

# SMILE-CHILD

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May - July 2023



## Child Marriage: A violation of Child Rights



One of the latest trends in human trafficking is Bride Trafficking also called "Child Marriage" where minor girls are being married to men who are twice/thrice of their age and further sold into sex trafficking. Sadly, in the state of West Bengal, this trend has become very common, and is being practice by traffickers.

[Child Marriage in West Bengal: Key Insights from the NFHS-5 \(2019-21\)](#)

Ashray, in the state of West Bengal is actively engaged in rescuing girls from child marriages, which is leading to Human trafficking.

In the month of May, we successfully rescued Reshmi (name changed), a minor girl, who is a student of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Reshmi was about to be sold by her father in the name of Child marriage. Reshmi's father was convinced by Raju (trafficker-name changed), aged 35 to get his daughter married to him and the marriage would be financially beneficial for his family.

Reshmi had no say in the forced marriage with a stranger who was twice her age, yet she had hope. Mustering up courage, Reshmi sought refuge with a friend, Riya, also a child marriage survivor through Ashray. On hearing her plight, Riya immediately contacted the Ashray team.

The Ashray Bengal team investigated the situation and informed the local police station. Soon, a joint rescue was conducted by the police officials from Berhampur along with Ashray team and rescued Reshmi from being a victim of Bride trafficking.

A First Information Report (FIR) has been registered against the trafficker and the police signed a bond, disallowing Reshmi's father to get his minor child married. Non-compliance of the bond would amount to strict legal ramifications.

Today, Reshmi is with her family; enrolled in a school and completing her education. Ashray is continuously monitoring her situation.



## Breaking the chains of bondage



In the month of June 2023, we were able to rescue six children between the ages from ten to fifteen who were trapped as bonded labour and were forced to repay their families' debt. The children were working under exploitative conditions.

Child labor is a serious issue that violates the rights of children and hinders the overall development of a child.

Ashray has collaborated with Bihar government authorities to identify and are working together to combat child labour and rescue children from exploitative work conditions.



During one of Ashray's awareness programs, when we were talking about child labour, we came across a youth who shared with the Ashray Bihar team about similar cases in his area.

On receiving the information, an investigation team was set up with the local authorities which led to the joint rescue operation, rescuing the six boys.

The Ashray team noticed Rajesh, a 12-year-old boy whom we rescued, with sad eyes and weary expressions, and the team approached him. He shared, "I dreamt of becoming a schoolteacher one day, but I was forced to drop my studies and work in a hazardous condition every day." Rajesh was forced to work under the scorching sun, molding bricks, carrying heavy loads, inhaling dusts which has led him to have difficulty breathing condition so that he can repay his families' debt without being paid for his work.

The rescued children were brought to the government Shelter home and legal complaints against the employers have been filed at the local police station under the Child Labour ((Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986.

The children were sent to the Child Welfare Committee and have been restored to their families and Ashray is monitoring the children on regular basis, and we are trying to admit them in the schools.



## Saving lives beyond borders

Human traffickers had been exploiting vulnerable communities, trafficking individuals across borders.

Ashray, in collaboration with the Border Security Forces' Anti - Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) has come together and has been responding to such



incidences in the state of West Bengal.

This collaboration, has led into a rescue of Seema (name changed), aged 18 years, hailing from a village in Bangladesh which lies at the border of West Bengal, was lured, disguised, and trafficked in the name of a better job opportunities into India.



Seema's parents were unable to reach the contact number that was shared by the trafficker. The parents panicked and filed a police complaint where the police further contacted the AHTU of the Indian BSF Border police. The BSF further shared the details about the incident with the Ashray team.

During Ashray's investigation, we were able to identify the place where Seema was kept along with another girl, named Nisha who was trafficked as well. Knowing about the situation, our team immediately informed the BSF Anti Human Trafficking Unit and the local police. Then a rescue operation was conducted where Seema and Nisha were rescued.

The police also arrested the trafficker and legal proceedings are being conducted against them. Today both the girls have been restored back to their families.



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