



BAL KALYAN SANGH

(AN ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS)

Combating Human Trafficking in Jharkhand

25 Years of Struggle, Progress, and Resolve

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FORWARD

By Sanjay Kumar Mishra, Founder
Secretary, Bal Kalyan Sangh

As Jharkhand stands on the threshold of its 25th year of statehood, we are presented with both a solemn reminder and a hopeful opportunity—a reminder of the deep-seated challenges our people, especially our children, have endured, and an opportunity to reaffirm our collective resolve to eradicate one of the gravest injustices of our time: human trafficking.

This report, meticulously compiled by Bal Kalyan Sangh (BKS), serves as a crucial milestone in Jharkhand's journey towards justice, dignity, and protection for every child and vulnerable individual. For over two decades, BKS has worked shoulder to shoulder with communities, government bodies, and partner organisations to combat trafficking in all its forms. We have witnessed first-hand the pain of loss, the trauma of exploitation, and the resilience of survivors. We have also seen the tremendous strength that lies in the hearts of young girls and boys who, even after being robbed of their childhoods, find the courage to rebuild their lives and inspire others to do the same.

This report is more than just a record of the past 25 years—it is a blueprint for the future. It chronicles the complex social and economic factors that have made Jharkhand a source state for trafficking, the evolution of institutional responses, and the critical role played by NGOs, especially BKS, in rescue, rehabilitation, and systemic reform. From the establishment of Anti-Human Trafficking Units and Migration Resource Centres, to survivor-led enterprises and grassroots vigilance networks, the report demonstrates how far we have come—but also how far we must go.

It does not shy away from exposing the gaps that persist: inadequate shelters, the absence of a comprehensive state policy, delays in justice, and the enduring stigma survivors face. These are not mere shortcomings; they are calls to action. The report's recommendations—rooted in field experience, survivor voices, and data—must guide our policy and planning in the years ahead.

At Bal Kalyan Sangh, we believe that the fight against trafficking is not just a mandate; it is a moral imperative. The wellbeing of our children is the truest measure of our progress as a society. As we commemorate 25 years of Jharkhand, let us also recommit—across government, civil society, and community—to building a future where every child is safe, every survivor is heard, and every life is treated with dignity.

Let this report be a tool, a testimony, and a torch for all those who work for freedom and justice in our state. Together, we can ensure that Jharkhand's next 25 years are defined not by vulnerability—but by vigilance, voice, and victory over trafficking.



25 Year's Overview

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Jharkhand approaches its 25th anniversary in 2025, this report provides a comprehensive analysis of the state's evolving response to human trafficking—one of the most pressing and persistent human rights challenges it has faced since its formation in 2000. The report traces the socio-economic, institutional, and grassroots developments that have shaped Jharkhand's anti-trafficking landscape over the past two and a half decades.

Jharkhand has long been identified as a source state for trafficking, with a high incidence of girls and boys being lured from impoverished, tribal-dominated regions under false promises of employment, education, or marriage. These children often end up in exploitative situations such as domestic servitude, forced labour, or commercial sexual exploitation across metropolitan cities in India.

The report presents a data-driven account of this crisis, drawing on primary documentation from BKS, IRRRC, NCRB reports, and field studies. From 2010 to 2025, thousands of children have been reported missing or trafficked, with a significant proportion being adolescent girls. Patterns show increasing digital grooming, unsafe migration, and the involvement of unregulated placement agencies.

Despite these challenges, Jharkhand has made considerable strides in building an anti-trafficking ecosystem. Key interventions include the establishment of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), and Migration Resource Centres (MRCs) in high-vulnerability districts. NGOs such as Bal Kalyan Sangh (BKS) have led the charge in rescuing and rehabilitating over 5,800 victims, while also pioneering livelihood training programs that have successfully reintegrated survivors into society.

Community-led initiatives such as Bal Panchayats, Village Child Protection Committees, and awareness drives in schools and villages have strengthened local vigilance.

Survivor-led peer educator networks and survivor-run enterprises represent innovative models of empowerment and rehabilitation.

The report identifies significant gaps in Jharkhand's fight against trafficking. These include the lack of a state-wide anti-trafficking policy, underfunded shelter infrastructure, inconsistent legal enforcement, delays in victim compensation, and the absence of an integrated data system. It also highlights the persistent stigma faced by survivors and the need to engage boys and men in prevention efforts.

To address these systemic challenges, the report offers a set of practical recommendations.

These include formulating a state anti-trafficking policy, expanding livelihood programs to block level, strengthening legal aid and fast-track courts, scaling up MRCs, and institutionalising survivor-led monitoring. A multi-sectoral approach—with alignment across health, education, police, and welfare systems—is vital for achieving lasting impact.

In conclusion, this report positions Jharkhand not just as a site of vulnerability but as a model of grassroots resilience, institutional innovation, and survivor-led change. With the right policy and programmatic support, Jharkhand can emerge as a national leader in the eradication of human trafficking.

INTRODUCTION

As Jharkhand marks 25 years of its formation in 2025, it is a moment of reflection and recognition of the progress made on several fronts, including the fight against human trafficking. The state, once largely under-reported in national trafficking statistics, has emerged as a key site for both the origin and resistance to this crime. Over the past two and a half decades, Jharkhand has developed robust institutional mechanisms, expanded rescue networks, and improved conviction rates, signaling its growing capacity and commitment to tackle trafficking.

Human trafficking is one of the gravest forms of human rights abuse. It disrupts families, exploits the vulnerable, and perpetuates cycles of poverty and violence. In Jharkhand, a state rich in tribal heritage and natural resources, trafficking has disproportionately impacted tribal women and children. Vulnerable individuals are often lured by traffickers through false promises of employment, education, or marriage, only to be subjected to forced labour, sexual exploitation, or domestic servitude.

Since the formation of the state in 2000, the issue has grown more complex due to factors such as internal migration, unregulated placement agencies, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and urban demand for cheap domestic labour. Districts such as Khunti, Gumla, West Singhbhum, and Latehar have emerged as hotspots of trafficking, primarily due to poverty, lack of education, and limited livelihood opportunities. These districts have consistently reported a high number of missing girls and women, many of whom are eventually traced to exploitative environments far from home.

Over the years, both the state government and civil society organisations have increased their engagement with the issue. Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) have been established in several districts, Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) have been strengthened, and legal frameworks have been implemented with greater vigour. At the same time, grassroots organisations have played a pivotal role in rescue, rehabilitation, and advocacy, often working in close collaboration with law enforcement agencies across states.

Despite these improvements, the scale and adaptability of trafficking networks continue to challenge the system. Traffickers often exploit legal loopholes, use digital platforms for recruitment, and operate through informal channels that make detection difficult. Survivors frequently face stigma, rejection by their families, and lack of long-term rehabilitation support, increasing their vulnerability to re-trafficking.

This report seeks to examine the nature, causes, and response mechanisms to trafficking in Jharkhand. It is grounded in field data, stakeholder interviews, and records from both government bodies and NGOs. By providing a comprehensive overview of trends, patterns, institutional responses, and community interventions, the report aims to inform future strategies and strengthen collective efforts to eradicate trafficking from the state.

As Jharkhand completes 25 years, this is also a time to recommit to the vision of a just and equitable society—one where every child, woman, and man can live with dignity, free from exploitation and fear.



UNDERSTANDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is widely recognised as one of the most serious and complex human rights violations of the modern age. It involves the exploitation of individuals—often women and children—for various forms of forced labour, commercial sexual exploitation, slavery, servitude, and organ trade. The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000), also known as the Palermo Protocol, defines trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat, use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

India's legislative approach to human trafficking is undergoing significant evolution, with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, set to replace the Indian Penal Code, introducing comprehensive definitions and stringent punishments for trafficking under Sections 143 and 144, alongside new provisions for organized crime and exploitation. While the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) of 1956 continues to address sex trafficking and brothels, judicial interpretations have broadened its scope, recognizing the rights of sex workers while maintaining anti-trafficking efforts. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, further bolstered by 2019 amendments, remains crucial for safeguarding children, and the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, continues its role in eradicating forced labor. Additionally, a proposed "Human Trafficking (Prevention and Control) Act, 2023" aims to establish a more integrated framework for prevention, care, and rehabilitation of trafficking victims.

In the context of Jharkhand, trafficking is driven by a combination of push and pull factors. These include poverty, lack of livelihood opportunities, illiteracy, gender discrimination, cultural norms, political instability, and the demand for cheap labour in urban households. The victims, often from tribal communities, are lured with promises of better lives, only to be subjected to physical abuse, economic deprivation, and psychological trauma.

It is important to differentiate human trafficking from migration. While migration is the voluntary movement of individuals seeking better prospects, trafficking involves coercion or deceit and results in exploitation. Many trafficking victims in Jharkhand begin their journey as migrants, often accompanied by a broker or middleman, only to discover later that they have been sold or enslaved. The blurred line between migration and trafficking complicates legal enforcement and victim identification.

Another important aspect of understanding trafficking is recognising the various forms it takes. While sex trafficking is the most publicised, forced labour—especially domestic servitude—is equally prevalent in Jharkhand. Girls are placed in households in metros like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru through unregulated placement agencies. They are often unpaid, abused, and denied access to education or contact with their families. Forced marriage, child labour in factories, agricultural work, and illegal organ trade are other forms observed.

Children are especially vulnerable due to their lack of awareness, mobility, and dependence on adults. The legal principle of "no consent for children" is vital—any child subjected to the recruitment and movement for exploitation is considered trafficked, regardless of perceived willingness.

Understanding human trafficking also requires a multi-dimensional lens that includes economic, social, legal, and psychological perspectives. Combating it necessitates a comprehensive response involving law enforcement, child protection systems, community engagement, awareness generation, and survivor rehabilitation. Jharkhand's fight against trafficking must therefore be rooted not just in law but in addressing the structural inequalities that allow trafficking to persist.

Girls aged between 11 and 16 are especially vulnerable. They are frequently lured by middlemen and agents who promise them domestic work opportunities in metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Ludhiana, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad. Upon arrival, they are often trapped in exploitative conditions—working long hours without pay, denied contact with their families, and subjected to verbal, physical, and even sexual abuse. Some are trafficked under the pretext of marriage, particularly to states like Haryana and Punjab where skewed sex ratios have increased demand for brides.

The role of unregulated placement agencies in this ecosystem is crucial. Operating with impunity in both source and destination states, these agencies often do not maintain any records, do not follow legal recruitment procedures, and are rarely held accountable when trafficking is uncovered. In many cases, the traffickers are known to the victims—neighbours, extended relatives, or acquaintances—further complicating detection and legal redress.

What distinguishes Jharkhand's trafficking situation is not only its magnitude but also its systemic nature. Trafficking here is not an isolated incident but a pattern that reflects structural inequality and the absence of opportunities. It highlights deep-rooted issues such as the lack of access to education, healthcare, and formal employment avenues. Additionally, patriarchal norms and social expectations restrict the agency of women and girls, pushing them into risky situations.

In response, civil society organisations, including Bal Kalyan Sangh (BKS), and government agencies have taken various steps to disrupt trafficking chains. There has been an increase in rescue operations, better coordination between states, and greater awareness in rural areas. However, the volume of cases and the adaptability of trafficking networks mean that challenges remain significant.

Jharkhand's emergence as a source state for trafficking is a stark reminder that economic vulnerability, gender disparity, and institutional gaps can fuel exploitation on a wide scale. Addressing trafficking in the state requires not only criminal justice responses but also development-driven interventions that offer genuine alternatives to migration and exploitation.



JHARKHAND: A SOURCE STATE OF TRAFFICKING

Jharkhand, one of India's youngest states, has emerged over the last two decades as a significant source region for internal human trafficking. The problem is especially acute in the tribal-dominated districts of Khunti, Gumla, Latehar, Simdega, and West Singhbhum. These areas, marked by low literacy, entrenched poverty, and limited infrastructure, have become prime recruitment grounds for traffickers targeting vulnerable populations, particularly women and children.

Jharkhand's socio-economic profile provides fertile ground for trafficking networks. A substantial portion of the population lives below the poverty line, and many communities are dependent on subsistence agriculture and irregular daily wage labour. In this context, promises of secure employment, education, or marriage made by traffickers appear appealing, especially to families struggling to support multiple children. The migration of youth, particularly girls, in search of work is often seen as a necessary means of survival, even though it exposes them to high risks.



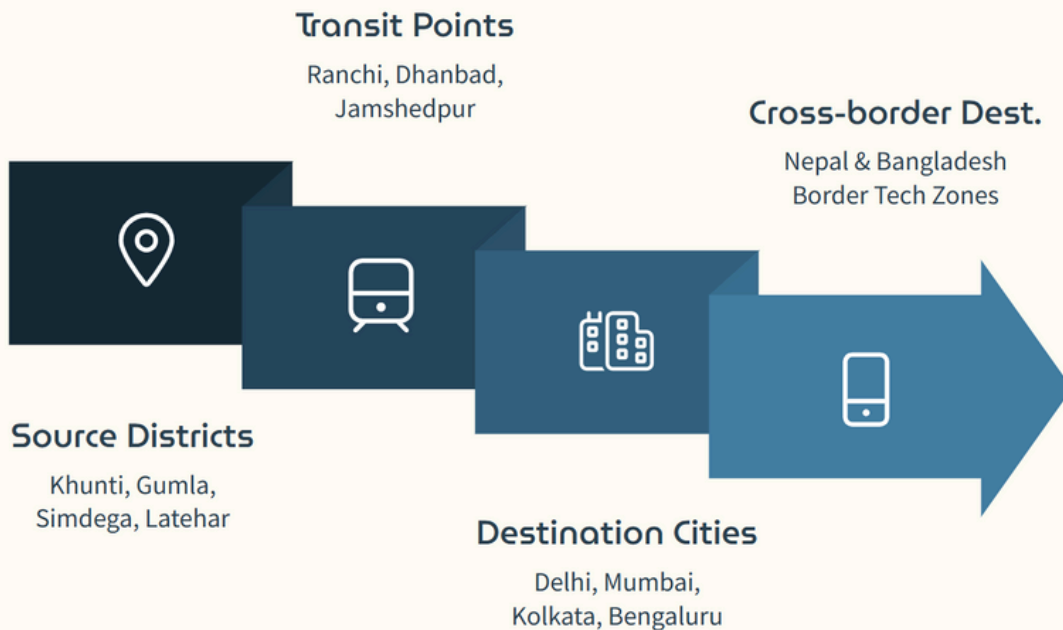
VICTIM PROFILE AND PATTERNS

The typical victim of human trafficking in Jharkhand is an adolescent girl between the ages of 11 and 18, often from scheduled tribes such as Oraon, Munda, Santhal, and Ho. These girls typically come from remote, economically marginalized districts with limited access to education, healthcare, and formal employment. Traffickers, posing as well-wishers or placement agents, exploit the desperation of families living in poverty by promising jobs, education, or marriage in urban centres. In many cases, girls are sent with relatives or acquaintances under the illusion of a better future, only to end up in forced domestic labour, sexual exploitation, or child marriage. Voluntary migration—especially among adolescent girls—has also become a rising trend, with many seeking to support their families or escape restrictive environments. However, this migration often turns involuntary as they become trapped in exploitative conditions in unfamiliar cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Ludhiana, without legal documentation or support systems. Boys and young men are also trafficked from Jharkhand for bonded labour in agriculture, construction, and manufacturing units.

RESCUE & REINTEGRATION

Rescue and reintegration of trafficking survivors are fraught with challenges. Many victims cannot recall the name of their village or address, complicating reunification efforts. Language barriers, trauma, and fear of stigma further hinder communication and rehabilitation. Upon return, survivors often face social rejection or suspicion, heightening their risk of re-trafficking. Psychological trauma is severe, with many experiencing PTSD, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation, yet mental health support remains scarce. Survivors also struggle to reintegrate due to interrupted education, lack of vocational skills, and limited access to state rehabilitation schemes. Addressing this complex victim profile requires survivor-centric interventions, including community sensitisation, adolescent education, vocational training, and legal empowerment. Jharkhand's trafficking crisis reflects deeper structural issues like gender inequality, economic deprivation, and institutional failure—demanding both protection and empowerment-based approaches to ensure dignity and justice for every victim.

Human Trafficking Routes from Jharkhand



Trafficking operations in Jharkhand are well-organised, multi-layered, and trans-regional. Victims are transported through a complex web of routes that include major transit points such as Ranchi, Gumla, Khunti, Dhanbad, and Jamshedpur. These routes typically terminate in urban destinations like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Ludhiana, and even cities in neighbouring Nepal and Bangladesh. At the heart of this movement lies an expansive and loosely coordinated network of traffickers, local agents, placement agencies, transport facilitators, and employers.

Local traffickers, often community insiders or known to the victims' families, play a crucial role in identifying vulnerable children and young women. These agents are adept at manipulating trust, using familial or community links to assure parents of safety and legitimacy. Once the victim agrees—or is coerced—they are handed over to mid-level traffickers who arrange for transportation and accommodation during transit. The final link is the destination agent or employer, who receives the trafficked individual for exploitation.

Railway stations and bus terminals in Jharkhand act as significant trafficking corridors. Stations like Hatia, Ranchi, Dhanbad, and Tatanagar are known hotspots, with traffickers often using forged documents to evade detection. In some cases, victims are trafficked using private vehicles to avoid public scrutiny. Lack of surveillance at transit points and limited training among transport workers make interception rare.

The sheer adaptability and resilience of trafficking networks in Jharkhand demand an equally dynamic and multi-pronged response. While the police have begun to map trafficking routes and conduct cross-border rescues, efforts are hindered by poor inter-state coordination, lack of intelligence sharing, and minimal prosecution of middlemen. Placement agencies remain largely unregulated, and many operate in legal grey zones, further complicating accountability. To dismantle these trafficking routes and networks, Jharkhand must strengthen its border surveillance, mandate licensing and monitoring of placement agencies, and develop a dedicated inter-state anti-trafficking task force. Engagement with railway and transport staff, digital surveillance tools, and community informant systems are essential to disrupting the supply chain of trafficking.

TRAFFICKING ROUTES AND NETWORKS

In metropolitan destinations, placement agencies operate as intermediaries under the guise of employment facilitators. These agencies are rarely registered and often do not maintain records. They place girls in households for domestic work, charging a fee from employers while withholding wages from the girls. Survivors have reported physical violence, sexual assault, denial of food, and 14 to 16-hour workdays without rest. The absence of labour regulations for domestic workers further entrenches this exploitation.

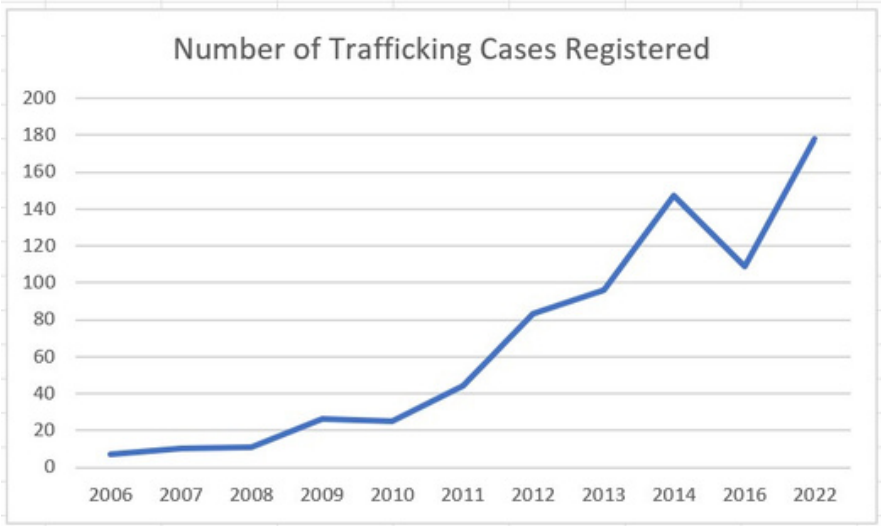
Marriage trafficking is another growing trend in Jharkhand. Girls, sometimes as young as 14, are married off under deceptive circumstances to men in Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh—states with deeply skewed sex ratios. These so-called marriages often mask bonded labour, domestic servitude, and sexual slavery. Victims are isolated, denied mobility, and subjected to continuous abuse with little chance of return.

Technology has also become an enabler of trafficking. Traffickers use mobile phones and messaging apps to recruit and coordinate. Social media is sometimes used to lure adolescents with false job offers or to maintain control over victims already trafficked. The digital trail left behind is often hard to trace due to lack of cyber investigation capabilities at the local level.

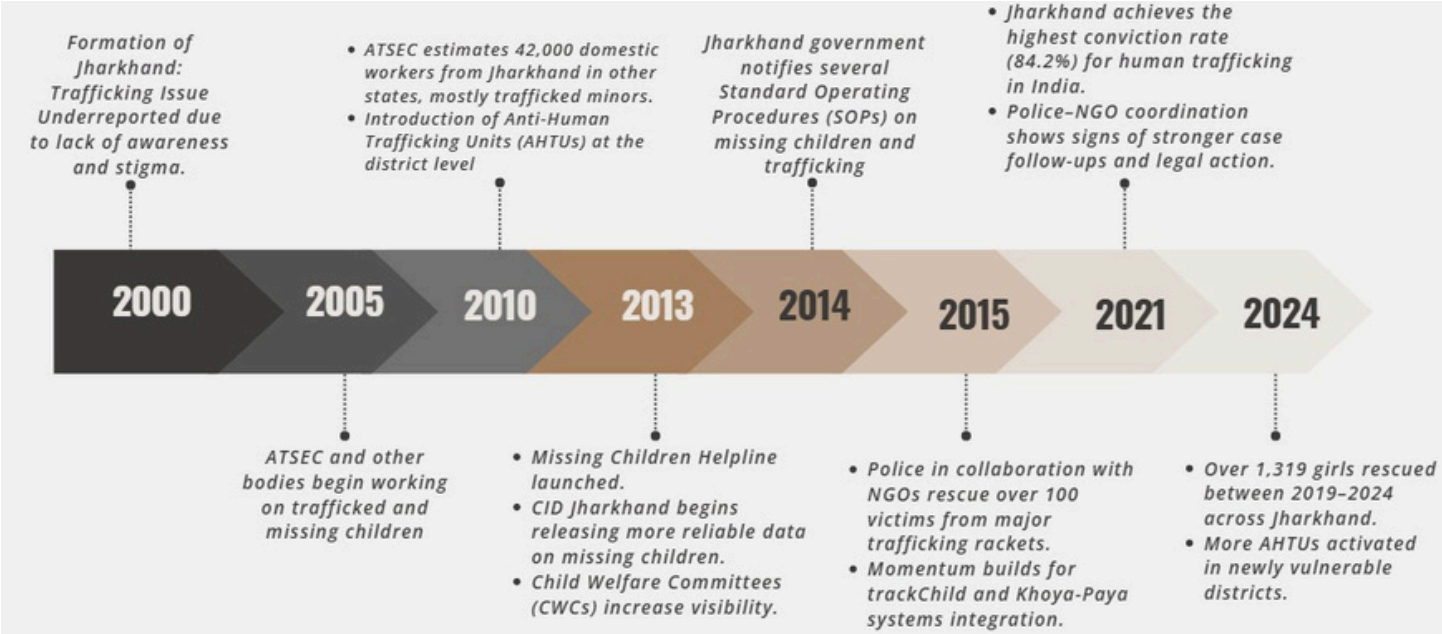
STATISTICAL OVERVIEW (2010–2025)

The data on human trafficking in Jharkhand from 2010 to 2025 reveals both the magnitude of the problem and the evolving response mechanisms. Over the years, civil society groups and government agencies have collected rescue, arrest, and conviction data that provide insight into trafficking trends, victim demographics, and institutional effectiveness. Between 2010 and 2014, more than 600 trafficked children were rescued and produced before the Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) across Jharkhand. These initial years were marked by increasing visibility of the issue, thanks in part to growing activism, legal reforms, and cross-border coordination. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, in 2016, Jharkhand recorded 109 cases of human trafficking, placing it among the top ten states in the country. This highlighted the urgent need for a dedicated and structured response from both the government and non-governmental actors. In 2021, the conviction rate for human trafficking in Jharkhand reached 84.2%—the highest in India for that year—reflecting improved policing and legal prosecution.

One of the critical challenges in analysing trafficking data in Jharkhand is the lack of uniformity in reporting mechanisms. Different agencies (police, CWCs, NGOs, and shelter homes) maintain separate databases, making cross-verification and cumulative analysis difficult. Furthermore, data on missing children often overlaps with trafficking but is not always followed up or recorded as such. Despite these challenges, recent years have witnessed the development of more sophisticated tracking and reporting tools. IRRIC and SRC now maintain detailed digital records of rescued and repatriated individuals. Technology-enabled platforms such as TrackChild and Khoya-Paya, along with helpline-based data from Childline (1098) and the Women’s Helpline (181), are playing a vital role in improving the accuracy and availability of trafficking data. Jharkhand’s statistical journey from scattered anecdotal reports to a more robust data ecosystem marks a significant development in its anti-trafficking strategy. These numbers not only underscore the scale of the problem but also act as performance indicators for interventions, funding allocation, and policy formulation. To make these gains sustainable, there is an urgent need to integrate all trafficking-related databases at the state level, train officials in data collection and analysis, and ensure transparency in sharing information among stakeholders. A centralised, accessible, and real-time data system will significantly enhance the state’s ability to anticipate, prevent, and respond to trafficking.



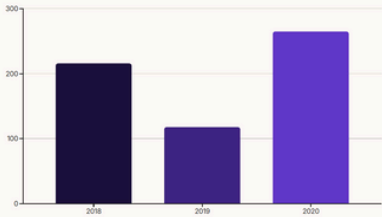
From 2019 to 2024, rescue operations across the state recovered over 1,319 trafficked girls, many of whom had been forced into domestic labour, sexual exploitation, or forced marriage in other states. These operations, often conducted in coordination with Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs), NGOs, and child protection bodies, resulted in increasing numbers of survivors being restored to their families or rehabilitated through state-run and NGO-supported programs. In 2022 alone, as per an NCRB report cited by media outlets, 125 girls and 43 boys were trafficked from Jharkhand. This data reaffirms that while women and girls remain the primary targets, young boys are also increasingly trafficked for labour exploitation. Importantly, the figures may under-represent the actual scale of the crisis due to underreporting, social stigma, and inconsistencies in FIR registration and case tracking.



Intensified Efforts and Rescue Operations (2016–2020)

This period marked a significant shift with systematic interventions and a notable increase in reported cases and rescues.

- Establishment of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in several districts, making rescue efforts more systematic.
- Significant increase in reported cases and successful rescues, indicating improved vigilance.
- Thousands of girls rescued by activist groups and NGOs, often from urban centers outside Jharkhand.



TRENDS IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES IN JHARKHAND SINCE 2000

2000s: Emergence and Increased Reporting

Early 2000s: Trafficking cases were under-reported, partly due to lack of awareness, weak state capacity, and social stigma. Initial cases mainly involved the trafficking of young girls and women to metropolitan cities for domestic work or sexual exploitation, often facilitated by nearby relatives or placement agencies.

2010–2015: Growth in Incidents and Awareness

Middle of the decade saw more structured interventions by state authorities and NGOs, leading to better detection and reporting. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data and NGO reports highlighted an uptick in registered trafficking cases, reflecting both an actual rise and improved vigilance. Jharkhand was increasingly identified as a trafficking “hotspot” due to poverty, low literacy, and vulnerable tribal populations.

2016–2020: Intensified Rescue Operations and Data Transparency

Establishment of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in several districts made rescue efforts more systematic and visible. Notable increases in reported cases and rescues: for instance, 216 victims were rehabilitated in 2018, 118 in 2019, and 265 in 2020, according to the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Several thousand girls were reportedly rescued by activist groups and NGOs during this period, often from urban centers outside Jharkhand.

2020–2025: Targeted Interventions and Persistent Challenges

Rescue and rehabilitation efforts continued, with over 1,300 girls rescued between 2020 and 2025 in coordinated state-NGO operations according to Bal Kalyan Sangh (BKS). NGO-led community outreach expanded, and the creation of job and skills programs for at-risk survivors tried to break cycles of re-trafficking. Despite these gains, under-reporting remains a serious issue, and the true scale is believed to be larger than official data suggests.

Notable Patterns

Geographic Focus: Most trafficking-prone districts include Simdega, Gumla, Khunti, Lohardaga, Palamu, Pakur, Dumka, West Singhbhum, Ranchi, and Hazaribagh.

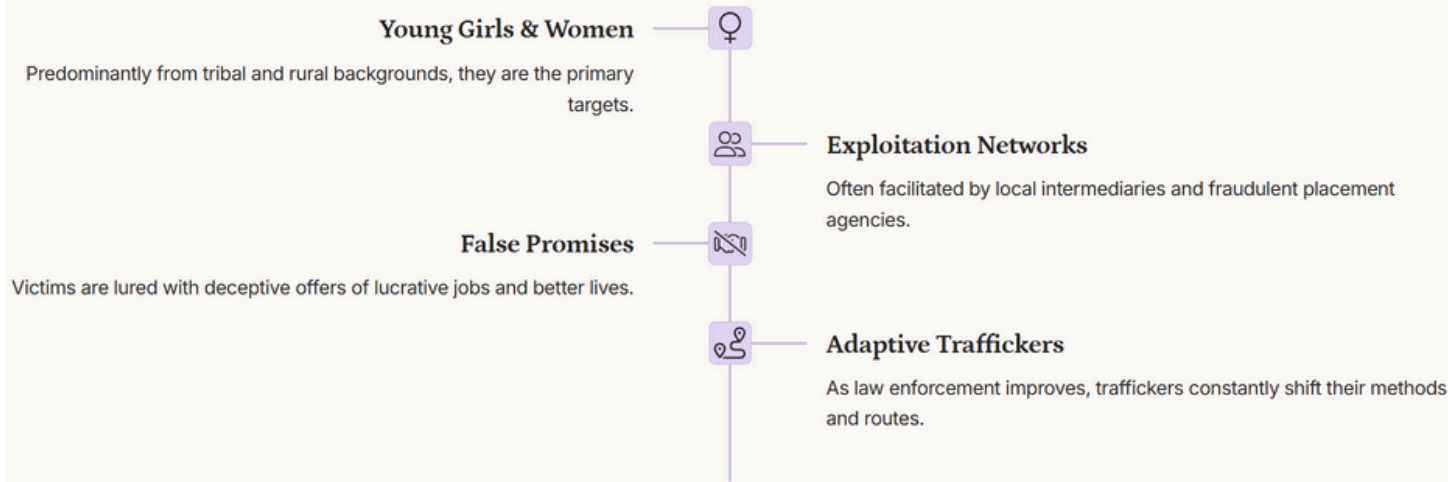
Nature of Victims: The majority are young girls and women from tribal, rural backgrounds.

Purpose of Trafficking: Primarily forced labor (especially domestic work), followed by sexual exploitation and bonded labor.

Adaptability of Traffickers: As law enforcement improved, traffickers shifted methods, often using local intermediaries and false promises of jobs.

Victim Profiles & Trafficker Tactics

Understanding who is targeted and how traffickers operate is crucial for effective prevention.



The issue of missing girls in Jharkhand is not merely a statistical concern—it is a humanitarian crisis with deep social, economic, and cultural roots. National-level reports, including data released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and CRY (Child Rights and You), paint a stark picture: every day in India, an average of 172 girls are reported missing, and at least three girls are trafficked. Jharkhand, as a source state, contributes significantly to this grim figure. Many of the girls reported missing from Jharkhand are later discovered to have been trafficked for forced labour, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, or even forced marriage. In most cases, these disappearances are not random but a result of organised trafficking rackets that prey on poverty, lack of education, and gender-based discrimination. The districts of Khunti, Gumla, Simdega, West Singhbhum, and Latehar consistently report high numbers of missing children, especially girls aged between 12 and 18. One alarming aspect is that many families do not report missing girls immediately, either due to fear of stigma or because they believe the girls have voluntarily migrated for work. This delay in filing First Information Reports (FIRs) gives traffickers a significant head start, often making rescue more difficult. In some cases, traffickers are family acquaintances or neighbours, making detection and community reporting even more challenging.

Another issue is the underreporting and poor follow-up on missing children cases. Law enforcement agencies are often overwhelmed, under-trained in handling child rights violations, or unaware of the protocols mandated under the Juvenile Justice Act and POCSO Act. Investigations can be sluggish, and cross-border coordination with police forces in destination states remains weak. Even when cases are filed, the conversion rate from FIR to recovery and rehabilitation remains low, partly due to logistical hurdles and resource constraints.

MISSING GIRLS: ALARMING TRENDS

Digital platforms such as TrackChild and Khoya-Paya have helped in tracking missing children, but their reach is still limited in rural Jharkhand where digital literacy is low and internet access is poor. Panchayats, schoolteachers, and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) remain underutilised in early warning mechanisms and can be key players in local vigilance if properly trained and supported.

What makes the problem even more disturbing is the psychological and physical impact on recovered children. Survivors often face trauma, societal stigma, and a lack of institutional support for reintegration. Many girls are unable to resume education due to age restrictions or gaps in learning. They are vulnerable to re-trafficking if not rehabilitated with care, dignity, and long-term livelihood support.

Addressing the issue of missing girls requires a multi-stakeholder response. Local police stations must proactively monitor missing child reports and coordinate with district AHTUs.

Communities need to be sensitised to understand that early reporting saves lives. Digital tracking must be complemented with offline, community-based monitoring systems. Schools, anganwadi workers, and health workers must be empowered as frontline responders. Additionally, families must be supported with economic alternatives so that their daughters are not pushed into unsafe migration.

The high number of missing girls is not just a symptom of trafficking—it is the entry point. Preventing disappearances and responding swiftly can significantly reduce the pool of individuals vulnerable to trafficking. Jharkhand's future depends on how effectively it can close this gap in protection for its most vulnerable population.



ROLE OF GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Government institutions in Jharkhand play a pivotal role in both the preventive and responsive aspects of human trafficking. Their involvement is crucial not just in rescue and repatriation, but in ensuring that the survivors of trafficking are treated with dignity, rehabilitated, and reintegrated into society. Over the years, a network of specialised units, child protection bodies, helplines, and resource centres have been developed to address the growing complexity of the trafficking ecosystem.

Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) have been set up across most districts and are tasked with tracking traffickers, conducting rescue operations, and investigating trafficking-related crimes. While their presence has undoubtedly improved the state's law enforcement response, many units are still under-resourced and lack dedicated personnel trained in child protection, gender-sensitive procedures, and cyber investigations. Further, inter-district and inter-state coordination remains weak, which is crucial for effectively tracking and dismantling trafficking networks that operate beyond state borders.

Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), established under the Juvenile Justice Act, are key players in handling the custody, counselling, and rehabilitation referral of rescued minors. CWCs in Jharkhand have handled hundreds of trafficking cases in recent years. However, delays in conducting hearings, lack of psychosocial support infrastructure, and gaps in follow-up mechanisms often undermine their effectiveness. There is also a need for regular training and capacity building of CWC members on trafficking-specific provisions and survivor-centred approaches.

Government-supported helpline services such as Childline (1098) and the Women's Helpline (181) have emerged as vital tools for emergency response.

Childline, in particular, plays an instrumental role in field-level interventions and crisis rescue efforts. However, many calls related to trafficking require escalation and coordination with AHTUs, CWCs, and NGOs—processes that are often delayed by bureaucratic red tape and unclear jurisdiction. The establishment of the Integrated Rehabilitation and Resource Centre (IRRC) in New Delhi and the State Resource Centre (SRC) in Ranchi, both supported by the Jharkhand government and operated by BKS, has created an institutional framework for managing repatriation and rehabilitation. These centres help maintain detailed records of trafficked individuals, assist with travel arrangements, liaise with destination states, and provide temporary shelter and counselling. Their role is especially significant in cases involving interstate or international trafficking.

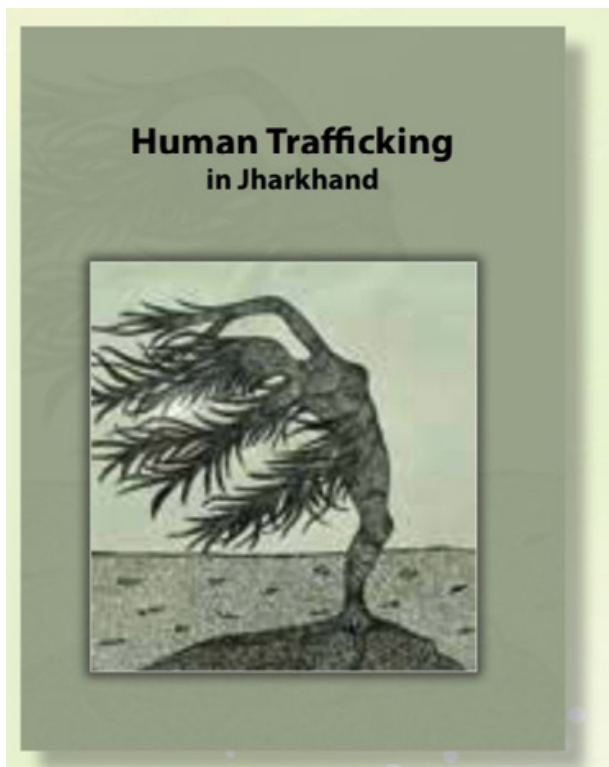
Despite these mechanisms, several systemic challenges persist. Compensation disbursement under schemes like the Central Victim Compensation Fund is often delayed or never reaches the survivors. Shelter homes in remote districts are either under-equipped or non-functional. Coordination between police, judiciary, and welfare departments is inconsistent, affecting the continuity of care and justice delivery.

Additionally, the lack of a comprehensive state anti-trafficking policy has led to fragmented approaches and duplication of efforts. The absence of standardised operating procedures for all government stakeholders—ranging from rescue to reintegration—has made responses inconsistent and often insensitive to the needs of survivors.

To enhance the impact of government institutions, Jharkhand must institutionalise cross-sector collaboration, establish monitoring and accountability frameworks, and ensure adequate funding and training for all anti-trafficking bodies. Only a robust, survivor-focused, and well-coordinated state apparatus can create a meaningful deterrent against trafficking while offering hope and justice to its victims.



KEY INTERVENTIONS BY NGOS



Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have played a transformative role in Jharkhand's battle against human trafficking. Their work spans the full spectrum of anti-trafficking efforts—from prevention and awareness to rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration. NGOs are often the first responders on the ground, particularly in remote districts where state presence is limited or ineffective.

One of the leading organisations in this space is Bal Kalyan Sangh (BKS), which has collaborated with national and international partners such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Jharkhand Women Development Society (JWDS), and various state and central government bodies. BKS's efforts have become synonymous with anti-trafficking work in Jharkhand, particularly in tribal-dominated regions like Khunti, Simdega, Gumla, and Latehar.

As of 2024, BKS and its partners have rescued and supported the repatriation of over 5,800 girls and adolescents, the majority of them girls. The organisation's shelter home, Kishori Niketan, has provided temporary care and psychological counselling to hundreds of survivors each year. In many cases, survivors spend several weeks or months at the shelter before being reunited with their families or linked to long-term rehabilitation programs.

BKS have also developed robust documentation systems, contributing to a reliable database of missing, rescued, and restored children. Their records are frequently used in state and national-level policy consultations and research publications. These data-driven approaches have helped for more comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation.

Awareness generation has been another cornerstone of NGO efforts. BKS, along with its network ATSEC (Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of the Children), has conducted thousands of village-level campaigns, school outreach programs, street plays, and community dialogues. These initiatives are critical in rural Jharkhand, where trafficking often begins with a simple promise made by a familiar face. Through tools such as comic books, mobile apps, short films, and puppet shows, these NGOs have been able to communicate complex messages in simple, relatable formats.

In addition, NGOs have played a vital role in training government functionaries including Panchayati Raj members, anganwadi workers, teachers, and police officers. These capacity-building initiatives have helped frontline workers identify early signs of trafficking, respond sensitively to survivor disclosures, and navigate the legal and child protection frameworks.

The impact of these interventions is evident not only in the number of lives saved, but in the growing awareness across Jharkhand's villages and urban settlements. The community's capacity to identify, report, and resist trafficking has grown significantly, largely due to the sustained efforts of grassroots organisations. As Jharkhand moves into its next phase of development, the continued partnership between the state and NGOs will be essential to ensuring that trafficking is not just managed—but prevented and ultimately eradicated.



LIVELIHOOD & REHABILITATION PROGRAMS



Livelihood and rehabilitation programs are essential for ensuring that survivors of trafficking in Jharkhand are not only rescued but also reintegrated into society with dignity and stability. These interventions form the backbone of long-term anti-trafficking strategies, helping victims rebuild their lives and reducing the risk of re-trafficking.

Bal Kalyan Sangh (BKS), in collaboration with state government departments, corporate partners, and vocational institutions, has pioneered a series of skill development and livelihood programs. These programs cater to the diverse needs and aspirations of survivors, many of whom return with broken education, disrupted childhoods, and psychological trauma. The focus is not merely on economic rehabilitation but on restoring confidence, self-reliance, and a sense of purpose.

Key vocational training modules include:

- Security Guard Certification (in partnership with private security firms)
- Nursing, Geriatric, and Childcare Training
- Housekeeping and Hospitality Training
- Basic and Advanced Computer Literacy
- Beautician and Salon Skills
- Tailoring and Stitching Units

As of 2024, over 1,000 survivors and at-risk youth have undergone vocational training through BKS-supported centres in Ranchi, Khunti, and Simdega. Of these, 869 have been successfully placed in private firms, hospitals, households, and local businesses across Jharkhand and neighbouring states. These placements offer not just financial independence but social mobility and a renewed sense of identity. Apart from formal vocational training, BKS runs life skills workshops covering topics such as communication, digital literacy, financial management, workplace safety, and self-defence. These modules prepare survivors for real-world challenges and equip them with tools to navigate employment, relationships, and public spaces with confidence.

A key innovation in BKS's model is the development of survivor-led micro-enterprises. Groups of trained girls have started collective businesses such as tailoring units, organic farming initiatives, and homemade goods production. These enterprises are supported through seed funding, mentoring, and market linkages. Some survivor groups have even begun mentoring other rescued girls, creating a ripple effect of empowerment.

Rehabilitation also includes psychological care and counselling. Survivors undergo trauma-informed therapy sessions facilitated by trained counsellors and clinical psychologists. Many arrive with symptoms of depression, anxiety, or PTSD, requiring months of sustained emotional support. BKS integrates art therapy, group therapy, and peer discussions into its rehabilitation approach.

In cases where families are unable or unwilling to take the survivors back, long-term residential rehabilitation programs are arranged. These homes provide a safe and nurturing environment where survivors can continue their education, complete their training, and gradually transition to independent living. A major success of these programs has been the reduction in re-trafficking rates among trained survivors. Girls with stable jobs or self-employment opportunities are significantly less vulnerable to exploitation. Many of them become advocates in their own communities, educating others about the risks of unsafe migration and the importance of education and employment.

To scale these efforts, BKS is advocating for a block-level expansion of livelihood training, along with government support for survivor entrepreneurship schemes under MSME and Skill India initiatives. The aim is to make every survivor not just a beneficiary, but a leader in the fight against trafficking.



IMPACT STORIES



CASE STORY 1

Anjali (name changed), a 16-year-old girl from Khunti district, was trafficked to Delhi and forced to work as a domestic worker under exploitative conditions. She was rescued during a joint operation by BKS and Delhi police. After being repatriated to Jharkhand, she received trauma counselling and was enrolled in a tailoring course at a local skills centre supported by the IRRRC. With a rehabilitation grant and support from a CSR-funded livelihood initiative, Anjali opened a tailoring unit in her village. She now employs two other survivors and serves as a mentor in her community, sharing her story at local schools to prevent unsafe migration.

CASE STORY 2

Raju, a 17-year-old from Gumla, was lured to Punjab with the promise of a well-paying agricultural job. Once there, he was made to work 14-hour shifts under inhumane conditions. After a tip-off from a migrant worker, Raju was rescued and brought back to Jharkhand. BKS enrolled him in a short-term security training course. Today, Raju works as a security guard in Ranchi and supports his family. He also volunteers with local CPCs (Child Protection Committees), conducting community meetings to educate others on the risks of trafficking and the importance of safe migration.

CASE STORY 3

Rekha (name changed), a trafficking survivor from Simdega, underwent vocational training in beauty services through a rehabilitation initiative by BKS. With help from a microgrant, she established a small beauty parlour in her village market. Rekha has since expanded her business, employing two other young women—both survivors of trafficking. She has become an advocate for survivor-led reintegration and frequently collaborates with district authorities to promote livelihood schemes tailored to trafficking victims.



BEST PRACTICES & MODEL INITIATIVES

Jharkhand's response to human trafficking has been strengthened by a number of best practices and innovative models that have emerged from years of field experience, community engagement, and institutional learning. These initiatives—led by both government and civil society actors—offer scalable solutions and replicable frameworks for combating trafficking in source states like Jharkhand.

One of the most impactful interventions has been the training of Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members, particularly in high-vulnerability blocks. By empowering village mukhiyas, ward members, and panchayat secretaries with knowledge about trafficking indicators, legal frameworks, and referral mechanisms, communities have been able to act as the first line of defence. Trained PRI members have helped register missing children's cases, alerted police about suspicious agents, and even intervened to stop unsafe migration in real-time.

Awareness generation in schools and villages is another best practice. BKS and its partners conduct targeted workshops using tools such as puppet shows, animated videos, interactive games, and printed materials in tribal languages. These campaigns are especially designed for children aged 10 to 18, with messaging that demystifies grooming tactics used by traffickers. In schools, child-friendly reporting boxes have been installed, enabling students to report abuse or trafficking threats anonymously.

Cyber safety workshops for adolescents, particularly girls, have emerged as a critical intervention. Traffickers increasingly use social media and messaging platforms to lure minors with false promises of employment or friendship. Digital literacy sessions—conducted in collaboration with local police and IT professionals—educate children and their guardians about cyber hygiene, privacy settings, and online red flags. These sessions have been incorporated into school curricula in select districts.

The creation of Bal Panchayats (children's councils) and active Village Child Protection Committees (CPCs) are also notable. Bal Panchayats give children a platform to discuss safety concerns, advocate for peer rights, and alert authorities about potential cases. CPCs, comprised of teachers, ASHA workers, ANMs, parents, and local leaders, meet monthly to monitor child rights issues, track school dropouts, and document seasonal migration patterns. These community-led structures foster collective responsibility and sustain vigilance against trafficking.

A hallmark of institutional innovation is the formulation and institutionalisation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for rescue, restoration, and reintegration. These SOPs standardise the role of each stakeholder—police, CWCs, shelter homes, MRCs, and NGOs—ensuring coordinated, timely, and rights-based interventions. BKS, with support from UNODC and Jharkhand State Child Protection Society (JSCPS), has trained over 1,200 functionaries on SOP adherence across 12 districts.





POLICY GAPS AND SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

Despite years of concerted action and growing public awareness, Jharkhand still faces numerous structural and policy-level obstacles in fully eradicating human trafficking. While the state has demonstrated significant progress through rescue operations, rehabilitation efforts, and community-based initiatives, several critical challenges continue to hinder sustainable outcomes. A primary concern is the absence of a dedicated and comprehensive State Anti-Trafficking Policy. Although various departments—such as Women and Child Development, Labour, and Police—address trafficking in their mandates, the lack of an integrated policy framework leads to duplication of efforts, poor coordination, and fragmented interventions. Without a unified roadmap, the state's response to trafficking remains reactive rather than preventive and strategic. Infrastructure gaps also pose a major challenge. Shelter homes, especially in rural and remote districts, are either underfunded or entirely absent. Survivors are often placed in temporary or overcrowded facilities that lack trauma-informed care, vocational training opportunities, or even basic amenities. This undermines their chances at holistic recovery and increases vulnerability to re-trafficking.

Another systemic challenge lies in the weak implementation of victim compensation schemes. Although the Central Victim Compensation Fund and other state welfare schemes exist, delays in disbursement, complex paperwork, and lack of awareness among beneficiaries mean that many survivors never receive the financial support they are entitled to. This financial gap severely impacts the reintegration process.

The judicial process is another area fraught with delays and bottlenecks. Prosecution of traffickers often takes years, and conviction rates, though improving, remain inconsistent across districts. Survivors are frequently made to travel long distances to attend court hearings, with little logistical or emotional support. The slow pace of justice contributes to a sense of helplessness and reduces public faith in the legal system.

At the community level, survivors continue to face stigma and social ostracisation. Families, under economic stress or social pressure, may refuse to accept returning victims, particularly if they were trafficked for sexual exploitation. This rejection not only affects the survivor's mental health but also undermines rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. There is also limited focus on engaging men and boys in prevention efforts, despite their critical role in disrupting exploitative social norms.

Another key gap is the limited use of data and technology. Although platforms like TrackChild and Khoya-Paya exist, they are not consistently updated or utilised. The absence of an integrated state-wide trafficking database means patterns go undetected, repeat offenders escape scrutiny, and inter-agency coordination is hampered. Moreover, there is little investment in predictive tools or GIS mapping that could help in hotspot identification and targeted interventions.

Lastly, frontline workers—teachers, health workers, anganwadi staff, and police—often lack adequate training on trafficking-related laws and procedures. High staff turnover, lack of refresher courses, and insufficient incentives reduce the efficacy of local interventions.

Addressing these policy and systemic gaps requires strong political will, resource allocation, and a commitment to inter-departmental coordination. Jharkhand's fight against trafficking will only succeed if it shifts from reactive rescues to proactive prevention, backed by a robust and inclusive policy framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS & WAY FORWARD

To move from fragmented interventions to a unified and systemic solution, Jharkhand must adopt a multi-sectoral, survivor-centred, and data-driven approach. Below are the key recommendations that can guide the state's future anti-trafficking roadmap:

- 1. Formulate and implement a State Anti-Trafficking Policy:** The absence of a unified policy is a critical gap. Jharkhand must adopt a comprehensive anti-trafficking policy that aligns with national frameworks while responding to local realities. This policy should outline clear roles, responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms across departments.
 - 2. Strengthen and fund district-level Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) and Child Welfare Committees (CWCs):** Every district must have fully staffed and trained AHTUs and CWCs. These bodies must receive adequate infrastructure, personnel, and recurring training in trafficking laws, child rights, trauma-informed care, and survivor reintegration protocols.
 - 3. Institutionalise Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and survivor follow-up systems:** Rescue, rehabilitation, and repatriation efforts must be governed by SOPs that are uniformly implemented across the state. Establishing a case management system that ensures regular follow-up with survivors for at least 12 months post-rescue is crucial.
 - 4. Scale livelihood training and reintegration programs to every block:** Current vocational initiatives should be decentralised and made accessible to all blocks in trafficking-prone districts. Partnerships with NSDC, CSR wings of companies, and Skill India initiatives can help scale efforts sustainably.
 - 5. Promote survivor support groups and peer educator networks:** Survivors should be encouraged to form collectives that offer psychological support, advocate for policy reform, and serve as watchdogs in their communities. Their lived experiences are invaluable in shaping prevention strategies.
 - 6. Invest in data and technology-driven interventions:** Jharkhand must develop an integrated, real-time trafficking database that connects police, CWCs, NGOs, and state departments. This should be supplemented by predictive GIS mapping, biometric ID checks at migration hubs, and the use of digital helplines for at-risk populations.
 - 7. Develop community vigilance structures:** Empower Village Child Protection Committees (CPCs), Panchayats, ASHA workers, and schoolteachers to identify vulnerabilities early. Provide them with training, reporting tools, and financial incentives.
 - 8. Improve judicial access and legal aid:** Deploy mobile courts and district-level legal aid cells to expedite trafficking trials. Survivors should be supported with travel, translation, and counselling assistance during court proceedings.
 - 9. Strengthen inter-state coordination:** Given that most trafficked individuals from Jharkhand are taken to other states, establishing dedicated liaison officers in major destination cities can help speed up rescues and court cases.
 - 10. Secure long-term funding through state budget allocations:** Anti-trafficking initiatives must be institutionalised through guaranteed funding in the state budget, rather than relying solely on donor or CSR grants.
- Jharkhand is on the cusp of transformation. By embedding these recommendations into a robust framework and holding institutions accountable for their implementation, the state can lead the way in creating a trafficking-free future.

REFERENCES

1. Rescue Operations & Victim Support

- Over 5,800 trafficked children and adolescents rescued and repatriated by Bal Kalyan Sangh (BKS) (as of 2024).
- 1,319 girls rescued between 2019 and 2024 through coordinated operations (BKS).
- 216 victims rehabilitated in 2018, 118 in 2019, and 265 in 2020 (Ministry of Women and Child Development).
- In 2022 alone:
 - 125 girls and 43 boys were trafficked (NCRB via media reports).

2. Statistical Overview & Trends

- Between 2010 and 2014: Over 600 trafficked children were rescued and produced before CWCs in Jharkhand. (Bal Kalyan Sangh)
- In 2016: Jharkhand reported 109 human trafficking cases, placing it among the top 10 states in India (NCRB).
- In 2021: The conviction rate for human trafficking in Jharkhand was 84.2%—the highest in India that year (NCRB).

3. Livelihood & Reintegration

- Over 1,000 survivors trained in vocational programs by BKS.
- 869 survivors placed in jobs across Jharkhand and neighbouring states (as of 2024).
- Survivor-led microenterprises include tailoring units, salons, and agricultural collectives.

4. National Perspective on Missing Girls

- 172 girls reported missing every day across India (NCRB)
- At least 3 girls trafficked daily (Child Rights and You – CRY; NCRB).

Primary Data Sources Cited

- Bal Kalyan Sangh (BKS) internal records and rescue documentation.
- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports
- Ministry of Women and Child Development data (2018–2020).
- Childline 1098, Khoya-Paya, and TrackChild digital platforms.
- Child Rights and You (CRY) reports on missing children.
- IRRIC (Integrated Rehabilitation and Resource Centre) and SRC (State Resource Centre) digital tracking systems.



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