggestions and Recommendations

11. In your opinion, what role community leader can play in improving children's safety?
12. In your opinion, what support and protection measures are required from government authorities for children's safety?

Childline

I. Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what are the major reasons for children going missing?
2. What are the potential factors that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?

3. In your experience, have you identified any link between missing children and other crimes against children like child labour, child trafficking, child abuse etc.? If yes, please explain.

Reporting Mechanism- barriers/challenges in ensuring justice

4. Please tell us about the process you follow when a case of a missing child is reported to CHILDLINE? Please illustrate this with the help of a case.

Investigation- barriers/challenges in ensuring justice, service delivery

5. Is there any role of CHILDLINE in investigation processes? If yes, please share.
6. Does CHILDLINE play role in follow up of the cases with parents? Please describe.
7. What is the process if the missing child is rescued in a different State? Do you follow any Inter-State protocols? Please share.

Data Management- mapping of areas, barriers/challenges in ensuring justice

8. Does childline maintains records on missing children? If yes, what information is maintained at the local centre? If this data shared with any other agency? If yes, please share the names of agencies.
9. As per your records, please share the profile of children who go missing.
Prompts- Distribution of male and female children, age group, economic background of children etc.
10. What are the challenges in maintaining and accessing data related to missing children?
11. Please tell whether childline undertakes public notification and have an alert system in case of children goes missing?
12. Please share case studies of missing and traced children.

Prevention and awareness

13. Is there any prevention and awareness efforts by childline to reduce cases of missing children?

Barriers /Challenges in ensuring justice

14. Are there any procedural and other challenges faced by childline which leads to delays in cases of missing children?
Prompts- Coordination with police and other agencies, follow up of cases in courts, delivery of compensation, etc.
15. Does CHILDLINE follow a child-friendly approach while responding to cases of missing children? What does this approach involve?

16. While dealing with cases of missing children, what have been the learnings of CHILDLINE?

Suggestions and Recommendations

17. Please share your recommendations to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing, rescue, rehabilitation, capacity building and training regarding cases of missing children.

Prompt- Please ask for each theme separately.

Police

I. Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what are the major reasons for children going missing?
2. What are the potential factors that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?
3. In your experience, have you identified any link between missing children and other crimes against children like child labour, child trafficking, child abuse etc.? If yes, please explain.

II. Reporting Mechanism- barriers/challenges in ensuring justice, impact on rights of children

4. What are the various modes of reaching out to police to report a case of missing child? Which mode is normally used by citizens?
Prompt- Whether people call or directly visit the police station?
5. How much time is taken to begin the investigation after a complaint is received?
6. What are the agencies with which the information about the case is shared? Is there any system in place for coordination with other agencies? Please share details.
7. Is there any early alert system of missing children? Please share details.
8. Do you follow any Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), court orders or advisories? Please share their details. Which document is considered to be most important for cases of missing children? How do you ensure compliance with the guidelines?

III. Investigation- barriers/challenges in ensuring justice, impact on rights of children, protection,

9. How much time does an average investigation of a case of missing children take? What are the reasons for a case to be resolved quickly or a case taking longer than usual?

10. Please describe the steps involved in investigating cases of missing children- from reporting, collecting evidence, tracing/rescue, trial?
11. Is FIR registered in all cases of missing children? What information is recorded in FIR?
12. What are the laws and IPC sections which are invoked in a case of missing children?
13. What are the challenges experienced in each of these steps?

14. What is the process if the missing child is rescued in a different State? Do you follow any Inter-State protocols? Please share.
15. What do you think is the right way to interact and deal with children, especially when they are in distress? Are you aware about child friendly approach? If yes, please describe what it entails.
16. What are the challenges faced during inter-agency coordination?

IV. Data Management- mapping of areas

17. How is data on missing children stored in each police station? How is it linked to other databases like Track Child Portal, Zip Net, Talaash and others?
18. Is data on missing children shared with other agencies like CHILDLINE, CWC or other government department? Please specify.
19. Does the police prepare profiles of the perpetrators? In your experience, what is the profile of perpetrators who kidnap children?
Prompt- Gender, age group, economic background
20. Is there any database of offenders or repeat offenders? If yes, what information is stored in the database.
21. What challenges you face in data management, storage, confidentiality and sharing with concerned agencies?
22. Please explain the process of public notification of the cases of missing children. Is consent of parents mandatory for this? What are the platforms where this information is shared? What is their geographic coverage and circulation mechanism?
23. Please share case studies of missing and traced children

V. Prevention and awareness

24. Is there any surveillance mechanism in place to prevent cases of missing children?
25. Is the police involved in any type of awareness activity with the community? If yes, please share its details.

VI. Suggestions and Recommendations

26. Please share your recommendation to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing, rescue, capacity building and training.

Judiciary

I. Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what are the major reasons for children going missing?
2. What are the potential factors that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?
3. In your experience, have you identified any link between missing children and other crimes against children like child labour, child trafficking, child abuse etc.? If yes, please explain.

II. Trial- barriers/challenges in ensuring justice

4. How much time does a trial of an average missing children case take? What are the reasons for a case to be resolved quickly or a case taking longer than usual?
5. Does the court use any of the judgements as guidance to adjudicate cases of missing children? Can you share details.
6. What are the laws and IPC sections which are generally applied in cases of missing children?
7. What are the challenges experienced while adjudicating a case of missing child?
8. In your experience, what is the profile of perpetrators who kidnap children?
Prompt- Gender, age group, economic background
9. In your experience, what is the rate of convictions in cases of missing children? Why do you think the convictions are high/low?

III. Suggestions and Recommendations

10. Please share your recommendation to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, prosecution and rehabilitation.

Functionaries of Child Care Institutions

I. Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what are the major reasons for children going missing?

2. What are the potential factors that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?
3. In your experience, have you identified any link between missing children and other crimes against children like child labour, child trafficking, child abuse etc.? If yes, please explain.

II. Rehabilitation

4. What type of rehabilitation service do you provide for traced children?

III. Data Management- mapping of areas

5. Does your institute maintain records on missing children? If yes, what information is maintained at the centre? If this data shared with any other agency? If yes, please share the names of agencies.
6. As per your records, please share the profile of children who go missing.
Prompts- Distribution of male and female children, age group, economic background of children etc.
7. What are the challenges in maintaining and accessing data related to missing children?
8. Please share case studies of missing and traced children.

IV. Prevention and awareness

9. Is there any prevention and awareness efforts by your institute to reduce cases of missing children? Please share details.

V. Barriers/challenges in ensuring justice

10. Are there any procedural and other challenges faced by your institute, especially in rehabilitation of missing children? Please describe.
Prompts- Coordination with police and other agencies, follow up of cases in courts, delivery of compensation, etc.
11. Does your institute follow a child-friendly approach while responding to cases of missing children? What does this approach involve?
12. While dealing with cases of missing children, what have been the learnings of your institute?

VI. Suggestions and Recommendations

13. Please share your recommendations to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing, rescue, rehabilitation, capacity building and training regarding cases of missing children.
Prompt- Please ask for each theme separately.

Child Welfare Committee (CWC)

I. Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what are the major reasons for children going missing?
2. What are the potential factors that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?
3. In your experience, have you identified any link between missing children and other crimes against children like child labour, child trafficking, child abuse etc.? If yes, please explain.

II. Reporting Mechanism- barriers/challenges in ensuring justice, protection

4. Are missing children cases reported to you? What is the process you employ if any missing children case is reported to you?
5. What is the process employed if a child is produced before you who had been missing?
6. Are traced children who are victims of abuse or any other crime presented before the Committee? Please explain the process in this case.

III. Delivery of service, rehabilitation

7. Does CWC carry follow up with the families of missing children?
8. What type of compensation, if any, is provided to the children or their families?
9. Are there any schemes through which the children or their families are linked? Please share details.

IV. Data Management- mapping

10. Does CWC maintain records on missing children? If yes, what information is maintained? If this data shared with any other agency? If yes, please share the names of agencies.
11. As per your records, please share the profile of children who go missing.
12. Prompts- Distribution of male and female children, age group, economic background of children etc.
13. What are the challenges in maintaining and accessing data related to missing children?
14. Please share case studies of missing and traced children.

V. Prevention and awareness

15. Is there any prevention or awareness efforts conducted by CWC to reduce cases of missing children?

VI. Challenges

16. Are there any procedural and other challenges faced by CWC which leads to delays in cases of missing children?

Prompts- Coordination with police and other agencies, follow up of cases in courts, delivery of compensation, etc.

17. Does CWC follow a child-friendly approach while responding to cases of missing children? What does this approach involve?

18. While dealing with cases of missing children, what have been the learnings of CWC?

VII. Suggestions and Recommendations

19. Please share your recommendations to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing, rescue, rehabilitation, capacity building and training regarding cases of missing children.

Prompt- Please ask for each theme separately

Principal/School Teachers

I. Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what are the major reasons for children going missing?
2. What are the potential factors that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?
3. In your experience, have you identified any link between missing children and other crimes against children like child labour, child trafficking, child abuse etc.? If yes, please explain.

II. Reporting Mechanism

4. Do you conduct follow up with the parents/caregivers of the child, if the child has been absent for few days? After how many days of absenteeism do you conduct follow up?
5. Do you have any experience of interaction with law enforcement and other child protection agencies? Please share your experience.

III. Prevention and awareness

6. Is there any prevention or awareness efforts conducted by your school on crimes against children, or missing children? If yes, please share details of such programs.
7. What efforts are taken/have been taken to ensure safety of children in and around school and during transportation to school.
8. Does your school have a child protection policy? If yes, please share details of the policy.

9. Is there any policy on corporal punishment? What action is taken if a staff violates such policy?
10. Does your school organize sessions/workshops on mental health of children? If yes, how often such programs are organized what does these entail?

IV. Suggestions and Recommendations

11. Please share your recommendations to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing, rescue, rehabilitation, prevention, capacity building and training regarding cases of missing children.
Prompt- Please ask for each theme separately.

Labour Department

I. Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what linkages have you identified in cases of missing children and child labour?

II. Identification

2. How do you identify if a rescued child labourer is a missing child? What is the process followed in case the rescued child is a missing child?

III. Data Management- mapping

3. Do you share information/data related to child labour with other agencies? If yes, please mention the agencies.
4. Does your Department publish information about missing children? If yes, what is the mechanism? Is there any requirement of consent or order to publish the same?

IV. Prevention and awareness

5. Does your Department undertakes any prevention and awareness activities to control or reduce cases of missing children? Please share details.

V. Suggestions and Recommendations

6. Please share your recommendations to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing and reuniting/repatriation including capacity building and training.

7. Can you please share any case study of a missing child who was also a victim of child labour?

CSOs Representatives

I. Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what are the major reasons for children going missing?
2. What are the potential factors that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?
3. In your experience, have you identified any link between missing children and other crimes against children like child labour, child trafficking, child abuse etc.? If yes, please explain.
4. Has your organization conducted any study on missing children? What were the major findings of the study?

II. Reporting Mechanism

5. Are missing children cases reported to you? What is the process you employ if any missing children case is reported to you?
6. What process is followed by you if a missing child is found or rescued by your organization?

III. Delivery of service- impact on rights of child, rehabilitation

7. Do you conduct follow up with families/caregivers of missing/traced children? What support do you provide during follow up?
8. Is there any service or support which is provided by your organization to missing/traced children or their families? If yes, please share.

IV. Data Management- mapping

9. Does your organization maintain any database on missing children? If yes, what information is maintained? If this data shared with any other agency? If yes, please share the names of agencies.
10. As per your records, please share the profile of children who go missing.
Prompts- Distribution of male and female children, age group, economic background of children etc.
11. What are the challenges in maintaining and accessing data related to missing children?
12. Please share case studies of your engagement with cases of missing children.

V. Prevention and awareness

13. Is there any prevention or awareness efforts conducted by your organization on missing children?
14. Is there any engagement with government agencies on missing children? Please share, if any.

VI. Challenges

15. Are there any procedural and other challenges faced by you?
Prompts- Coordination with police and other agencies, follow up of cases in courts, delivery of compensation, etc.
16. Do you follow a child-friendly approach while responding to cases of missing children? What does this approach involve?
17. While dealing with cases of missing children, what have been the learnings of CWC?

VII. Suggestions and Recommendations

18. Please share your recommendations to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing, rescue, rehabilitation, capacity building and training regarding cases of missing children.
Prompt- Please ask for each theme separately

State/District Legal Services Authority

I. Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what are the major reasons for children going missing?
2. What are the potential factors that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?
3. In your experience, have you identified any link between missing children and other crimes against children like child labour, child trafficking, child abuse etc.? If yes, please explain.
4. Has your organization conducted any study on missing children? What were the major findings of the study?

Delivery of service- rehabilitation

5. Do parents/caregivers seek legal aid from S/DLSA? What type of legal aid is provided?
6. Is there any record of legal aid provided to missing children or their families? Please share details?
7. Is there any scheme of S/DLSA under which traced children are rehabilitated or legal aid is provided to victims? Is there any data available on how many people have benefitted from his scheme?

8. Do you conduct follow up with families/caregivers of missing/traced children? What support do you provide during follow up?
9. Is any type of compensation provided to victims (traced children/families of missing children)? If yes, please share its details.
10. Is there any data available on prosecution achieved in cases of missing children with the assistance of S/DLSA? Please share details.

Data Management- mapping

11. Does your organization maintain any database on missing children? If yes, what information is maintained? If this data shared with any other agency? If yes, please share the names of agencies.
12. As per your records, please share the profile of children who go missing.
Prompts- Distribution of male and female children, age group, economic background of children etc.
13. What are the challenges in maintaining and accessing data related to missing children?
14. Please share case studies of your engagement with cases of missing children.

Prevention and awareness

15. Is there any prevention or awareness efforts conducted by your organization on missing children?
16. Is there any engagement with government agencies on missing children? Please share, if any.

Challenges

17. Are there any procedural and other challenges faced by you?
Prompts- Coordination with police and other agencies, follow up of cases in courts, delivery of compensation, etc.
18. Do you follow a child-friendly approach while responding to cases of missing children? What does this approach involve?
19. While dealing with cases of missing children, what have been the learnings of S/DLSA?

Suggestions and Recommendations

20. Please share your recommendations to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing, rescue, rehabilitation, capacity building and training regarding cases of missing children.
Prompt- Please ask for each theme separately.

Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR)

Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what are the major reasons for children going missing?
2. What are the potential factors that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?
3. In your experience, have you identified any link between missing children and other crimes against children like child labour, child trafficking, child abuse etc.? If yes, please explain.
4. Has DCPCR conducted any study on missing children? What were the major findings of the study?

Delivery of service, rehabilitation

5. What is the role of DCPCR in ensuring justice and protection the rights of missing children?
6. Are there any guidelines or orders issued by DCPCR with respect to missing children? If yes, Please share their details.
7. What steps are taken by DCPCR to ensure rehabilitation of traced children?
8. Does DCPCR conduct follow up with families/caregivers of missing/traced children? What are the protocols for conducting such follow up?
9. Is any type of compensation provided to victims (traced children/families of missing children)? If yes, please share its details.

Data Management- mapping

10. Does DCPCR maintain any database on missing children? If yes, what information is maintained? If this data shared with any other agency? If yes, please share the names of agencies.
11. As per your records, please share the profile of children who go missing.
Prompts- Distribution of male and female children, age group, economic background of children etc.
12. What are the challenges in maintaining and accessing data related to missing children?
13. Please share case studies of your engagement with cases of missing children.

Prevention and awareness

14. Is there any prevention or awareness efforts conducted by DCPCR on missing children?

15. Is there any engagement with other government agencies on missing children? Please share, if any.

Challenges

16. Are there any procedural and other challenges faced by you?
Prompts- Coordination with police and other agencies, follow up of cases in courts, delivery of compensation, etc.
17. Do you follow a child-friendly approach while responding to cases of missing children? What does this approach involve?
18. While dealing with cases of missing children, what have been the learnings of DCPCR?

Suggestions and Recommendations

19. Please share your recommendations to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing, rescue, rehabilitation, capacity building and training regarding cases of missing children.
Prompt- Please ask for each theme separately.

Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs)

Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what are the major reasons for children going missing?
2. What are the potential factors that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?
3. In your experience, have you identified any link between missing children and other crimes against children like child labour, child trafficking, child abuse etc.? If yes, please explain.
4. Have you ever been part of any study conducted on missing children? What were the major findings of the study?

Delivery of service, rehabilitation

5. Have you ever assisted parents/caregivers in cases of missing children? What type of legal aid is provided?
6. Is there any record of legal aid provided to missing children or their families? Please share details?
7. Is there any scheme under which traced children are rehabilitated or legal aid is provided to victims? Is there any data available on how many people have benefitted from his scheme?
8. Do you conduct follow up with families/caregivers of missing/traced children? What support do you provide during follow up?

9. Is any type of compensation provided to victims (traced children/families of missing children)? If yes, please share its details.
10. Is there any data available on prosecution achieved in cases of missing children? Please share details.

Data Management- mapping

11. Do you maintain any database on missing children? If yes, what information is maintained? If this data shared with any other agency? If yes, please share the names of agencies.
12. As per your records, please share the profile of children who go missing.
Prompts- Distribution of male and female children, age group, economic background of children etc.
13. What are the challenges in maintaining and accessing data related to missing children?
14. Please share case studies of your engagement with cases of missing children.

Prevention and awareness

15. Is there any prevention or awareness efforts conducted by you on missing children?
16. Is there any engagement with government agencies on missing children? Please share, if any.

Challenges

17. Are there any procedural and other challenges faced by you?
Prompts- Coordination with police and other agencies, follow up of cases in courts, delivery of compensation, etc.
18. Do you follow a child-friendly approach while responding to cases of missing children? What does this approach involve?
19. While dealing with cases of missing children, what have been your learnings?

Suggestions and Recommendations

20. Please share your recommendations to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing, rescue, rehabilitation, capacity building and training regarding cases of missing children.
Prompt- Please ask for each theme separately.

Portal Administrator

I. Access- service delivery

1. Who can record a complaint at the portal? Is this portal available to citizens?

2. Which are the government agencies or other organizations who have access to this portal?
3. On an average, how many days does it take to resolve a complaint? (From receiving a complaints to its withdrawal or resolution)

II. Process- barriers/challenges in ensuring justice

4. What is the process followed once a complaint is received? Is there any internal SOP developed for the same? Can you share its details?
5. Is the data shared with police to register FIR? Is FIR registered in all cases? If no, in what cases it's not registered?
6. What is the role of different stakeholders who have admin login?
Prompt- Ask for various stakeholders like WCD, Police, CWC, JJB, CCI, Children's Court, Fit Facility, NALSA/SALSA/DLSA, CHILDLINE

Data Management- mapping

7. Is there any kind of analysis done on the data received on missing children? If yes, please share the details.
8. Have you ever done a mapping of areas where maximum cases of missing children are reported? If yes, please share details of any such exercise- key findings and recommendations
9. As per your records, please share the profile of children who go missing.
Prompts- Distribution of male and female children, age group, economic background of children etc.
10. What are the challenges you face in maintaining data related to missing children?
11. Please share case studies of your engagement with cases of missing children.

Challenges

12. Are there any procedural and other challenges faced by you?
Prompts- Coordination with police and other agencies, follow up of cases in courts, delivery of compensation, etc.
13. While dealing with cases of missing children, what have been your learnings?

Suggestions and Recommendations

14. Please share your recommendations to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing, rescue, rehabilitation, capacity building and training regarding cases of missing children.
Prompt- Please ask for each theme separately.

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)

I. Reasons for going missing

1. In your experience, what are the major reasons for children going missing?
2. What are the potential factors that make children vulnerable to kidnapping and running away?
3. In your experience, have you identified any link between missing children and other crimes against children like child labour, child trafficking, child abuse etc.? If yes, please explain.
4. Has MHA conducted any study on missing children? What were the major findings of the study?
5. Has MHA ever done a mapping of areas where maximum cases of missing children are reported? If yes, please share details of any such exercise- key findings and recommendations

Delivery of service

6. Are there any guidelines or orders issued by MHA with respect to missing children? If yes, Please share their details.
7. Please share details about programs/schemes for missing children being carried out by MHA (current and erstwhile)
8. Is any type of compensation provided to victims (traced children/families of missing children)? If yes, please share its details.

Data Management- mapping

9. Does MHA maintain any database on missing children? If yes, what information is maintained? If this data shared with any other agency? If yes, please share the names of agencies.
10. As per your records, please share the profile of children who go missing.
Prompts- Distribution of male and female children, age group, economic background of children etc.
11. What are the challenges in maintaining and accessing data related to missing children?
12. Please share case studies of your engagement with cases of missing children.

Prevention and awareness

13. Is there any prevention or awareness activities conducted by MHA on missing children?

14. Is there any engagement with other government agencies/departments on missing children? Please share, if any.

Challenges

15. Are there any procedural and other challenges faced by you?
Prompts- Coordination with police and other agencies, follow up of cases in courts, delivery of compensation, etc.
16. Do you follow a child-friendly approach while responding to cases of missing children?
What does this approach involve?
17. While dealing with cases of missing children, what have been the learnings of MHA?

Suggestions and Recommendations

18. Please share your recommendations to strengthen reporting, early response, investigation, tracing, rescue, rehabilitation, capacity building and training regarding cases of missing children.
Prompt- Please ask for each theme separately.

Annexure 4: List of key stakeholders interviewed

Respondent	Organization/Department
Ms Pausumi Basu, Director (WS)	Ministry of Home Affairs
Mr RV Yadav, DC (Legal)	Ministry of Home Affairs
Ms. Indra Mallo, Joint Secretary	Ministry of Women and Child Development
Mr Naveen Gupta, Special Secretary	Delhi State Legal Services Authority
Ms. Helly Fur Kaur, Secretary	New Delhi DLSA
Mr Himanshu Sehlot, Secretary	North DLSA
Mr Vinik Jain, Secretary	North-East DLSA
Ms Rishika Srivastava, Secretary	Central DLSA
Mr Animesh Bhaskar, Secretary	South DLSA
Mr B C Narula, Sr Consultant	Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights
Ms Divya Kumar, Chairperson	Child Welfare Committee-V, Delhi
Ms Bindiya Sarkar, Member	Child Welfare Committee-III, Delhi
Mr. J R Sharan, Member	Child Welfare Committee-II, Delhi
Mr. Rajneesh Vats, Member	Child Welfare Committee-II, Delhi
Ms. Purnima R Panda, Member	Child Welfare Committee-IX, Delhi
Ms. Angelika S Gier, Member	Child Welfare Committee-IX, Delhi
Mr. Bhaskar S Gogoi, Member	Child Welfare Committee-IX, Delhi
Mr. V K Rao, Joint Labour Commissioner	Labour Department, South District
Mr. Shashi Bhushan, Deputy Labour Commissioner	Labour Department, South District
Mr. Gurmukh Singh, Joint Labour Commissioner	Labour Department, North District
Mr. Amardeep JLC, Deputy Labour Commissioner	Labour Department, North-East District
Ms. Neeru Thakran, Labour Officer	Labour Department, North-East District
Mr Tukaram, Deputy Labour Commissioner	Labour Department, East District

Annexure 5: Key Communications

Letter from MHA

F. No. 15011/48/2023-SC/ST-W
भारत सरकार/ Government of India
गृह मंत्रालय/Ministry of Home Affairs
महिला सुरक्षा प्रभाग /Women Safety Division
2nd Floor, MDC National Stadium, नई दिल्ली /New Delhi- 110001.
दिनांक /Dated: 24th May, 2023.

सेवा में /To

Ms. Anita Sinha, Joint Secretary (P&T),
National Human Rights Commission,
Manav Adhikar Bhawan, C-Block,
GPO Complex, INA, New Delhi-110023.

**विषय/Subject: NHRC sponsored research study on missing children conducted by
New Concept Centre for Development Communication, New Delhi**

Madam/महोदया

I am directed to refer to your D.O. letter dated 10.05.2023, forwarding therewith a copy of Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Research Team- '**New Concept Centre for Development Communication (NCCDC)**' constituted for the NHRC's sponsored Research Project titled as "Research Study on Missing Children" and has also requested this Ministry to nominate a well-versed Senior level Officer from the Women Safety Division, MHA with whom the Research Team would interact for the said Research Project. Your proposal has been considered in this Division and the Competent Authority is pleased to nominate the Director (WS), MHA accompanied by the DS(WS-II), MHA for interaction with Research Team in respect of the 'Research Study on Missing Children'. The details of the nominated Officers are as below:

Name: Ms. Pausumi Basu, Director (Women Safety),
Phone: 2309 3329
Address: Room No. 206, Second Floor, North Block, New Delhi.
Email Id: pausumi.basu@nic.in

Name: Shri Lakshmi Kanta Haldar, Deputy Secretary (WS-II),
Phone: 23075293
Address: Hall No. 1, 2nd floor, MDCNS, New Delhi.
Email: lakshmikanta.halder@gov.in

3. This issues with the approval of Additional Secretary (Women Safety).

भवदीय/Yours faithfully,

Signed by Lakshmi Kanta
Halder

Date: 24-05-2023 17:13:32

Reason: Approved

(लक्ष्मी कांत हालदार/ Lakshmi Kanta Halder)
भारत सरकार के उप सचिव /Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of India
दूरभाष सं./Tele No. 23075293; E-mail/ ईमेल:lakshmikanta.halder@gov.in

संदर्भित पत्राचार की एक प्रति के साथ प्रतिलिपि/Copy along with a copy of the referred correspondence to:

1. Ms. Pausumi Basu, Director (WS), North Block, New Delhi.
2. Shri Lakshmi Kanta Haldar, Dy. Secretary (WS-II), MDCNS, New Delhi.

Letter from DWCD, Delhi

**GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI
DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(CHILD PROTECTION UNIT)
5th Floor, ISBT BUILDING, KASHMERE GATE, DELHI-110006**
F.61 (1444)/Permission for Internship/AD (ICPS)/DWCD/2020-21/- 668 Dated: 4-5-23

To,
Ms. Anita Sinha
Joint Secretary (P&T)
National Human Rights Commission
New Delhi-110023

Sub: Regarding permission for research study -reg

Madam,

With reference to your letter vide D.O.No.R-32/4/2020-PRPP dated 10/04/2023 wherein it is stated that NHRC New Delhi has sponsored a Research Project titled “ Research Study on Missing Children” to a organisation ‘New Concept Centre for Development Communication (NCCDC)’, New Delhi. Six police districts have been identified as the sample of the study, namely, North, North East, Outer, New Delhi, Central and South.

It is further mentioned in the letter that the objective of the study is to assess as to how the system of delivering justice to missing children functions at various levels in the NCT of Delhi and to explore the reasons as to why children go missing through interacting with members of Child Welfare Committees and Child Care Institutions.

In this regard, as per subsequent communication held, permission is hereby granted for the research study to Ms. Hrishika and Mr. Akhil Dobhal from NCCDC in the following Child Care Institutions and Child Welfare Committees-

- a. **District North**- Children Home For Boys, Alipur and Child Welfare Committee-X,Alipur
- b. **District North East** -Sanskars Ashram For Boys, Dilshad Garden, Sanskar Ashram For Girls, Dilshad Garden and Child Welfare Committee-V, Sanskar Ashram Complex, Dilshad Garden
- c. **District Central**- Observation Home For Boys-I, Delhi Gate and Child Welfare Welfare Committee-III, Sewa Kutir Complex,
- d. **District New Delhi**- Bal Sahyog Home, Outer Circle, Cannuaght Circus, New Delhi and Child Welfare Welfare Committee-IX, Mayur Vihar

e. **District South**- Children Home For Boys, Lajpat Nagar, Village Cottage Home, Lajpat Nagar and Child Committee-II, South Kasturba Niketan Complex, Lajpat Nagar,

The following terms and conditions need to be adhered while carrying out the research study-

1. Provision of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Rule 2016 and JJ Amendment Act 2021 and JJ amendment rules 2022.
2. The norms of the institution should be followed
3. The confidentiality and dignity of the children shall be maintained.
4. No photography/ videography is allowed.
5. Visitors/ Researchers/ Intern shall carry the permission letter along with the identity card.
6. Report/ Data/ findings will not be shared with the media or public domain without permission from the department.
7. In case of violation of any of the above condition is found at any point of time, suitable action/penalty/cost may be imposed on the researcher and they are advised to submit an undertaking in this regard to concerned Superintendent/ in-charge on first day of visit.
8. The final report should be shared within 15 days time with the Department of WCD, GNCTD on cpuwcddelhi@gmail.com and rtedwcd@gmail.com.


Deputy Director (CPU)

F.61 (1444)/Permission for Internship/AD (ICPS)/DWCD/2020-21/- 668

Dated- 4-5-23

Copy to:

1. PS to Director, Department of Women and Child Development, Ist, ISBT Building, Kashmere Gate, Delhi-110006
2. Deputy Director (RTE), Department of Women and Child Development, IIInd Floor, ISBT Building, Kashmere Gate, Delhi-110006
3. District Officer (North), Department of Women and Child Development, GNCTD (With the request to supervise and monitor the said research study)
4. District Officer (North East), Department of Women and Child Development, GNCTD (With the request to supervise and monitor the said research study)

Letter to Delhi Police

अनिता सिंहा, भा.र.से.
संयुक्त सचिव
ANITA SINHA, IRS
Joint Secretary (P&T)



राष्ट्रीय मानव अधिकार आयोग
मानव अधिकार भवन, सी-ब्लॉक, जीपीओ कम्प्लेक्स,
आईएनए, नई दिल्ली-110 023 भारत

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
Manav Adhikar Bhawan, C-Block,
GPO Complex, INA, New Delhi-110023 India
Ph. No. (O) 011-24663217 / 24663269

D.O. No. R-32/4/2020-PRPP

Date: 19/10/2022

Dear *sir,*

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), New Delhi has sponsored a Research Project titled "Research Study on Missing Children" to the New Concept Centre for Development Communication (NCCDC), New Delhi vide Sanction Order dated 29th April, 2022. A copy of the Terms of Reference (TOR) of sanction is enclosed at **Annexure - I.**

The overall objective of the research study is to assess as to how the system of delivering justice to missing children functions at various levels in the NCT of Delhi and also to explore the reasons as to why children go missing.

For the purpose of collection of the primary data, the members of the Research Team will be visiting 55 selected police stations of six police districts of NCT of Delhi, namely Outer North, North East, Outer District, New Delhi, Central and South District. List of selected police stations along with their addresses is enclosed at **Annexure - II.**

The personal information of the respondents collected for the study will be kept confidential and will be used for the purpose of research only.

I shall be grateful if you could kindly provide necessary support to the Research Team and issue necessary instructions to the concerned authorities in the district for the same.

Your cooperation in this regard shall be highly appreciated.

Warm regards.

Yours sincerely,

Anita Sinha
(Anita Sinha)

Encl: As above.

To:

Shri Sanjay Arora
Commissioner of Police, Delhi
Delhi Police Headquarters
Jai Singh Road, New Delhi- 110001

Copy to:

Ms. Nirmala Mathew
Principal Investigator
New Concept Centre for Development Communication
'Darshan' Plot No. 5, Institutional Area
Sarita Vihar, New Delhi- 110076

Letter to MWCD

आनिता सिन्हा, भा.र.से.
संयुक्त सचिव
ANITA SINHA, IRS
Joint Secretary (P&T)



राष्ट्रीय मानव अधिकार आयोग
मानव अधिकार भवन, सी-ब्लॉक, जीपीओ कम्प्लेक्स,
आईएनए, नई दिल्ली-110 023 भारत

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
Manav Adhikar Bhawan, C-Block,
GPO Complex, INA, New Delhi-110023 India
Ph. No. (O) 011-24663217 / 24663269

D.O. No. R-32/4/2020-PRPP

Date: 10/05/2023

Dear *Ms Mallo*,

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), New Delhi has sponsored a Research Project titled "Research Study on Missing Children" to the New Concept Centre for Development Communication (NCCDC), New Delhi vide Sanction Order dated 29th April, 2022. A copy of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the sanction is enclosed.

The overall objective of the research study is to assess how the system of delivering justice to missing children functions at various levels in the NCT of Delhi and also to explore the reasons why children go missing.

To meet the objectives of the study, NCCDC needs to interact with a senior level officer heading the department dealing with the issues of children in the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the officers who manage the 'Track the missing child' and 'Khoyapaya' portal.

I shall be grateful if you could kindly provide support to the Research Team by allowing them to interact with the concerned officers.

Your cooperation in this regard shall be highly appreciated.

Warm regards,

Yours sincerely,

Anita Sinha

(Anita Sinha)

Encl: As above.

Ms. Indra Mallo, IAS
Joint Secretary, MWCD
Ministry of Women and Child Development
Shastri Bhawan, A - Wing, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road
New Delhi- 110001

