



CHILD PROTECTION BULLETIN

STATE CHILD
PROTECTION
SOCIETY, ASSAM

MONTHLY BULLETIN OF ACTIVITIES CONCERNING CHILD PROTECTION IN ASSAM

EDITORIAL

As notified by the Govt. of Assam, 4th March, 2015 was celebrated as the Second Child Protection Day in Assam. Assam is the only state to have notified Child Protection Day to be celebrated on 4th March. Child Protection is a concern where our society does not feel safe about their children. There are stories of abuses, violence, child labour, trafficking, etc on daily basis, which really makes our children feel unsafe and vulnerable at every moment.

Trafficking is a major child protection concern in Assam. The children in Assam are often trafficked elsewhere in India for child labour, sex trading, etc. There is a need to bring about sensitization among the people in the state for safeguarding our children.

This month's news bulletin is about child trafficking. After reading, the readers should spread the facts about the menace of child trafficking especially among the rural population from which the children are often being trafficked.

*Editorial Board,
State Child Protection Society, Assam*

Child trafficking in Assam: Is there any remedy?

Out of 207 cases of trafficking in the last two years, 80 per cent were women and out of whom 56 per cent are minor girls and only 20 per cent are minor boys between the age group of six to fourteen years.

Seema (name changed) a ten-year-old girl, was shivering with fear and broke into tears when she hugged her mother. Unsteadiness in body and with cracking voice, the innocent young girl felt free and strong after becoming free from the hands of the abductors in whose hands she was raped and abused.

"I hail from an interior village of Baksa district of Assam. Two years back, my father suddenly expired in a motorbike accident and his sudden death had left our family in huge financial crisis. My mother started working as a daily wage worker in village, but her income was not enough to meet the expenses of our family as I have two more brothers. So my mother started borrowing money from people but as her income was very less she was forced to borrow more and more," told Seema, adding, "So to reduce her debt to some extent I started searching for work."

Narrating her horrific ordeal, Seema, who was rescued from the clutches of the traffickers, said, "One day I came across a person, who after knowing the condition my family, told me to go with him in Delhi. He even convinced and assured my mother that he will allow me to go to school and also will financially help my family as much as possible. But all promises were thrown to the winds after I reached Delhi. Instead of school, he started sending me to brothel for earning money. At first, when I declined to go he along with some of his friends started assaulting me both physically and sexually, and forced me to work in brothel."

Seema worked in a brothel at South Extension for about three months and did not get a single penny of her income. "One day I somehow managed to trace out the nearest police station and filed a complaint against all those persons. After that those police officials further contacted the Assam police and the CID who finally rescued me from that hell," she said.

Seema is just an example. There are number of children in the State who are being lured and trafficked to other parts of India under various circumstances. Trafficking is an organized crime and in the past few years Assam has become a hotspot for the traffickers.



Five rescued children being handed over to the Child Welfare Committee, Hailakandi in the presence of the Deputy Commissioner

Located in the south of eastern Himalaya, Assam is the only Northeastern state which connects the region with the rest of country through a strip of land in West Bengal called the 'Siliguri Corridor' or 'Chicken's Neck'. Assam also shares international borders with Burma, Bhutan and Bangladesh from its three sides and this peculiar location make the state more vulnerable to infiltration and insurgency resulting in slow economic growth.

Over the decades, Assam has witnessed large scale migration of the local population to the comparatively developed parts of the country. The growing need for better livelihood options and employment has turned Assam into a fertile place for human traffickers in the past few years. Thousands of young men, women and even children of the state have fallen prey to the designs of traffickers and have been exploited as cheap labour, prostitutes, domestic helps in other parts of the country and even abroad.

Baksa, Karimganj, Golaghat, Jorhat, Dhemaji, Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Chirang, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, and Udaguri are the soft targets of the traffickers.

The traffickers usually target the children of poor families from the remote and the interior place. The children from Dhemaji and Lakhimpur -two worst flood-hit districts of the State, are more vulnerable because of thousands of people in these two districts displaced due to flood. The traffickers target the children of the displaced people.

Similarly, many children in Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang, and Udaguri districts have been displaced due to ethnic violence and massacre carried out by the extremist groups. The traffickers lure the children who take shelter in the relief camps displaced due to violence.

Besides, Dhubri, Cachar and Karimganj districts, which share international boundary with Bangladesh, a large number of infiltrators generally target the children of poor and displaced families.

According to the study, Secondary Data Analysis of Trafficking of Women and Children in Assam, carried out jointly by UNICEF and Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (ASPCR), the girls are more vulnerable to trafficking than boys.

The survey revealed that out of 207 cases of trafficking in the last two years, 80 per cent were women and out of whom 56 per cent are minor girls and only 20 per cent are minor boys between the age group of six to fourteen years.

According to the data provided by UNICEF in last few years, the maximum number of children of the State has been trafficked to Delhi. Given the gravity of the problem of trafficking, certain long term measures should be adopted by the government involving community based organisations (CBO).

A special task should be formed to curb trafficking on the lines of Special Rhino Protection Force, which the government has recently formed to protect the animal from poaching and to stop encroachment of the forest land in the state.

Bus stops or railway stations play a major role in trafficking as most of the traffickers shift the victim either through bus or trains and so by forming a special vigilance team consisting of police officials, common people or some of their employees could reduce trafficking to a great extent.

Police can also involve some local youths from that particular village on a temporary basis for providing any information regarding the trafficking of the area. Government should take some steps to appreciate the person who is helping the local police by providing any information which can ultimately lead to trafficking.

All the necessary documents of placement agencies or other private organizations should be verified properly by the police before establishing the firm, also police should conduct surprise inspection in every firm at fixed intervals.

State government has already established Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in every district of the State. But unfortunately due to staff crunch, presently these units are not operational in many districts of the State, which should have to be immediately made active in major police stations of each district.

Besides, the Government should launch massive awareness programmes in the vulnerable areas involving the CBOs. The government should concentrate on the development of interior places, children from which areas fall prey to traffickers, and should ensure proper implementation of the flagship programmes meant for the poor people.

Sayantani Deb



Child Line, Guwahati with the help of Assam Police, rescued 19 children from Guwahati Railway Station on 25th February, 2015. The children were waiting to board a Delhi-bound train. The children were allegedly being taken to a Gaudiya Math in Himachal Pradesh. The children rescued were between 4 and 16 years old. Of the 19 children 4 were from Hailakandi and the rest 15 were from North Tripura district of Tripura. The rescued children included one who is visually impaired.

Childline, Guwahati produced the children before the Child Welfare Committee, Kamrup Metro, who ordered the children to be returned to their home state immediately and to the safe custody of their parents. For temporary shelter the children were housed in the Children's Home, Fatasil Ambari.

Accompanied by two Programme Managers of State Child Protection Society, Assam 5 children were handed over to the Child Welfare Committee, Hailakandi in the presence of the Deputy Commissioner, Hailakandi on 8th March, 2015. Later on the same day the remaining 15 children were taken to the North Tripura district of Tripura, and were handed over to the Childline, in the presence of the DSWO North Tripura, Superintendent of Home, Children's Home at Ramnagar.

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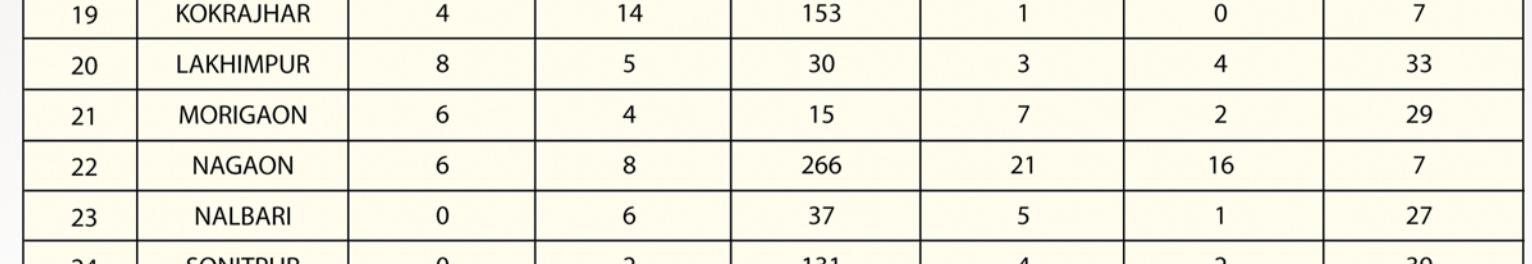
A Glimpse at the Union Budget 2015-16 for Children

India is home to about 442 million children aged 0-18 years, who constitute 39 percent of the country's population. Policy makers visualise them as the nation's assets. But, the dominant attitude of the nation is to treat children as a passive group, which is reflected in the designing, implementing and monitoring of child related schemes without their consultation.

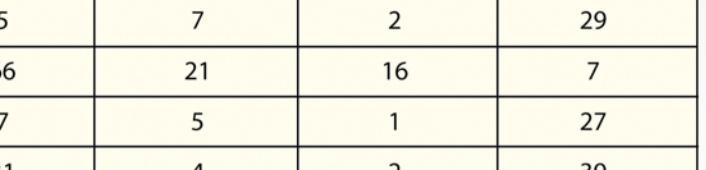
There has been a budgetary outlay by the government for policies and schemes towards the upliftment of children. For instance, during 11th Five Year Plan (FYP), the total expenditure on children related schemes was around Rs. 202,819.6 crore. The 12th FYP (2012-17) recognized the urgency and importance of addressing the vulnerabilities of children in India's population. Despite the recognition of child budgeting in the Five-year Plan documents, the share of child budget in the Union budget has never been more than 5 percent.

A few key highlights

- ❖ 29 % Reduction in budget for children from 2014-2015
- ❖ 55% reduction in the overall budget for the Ministry of Women and Child Development
- ❖ Fall in allocations in critical schemes like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (21 % reduction) Mid Day Meal scheme (30% reduction)
- ❖ 22% reduction in health related schemes for children
- ❖ 25% reduction in overall education programmes for children, while a scheme for providing education to Madrassas / Minorities saw an increase of 36.55 %
- ❖ The scheme for setting up of 6000 model schools at the block level as a benchmark of excellence has faced a 99.92% deduction in allocation.
- ❖ 2.3 crore children in India are malnourished. Given this, the scheme that deals with malnourishment- ICDS (The Integrated Child Development Scheme), has seen a 54.19 per cent decrease in allocation.
- ❖ There have been some increases in certain schemes, such as a 42.86% increase in improvement in working conditions of Child/Women Labour.



Glimpses of the Child Protection Day Celebrations held on 4th March, 2015 at Tarun Ram Phukan Indoor Stadium, Ulubari



CASE STUDY

When Bornali* was very young, her father passed away and her mother remarried and moved away. Although extended family members were willing to care for Bornali and send her to school, Bornali's elder sister sent her to work as a domestic slave. Bornali was only about five years old. It is against the law for children under fourteen years of age to work. Even though it is completely illegal and would be invalid in court, Bornali's sister and new "owners" signed a document transferring ownership of Bornali away from her family to her new masters.

To the people who bought her, Bornali was nothing more than a workhorse. She was never allowed to leave and never sent to school. They forced her to clean a construction site, wash dishes and care for children and animals. They fed her scraps of food from other people's plates. When she made a mistake, they punished the little girl by stripping her nearly naked and tying her to a tree so the mosquitoes could bite her skin. They even beat her with an assortment of items: a wood block, a police rod or a pressure cooker lid. Sometimes, they tied her a window when they beat her. Once, they tied her up in a bag.

About a year and a half ago, Bornali escaped from her masters. She took a rickshaw to a train station and hopped on one of the cars. An old man and his son noticed that she was alone and took her to the police. Childline picked her up and placed her at a government-licensed children's home.

When Bornali first arrived at the children's home, she acted "wild." She was stubborn and refused to follow rules. The staff believed her rebellion resulted from her life as a slave, when she had to obey any given order.

Eventually, with proper care, Bornali grew both physically and emotionally. She ate plenty of nutritious food and grew more than six inches. She is now one of the tallest girls at the home.

Bornali also started studying and showed an aptitude for learning, transforming from an illiterate little girl to a high-level student. She became enthralled with the workings of electrical systems and watched intently as an electrician fixed the home's circuit breaker. She then began to wonder what the inside of a computer looked like.

Now that Bornali has unleashed her curiosity and joy, she thrives. She still bears physical and emotional scars from her abuse, but she can live in the manner for which she was created. Bright and enthusiastic, she wants to grow up to be a computer engineer, a soldier and a dancer.

During the day, Bornali laughs with the other girls at the home. But, at night, Bornali often has nightmares about her former life as a slave. Her abusers, however, are still at large. Due to the facts of this case, it is clear criminal charges should be filed under the 2012 POSCO Act as well as labor laws, although to date, the perpetrators have not been charged or held accountable in any way.

*Name changed

Andrea Stokes

Source: MIS Cell, SCPS, Assam

For any feedback, write to :

Chairperson, Editorial Board,

State Child Protection Society, Assam

46, Survey Bus Stop, Beltoha, Guwahati-781028, Phone: 0361-2229275, Email: scpsassam@gmail.com, Website: assam-scps.com/termsofuse.php

DSW, Government of Assam

Lokonya Press, Guwahati-1

Status Report on the functioning of the Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees in Assam for the month of February 2015

Sl. No. **Districts** **Juvenile Justice Boards** **Child Welfare Committees**

| Sl. No. | Districts | No. of cases instituted | No. of cases disposed | Total cases pending | No. of cases instituted | No. of cases disposed | Total cases pending |
|--------------|---------------|---|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | BAKSA | Cases are jointly dealt with Nalbari JJB | | | 0 | 1 | 12 |
| 2 | BONGAIGAON | 5 | 3 | 39 | 2 | 6 | 1 |
| 3 | BARPETA | 6 | 5 | 99 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 4 | CACHAR | 2 | 8 | 66 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| 5 | CHIRANG | 8 | 1 | 42 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 6 | DARRANG | 6 | 3 | 141 | 2 | 4 | 19 |
| 7 | DHEMAJI | 3 | 0 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 8 | DHUBRI | 4 | 6 | 177 | 2 | 1 | 13 |
| 9 | DIBRUGARH | 8 | 4 | 65 | 17 | 17 | 2 |
| 10 | DIMA HASAO | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| 11 | GOALPARA | 4 | 1 | 120 | 5 | 5 | 1 |
| 12 | GOLAGHAT | 2 | 4 | 27 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| 13 | HAILAKANDI | 1 | 0 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| 14 | JORHAT | 3 | 2 | 44 | 3 | 0 | 6 |
| 15 | KAMRUP (M) | 8 | 3 | 171 | 47 | 34 | 92 |
| 16 | KAMRUP (R) | Cases are jointly dealt with Kamrup (M) JJB | | | 1 | 0 | 16 |
| 17 | KARBI ANGLONG | 4 | 1 | 53 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 18 | KARIMGANJ | 3 | 0 | 58 | 3 | 0 | 13 |
| 19 | KOKRAJHAR | 4 | 14 | 153 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| 20 | LAKHIMPUR | 8 | 5 | 30 | 3 | 4 | 33 |
| 21 | MORIGAON | 6 | 4 | 15 | 7 | 2 | 29 |
| 22 | NAGAON | 6 | 8 | 266 | 21 | 16 | 7 |
| 23 | NALBARI | 0 | 6 | 37 | 5 | 1 | 27 |
| 24 | SONITPUR | 0 | 2 | 131 | 4 | 2 | 39 |
| 25 | SIBSAGAR | 3 | 2 | 63 | 3 | 0 | 43 |
| 26 | TINSUKIA | 5 | 4 | 62 | 3 | 9 | 3 |
| 27 | UDALGURI | 4 | 2 | 21 | 5 | 1 | 22 |
| Total | | 103 | 88 | 1922 | 140 | 116 | 400 |

Source: MIS Cell, SCPS, Assam

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