



# Stronger Together

Annual Report 2023-2024



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# Introduction

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## Making human trafficking a rarity by being stronger and together

12 years ago, VIHAAN began work in tackling human trafficking with the need to understand the issue in its own right, and model, institutionalise and scale effective and specific solutions. We realised that human trafficking lay at the intersection of many discourses and disciplines such as migration, human rights, labour laws, poverty and human development discourses as well as trans-border rules and regulation. Therefore, at the execution level, we required a collaborative, end-to-end, multi-disciplinary approach upholding the rights of the survivors.

Even today, the end-to-end approach is our core, focusing on individuals, families and communities vulnerable to, or affected by the crime of trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation. Our interventions, mapped through six programmes, help build knowledge from action on the ground through education, skill building, rescue, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration and assist to strengthen an integrated ecosystem through collaborative action with a network of stakeholders operating at multiple levels.

Since inception, we have envisaged a diverse team of social workers, case workers, lawyers, researchers and community development professionals to work together to ensure a holistic perspective and unified, efficient and effective solution.

We recognise the fact that partnerships and collaborations are crucial in the fight against human trafficking. Being together, working with others as one entity, engaging in dialogue, sharing knowledge and gaining new skills make VIHAAN stronger to crack the complex nature of the crime.

Upholding these core principles, we have strived together in 2023-24 towards our common vision to create a world free from abuse and exploitation, where every person lives with dignity.





## Message from the President



Collaboration makes our mission possible.

Through the passion and persistence of visionary donors, dedicated partners and committed staff, VIHAAN's resilience grew in the last twelve months. We have been moving forward with great momentum with a shared vision and aligned objectives, enabling hundreds of children and women – vulnerable populations and survivors of human trafficking – to feel a sense of hope, belonging and a new beginning.

I am immensely proud of the way VIHAAN prevents and responds to the challenges of human trafficking although I wish the organisation's work were not desperately needed.

Our close and strategic partnerships have helped, protected and supported more children and survivors than last year. We have doubled – more than doubled – our impact; 347 vulnerable girls and survivors of human trafficking, abuse and exploitation have been enrolled in skill training (113% increase), 96 girls have been connected to livelihood opportunities (113% increase), 71 girls removed from situations of sex trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation (173% increase), 21 accused convicted (425% increase) and received victim compensation amounting to INR 53,56,500 for 27 survivors (114% increase).

The year was marked with growth, progress and success. It also proves that VIHAAN's organisational strategy with six programmes – Rescue, Care and support, Legal interventions, Strengthening the ecosystem,

Education, and Skill building and livelihood generation – is right on track.

Truly traffickers can be stopped when we lift and support each other. It is so inspiring and humbling to see people from different backgrounds emerge to advocate for firm measures to stop the traffickers and create better solutions to support survivors and vulnerable populations. I have witnessed – and continue to experience – this togetherness in every gathering, every discussion and even at a chance encounter.

As the world continues to change around us and the traffickers operate with new tactics using technology, we recognise the importance of building innovative systems to effectively prevent and respond to trafficking.

No one wants to live in a world with a fear of being trafficked, abused and exploited. We all want a future where children and women complete their schooling, pursue decent jobs, achieve financial independence and become part of a thriving society.

If we do not act united, trafficked children and women remain faceless and nameless –

and mere properties or assets – of the trafficking network.

Yes, much is at stake right now and challenges are powerful. The urgency requires us to join forces. Let us continue to move forward with fighting spirit.

The various threads of impact we have captured in this Annual Report, Stronger Together are the true reflection of our dedication, courage and resilience from all of us. I would like to mention particularly that survivors are co-creators of this impact.

We can be far more effective and see lasting impact if we work together.

Warmest regards,

**Sriparna Ganguly Chaudhuri**  
President, VIHAAN





## Message from the CEO



History has shown us when we act as a collective, we are stronger, and progress is made.

Driven by determined employees and committed partners, VIHAAN played a forceful and essential role in advancing the ambitious fight against human trafficking. The work we did in the last twelve months and continue to do together will not just be felt today but into the future generation. Together, we are breaking the cycle of intergenerational trafficking, abuse and exploitation.

We live in a delicate and complex world where human lives are easily sold. Not far from where each of us live, there could be a trafficked girl, boy, woman or man forced into cheap labour or sex trade. It is a terrible truth that 11 million people live in modern slavery in India, topping the list world-wide (according to The Global Slavery Index, Walk Free, 2023.)

Working together is critical at this moment. It is a necessary response to such a deep-rooted and widespread crisis. Traffickers have a brazen disregard for victims' lives and are finding new tricks to trap them. We need all actors and representatives of humanity; inclusive dialogue, shared knowledge, collective wisdom and varied perspectives which are vital components for anti-trafficking measures and actions that needs to be tweaked quite often.

The pages of this Annual Report, 'Stronger Together' are filled with inspiring examples of enormous challenges and the actions VIHAAN and our partners took to meet them, and with hopeful stories about some of the children and

women whose lives have been transformed completely.

Children like Mona\* and Sraboni\*, who were trapped in prostitution until VIHAAN in partnership with police officials came to their rescue and are currently supporting them with counselling, legal help and long-term re-integration into the society.

Women like Beth\* and Elsy\* from Nigeria who were trafficked into India under the pretence of a job opportunity and forced into prostitution are safely back to their homes in Nigeria.

Children like Meenu\* who was sexually assaulted at the age of three received justice after eight years of fierce battle in courts.

Young women like Narmada\* who were highly likely to follow their parents' path into the sex trade now employed at the Pizza section of a renowned café in Kolkata, thanks to VIHAAN's Centre for Community Empowerment at Sonagachi, the largest red light district in Asia.

Children like Bipasha\*, whose chance for an education was once shattered because of her disability, who is now learning at a child-friendly VIHAAN's Centre for Community Empowerment at Sonagachi.

In connection with the roll-out of the strategy, VIHAAN held the team meeting, 'Strengthening VIHAAN together', to celebrate our collective accomplishments, reaffirm our values and begin with a larger organisational transformation – increase efficiency, improve the effectiveness of our

interventions, empower zone-level leadership, and ultimately provide greater support to children and women who are caught in human trafficking and other situations of abuse and exploitation.

Our journey is long and often with numerous challenges. However, that neither scares us nor stops us.

The results we have achieved did not happen by themselves. It happened because of the support of our generous donors, committed supporters and dedicated staff who believe in our mission and propel VIHAAN forward. We enter the next year with a renewed commitment to amplify our work with greater impact and scale across India.

We have achieved so much, nevertheless, there is much work to be done. Hundreds of children and women are still denied the inherent right to live, being silenced by traffickers with great threats to themselves and their families.

Getting to zero trafficking may be difficult, yet it is possible when we move forward together. Change will happen and continued progress will be felt.

Alone we can achieve a lot, together we can achieve much more. Thank you for being with us.

**Samir Baptist**  
Chief Executive Officer, VIHAAN



# Understanding VIH AAN





## Our vision

Our vision is to create a world free from abuse and exploitation, where every person lives with dignity.

## Our mission

Our mission is to facilitate protection of vulnerable women and children from situations of human trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation by empowering them through care, quality education, livelihood opportunities, and access to justice and collaborative action, enabling the creation of a resilient and sustainable society.

## Our values

**Collaboration** – We engage with colleagues in the multi-disciplinary unit (MDU), stakeholders and partners to collectively meet the goals of the team and the organisation.

**Accountability** – We take responsibility for actions, results and decisions in the completion of tasks. Acknowledge failures/mistakes and take corrective action.

**Servant leadership** – We accept wholeheartedly the role of a steward, seek justice and commit to the well-being of others, especially those affected by social justice.

**Initiative** – We take a lead on something without being told, act on opportunities and are proactive.

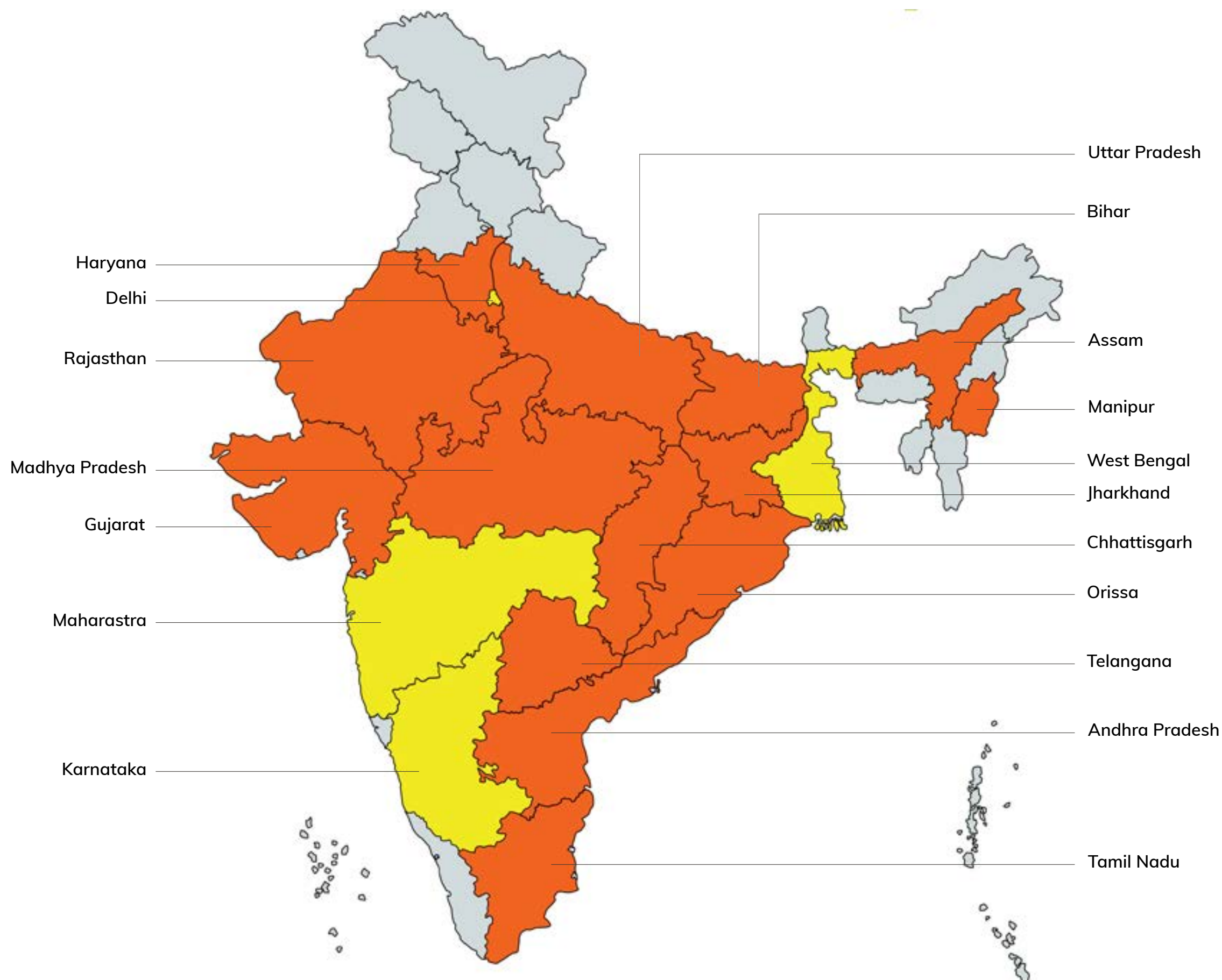
**Excellence** – We demonstrate high quality standards, meet set timelines with accuracy and are result-oriented.





## Our presence

With a long-term vision to see abuse and exploitation become a rarity, in collaboration with the State and other like-minded organisations, we have been able to make significant in-roads into anti-trafficking work in the past decade. We are directly present in New Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra and West Bengal, and, our casework and capacity building programmes lead us to intervene across other states in the country, including Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Daman, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.





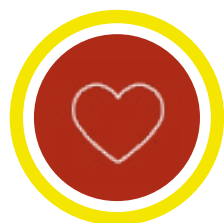
## Our programmes

The uniqueness of VIHAAN is in its end-to-end approach for addressing the problem of human trafficking which is manifested through its six programmes.



### Rescue

Removing victims from situations of human trafficking through rescue operations in collaboration with law enforcement.



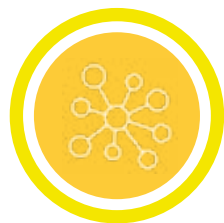
### Care and support

Caring and protecting survivors of human trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation to facilitate their rehabilitation, restoration and reintegration.



### Legal interventions

Prosecuting the accused and securing justice for the survivors through legal support.



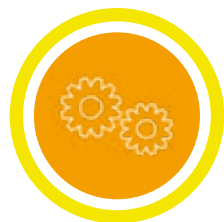
### Strengthening the ecosystem

Building networks and partnerships with influencers and duty bearers for collective response.



### Education

Preventing human trafficking by promoting education among the adolescents to create a safe environment for them.



### Skill building and livelihood generation

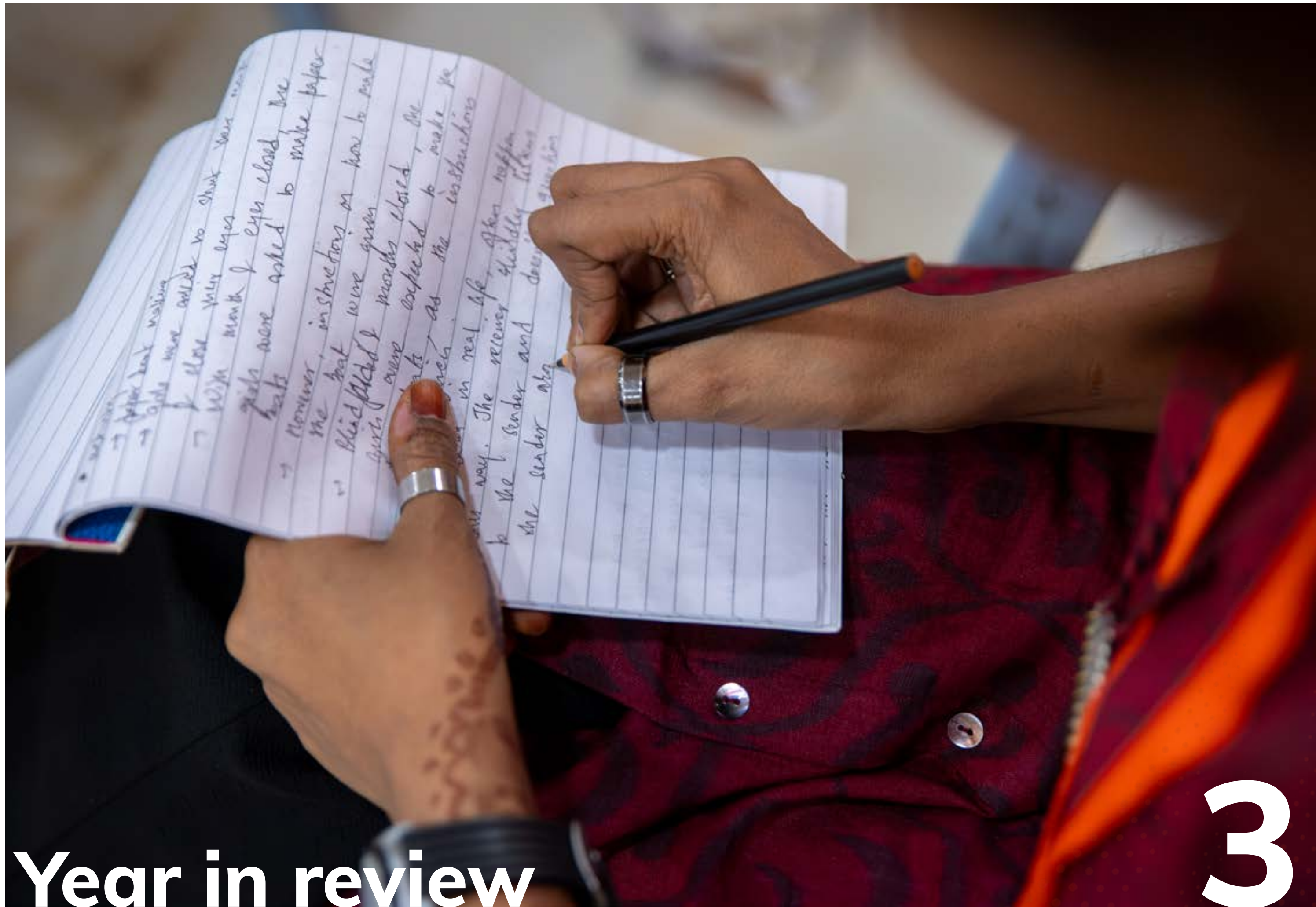
Empowering the vulnerable and survivors through skill training and livelihood generation in shelter homes and high-risk communities.





Year in review

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## Year in review (2023-2024)



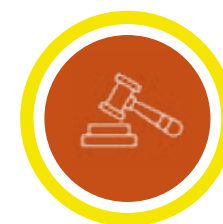
**71**

girls removed from situations of sex trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation.



**230**

first-generation learners have been regularized in school and provided academic support.

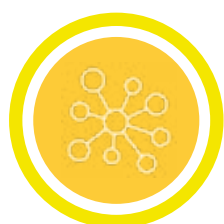


**211**

legal cases were supported, 32 accused were arrested and 21 accused were convicted.

**INR 53,56,500**

received as total compensation by 27 survivors.

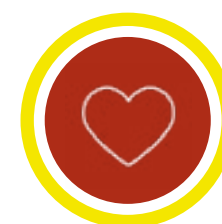


**2,346**

stakeholders including law enforcement personnel trained through

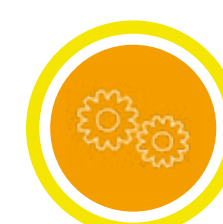
**31**

training programmes.



**200**

survivors of sex trafficking, child sexual abuse and domestic servitude were supported towards reintegration under the care and support programme.



**347**

vulnerable girls and survivors of human trafficking, abuse and exploitation have been enrolled in skill training,

**96**

girls have been connected to livelihood opportunities.



## A snapshot of our achievements

### East zone

VIHAAN's Centre for Community Empowerment, promoting education and skill training among survivors of human trafficking and vulnerable girls, was launched at Sonagachi, Kolkata, the largest red-light district in Asia and in Mithakhali, Canning, West Bengal, one of the high-risk districts for trafficking of young girls.

VIHAAN was shortlisted by SVP India – Kolkata chapter, a collaborative philanthropy organisation as one of their investees for a mega fundraising event, SETU (which means 'Bridge' in Bengali). Through the event, SVP has helped VIHAAN to raise INR 74.3 lakhs.

### West zone

Under the ambit of our preventive initiatives, the Mumbai legal team organised a legal awareness session for the students of Valia College on basic legal concepts like types of laws, its sources and significance, nature of enforcement agencies, and the significance of the First Information Report, among others.

After Karnataka and Delhi, the skill training programme was rolled out in Mumbai this year. The first batch of 20 shelter home residents were provided with opportunities for economic independence and a scope to move out of shelter homes.

### South zone

ITPA Saral Mobile App, a web-based application on sex trafficking procedures and processes was developed by VIHAAN in collaboration with a computer programming company for the Karnataka Police. The app was launched in February 2024 by the Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri. Siddaramaiah .

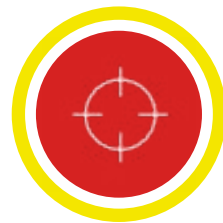
VIHAAN has been empanelled as a trainer of the Karnataka Police Training Academy, Police Training College and 11 Police Training Schools. We were invited to address law enforcement officials and members of the judiciary on the issue of gender and crimes against women, child protection and human trafficking at 23 capacity building workshops.

### North zone

Beth and Elsy, young Nigerian women, trafficked in 2020 and forced into prostitution, rescued by VIHAAN along with the Delhi police, were finally issued emergency travel certificates by the Nigerian High Commission in New Delhi in March 2024, two years after their rescue, flew back home and reunited with their families.

In a case of prolonged sexual assault and rape of a 10-year-old girl by the step father, the VIHAAN team's arduous efforts led to the survivor's fearless and confident presentation of evidence before the judge despite her mother's constant endeavours to manipulate and pressurize the girl to withdraw her statement. After four years of struggle, on 30 November 2023, the accused was convicted and sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment. The survivor was awarded the maximum compensation amount as per the Delhi Victim Compensation Scheme, 2018 of INR 10.5 Lakhs.

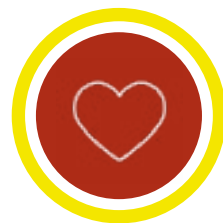
## Voices of our beneficiaries



### Rescue

“My mother works hard to make ends meet. I wanted to help her financially. I asked a lot of people for work. Then my neighbour, who is a bar dancer, deceived me into this (prostitution) two months ago. I have engaged five times in the last two months. I did not want to come today but they (the traffickers) threatened to make my nude pictures viral on social media if I did not turn up.”

- Mona\*, aged 15, a survivor of sex trafficking rescued by VIHAAN along with the Kolkata police



### Care and support

“VIHAAN is my family. You have been the one to provide me with support, courage, and confidence at every turn in my life. I was afraid of my own family because of what they did and had nowhere to go. But then VIHAAN came along and their care became my rock. Thankfully, because of VIHAAN’s belief in me, I’m now in my second year of Pre-University College (II PUC) and I want to continue and complete graduation and then become an IPS officer.”

- Pooja\* was a victim of domestic servitude who was sold by her own family. After the rescue, she spent her childhood in a childcare Institution and never returned home. With VIHAAN’s support she pursued her education and scored high first division marks in her 10th standard examination. She is now pursuing higher studies.



### Education

I am very happy that now my daughter reads English books which she never did earlier. Coming to the centre has been really helpful for her.

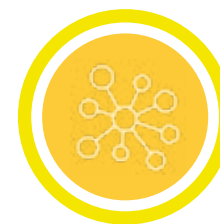
- Mother of a girl who attends classes at VIHAAN Centre for Community Empowerment in West Bengal



### Legal interventions

“I am happy. Didi (social worker), you have always been there for me. Now, I am looking forward to a new life. I am going to be married soon. The compensation money will be really helpful for my marriage preparations. Rest, I will keep it in my account.”

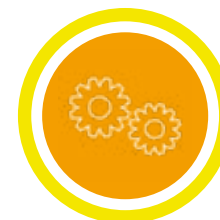
- Kirti\*, a minor victim of sex trafficking received justice after nine years. The accused were sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment and Kirti was awarded victim compensation of INR 3,00,000.



### Strengthening the ecosystem

“VIHAAN has been playing an exemplary role as a ‘Support Person’ in the POCSO cases with full diligence and sincerity. They are well oriented to provide legal support for these cases as and when required. Kudos to VIHAAN for all their initiatives to ensure justice for our children, especially the POCSO victims.”

- Mrs. Mohua Sur Roy,  
Chairperson of the Child Welfare Committee, Kolkata.



### Skill building and livelihood generation

I have gained a lot of advantage from VIHAAN’s course. I was having family issues, and the personal counselling helped me turn my life around. In addition to learning a lot from the course, it has given me the scope to live a self-sufficient life. I want to thank VIHAAN from the bottom of my heart for giving me work. I am enjoying my work and saving money every month for my son’s future.

- Trainee, aged 23, a survivor of domestic violence, placed as typist in a cyber centre with a monthly salary of INR 8,000





**Our impact**

**4**



# Rescue

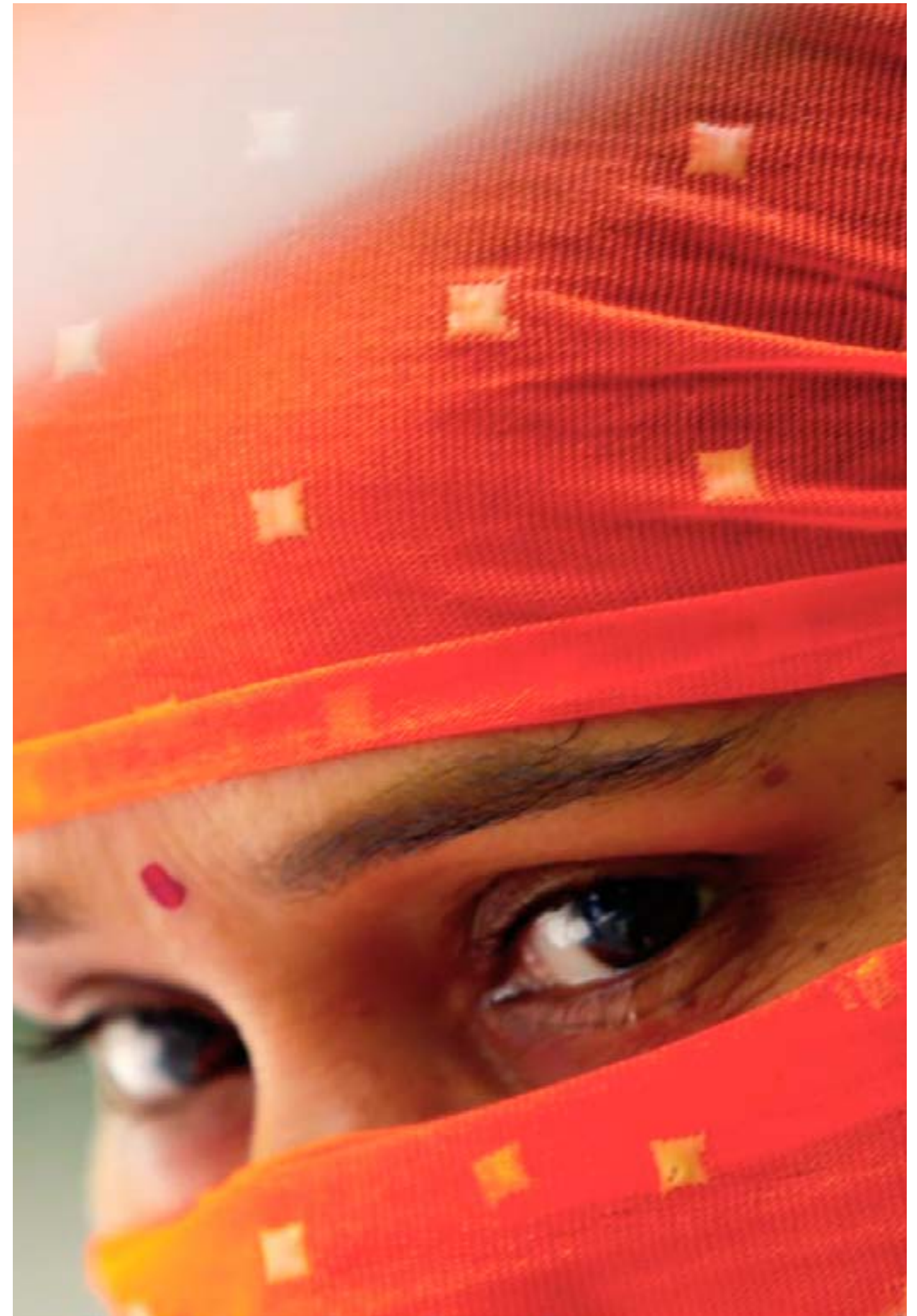
Removing victims from situations of human trafficking through rescue operations in collaboration with law enforcement



## Impact in numbers

- ▲ 71 survivors were rescued/freed from situations of abuse and exploitation.
- ▲ 23 victims of sex trafficking and 1 victim of domestic servitude were rescued in collaboration with the state police in Kolkata, Bangalore and Delhi.
- ▲ 32 accused were arrested through the seven rescue operations.
- ▲ 47 survivors of trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse were received as referrals from the Governments of Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

India, with around 11 million people living in modern slavery slaves, is among the top ten countries with the largest estimated absolute number of people in modern slavery. The most prevalent sectors employing trafficked people include forced labour, sex trade, domestic servitude, illegal adoption, forced marriages, illegal organ harvesting and agricultural slavery among others. VIHAAN works closely with law enforcement during rescue operations to rescue children and enslaved women from situations of abuse and exploitation.





## Stories of Mona and Sraboni: Rescued from the clutches of sex trafficking

Girls belong in school, not in the sex market where they are seen as a mere commodity. On December 2023, VIHAAN in partnership with the State Police in West Bengal rescued Mona\* and Sraboni\* who were sold into prostitution rings by human trafficking criminal networks.

Rescuing a victim of trafficking from the clutches of a trafficker, pimp, handler and brothel manager is no easy feat. It requires detailed planning, budgeting, multiple MDU discussions, coordination with law enforcement, confidential action and protection of team before the rescue operation.

The planning for the rescue operation began in October 2023 when the field workers received information that a criminal network was operating from a residential house in South Kolkata. Girls, as young as, 14 were forced to have sex with multiple customers every day. Upon receiving the information, the team coordinated with the Joint Commissioner of Police, Kolkata for the rescue operation. It took many rounds of discussion before the law enforcement officials verified the information and jointly planned for the rescue operation.

Once the date for the operation was finalized, a detailed rescue plan was prepared and team members were

assigned responsibilities as part of the Rescue Team. Finally, on 21 December 2023, VIHAAN team along with the law enforcement team reached the location. Around 2:30 pm, the police and VIHAAN team entered the establishment and took control of the situation. The social workers helped the two victims to calm down and moved them to a safe corner to avoid any contact with the trafficker.

The accused were handled by the women police officials and were taken to another room. The police conducted a thorough search of the crime site to gather evidence. It was also revealed that the trafficker had a 10-year-old son. Arrangements were made to admit the boy in the safe custody of a childcare institution.

The rescue team left the brothel at around 8:00 pm and reached the police station to facilitate the post rescue procedures. At the police station, Mona and Sraboni were introduced to VIHAAN's counsellor who immediately built rapport with the girls, assisted them to deal with their trauma and tried to make them comfortable. The counsellor also helped the girls understand the entire legal procedure. Once the girls were sure they were in safe hands, gradually they opened up before the social workers and started sharing about themselves.

Mona and Sraboni had a story to tell, as tragic as it was, but it was a common one.

Mona, aged 15, was a student of 9th grade. Her mother is part of the non-teaching staff in a school. Her father, an alcoholic, is jobless. Mona has been diagnosed with clinical depression. Her abusive home environment has pushed her to the edge. She needs long-term therapy. Currently, she is under counselling at a government hospital in Kolkata.

Sraboni, aged 14, was a school dropout. She has studied till the 8th standard. Due to a financial crisis at home, she left school and started working with a catering group. Both Sraboni and her sister was brought into prostitution by a common trafficker. Sraboni was taken to hotels where she engaged with customers. Through

different connections, she got involved with the current accused and began attending customers at her residence. On the day of the rescue, she was requested multiple times to attend a very important client. She was promised INR 500 for each engagement. She is currently undergoing counselling and is motivated to continue her education and live a life of dignity and respect.

The statements of the girls have been recorded before the police and the judicial magistrate in accordance to CrPC Sec. 161 and 164. Their medical examination has been completed. A criminal case has been registered and the girls are currently staying at a child care institution. The social workers and legal team are in touch with the survivors and their families to prepare detailed individual care plans for their successful reintegration.



## Trafficked Nigerian women rescued in India safely returned home

Beth and Elsy, young Nigerian women, jumped at a chance when they were offered jobs along with a promise of a passport, visa, flight ticket to India and safe accommodation to take on their jobs. They hopped onto the plane with the hope of earning decent money and supporting their struggling families at home.

“Life was tough at home. We were both excited to travel. Our families needed money and we thought it was a good opportunity to help them as well as start our new lives”, Beth said.

They thought their jobs were to help some families with their household chores but their new employers had new ideas.

After a 15-hour flight from Lagos to New Delhi, their dreams crumbled as they entered the house of a ‘Madam’, a Nigerian woman in the trafficking trade. Beth and Elsy were informed that they owed INR 5 crores calculated as a total cost of their travel to India. They were under the control of the madam and had to do what they were told.

Madams are the main actors in exploitation. They force girls into prostitution and ask for money to repay their debt. They also work with ‘brothers’, men in charge of physically trafficking the girls from Nigeria into India.

Beth and Elsy were assigned tasks immediately.

Elsy was told to wear revealing clothes, put on heavy make-up and walk in glittery stiletto heels. She was forced into a room. A man entered the room and raped her brutally.

Beth received specific instructions from Madam in a sharp and curt tone on how to cook and clean and be ready. Beth was in utter shock and resisted her assigned duties, which earned her a scolding and beating from Madam – and she was raped too.

That was the day the young women’s lives as sex slaves began.

Day after day, the ‘working’ hours lengthened and the abuse became brutal.

“Life was devastating and we had no way to escape. The house was always guarded by some men or the other who worked for Madam,” Elsy explained.

Beth and Elsy were caught in the trap for two years until Beth came across a social media post about the rescue operation of three young Nigerian girls, assisted by VIHAAN on NAPTIP’s social media account. NAPTIP, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons is an agency in Nigeria to address the scourge of trafficking in persons. She gathered courage and contacted NAPTIP who gave VIHAAN’s contact number.

“I realised that the only way is to find someone who would help us”, said Beth after the rescue.

VIHAAN passed on the information to the Delhi police and Anti Human Trafficking Unit and assisted in the rescue operation. They were rescued in February 2022. After the formalities and medical examination, we ensured that Beth and Elsy were safely admitted to state shelter homes.

Our counsellor and social worker made frequent visits to meet Beth and Elsy. It took few weeks for our team to gain their trust. Slowly, we built rapport, learnt about the intensity of the exploitation and tailored the counselling techniques to help them process the psychological impact. Throughout the sessions, we ensured that Beth and Elsy felt that they were in charge of their situation, and we were there to guide them.

We believe that victims must be heard in the court. It is equally important that victims feel protected and that their rights are respected throughout the proceedings.

From talking to our lawyers, Beth and Elsy understood that their share of voice in the court has the power to protect young girls and women in Nigeria being trafficked into India, they came forward and testified against their traffickers. Their brave witness statements, supported by

strong arguments from our lawyers led to the arrest of traffickers, including the kingpin of the widespread criminal network.

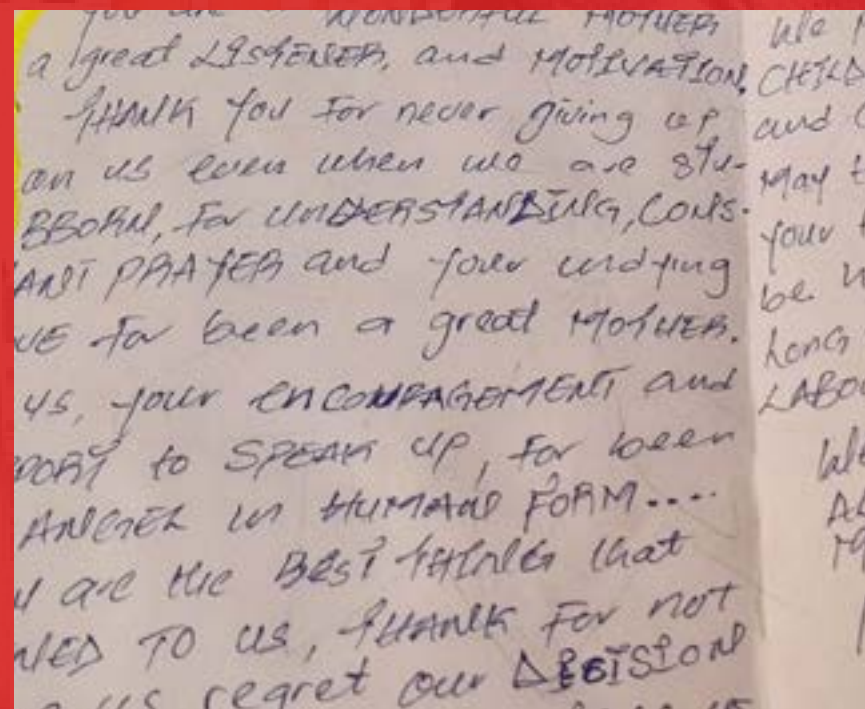
Our lawyers did not stop here. By presenting strong evidence, Beth and Elsy received victim compensation of INR 2,00,000 each as cash cards. This was the first time for the Indian court to offer victim compensation to foreign nationals. And, secured a repatriation order as well.

While Beth and Elsy continued to receive care and support from VIHAAN’s team, we had discussions with the Nigerian High Commission in New Delhi for the issuance of an emergency travel certificate. An emergency travel certificate is a valid travel document for a one-way journey to Nigeria, issued to stranded Nigerians abroad who do have the appropriate documents to travel back home.

Because of your generous donations, Beth and Elsy safely returned to their families in Nigeria.



## Heartfelt note from Beth and Elsy to our social worker!



you are a wonderful mother, a great LISTENER, and MOTIVATION. We  
THANK you for never giving up on us even when we are STUBBORN, for UNDERSTANDING, CONS. and  
AND PRAYER and your undying love. You have been a great mother. You have  
us, your ENCOURAGEMENT and SUPPORT to SPEAK UP, for been  
ANGEL IN HUMAN FORM.... We are the BEST children that  
WENT TO US, THANK FOR NOT  
US regret our DECISION

You are a wonderful mother, a great listener and a (motivator).

Thank you for never giving up on us even when we are (were stubborn). (Thank you) for understanding and your undying love (and) for being a good mother.

Your encouragement and support (helped us) to speak up. You are an angel in human form. You are the best thing that happened to us.

Thanks for not giving up on us. Us (We) regret our decision. (Thank you for) believing and trusting us. I can't tell you how much you mean to us.

We love and cherish you.  
We will deeply miss our sweet mother.

# Care and support

Caring and protecting survivors of human trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation to facilitate their rehabilitation, restoration and reintegration.



## Impact in numbers

- ▲ 200 survivors of sex trafficking, child sexual abuse and domestic servitude were supported towards reintegration under the care and support programme.
- ▲ 35 survivors received medical support and were facilitated hospital visits.
- ▲ 31 survivors were supported to continue their education and/or vocational training.
- ▲ 67 survivors were part of one-to-one counselling sessions to help them cope with the trauma.
- ▲ The survivors were followed up physically or over the phone 1,251 times over the period of one year to map their progress and well-being.
- ▲ The team facilitated the repatriation of four sex trafficking survivors, two from Bengaluru to Bangladesh and two from Delhi to Nigeria. In all cases, the follow-up continued for nearly two years.
- ▲ National survivors meet was organised in Kolkata, West Bengal, from 7 – 9 March, 2024. The event was attended by 16 survivors who travelled from across the country – Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka and West Bengal – to be a part of the celebrations.

The Care and Support (CS) programme is central to the value and mission of VIHAAN. Our programme strategy is based on the victim-centric, right-based, end-to-end approaches encompassing the needs of the victim in the immediate stage after rescue to addressing short- and long-term requirements, all of which enable sustainable support towards rehabilitation and reintegration and fulfilment of their rights to survival, development, protection and participation.

VIHAAN defines Care and Support as an essential process to address the psychological, medical, social, legal, economic and self – empowerment needs of the victim from rescue to the stage wherein the victim is towards a journey of a survivor and is enabled to live a life of self-determination. The terms ‘victims’ and ‘survivors’ are used strategically in the care and support work of VIHAAN. The victim becomes a survivor from the moment he/she is rescued. As a survivor, he/she is no longer in conditions of bondage/captivity/enslavement of any form of human trafficking and sexual abuse/exploitation.

In order to be successful in making sure each and every survivor is given their rights and receives the best for their life, VIHAAN strongly believes in establishing partnerships both with the government, medical institutions and other civil society organisations.

## This year in focus

Our team of social workers and counsellors worked relentlessly to facilitate and provide the necessary services that led to the rehabilitation and reintegration of 200 survivors. From planning the rescue, ensuring the safety of the victim during the rescue operation, preparing the home investigation report, dealing with medical emergencies, organising counselling sessions, drawing up individual care plans, linking them to educational services, therapeutic activities, skill training programmes and/or job opportunities to restoring/ repatriating them to their families and working towards a long-term sustainable plan making the survivor economically, socially and emotionally independent, the CS team did it all.

Dealing with the intense pain, suffering and trauma of the survivors is no easy feat. The social workers and counsellors had borne with it all – hostility, anger, frustration, outbursts to late night emergency calls averting suicidal tendencies, dealing with panic attacks and emotional breakdown. Across the four zones, the team travelled hundreds of kilometres by local trains, buses, and shared autorickshaws to home-visit the survivors at remote locations to find out about their well-being, adaptation to community life and/or any possible threats from the perpetrators or the criminal network. Our CS team has been the pillar in our survivors’ lives – a go-to trusted adult who listened to their life stories without judging them, empathised with their suffering, and guided them on the path to a better future.



## Going home to Bangladesh

“I am so happy didi, I cannot believe I am finally home. I can now take care of my ailing mother and help my sister. Everyone is so happy to see me.”

Shaina shared joyously over the phone to the VIHAAN social worker, after reaching home in Bangladesh. Shaina was trafficked from Bangladesh into India in June 2021 by a woman from her village. Shaina narrates, “I was told that a high-paying job was waiting for me in India. So, I crossed the border with Sonia (the trafficker) at midnight. The moment we reached India, I was locked in a room and then we travelled by train somewhere and again I was kept in a locked room. I was feeling very uneasy and tried to ask questions. But there was no response. Somehow, I managed to convince the lady serving me food to call a relative of mine living in India, Jyothi. Jyothi promised to send me back to Bangladesh but instead pushed me into trade.”

Shaina was forced into prostitution. She engaged with seven to eight customers in a day at different locations. Finally, on December 8, 2021, VIHAAN along with the Karnataka police rescued Shaina along with another Bangladeshi in an operation. Shaina was placed in the safe custody of the Government State Home for Women and repatriated on December 20, 2023.

Her repatriation process was a difficult one. It took some time to get Shaina’s home address in Bangladesh. She refused to share any details in the beginning but later relented. Once her home address was confirmed, a home verification was conducted in Bangladesh, through a partner NGO of VIHAAN. Thereafter, it took nearly six months to get the court order for repatriation.

Shaina became very impatient during that time. Her mother and sister suffered from ill health and she felt guilty for not being there for them. VIHAAN social workers regularly visited and helped her call her family members in Bangladesh. Every time she spoke to them, she became emotional and wanted to return home desperately. She became angry and cried for long hours. At one point of time, she became suicidal. Her stress and trauma reflected on her health and she started keeping unwell.

VIHAAN social workers continuously followed up with Shaina and tried to keep her hope alive. Updates from the court were regularly shared with her. Finally, in September 2023, her order for repatriation was secured from the court. Immediately, the team reached out to the Bangladesh High Commission for the travel permits. Once all documentation was completed, finally, train tickets were booked from Bengaluru to Kolkata.

The Bengaluru police escorted Shaina to Kolkata. The team reached Howrah Station on December 19, 2023, and she was handed over to Border Guard Bangladesh on December 20, 2023, at 15:15 hrs. (IST).







## Seasons of change: National Survivors' Meet

We held our annual flagship programme, the Seasons of Change, a celebration of the strength, bravery and resilience of the survivors of human trafficking from 7 to 9 March 2024 in Kolkata, West Bengal.

It was filled with heart-warming moments and we couldn't be more happy to see how far the survivors have come and what they achieved; from finishing school to getting jobs and being financially independent while successfully battling the odds of trauma and achieving healing since we first met them.

The 3-day event came to an end with VIHAAN, reflecting on the journey with these survivors and standing with awe about their resilience and determination. It is equal to the journey of a sunflower; from a humble seed to a radiant bloom always seeking out light with unwavering faith and standing tall in the face of adversity. It symbolises hope, strength and positivity.

These young girls with whom we have travelled for years are some of the strongest and bravest in the world. They have sought out sunlight and conquered abuse, exploitation and violence. They have lived on the streets and brothels, attacked and exploited by men and women, and survived the worst of the worst.

All they needed was someone to believe in them and offer a helping hand.

That was what VIHAAN did – because of the sheer generosity and pure kindness of our funders, partners and supporters like you.

Once they are given a chance, their resolve is as firm as ever. They are not here to be boxed up; they are here to conquer the world.



# Legal interventions

Prosecuting the accused and securing justice for the survivors through legal support.



## Impact in numbers

- ▲ 211 legal cases were supported in 2023-24.
- ▲ 32 accused arrested .
- ▲ 149 accused were in judicial custody in 111 active legal cases being followed up by the legal team. The legal team successfully facilitated bail denial in 162 applications filed by the accused (87% of bail denied). This is an important milestone because bail of the accused results in delays of legal proceedings and timely denial of justice to the survivors.
- ▲ The legal team recorded 1,125 court attendances to follow-up on the cases regularly.
- ▲ 112 witnesses were supported and provided protection to record their evidence in court.
- ▲ With diligent follow-up, an order for award of victim compensation was received by 21 survivors (INR 49,32,500) and 11 survivors (INR 19,24,000) received victim compensation money in their bank accounts.
- ▲ 13 judgements were received, 3 of them were child sexual abuse cases, 1 domestic servitude and 9 were sex trafficking cases. Conviction order was received in 7 cases and 21 accused were convicted. Eight accused were ordered 10 years imprisonment and 1 accused for 25 years.

The objective of the programme is to provide legal support to survivors to protect their right to justice and link them to the government victim compensation schemes as a step to their effective rehabilitation and reintegration. The role of the advocates associated with VIHAAN begins in the pre-rescue period as they help network with external stakeholders. After the rescue, we support in applying for victim compensation, oppose bail by supporting the Assistant Public Prosecutor and Investigating Officer and if needed, use an appellate mechanism to file a revisional application in a higher court.

## This year in focus

Every year, for our team of advocates, the court rooms bring forth new experiences, challenges, learnings and pleasant surprises. From handling long delays in the

legal processes, tackling case-specific legal requirements, facilitating a safe environment for the survivor to record their evidence fearlessly, challenging adeptly the defence tactics of tarnishing VIHAAN's reputation, calmly managing the enticement by the accused party to compromise on the case to committedly fighting for the survivor's right to justice, the legal team have a plethora of encounters to narrate.

On one hand, the Mumbai team won accolades and appreciation from the Raigarh District Court for their sincere commitment to uphold the law and support the judiciary in various legal processes, on the other, the Kolkata team struggled for over a year to get an order passed by the higher court for transfer of important documents from the lower court, resulting in unwarranted delay in the recording of evidence of the survivor.



## Renewed hope for a child survivor of sexual abuse

Piya was only eight years old when the sexual abuse started. “It is our secret game”, her stepfather told her.

It was such a young age and Piya believed her stepfather. “I felt uncomfortable with the kind of things he asked me to do. But it was a secret and so I convinced myself that there was nothing to tell”.

The abuse continued for years and she grew up feeling that something was wrong with her.

In 2019, an educative awareness workshop on ‘good touch and bad touch’ was held at Piya’s school. When the instructor explained that there are some places on one’s body which is private, and they should tell their parents, teachers or any trusted members of the family if they ever felt uncomfortable by someone touching them, Piya felt disgusted by what was happening to her.

“I ran to my teacher and started crying. And, I said something is happening to me at home.”

That was the first time Piya disclosed her abuse. Her teacher reacted in a way that was supportive by telling her that she believed her and it was not her fault.

Her teacher jumped right into action. She discussed this with the Principal of the school and immediately called Childline for support. A complaint was filed at the local police station.

“It was a relief to tell my teacher how I felt. However, my mother was angry and told me that I cannot say anything to the police”, Piya said.

The Child Welfare Committee, the institution which aims to shield children from any threats and ensure protection, approached VIHAAN to help Piya with counselling and legal support.

“With her mother’s constant disapproval, Piya was afraid to talk about the abuse and did not want to proceed further with the police complaint”, our social worker said.

VIHAAN’s care and support team made numerous visits to Piya’s house and helped her understand that she was not at fault.

“I couldn’t trust anyone in my life. I was not ready to talk about anything. However, I felt a strong sense of support when the social worker did not give up. She visited our house frequently”.

Years back, this was me.





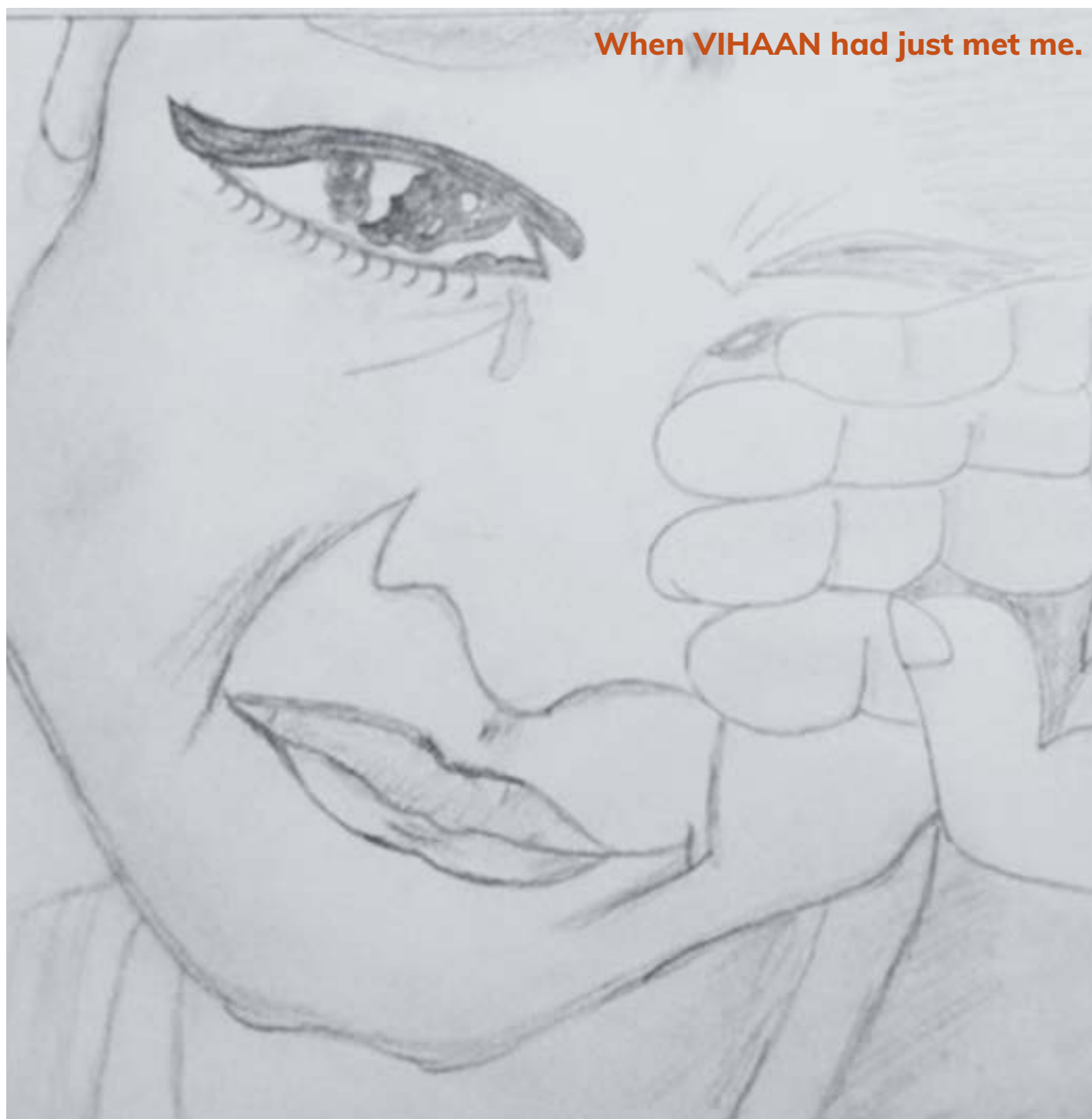
Though Piya was constantly pressured by her mother and other family members to withdraw the complaint, VIHAAN supported her and explained the importance of bringing the abuser to justice.

“I cannot imagine what would have happened to me if VIHAAN wouldn't come into my life. I was so scared about my mother.”

After 34 months of VIHAAN's intensive counselling sessions, Piya recorded her evidence at the court against the abuser. She gathered the courage to speak about all the horrible things that has happened to her.

The accused was sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment. Piya was awarded the maximum compensation amount per the Delhi Victim Compensation Scheme, 2018 of INR 10.5 Lakhs.

**When VIHAAN had just met me.**



**This is who I am today!**



## Hopeful spring arrived after eight years of harsh winter

Meenu's parents were overwhelmed when the honourable judge finally delivered the judgement after eight years of fierce legal battle. They had no words to express their gratitude to VIHAAN's team of social workers and lawyers who steadfastly stood by their side in every moment of their struggle.

Meenu's father, a daily wage labourer, has no stable source of income. The family of four, Meenu, her parents and her younger brother, live in a small semi-furnished rented room in a low-income housing.

Meenu was only three years old when she was mercilessly sexually assaulted by a 25 years old man, their next-door neighbour. Her mother was downstairs preparing tea when she heard Meenu's desperate cry for help. She rushed upstairs and was horrified to witness Meenu bleeding from her vagina and the accused trying to rape her. Immediately, Meenu's mother informed her husband and reported the matter to the police.

VIHAAN was referred to the case by the Child Welfare Committee after the incident as a support person under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 to assist in the rehabilitation and reintegration of the child.

The social worker visit revealed that Meenu showed signs of hearing and speech impairment and medical advice was sought. Meenu was diagnosed with 'severe to

profound degree hearing loss' in both ears and she had 82 percent permanent disability in both ears. The disability board issued a unique disability identity and permanent disability certificate to Meenu. VIHAAN supported her to procure a hearing aid and enrolled her for speech therapy sessions at Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for Hearing Handicapped, NCR Noida. The hearing aid and the speech therapy sessions helped her associate with her surroundings better and her IQ score improved significantly. Currently, Meenu is receiving a monthly disability pension amounting to INR 2,000 and studying in the sixth standard. Meenu says jovially, "Thank you so much didi (VIHAAN social worker) for helping me to hear the voices of my maa and baba (mother and father) for the first time."

While the social workers and counsellors worked to reintegrate Meenu, VIHAAN's legal team supported her to seek justice. The team worked closely with the Assistant Public Prosecutor to secure a custodial trial for the matter preventing any tampering of evidence or harassments to the family. There were several delays in the trial however based on the testimony of the mother, the medical report of the doctor who examined Meenu and the presence of injuries on the private part, as per the Supreme Court judgement, circumstantial evidence and medical jurisprudence was upheld and the accused was convicted for committing aggravated penetrative sexual assault (6 POSCO), rape (376 IPC)

and unnatural offences (377 IPC) upon a three and half year-old child. The accused was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.

In 2018, an application was filed to the District Legal Service Authority for Meenu's victim compensation. An interim compensation of INR 25,000 was granted to Meenu to meet her immediate medical needs. Prior to the pronouncement of the final judgement, advanced arguments were held on the quantum of final compensation to the survivor. The legal team produced the Delhi Victim Compensation Scheme, 2018 and a few judgements on compensation and prayed for the maximum amount of final compensation as per the scheme. Finally, the honourable judge ordered a maximum compensation amount

as per the Delhi Victim Compensation Scheme, 2018 of Rs 10.5 Lakhs to be awarded to the child. The interim compensation of Rs 25,000 was to be adjusted, 80 percent of the Final Compensation amount would be fixed in favour of the child till she turned 18 years and 20 percent would be released to the family for the purpose of rehabilitation of the child.

Meenu's mother broke down into tears when she heard the court's judgement.

"I do not know how to thank you (VIHAAN team), it is because of you that my daughter's life was transformed. Her hearing disability was diagnosed, she was able to attend regular school and now finally get justice."



# Strengthening the ecosystem

Building networks and partnerships with influencers and duty bearers for collective response.



## Impact in numbers

▲ In 2023-24, VIHAAN trained over 2,346 stakeholders including law enforcement personnel through 31 training programmes on child protection, human trafficking, victim-centric approach in Anti-Human Trafficking interventions, related laws, policies and legal procedures, the importance of education, among others.

VIHAAN partners with a network of stakeholders operating at different levels to generate awareness, build capacities and achieve lasting solutions. With victims/survivors at the centre, we collaborate with the survivor families, shelter home staff, police, social workers, counsellors, Child Welfare Committee members, lawyers, judges, public prosecutors and vulnerable communities at the grassroots level; and the Judiciary, civil society, child protection committees, media, corporates, NGOs, law enforcement agencies and government departments at the structural level. The focus is on developing strategic alliances with influencers and duty-bearers for a collective response to break the cycle of crime.

## This year in focus

In 2022-23, VIHAAN, in partnership with the International Institute of Information Technology, Bengaluru developed an extensive research report titled Situational Analysis of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Bengaluru City - A Study of Sex Trafficking Cases registered in Bengaluru City from 2013-18.

The four primary recommendations from the study were – Strengthening the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit ; Capacity building of law enforcement officials and the members of the judiciary; A simple ready reckoner accessible to an officer on the field detailing process and procedures to be followed by stakeholders especially police when handling cases of human trafficking; Improved coordination among stakeholders especially the law enforcement, judiciary and prosecution.

VIHAAN began making in-roads into the state systems and institutions to influence action on policy decisions. Building credibility of VIHAAN with the government officials was the first major hurdle we successfully overcame. With continuous meetings, discussions and consultations, we are happy to report that VIHAAN has effectively institutionalised the relationships. Today we are a voice which is heard, invited to propose solutions and partnered with to implement the change.

A few of our significant partners whom we have trained includes:

- Kolkata Police, West Bengal,
- Karnataka State Police including the Special Juvenile Police Unit,
- Civil judges, Judicial Magistrates and judicial officers,
- Government functionaries from the Department of Women and Child Development including Child Welfare Committee members, staff of Child-care Institutions, District Child Protection officers, and
- Community members, students, teachers and NGO representatives.

In collaboration with the Karnataka State Commission on the Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR), VIHAAN supported in monitoring the implementation of the standard operating procedure regarding missing and found children as mandated by the Hon'ble Supreme Court; organised multi-stakeholder consultations in the state on the Issues and Challenges in Implementing the Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines under POCSO Act 2012.

VIHAAN has been empanelled as a trainer of the Karnataka Police Training Academy, Police Training College and 11 Police Training Schools. We were invited to address over 2000 participants including Civil judges, police sub-inspectors, head constables, police constables and women police (for women and child protection) on the issue of gender and crimes against women, child protection and human trafficking at multiple capacity-building workshops.

## Chief Minister of Karnataka launched VIHAAN's ITPA Saral app for police

It was a historical moment for VIHAAN when the Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri. Siddaramaiah launched the ITPA Saral Mobile Web-based Application. It was the manifestation of a classic public-private partnership model where an NGO (with expertise in human trafficking) partnered with a corporate (software developer) to deliver a product where the end-user was the government (law enforcement).

In this project, supported by the Karnataka State Police, VIHAAN in partnership with TARGET, a company that specialises in Computer Programming developed a web-based application on sex trafficking procedures and processes named as the ITPA Saral Mobile App. (ITPA stands for Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act).

The ITPA Saral Mobile App aims to serve as a reference guide for frontline police officers in navigating the challenges of human trafficking cases. The application provides easy guidance on the required documents, procedures, applicable laws and shelter homes for the victims of human trafficking.

ITPA Saral has vital information including:

- Step-by-step procedures: Clear instructions on handling rescue, investigation, rehabilitation, repatriation and trial processes.
- Document templates: Ready-made forms and letters to facilitate efficient documentation.
- Legal framework: Easy access to relevant sections of the IPC and other applicable legislation.
- Shelter resources: Links to a directory of shelters listed by the Department of Women and Child Development.

Along with VIHAAN, the Karnataka State Police is currently translating the application to Kannada for ease of use among all police officials. It is currently in the testing phase and will be available soon for all officials registered on the police network.





# Education and child safety

Preventing human trafficking by promoting education among the adolescents.



## Impact in numbers

▲ **230 first-generation learners have been regularized in school and provided academic support**

▲ **Seven girls from the learning centre in Kishanganj, Bihar passed their secondary and higher secondary board examinations this year. This was a significant milestone in their lives as all of them were the first in their families to study this far.**

VIHAAN conceptualised a three-fold intervention on providing educational support to rural adolescent girls in the age group of 12 – 18 years to facilitate their completion of secondary level (10th standard) and prevent school drop-out. This was done by organising campaigns and training to raise awareness on child protection among adolescent girls enrolled between 7th and 10th standard in government schools to make the schools child friendly and reduce incidences of human trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation. Forming community collectives sensitising, capacitating and empowering adolescent girls (12-18 years) to live a life of dignity and freedom and become the torchbearers of rights in the community.

## This year in focus

Launched in December 2021, the programme focuses on setting up learning centres in communities vulnerable to child protection violations. Five locations in Bihar, West Bengal and Delhi were selected for rolling out the programme.

- Pothia block, Kishanganj district, Bihar
- Baduria block, North 24 Parganas district, Canning 1 block, South 24 Parganas district and Sonagachi, Kolkata in West Bengal
- Krishna Colony, Kalibasti, South West Delhi

The rural areas in West Bengal and Bihar where the programme was implemented, comprised of most impoverished and traffic-prone blocks with close proximity to the Bangladesh border. Lack of adequate employment avenues forces the local menfolk to migrate to urban/peri-urban areas in search of livelihood. Struggling with poverty, the women and children left behind in the villages, targeted by traffickers, are often at-risk of falling prey to the deceptive stories of jobs and better opportunities.

Among the urban spaces, Sonagachi is the largest red-light district in Asia and is home to more than 10,000 sex workers while Krishna colony Kali Basti is inhabited by 1,500 migrant families staying in extremely vulnerable and deprived socio-economic conditions, struggling for their livelihood.

Perennial problems like insufficient income, hazardous nature of employment/job, ill health plague the community. Children are often left without the supervision of elders leading to their school dropout, and increased susceptibility to addiction, abuse and exploitation.

We set up the eight learning centres in collaboration with the community in the selected location. Assessment tools were used to identify for each centre, 25 adolescent vulnerable girls at-risk of drop-out. The majority of the beneficiaries were first-generation learners and had an extremely volatile family situation, witness to acute poverty, domestic aggression and physical and sexual abuse.

At each centre, a teacher was recruited from the local area and classes were organised from Monday to Friday for two hours duration. Other than general assistance for all subjects, emphasis was given to English language and basic Mathematics. We also introduced them to a strong, character-based curriculum to equip them with the necessary life skills to build their social resilience and shape their personalities and abilities. The psychological support focused on overcoming their fears and being capable of adapting to the living environment. Frequent parent meetings and home visits were priority tasks undertaken to control drop-out and monitor progress.



## Disability inclusion at VIHAAN's Centre for Community Empowerment

Bipasha Sarkar, aged 14, is an eighth grader in a local Bengali medium school of Sovabazar. Her father is infirm and unable to work while her mother works as a domestic help to earn a living for the family. She has an elder sibling who is in 12th standard and works as a labourer at a local facility which delivers mineral drinking water to the neighbourhood homes, to supplement the family income. They live in a dilapidated house marked unfit for dwelling by the municipal corporation because they cannot afford a decent accommodation.

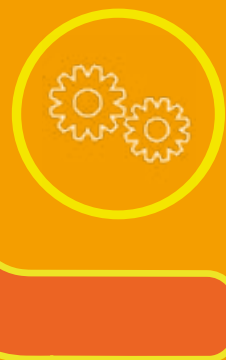
Bipasha's case was referred to the community teacher by the local school authorities since they were aware of VIHAAN's academic centre in the vicinity. The child's medical report suggests she suffers from mild attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and borderline retardation. Initially, when she joined the class, she was a timid child who had poor cognition. She could not identify letters or spell out words correctly. Her poor social skills made her aloof. After a basic assessment, the teacher determined her problem and helped her recognize Bengali letters, words and syllables.

Now, Bipasha can identify letters and is able to read and spell simple words. Earlier, she had been turned down by several teachers of the locality since they could not identify her need and address that adequately. Her acceptance by the teacher boosted her self-esteem and confidence. Now, she is generally regular for the classes and is slowly opening up to her peers.



# Skill development and livelihood generation

Empowering the vulnerable and survivors through skill training and livelihood generation in shelter homes and high-risk communities.



## Impact in numbers

- ▲ 347 girls have been enrolled in skill training and 96 have been connected to livelihood opportunities in 2023-2024.
- ▲ 207 survivors and vulnerable girls have completed their skill training course in West Bengal, Delhi and Karnataka.
- ▲ Among the 96 girls connected with livelihood opportunities, 89 girls have received their offer letters with an average salary of INR 12,000 per month and 7 girls were supported to start their own small business units.
- ▲ 79 girls are currently enrolled in training.

Launched by the President of India, Shri. Ramnath Kovind, the Skill development and livelihood generation programme aims to empower survivors and at-risk young girls residing in shelter homes and in the community through skilling and livelihood opportunities leading to their financial independence.

This model has two phases. The first phase, the Foundation Course spans 3 months (360 hours) and includes modules such as Communicative English, Basic Information Technology, Functional Literacy (English and Mathematics), Life Skills and Behavioural Change and Sectoral Orientation. The next phase includes aptitude assessment and domain-specific industry-oriented vocational training and industry visits. It capacitates trainees and makes them employment-ready. The course closes with an assessment and certification. At least 50% of candidates who complete the training

are placed in gainful employment. Throughout the course of the training and up to three months post-placement, group counselling, individual counselling and social worker support are provided as a constant service for the participants.

## This year in focus

The programme was scaled up this year to cover four states – Delhi, Karnataka (Bengaluru and Belgaum), Maharashtra (Mumbai), and West Bengal (Kolkata, Murshidabad and South 24 Parganas). Nine batches were launched in vulnerable communities and three in shelter homes for girls and destitute women. From finding the right candidates to securing a placement offer for them, the journey with the girls had been a dynamic experience.

In shelter homes, the programme facilitated the economic empowerment as well as a holistic reintegration of the girls into the labour market and society. Many of our candidates, after almost a decade, stepped out of the shelter homes for the first time, with a job offer, to explore the world outside. We achieved a new milestone this year, when our stories and recommendations helped us to get permissions and expand our programme to government shelter homes in Delhi.

The story in the communities was a little different. Mobilising the right candidates from the community was a major hurdle. Drop-out rates among the candidates were much higher due to the influence of various external factors such as family pressure, mobility restrictions, imposition of prescribed

gender roles, seasonal migration and lack of awareness about the benefits of skill training. However, despite challenges, the programme was very successful in majority of the locations. For example, in Belgaum, Karnataka the programme was initiated to empower the girls from the Devadasi community. At the end of the course, 68 percent of (66) girls received job offers with a mean monthly salary of INR 10,000. Months of rigorous networking and negotiations with the corporates/private companies helped us to secure so many placement opportunities in a non-metropolitan district.

This year, our programme has not only benefitted our candidates but even corporate HRs and private sector employers have been very appreciative of our efforts and the training quality. Many employers have approached us seeking more candidates for placement and even offered infra-structural support to facilitate the launch of future trainee batches.



## Launch of Centre for Community Empowerment at Sonagachi and Mithakhali, West Bengal

Located in Kolkata, Sonagachi is the largest red-light district in Asia and is home to more than 10,000 sex workers while Mithakhali is one of the high-risk locations for trafficking of young girls.

At VIHAAN's Centre for Community Empowerment, 40 survivors of human trafficking and vulnerable girls receive access to foundation, transferable and technical skills training, and support in gaining real and meaningful employment.

Our social workers guide them to make the right choice amongst varied training opportunities that include fashion designing, embroidery, tailoring, hospitality management and customer service. After the training, we ensure the involvement of major employers for internships/ apprenticeships which acts as an avenue for the trainees to get into the market. This helps them get proper employment, achieve economic independence, prevent them from being trafficked and reduce the risk of relapsing into a trafficking situation.

### **An opportunity to continue education**

A good education can be hard to come by, especially for the children living at Sonagachi. The Education Programme at both Mithakhali and Sonagachi Centres give 38 children, who have dropped out of school or facing academic difficulties, the opportunity to continue their education and imparts them with the necessary knowledge for their re-entry into formal education or continue their informal education.







## The road to economic independence

Pallavi\* was one of the first girls to enrol in the Foundation course at VIHAAN's Centre for Community Empowerment at Sonagachi, the largest red light district in India. Today, Pallavi earns INR 10,200 per month at a major Financial Services in Kolkata.

Having lost her father at a young age, Pallavi was supported by her mother with a meagre income from a family-owned teashop. Pallavi dreamt of studying well and making enough money to take care of herself and her mother.

That was when she learnt about VIHAAN's Centre for Community Empowerment, which aims to provide vulnerable girls and survivors of human trafficking access to foundation, transferable and technical skills training and connects and supports them in gaining employment.

Lack of education and employment are contributing factors to vulnerabilities of human trafficking. Survivors of human trafficking may have little or no experience in finding and keeping jobs which increases their vulnerabilities to revictimization.

Skill development and livelihood generation, is an important element of the healing, recovery and reintegration plans of VIHAAN, ensuring the sustainable social integration of survivors of human trafficking and preventing the victimisation of vulnerable populations by increasing their employment opportunities, confidence and life skills. After completing the skill development training, we arrange for paid internships where they get to learn job-oriented skills and prepare them to attend and ace interviews.

Pallavi learnt basic employability skills such as functional, financial management, communication, problem-solving, self-management, time-management and adaptability skills in a month-long foundation and three months technical course.

Pallavi works hard and is determined to achieve a better future.





Looking forward

5



## Looking forward

In 2024-25, our efforts will continue to sustain work and achieve new milestones within the ambit of all six programmes. Additionally, there are two significant projects which we aspire to nurture this year and scale up.

### Safe Block Programme: Building resilient and child-friendly communities

The project aims at a multi-pronged preventive approach to build child-friendly communities resilient to crimes like human trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation. Focusing on awareness generation, strengthening of the service delivery mechanisms and access to education, skilling and livelihood among the adolescents and youth, the project envisions to create a model block, in collaboration with government and non-government stakeholders, where every child will enjoy a protective right-based environment facilitating their holistic development. A block in southern West Bengal has been selected for launching the project in 2024-25, due to its deep-rooted vulnerabilities for child rights violations and identification as a hot spot for child trafficking, child sexual abuse and child prostitution.

### Centre for Community Empowerment

VIHAAN's Centre for Community Empowerment seeks to create safe spaces or hubs within vulnerable communities with the purpose of promoting education and skill training among survivors of human trafficking and vulnerable girls. The education programme focuses on adolescent girls who have dropped out of school or facing academic difficulties, provide them an opportunity to continue their education and impart them with the necessary knowledge for their re-entry into formal education or continue their informal education. The skill training programme will entail a foundation and technical training module with internships/apprenticeships opportunities. The goal will be to help the girls get proper employment, achieve economic independence, prevent them from being trafficked and reduce the risk of relapsing into a trafficking situation.

In 2023-24, we have launched two centres in West Bengal. The first in Sonagachi, Kolkata, the largest red-light district in Asia and home to more than 10,000 sex workers and the second in Mithakhali, one of the high-risk locations for trafficking of young girls, in Canning block, South 24 Parganas district. In 2024-25, we aspire to launch our centres at three new locations.

### Setting up of VIHAAN Safe Home for survivors of human trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation in Kolkata, West Bengal

The VIHAAN Safe Home project aims to set up a ten-bedded short-stay home for survivors of human trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation. It will be a safe space with accommodation facilities where survivors can stay up to 12 months seeking emergency/ immediate support, and short-term care facilitating their reintegration and empowerment.

The main focus of short-stay homes will provide bridging services for the transition of the survivors to independent/self-sufficient lives. VIHAAN will assist in providing the rent and deposit for the accommodation and integrated services such as legal aid, psycho-social counselling, medical assistance, vocational training for skill development, entrepreneurship and linkages with various other support.









## Financial highlights

### Balance sheet

Particulars	As at March 31, 2024 Rs. in '000	As at March 31, 2023 Rs. in '000
<b>SOURCES OF FUNDS</b>		
Reserves and Surplus	33,114	27,006
Unapport Balance of Project Grants	19,292	16,169
Current Liabilities	924	812
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>53,330</b>	<b>44,887</b>
<b>APPLICATION OF FUNDS</b>		
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>		
Property, Plant, Equipment and Intangible Assets	631	1,171
Investments	28,650	28,150
Long-term Loans and Advances	150	121
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Interest Accrued on Fixed Deposits	1,604	1,727
Cash and Cash Equivalents	21,561	13,167
Short-term Loans and Advances	734	551
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>53,330</b>	<b>44,887</b>

## Income and expenditure account

Particulars	For the Year Ended March 31, 2024 Rs. in '000	For the Year Ended March 31, 2023 Rs. in '000
<b>INCOME</b>		
Grant and Donations	39,594	38,940
Other Income	2,304	1,519
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>41,898</b>	<b>40,459</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Programme Expenses	26,693	22,462
Administrative Expenses	9,818	10,055
Depreciation and Amortisation Expense	179	239
Provision for Doubtful Debts		5,073
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>36,690</b>	<b>37,829</b>
<b>SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)</b>	<b>5,208</b>	<b>2,630</b>

## Receipts and payments account

Particulars	For the Year Ended March 31, 2024 Rs. in '000	For the Year Ended March 31, 2023 Rs. in '000
<b>CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS - Opening Balance</b>	<b>41,317</b>	<b>35,130</b>
Bank Balances	13,167	18,580
Fixed Deposits with Banks	28,150	16,550
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Grant and Donations	42,711	37,576
Interest and Other Income	2,286	705
Other Receipts	5,304	15,116
<b>Receipts During The Year</b>	<b>50,291</b>	<b>53,397</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>91,598</b>	<b>88,527</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>		
<b>Programme Expenses</b>		
Education, Skill Development and Livelihood	6,926	2,718
Rescue	4,636	2,033
Care and Support	4,902	4,720
Legal Intervention	8,218	7,311
Strengthening the Ecosystem	4,474	4,581
	<b>27,154</b>	<b>21,363</b>
Administrative Expenses	8,535	10,646
Other Payments	5,698	15,201
<b>Payments During The Year</b>	<b>41,387</b>	<b>47,210</b>
<b>CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS - Closing Balance</b>	<b>50,211</b>	<b>41,317</b>
Bank Balances	21,561	13,167
Fixed Deposits	28,650	28,150
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>91,598</b>	<b>88,527</b>



# Stronger Together

Annual Report 2023-2024



To report a potential case of human trafficking, exploitation, bonded and child labour, or domestic servitude and beggary, please send an e-mail to **[info@vihaan-wms.org](mailto:info@vihaan-wms.org)**



[instagram.com/vihaanngo/](https://www.instagram.com/vihaanngo/)



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