



PRAJWALA HAPPENINGS

Knowledge → Reflection → Action

Volume 5

Monthly Newsletter

May 2026

This Month in Impact

- 2 Justice served in 2 POCSO cases resulting in convictions after years of effort - one accused sentenced to 20 years + Rs. 10 lakh compensation to survivor, another to 20 years + Rs. 7 lakh
- 191 At-risk children mainstreamed into formal education
- 105 At-risk vulnerable women supported through employment/ self employment
- 14 Survivors secured employment and moved towards sustainable and dignified livelihoods
- 19 Survivors safely reintegrated with their families (2 children included)
- 115 Sex buyers counselled and pledged to not buy sex again
- 50k+ Community members reached through prevention and awareness programs

Beyond Rescue: Restoring Dignity

A landmark Supreme Court judgment has reaffirmed a powerful truth: rescue alone is not enough and rehabilitation is not a charity.

For survivors of trafficking, dignity is restored through protection, rehabilitation, informed choices, and opportunities to rebuild life with hope. As reaffirmed by recent judgement, we explore why a truly survivor-centred approach must look beyond rescue and towards lasting empowerment.

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"TRAFFICKED AT 16 THROUGH DECEPTION AND BETRAYAL, SUMAIRA BELIEVED HER LIFE AND DIGNITY WERE LOST FOREVER. TODAY, SHE STANDS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF RESCUE OPERATIONS – RESCUING VICTIMS AND HELPING THEM REBUILD TRUST, SAFETY, AND HOPE. HER JOURNEY REFLECTS WHY REHABILITATION, DIGNITY, AND SURVIVOR-CENTRED CARE MATTER BEYOND RESCUE."

[Read her Story inside on Page 4](#)



Celebration with 10th passed out students from our Learning Centre's



National Thought Leadership Award conferred on our founder Dr. Sunitha Krishnan

SC issues guidelines for protecting survivors of human trafficking

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court on Friday issued comprehensive guidelines for the government and competent authorities to protect young women from trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation (CSE).

A Bench of Justices J.B. Narayana and R. Narayana said the judgment in the case, pending for over 22 years in the apex court, was "close to our hearts".

The court gave detailed guidelines on establishing a uniform victim protection protocol for survivors of CSE. The court said trafficking is a constitutional violation.

"We have the best," said.

The short pronouncement in the courtroom saw Justice Mahadevan appreciate the long representation of senior advocate Aparna Bhat in the matter.

"History will long remember your efforts in this case," Justice Mahadevan addressed Ms. Bhat.

The petition highlighting the lack of laws and protective mechanism for survivors of CSE was filed into the court by Prajwala.

Landmark judgement by the Supreme Court in continuation to our PIL filed in 2004



Thanking Shri A. Revanth Reddy Garu for the timely medical support



Blood Donation by our team members



Supporting Transgenders through the Transgender Support Unit (TSU)



Vesavi Sambaralu (Summer Camp)



The RRR show: Raw and Real with Rohith Gollena (podcast)



'Rise and Shine' Summer Camp continued



Training on Human Trafficking for Village Organization Assistants (VOA)



54th birthday celebrations of our Founder

BEYOND RESCUE: RESTORING DIGNITY

The recent landmark Supreme Court judgment on the rights and protection of trafficking survivors has reaffirmed an important principle: rescue alone is not enough. At the heart of the judgment lies a powerful recognition that survivors must be viewed not merely as beneficiaries of services, but as rights-holders entitled to protection, rehabilitation, dignity, and informed choices about their future.

When we speak about trafficking, much of the conversation focuses on rescue. Rescue operations are often seen as the defining moment in a survivor's journey—the point at which exploitation ends and freedom begins.

But does rescue alone restore what trafficking takes away?

Trafficking does not only deprive individuals of their freedom. It strips away dignity, trust, self-worth, safety, and the ability to make choices about one's own life. The impact often continues long after the rescue operation is over. Survivors may carry deep emotional wounds, fear, stigma, uncertainty, and vulnerability that cannot be addressed through rescue alone.

This is why a truly **survivor-centred approach** looks beyond rescue. It recognises that every survivor has the right not only to be protected from exploitation, but also to heal, recover, and rebuild life with dignity. Rehabilitation is therefore not an act of charity or goodwill—it is a fundamental right that enables survivors to reclaim control over their future.

The judgment also reminds us of another important reality: freedom and dignity cannot be separated from safety. For survivors emerging from trafficking and exploitation, informed consent, protection from re-trafficking, access to support systems, and meaningful rehabilitation are essential for exercising genuine choice and independence.

Dignity is restored when survivors are listened to and their voices are respected. It is restored when they are able to access counselling and mental health support. It is restored when children return to education, when women gain economic independence, when survivors can participate confidently in legal proceedings, and when they are supported to make informed choices about their own lives.

For survivors of trafficking, freedom without support can often become another form of vulnerability. Meaningful freedom requires safety, protection, opportunities for rehabilitation, and pathways towards reintegration. It requires systems that place survivors at the centre of decision-making and recognise their unique needs and circumstances.

Every day, we witness remarkable journeys of resilience. Survivors who once arrived fearful and withdrawn gradually regain confidence, develop new skills, pursue education, secure livelihoods, and begin to dream again. These transformations remind us that rehabilitation is not merely about providing services—it is about restoring dignity, hope, and the belief that a different future is possible.

Dignity is what enables survivors to walk through and build a life of safety, purpose, and hope.

FROM SURVIVOR TO PROTECTOR

**"A JOURNEY OF REBUILDING TRUST, RECLAIMING DIGNITY, AND
TRANSFORMING PAIN INTO PURPOSE."**

Sumaira (name changed), a survivor of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, was trafficked at the age of 16 after being deceived by people she trusted. Coming from a financially vulnerable family in West Bengal and emotionally attached to a young man she believed cared for her, she was manipulated into leaving home with false promises of meeting him in Delhi. Instead, she was **trafficked to Hyderabad**, where she was forced into prostitution through coercion, violence, manipulation, and fear.

For nearly one-and-a-half years, Sumaira endured repeated abuse, exploitation, forced alcohol dependency, starvation, and extreme violence. Each betrayal deepened her wounds, erasing her trust in people and in possibility of kindness itself. Fear of stigma, rejection, and social humiliation prevented her from returning home or seeking help. Even after escaping exploitation once, she returned to the same exploitative environment because she felt she had nowhere else to go.

Following a rescue operation, Sumaira was admitted to our home for rehabilitation. Trust did not come easily. For someone who had experienced repeated betrayal, believing that support could exist without judgment felt almost impossible. Yet, through patient counselling, consistent care, and a safe environment, she slowly began to rediscover something she had lost long ago - hope. **What began as a journey of healing soon evolved into one of leadership.** Sumaira immersed herself in life-skills and security training and gradually took on greater responsibilities within the shelter, helping care for and guide other residents. Receiving her first full-time salary in shelter was a **life-changing moment** for her. It gave her a sense of **dignity, independence, and the confidence** to believe that she could build a future free from exploitation.

After her release, she made a remarkable decision—to **return and stand beside those walking** the path she once travelled. Today, she actively supports rescue operations, legal interventions, and awareness programmes, including interactions with police trainees and law enforcement officials. Having rescued over **600+ girls**, her lived experiences now contribute towards **sensitising systems and strengthening survivor-centred responses.**

Reflecting upon her journey, Sumaira strongly believes that survivors must be treated with dignity, empathy, and respect during rescue and rehabilitation processes.

Sumaira says, "Many survivors remain silent not because they are unwilling to speak, but because they are afraid of judgement, rejection, shame, and losing respect. When survivors are treated with empathy and dignity, they slowly begin to trust and heal."

"My case has still not come to trial, and I hope that recognising AHTUs as police stations will give them greater authority in handling sensitive investigations, enabling them to identify traffickers, dismantle their networks, and strengthen efforts to prevent trafficking and protect others from similar exploitation"

Today, Sumaira lives independently with confidence and dignity. She stands as beacon of hope for many victims of trafficking.

If You Would Like to Support

Rescue is only the beginning of a survivor's journey.

Healing, rehabilitation, education, mental health support, livelihood training, and reintegration require long-term, survivor-centred care.

This landmark judgement reaffirms that rehabilitation is not charity, but a right of every survivor.

Your support can help survivors rebuild their lives with dignity, safety, and hope.

To support, **Donate at <https://prajwalaindia.com/donate>**