



CHILD RIGHTS AND YOU

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Media Release: International Missing Children's Day 2018

## 174 Children Go Missing In India Every Day, Half Of Them Remain Untraced

**25<sup>th</sup> May, New Delhi:** A phone call at the dead of the night is seldom good news. However, for the Aimol\* family what followed was not only shocking but also something that would change their lives forever. Their daughter Julie\* had bagged a job opportunity abroad the month before and the family had been ecstatic. The employment agency had taken her and seven other girls. The family was waiting for good fortune to unfold. Little did they know that the reality would be dark, dangerous and gloomy. Julie and the other girls were taken to Myanmar, where their identity documents were forged and then to Singapore. They realised they had no clue about their final destination. As luck would have it, they were forced to lodge in a hotel in Yangon enroute to Singapore. Luckily, Julie managed to call home from there.

Back at the hilly terrains of Churachandpur district in Manipur, home to Julie, her family was completely at a loss. They desperately contacted a member of Manipur Alliance for Child Rights (MACR), an organisation working towards ensuring child rights in the state, supported by CRY-Child Rights and You.

With immediate action from the team, the local police department, the Special Investigation Team of the state police and immense cooperation from the Indian Embassy, the State Government, the External Affairs Ministry and the Yangon police, the children were rescued from Myanmar and six persons were arrested.

Speaking about this, Keisham Pradipkumar, member of Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MCPCR) said, "Manipur has become not only a source state for cross-border human trafficking, but also it is being used as an easy transit route. Children are soft and easy target, and it is definitely a burning issue for the state."

"I've got a second chance to live. Though I still get nightmares, I know I am lucky enough to be back with my family. Not everyone is as lucky as me. They go missing without a trace," said Julie.

### **Status of Missing Children in India: An Overview**

**174 children go missing in India everyday (MHA - 2016)**

**Only half the children who go missing every year are able to be traced (MHA - 2016)**

**One in every 4 missing children in India are from cities (MHA - 2016)**

**More than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the missing children in the country are concentrated in just 3 states – West Bengal, Delhi and MP (MHA - 2016)**

**Kidnapping and Abduction (K&A) of children is the largest crime committed against children and accounts for 51% of all crimes against children (NCRB 2016)**

**70% of victims of K&A are girls (NCRB 2016)**

Unfortunately, Julie is absolutely right. Going by the data on missing children revealed by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) Report and cited by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in the Parliament (LS Q NO. 3928, 20-03-2018), more than one lakh children (1,11,569 in actual numbers) were reported to have gone missing till 2016, and 55,625 of them remained untraced till the end of the year. Simply put, that's 174 children that went missing everyday in India in 2016, and more worryingly, only half of them came back in the same time-period (MHA - 2016). To plot it on a scale of ten, five out of every ten missing children remained untraced till 2016.

Further analysis of the data released by MHA suggests that more than half of all missing children in the country are concentrated in just five states, namely West Bengal, Delhi UT, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar. West Bengal tops the list with accounting for a whopping 15.13% of all missing children in the country in 2016, while Delhi UT closely follows with 13.14% during the same time. Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar accounted for 10.8%, 8.9% and 5.2% of India's missing children respectively.

Elaborating on the close linkage of missing children to organised crimes, Puja Marwaha, CEO, CRY – Child Rights and You said, “It is deeply disturbing that our children go missing and we can't bring them back home. The evidences on ground and numbers that indicate a large number of missing children are actually trafficked, kidnapped or abducted.”

The Optional Protocol on Trafficking which India is a signatory of, states that trafficking is an organized crime. It is the next largest form of trans-national illegal trade after arms and drugs. India is no exception as it is rapidly 'gaining' the status of a vast and 'low risk' market for the procurement and use of children for a range of exploitative needs, from organ trade and child labour to commercial sexual exploitation. “Child abduction and trafficking in India is growing because of two equally powerful forces – the supply chain of victims fed by extreme poverty, and the demand for dirty, difficult and dangerous services that provide the economic impetus for middlemen and traffickers to thrive,” Puja added.

Now that the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018 is on its way, and as Govt. initiatives like TrackChild, Operation Smile and Muskaan are trying to track detailed status of missing children, one can be hopeful that the country will take robust steps in addressing the issue squarely and for good.

Puja said, “At one level we need to relentlessly work on underlying reasons for various forms of deprivation which grapples our society at large, and on the other hand we need to accelerate our efforts in varied aspects related to bringing missing children back home – inter and intra state coordination and convergence, solid rescue and rehabilitative mechanism and more importantly invest adequate resources and trained personnel at every level. We have to remember that a missing child is not just a number, it's a missing childhood, a missing experience and missing memories of a lifetime for people close to them.”

*\*Names have been changed to protect the identity of the child and her family.*

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**Note to the Editor:**

**CRY – Child Rights and You** (formerly known as Child Relief and You) is an Indian NGO that believes in every child’s right to a childhood – to live, to learn, grow and play. For nearly 40 years, CRY and its partners have worked with parents and communities to ensure Lasting Change in the lives of more than 20 Lakh underprivileged children. For more information please visit us at [www.cry.org](http://www.cry.org).

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