



# AHTU WATCH

**Strengthening Anti-Human  
Trafficking Systems in India:**

A longitudinal RTI and  
Field-Based Inquiry into  
AHTU Functionality

**(2010-2025)**

# Foreword

Over the last fifteen years, conversations on human trafficking in India have increasingly moved beyond rescue-centric approaches towards broader questions of institutional accountability, access to justice, survivor protection, and long-term systems response. At a time when trafficking patterns are becoming increasingly interstate, networked, digitally facilitated, and intertwined with migration and labour vulnerabilities, strengthening frontline anti-trafficking systems becomes even more critical. Within this evolving landscape, Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) were envisioned as specialised institutional mechanisms capable of strengthening investigations, improving inter-agency coordination, ensuring survivor-sensitive responses, and addressing trafficking through a more focused and multidisciplinary framework.

The AHTU Watch initiative emerged from a need to critically examine whether this institutional vision translated into operational reality on the ground.

This report, *Strengthening Anti-Human Trafficking Systems in India: A Longitudinal RTI and Field-Based Inquiry into AHTU Functionality (2010–2025)*, presents findings from a fifteen-year longitudinal accountability initiative undertaken by Sanjog India through multiple phases of research, documentation, field engagement, and systems analysis. Few studies in India have attempted to longitudinally track the functionality of Anti Human Trafficking Units over such an extended period. Over the years, one of the strongest learnings for us has been that trafficking data, institutional responses, and survivor experiences often tell very different stories – and it is within these gaps that questions of accountability and access to justice emerge most sharply. Through RTI responses, field observations, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), survivor testimonies, and stakeholder consultations, the study attempts to understand not only the existence of AHTUs as administrative structures, but their functionality as justice institutions.

The findings across the report reveal a persistent dissonance between institutional intent and operational implementation. While policies, advisories, and schemes have repeatedly emphasized dedicated staffing, specialised training, inter-agency coordination, survivor-centred approaches, and strengthened investigations, the realities emerging across states continue to reflect fragmented notification processes, additional charge burdens, inconsistent budgetary allocation, weak FIR autonomy, poor coordination mechanisms, and uneven access to justice outcomes.

Importantly, this report also reflects the experiences and observations of those who engage most closely with the anti-trafficking ecosystem – survivors, lawyers, civil society organisations, survivor collectives, frontline responders, and institutional actors themselves. The report also attempts to draw attention to forms of trafficking, particularly labour trafficking and child labour-linked exploitation, that frequently remain under-recognised or misclassified within institutional responses. Survivor testimonies repeatedly indicate that where AHTUs function effectively, they are often perceived as more accessible, responsive, and sensitive than general policing structures.

At the same time, the report highlights how gaps in coordination, investigation continuity, rehabilitation pathways, compensation processes, and institutional accountability continue to affect survivor experiences within the justice system.

The report must also be situated within broader national and international concerns around trafficking response systems. Repeated observations emerging from Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Reports, institutional assessments, and field-based interventions continue to raise questions around the effectiveness, consistency, and coordination of anti-trafficking systems across India. In this context, AHTU Watch contributes not merely as a documentation exercise, but as an accountability and systems-learning initiative intended to strengthen institutional reflection and policy engagement.

This study has also been shaped significantly by the learnings emerging from Taftesh and wider collaborative engagements across the anti-trafficking sector. Over the years, partnerships with survivor collectives, legal actors, grassroots organisations, and institutional stakeholders have reinforced the importance of viewing trafficking not as an isolated criminal event, but as a complex justice issue requiring sustained, coordinated, and survivor-centred institutional response.

At its core, this report attempts to move the conversation from the mere existence of structures towards questions of functionality, effectiveness, and accountability. Ultimately, the effectiveness of anti-trafficking systems must be assessed through the lens of access to justice experienced by survivors themselves. It recognises that institutional systems cannot be assessed only through notifications, schemes, or rescue numbers, but through their ability to consistently ensure protection, investigation, prosecution, rehabilitation, compensation, and dignity for survivors navigating the justice process.

We hope that this report contributes meaningfully to ongoing discussions on strengthening anti-trafficking systems in India and encourages deeper engagement between government institutions, civil society organisations, survivor networks, researchers, and justice actors towards building more responsive and accountable systems.

Ultimately, the report is also a reminder that the fight against trafficking cannot be sustained through fragmented interventions alone. It requires long-term commitment, institutional continuity, collaborative ecosystems, and a justice framework that places survivors – and their rights, agency, and lived realities – at the centre. The future of anti-trafficking systems will depend not only on stronger institutions, but on whether those institutions are able to consistently uphold dignity, trust, and justice for survivors navigating them.

**Nisha Mehroon**  
**Director, Access to Justice**  
**Sanjog India**

# Acknowledgments

*"Knowledge is an act of justice; to document is to refuse to forget."*

This 15-year longitudinal inquiry (2010-2025) was born from a commitment to institutional accountability. It is not merely a collection of data, rather a sustained demand for the State to honour its obligations to the survivors of human trafficking. We present this work with the conviction that transparency is the first step toward reclaiming rights within a system that often operates in the shadows.

We are deeply grateful to **ECPAT Luxembourg** for their partnership in this third phase. Their support has been instrumental in ensuring that this research remains a living, breathing tool for advocacy, enabling us to bridge the gap between policy intent and the lived realities of those seeking justice.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our research partners, the **VIPLA Foundation** (Maharashtra) and **AASRA Foundation** (Rajasthan), whose deep-rooted community presence and commitment to justice were essential in documenting the regional nuances of institutional accountability.

Our deepest appreciation goes to the lawyers who have walked this path with us - **Kaushik Gupta, Anirban Tarafder, Atul Barthwal** - and criminologist **Sajith Mohmad Saleem**. By utilising the Right to Information (RTI) Act not just as a legal tool, but as a means of constitutional inquiry, they have helped us challenge institutional opacity. We owe specific gratitude to **Krithika Balu**, a human rights lawyer whose rigorous analytical lens and deep commitment to legal accountability transformed raw data into a narrative of systemic critique and potential reform.

The heartbeat of this report remains the survivors. We acknowledge the leadership of **ILFAT** (Integrated Leadership Forum Against Trafficking) and other survivor collectives notably **Bijoyini** and **Utthan** in West Bengal and **SAANS** in Chhattisgarh. You are the primary claimants; your courage in demanding accountability from the very systems meant to protect you is the reason this research exists. We also thank the countless social workers and community defenders who continue to work at the intersection of law and empathy.

Finally, we acknowledge the team at Sanjog. For fifteen years, Sanjog has served as a repository of institutional memory, ensuring that the struggle for AHTU functionality is documented, questioned, and never abandoned.

## **Team Sanjog**

**Nisha Mehroon, Debarati Choudhury, Riddhi Bhattacharya, Uma Chatterjee, Roop Sen**

# Table of Contents

FOREWORD	1
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	6
OVERVIEW	8
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	14
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY	19
CHAPTER 3: LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK	25
CHAPTER 4: DASHBOARD—A 15-YEAR SNAPSHOT OF AHTU FUNCTIONALITY (2010–2025)	30
CHAPTER 5: INDICATOR I— NOTIFICATION FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF AHTUs	36
CHAPTER 6: INDICATOR II—STAFFING, STABILITY, AND ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF AHTU PERSONNEL	42
CHAPTER 7: INDICATOR III—BUDGET ALLOCATION, FUND UTILISATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE READINESS	49

# Table of Contents

CHAPTER 8: INDICATOR IV–TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF AHTU PERSONNEL	57
CHAPTER 9: INDICATOR V–FIR REGISTRATION AUTONOMY AND CASE HANDLING	63
CHAPTER 10: INDICATOR VI–COORDINATION MECHANISMS AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER RESPONSE	69
CHAPTER 11: CONSOLIDATED ANALYSIS OF AHTU FUNCTIONALITY ACROSS PHASES (2010–2025)	78
CHAPTER 12: POSITIVE DEVIATIONS AND AHTU REFORM PATHWAYS	85
CHAPTER 13: STATE/UT-WISE AHTU FUNCTIONALITY AND REFORM AREAS	92
CONCLUSION: A ROADMAP FOR AHTU REFORM (2025–2030)	95
ABOUT SANJOG	96
ANNEXURE	97

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

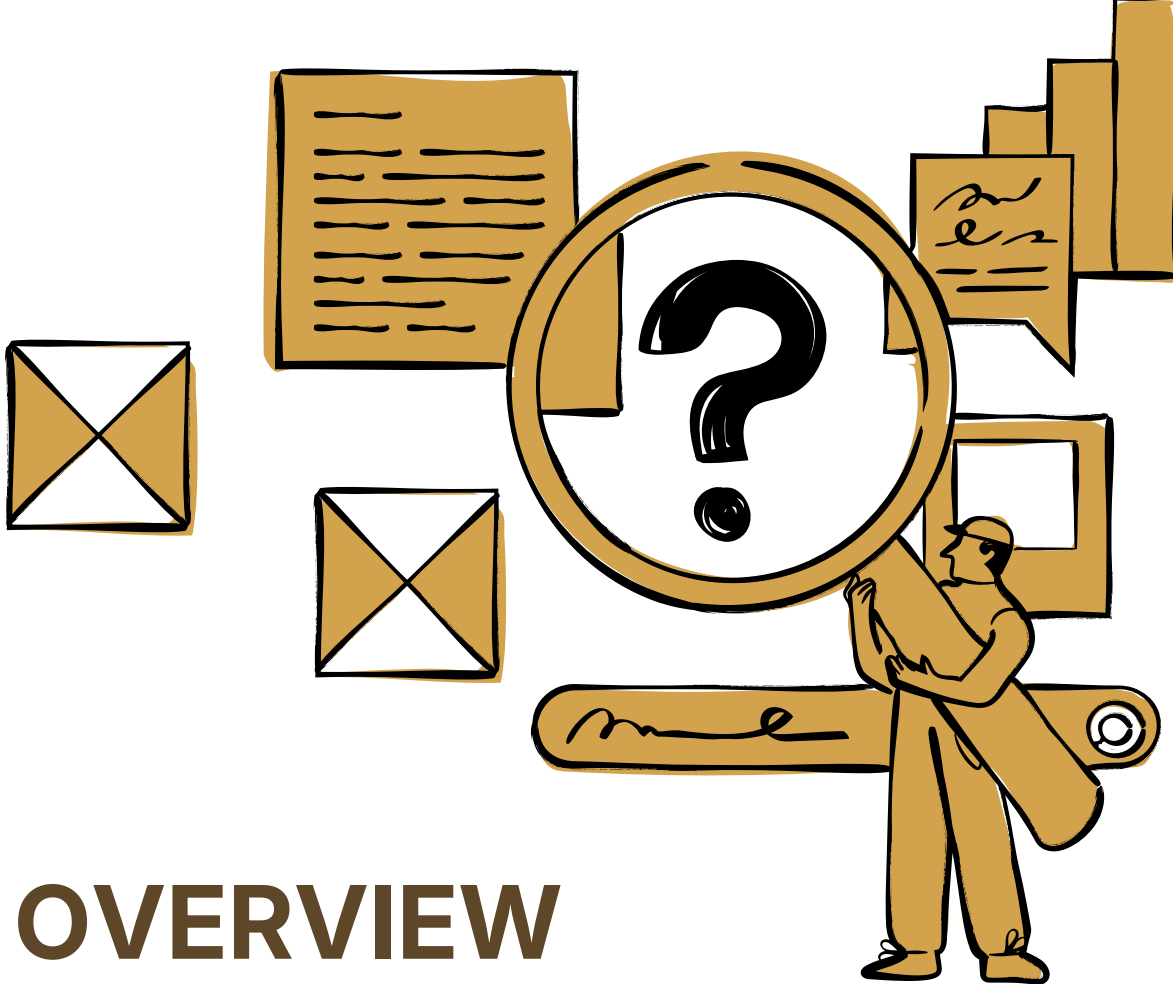
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>FULL FORMS</b>
<b>AHTU</b>	Anti-Human Trafficking Unit
<b>BNS</b>	Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023
<b>BNSS</b>	Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023
<b>BPR&amp;D</b>	Bureau of Police Research and Development
<b>BSA</b>	Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023
<b>CBO</b>	Community-Based Organisation
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>CrPC</b>	Criminal Procedure Code
<b>CWC</b>	Child Welfare Committee
<b>DIG</b>	Deputy Inspector General
<b>DLSA</b>	District Legal Services Authority
<b>DoJ</b>	Department of Justice
<b>DV Act</b>	Domestic Violence Act
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FIR</b>	First Information Report
<b>HC</b>	High Court
<b>HP</b>	Himachal Pradesh
<b>ICC</b>	Internal Complaints Committee
<b>IPC</b>	Indian Penal Code
<b>ITPA</b>	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act
<b>MHA</b>	Ministry of Home Affairs
<b>MIS</b>	Management Information System
<b>MoLJ</b>	Ministry of Law and Justice
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MWCD</b>	Ministry of Women and Child Development
<b>NALSA</b>	National Legal Services Authority
<b>NCRB</b>	National Crime Records Bureau

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

## ABBREVIATIONS

## FULL FORMS

<b>NCPCR</b>	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
<b>NCW</b>	National Commission of Women
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NHRC</b>	National Human Rights Commission
<b>POSH</b>	Prevention of Sexual Harassment
<b>RPF</b>	Railway Police Force
<b>RTI</b>	Right to Information
<b>SC</b>	Supreme Court
<b>SCPCR</b>	State Commission for Protection of Child Rights
<b>SLSA</b>	State Legal Services Authority
<b>SP</b>	Superintendent of Police
<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UP</b>	Uttar Pradesh
<b>VC</b>	Victim Compensation
<b>VCS</b>	Victim Compensation Schemes
<b>WB</b>	West Bengal



# OVERVIEW

This National Report presents a **longitudinal assessment** of Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) functionality in India across three research phases under the AHTU Watch initiative (CY 2010 – FY 2024–25). The study adopts a **multi-pronged methodology combining Right to Information (RTI) data, field observations, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and survivor testimonies** to evaluate the operationalisation of AHTUs

against their intended mandate as specialised anti-trafficking institutions.

While AHTUs were envisioned as specialised, coordinated, survivor-sensitive units, the evidence across fifteen years reveals a **persistent and systemic divergence between institutional design and on-ground execution.**

## About Trafficking in India

Trends in human trafficking since 2009, as per NCRB’s Crime in India show a rise till 2016 and a subsequent fall till 2020. Rates have been almost consistent from 2021 onwards.

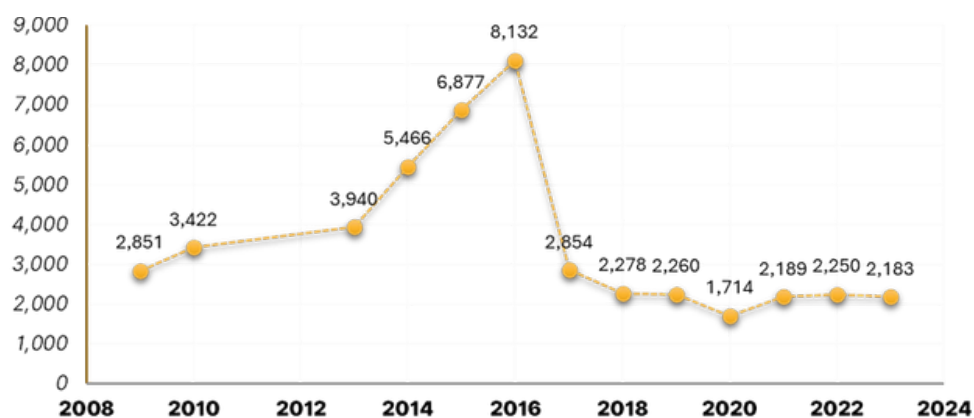


Figure 1: Trends in human trafficking since 2009, as per NCRB’s Crime in India report

# Six Indicators of AHTU Functionality

This study frames AHTU functionality through **6 interdependent indicators**:



## **Notification Status**

Non-notification leads to no FIR powers.



## **Staffing and Stability**

Additional charge of AHTU officers compromises continuity of investigations.



## **Budget and Infrastructure**

Opaque and erratic budgeting seriously affects operational infrastructure.



## **FIR Autonomy**

AHTUs are unable to undertake independent investigations.



## **Coordination Mechanisms**

Poor coordination results in delayed/no victim compensation and rehabilitation.



## **Case Progression and Outcomes**

Low conviction rates, survivor vulnerability and impunity for traffickers

*This framework reflects both systemic data and survivor experiences.*

# Methodology

The AHTU Watch initiative demonstrates methodological evolution across **three phases of research**:



The evolving approach significantly enhances the veracity, accountability value, and advocacy relevance of the findings.

This research integrates the voices of survivor leaders and civil society stakeholders, including collaboration with survivor collectives and advocacy partners such as ILFAT for survivor-centred accountability and policy advocacy. Their testimonies substantively corroborate institutional data gaps, particularly with respect to coordination, victim compensation and police responsiveness.

Figure 2: Three phases of research for AHTU Watch

## Primary Finding in India

### **A Structural Dissonance Between Policy Intent and Ground Reality**

Despite multiple advisories issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (2010, 2013, 2019) emphasising dedicated staffing, inter-agency coordination, infrastructure, and specialised training, AHTUs continue to operate with fragmented notification, limited autonomy, additional charge burdens, weak coordination, and inconsistent resource allocation.

# Top Findings Across Phases of AHTU Watch

## **01** **Fragmented AHTU Notification**

Even after 15 years of research and policy-making, formal notification of AHTUs as police stations with FIR powers remains inconsistent and poorly documented across the country.

## **02** **Additional Charge is a systemic constraint**

AHTU personnel are frequently burdened with general policing duties, significantly reducing their ability to focus on trafficking investigations and survivor support.

## **03** **Declining and Opaque Budget Flows**

Budget allocation is inconsistent, utilisation data is frequently missing, and funds often do not trickle down to the district-level AHTUs despite higher government sanction.

## **04** **Weak FIR Autonomy that Impedes Investigations**

FIR registration and investigation remain dependent on local police stations in many States/UTs, reducing AHTUs' operational independence.

## **05** **Low Convictions Despite Rescues and Arrests**

Data suggests that cases often stall at rescue, FIR, or arrest stages, with extremely low conviction outcomes across trafficking cases.

## **06** **NGO-Led Survivor Rescue and Support Systems**

Rescue, rehabilitation, and survivor support continue to be largely spearheaded by NGOs and survivor collectives, validating the continued necessity of civil society intervention in anti-trafficking ecosystems.

## 07 Improved but Uneven Training Trends in AHTU Watch-Phase 3

There is a visible increase in training programmes (including virtual formats), though these remain police-centric and not multi-stakeholder as originally envisioned.

## 08 Misclassification of Child Labour/Labour Trafficking

Law enforcement frequently categorises trafficking cases as wage disputes or child labour issues, creating legal blind spots and reducing victim compensation eligibility.

## 09 Data Transparency Gaps in High-Trafficking States

High-incidence states such as Assam, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh showed non-responsiveness to RTIs, raising concerns about whether declining NCRB figures reflect reduced trafficking or reduced reporting and disclosure.

## 10 Coordination Failures in Justice and Rehabilitation Systems

Weak coordination with District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), rehabilitation services and prosecution agencies results in delayed compensation, prolonged trials, and exacerbates survivor distress and vulnerability.

The findings reveal **asymmetric functionality** of AHTUs, where:

- *Some states demonstrate strong FIR autonomy and case activity*
- *Others remain systemically fragile due to staffing, funding, and coordination gaps*

There have been some positive systemic shifts, which can indicate that targeted institutional strengthening can lead to tangible improvements in AHTU functionality. These include:

- Increased reportage of training initiatives in Phase 3 and virtual trainings.
- Active prosecution trends in select states (notably Telangana)
- Survivor perception that functional AHTUs perform better than local police stations

## Recommendations



**Mandatory notification of AHTUs as police stations with FIR powers**



**Removal of additional charge for AHTU personnel**



**Dedicated, regular and traceable budget allocation to AHTUs**



**Standardised multi-stakeholder training (including labour trafficking recognition)**



**National toll-free trafficking reporting mechanism**



**Appointment of Nodal Officers**



**Standard and mandatory institutional coordination protocols with DLSA, CWCs, and rehabilitation services**

# Chapter ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Policy Paradox:**

While national guidelines envision AHTUs as specialised, survivor-centric units, fifteen years of data reveal a persistent structural dissonance between policy intent and ground reality.

# 1.1 Context: Anti-Human Trafficking Units in India

Human trafficking in India remains a complex and evolving challenge that requires coordinated institutional responses across investigation, prosecution, rehabilitation, and survivor support systems. Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) were conceptualised by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) as specialised, multi-disciplinary units designed to prevent trafficking, conduct rescues, investigate offences, prosecute traffickers, and coordinate survivor rehabilitation through a structured inter-agency ecosystem. Their intended composition includes trained law enforcement personnel, coordination with Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), shelters, legal aid authorities, and prosecution services, thereby positioning AHTUs as nodal institutional mechanisms for a

survivor-centric anti-trafficking response.

Since 2009, the MHA has issued advisories and guidelines emphasising dedicated staffing, specialised training, infrastructure support, intelligence-led investigations, and inter-state coordination to strengthen AHTU functionality. However, repeated national and international assessments, including those cited in this study, have highlighted persistent operational and coordination challenges within AHTUs, including lack of trained personnel, poor case management, and gender-insensitive responses in anti-trafficking policing. This report is situated within this broader policy context and examines whether the institutional vision of AHTUs has translated into functional anti-trafficking systems on the ground.

## 1.2. NCRB Trends and the National Trafficking Context

According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, the states reporting the highest number of human trafficking cases in 2022 included Telangana, Maharashtra, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and Assam. These trends indicate continued geographic concentration of trafficking prevalence in specific high-risk regions.

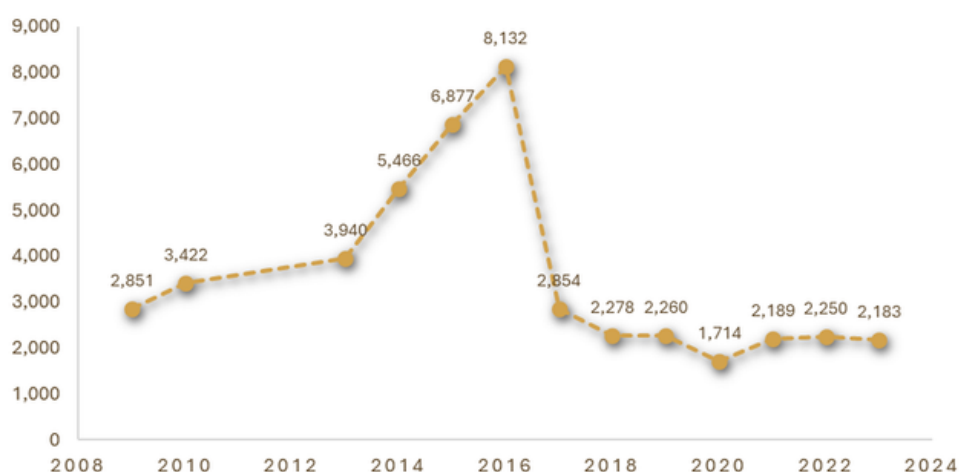


Figure 3: NCRB Human Trafficking Trends in India (2009–2023)

At the national level, reported human trafficking cases declined from 8,132 cases in 2016 to 2,183 cases in 2023. While this numerical decline may

appear to indicate progress, it must be interpreted cautiously within the broader institutional and data transparency landscape.

Year	Incidences	States/UTs with maximum reported cases
2009	2,851	Not mentioned
2010	3,422	Not mentioned
2013	3,940	Not mentioned
2014	5,466	West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka
2015	6,877	Not mentioned
2016	8,132	West Bengal, Rajasthan, Gujarat
2017	2,854	Jharkhand, West Bengal, Telangana
2018	2,278	Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Assam
2019	2,260	Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Assam
2020	1,714	Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala
2021	2,189	Telangana, Maharashtra, Assam
2022	2,250	Telangana, Maharashtra, Bihar
2023	2,183	Maharashtra, Telangana, Odisha

**Table 1: Incidence of Trafficking in India and State/UT Rankings**

A critical concern emerged from NCRB trends with RTI responsiveness; namely that high-incidence states, including Assam, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh, were either non-responsive or minimally responsive to RTI queries. This raises a question as to whether the observed decline in trafficking cases reflects an actual

reduction in trafficking prevalence or a decline in reporting, documentation, and institutional disclosure. This ambiguity reinforces the need for institutional accountability studies such as AHTU Watch, which move beyond crime statistics to assess functional performance of anti-trafficking systems.

## 1.3 The Dissonance Between Institutional Intent and Ground Reality

Survivor testimonies, field observations, and RTI data consistently point to a significant difference between the intended mandate of AHTUs and their operational reality. Survivors frequently reported that AHTU officials were overburdened with general policing responsibilities and often unavailable due to additional charges unrelated to trafficking cases. Officers themselves acknowledged pressure, noting the difficulty of managing both local police duties and AHTU responsibilities simultaneously.

Survivors also observed that many AHTU personnel were transferred from local police stations without specialised

training in handling trafficking cases, undermining the core purpose of establishing specialised units to combat trafficking.

This gap between institutional design and implementation is further compounded by weak coordination between AHTUs and rehabilitation stakeholders, delays in documentation and legal processes, inconsistent survivor support mechanisms and dependence on NGOs for rescue and rehabilitation. The cumulative effect is a system where AHTUs often exist administratively but function unevenly across states, districts, and indicators of effectiveness.

## 1.4 AHTU Watch: A Longitudinal Accountability Initiative (2010–2025)

The present report forms part of the AHTU Watch initiative undertaken by Sanjog, which has systematically studied AHTU functionality across three research phases spanning fifteen years, Calendar Year (CY) 2010 to Fiscal Year (FY) 2024–25.

- **Phase 1:** Initial RTI-led documentation of AHTU notification and functionality
- **Phase 2:** Expanded institutional review with comparative analysis
- **Phase 3:** RTI analysis combined with field visits, key informant interviews, and survivor testimonies

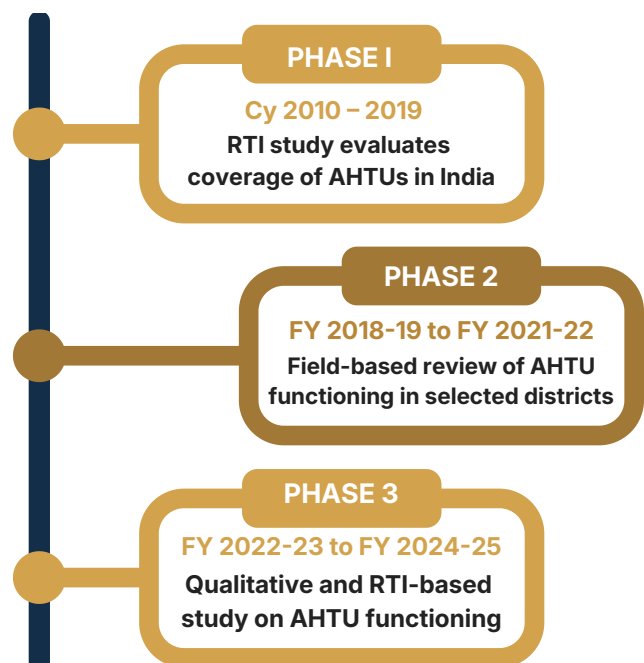


Figure 4: AHTU Watch Phases (CY 2010 – FY 2024–25)

## 1.5 Scope of the Present Report

This report provides a compounded longitudinal analysis by synthesising insights across all three phases of AHTU Watch. The report evaluates AHTU functionality through *six core indicators developed as a framework*.



**Figure 5: Indicators of AHTU Functionality**

These indicators collectively reflect the operational ecosystem required for effective anti-trafficking policing and survivor-centric access to justice. The six-indicator framework is based on the recognition that AHTU effectiveness is not determined by a single variable but by an interdependent systemic chain. This systems-based approach strengthens the analytical rigour of the study and aligns with expert recommendations to undertake standalone analysis across all six indicators in an integrated manner.



# Chapter TWO

## METHODOLOGY



### **Evolution of Accountability:**

Moving beyond simple RTI data to a multi-pronged approach that integrates field inquiries, key informant interviews, including survivor voices and AHTU officials to validate institutional findings

## 2.1 Overview: A Multi-Pronged Research Framework

This study adopts a qualitative, longitudinal, and triangulated research design, combining RTI data analysis, field observations, key informant interviews (KIIs) including survivor testimonies to assess the functionality of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) across India.

## 2.2 Evolution of Methodology Across the Three Phases of AHTU Watch

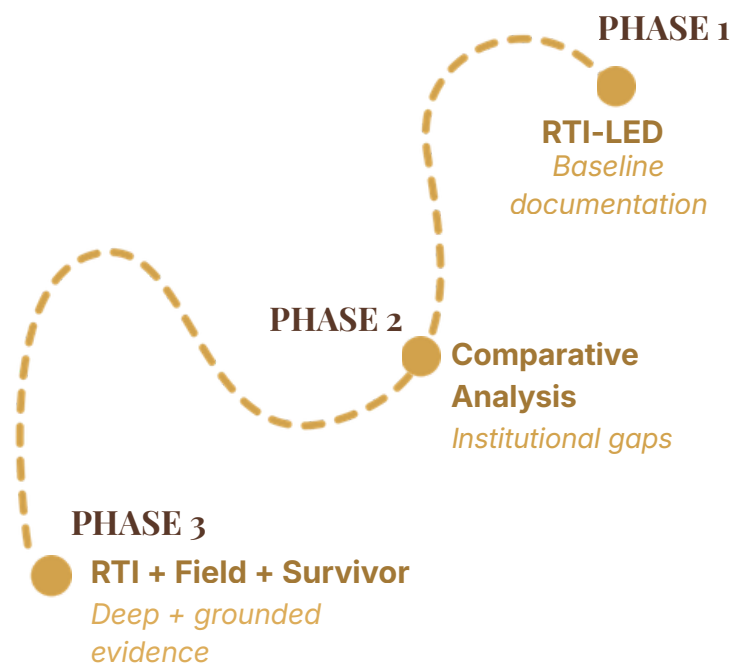
The methodology has evolved across **three phases (CY 2010 – FY 2024–25)** in response to emerging institutional gaps, fragmented and non-transparent data and the need for survivor-centred accountability. This evolutionary approach strengthens the credibility, and policy relevance of the findings.

### Phase 1: RTI-Led Systemic Documentation

The first phase primarily relied on RTI filings to document the notification status, staffing patterns, and institutional existence of AHTUs across States and Union Territories. This phase established baseline evidence on the formal establishment and administrative recognition of AHTUs. The first phase also included relevant first-hand narratives from survivors, NGO personnel and lawyers providing legal aid to survivors of human trafficking.

### Phase 2: Expanded Systemic Review and Comparative Analysis

The second phase expanded the scope to include comparative institutional



**Figure 6: Methodological Evolution across 3 phases**

analysis highlighting functional disparities across states/UTs, lack of coordination protocols, continued reliance on NGOs for rescue and rehabilitation and limited institutional support for AHTUs. This phase showed increased functionality of AHTUs compared to Phase 1 but revealed persistent weaknesses in coordination, record-keeping, and training.

### **Phase 3: RTI Data with Field-Based Observations and Survivor-Centred Framing**

The third phase of research contains a comprehensive methodology, integrating RTI data with ground-

level KIIs and survivor perspectives. This evolution from RTI-only documentation to field inquiries validates the rigour and depth of the AHTU Watch initiative and directly responds to emerging research needs identified in earlier phases.

## **2.3 Components of the Multi-Pronged Methodology**

### **RTI Filing and Data Analysis**

Right to Information (RTI) applications were filed across all 36 States and Union Territories to obtain official data on:

1. AHTU notification status
2. Staffing and additional charge
3. Budget allocation and utilisation
4. Infrastructure and resources
5. Training and capacity building
6. Case management and FIR autonomy
7. Coordination mechanisms
8. Compliance with MHA advisories and guidelines.

The RTI data spans the period 2022–2025 and forms the primary administrative evidence base for Phase 3 analysis. Non-disclosure, partial disclosure, and inconsistent responses were systematically documented and treated as indicators of institutional transparency gaps rather than mere data gaps.

### **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**

Key informant interviews were conducted across multiple

stakeholder categories, including: Superintendents of Police (SPs), Constables attached to AHTUs and civil society partners. To ensure ethical reporting and institutional neutrality, respondent identities are presented through designation-based references rather than personal names.


### **Survivor Interviews and Focus Group Discussions**

The study incorporates survivor-centred evidence (ethically anonymised) through individual interviews with survivors of sex and labour trafficking and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with trafficking survivors.

### **Engagement with NGOs and Survivor Collectives**

The methodology also involved consultations with civil society organisations and survivor leaders, including collaboration with advocacy stakeholders and survivor collectives such as ILFAT.

## AT GLANCE: COMPONENTS OF THE MULTI-PRONGED METHODOLOGY




### RTI FILING & DATA ANALYSIS

**36** States & Union Territories Covered

**Data collected on 8 key areas:**

- ✓ Notification Status
- ✓ Staffing
- ✓ Budget & Utilisation
- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Training
- ✓ FIR Autonomy
- ✓ Coordination
- ✓ Compliance

 **Period: 2022-2025**



### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

**Stakeholders Included:**


- Superintendents of Police (SPs)
- Inspectors & Sub-Inspectors
- Constables attached to AHTUs
- CSO partners



### ENGAGEMENT WITH NGOs & SURVIVOR COLLECTIVES

**Consultations & collaborations with:**

- Civil Society Organisations
- Survivor Leaders
- Advocacy Stakeholders
- Survivor collectives like **ILFAT**



### SURVIVOR INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

**Survivor-centered evidence gathered through:**

- *Individual Interviews* with survivors of sex and labour trafficking
- *Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)* with trafficking survivors

## 2.4 Criteria for Selection of Field Research States

Field research in Phase 3 was conducted in West Bengal, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan based on the following criteria:

1. High prevalence and vulnerability to human trafficking as identified through national-level studies and NCRB trends.
2. Persistent gaps in transparency and RTI responsiveness during earlier research phases.
3. Availability and readiness of local NGO partners to facilitate ethical access to survivor voices and institutional engagement.

This targeted selection strategy ensured that the study captured both high-incidence and high-opacity governance contexts.



## 2.5 Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

Given the sensitive nature of human trafficking research, the study adhered to ethical safeguards, including the anonymisation of survivor identities, designation-based referencing of AHTU personnel and ethical facilitation of survivor interviews through trusted partners.

## 2.6 Limitations of the Methodology

While the study employs a robust multi-pronged design, *certain limitations are acknowledged as below:*

### 01 RTI Non-Responsiveness

Several high-trafficking states did not provide complete data, creating transparency gaps.

### 02 Incomplete Budget and Utilisation Records

Inconsistent financial disclosures limited comparative fiscal analysis.

### 03 Restricted Access to Officials

In some jurisdictions, AHTU personnel were unavailable for interviews.


### 04 Variability in Record-Keeping

Absence of systematic documentation in multiple AHTUs affected data standardisation.

### 05 Potential Reporting Bias

Government-reported coordination mechanisms occasionally diverged from survivor testimonies and field observations.

Importantly, these limitations also reflect **systemic governance challenges** within AHTU implementation rather than merely methodological constraints.



## **A Framework of Fragmented Compliance:**

Despite 22 MHA advisories since 2009, the lack of standardized implementation across states continues to undermine the intended anti-trafficking ecosystem

# **Chapter THREE**

## **LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**

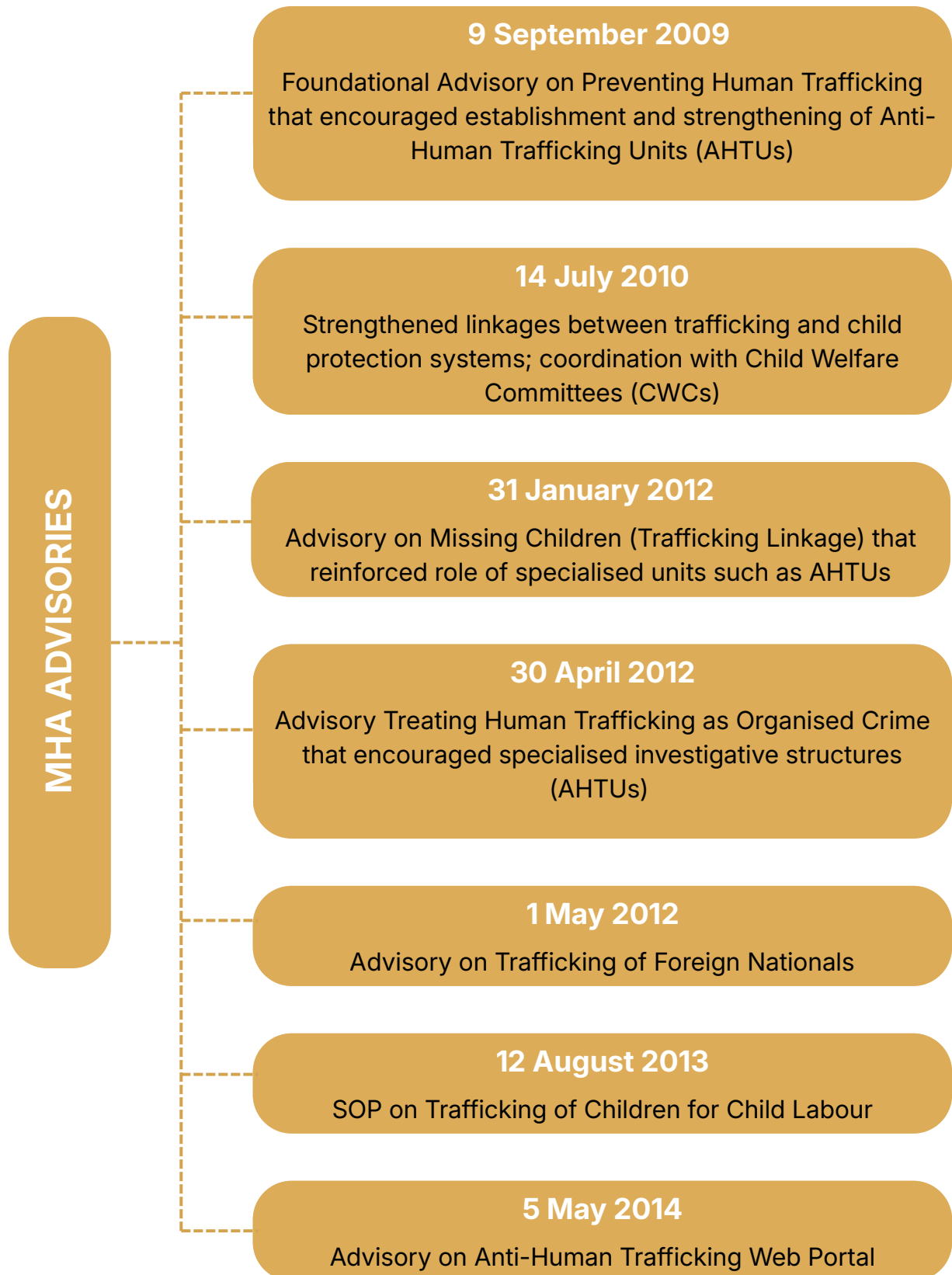


## 3.1 Overview

Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in India are grounded in a legal and policy framework developed through Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) advisories, national anti-trafficking policies, and institutional guidelines issued since 2009. These advisories collectively outline the mandate, composition, powers, and operational standards expected of AHTUs across States and Union Territories.

## 3.2 MHA Advisories on Establishment and Strengthening of AHTUs

From 2009 onwards, the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued at least **22 advisories and operational guidelines** to States and UTs, alongside a comprehensive scheme for establishment and strengthening of Anti-Human Trafficking Units across districts. Some relevant advisories are represented below:



**Figure 7: Key MHA Advisories relating to AHTUs**

**However, fragmented compliance with these advisories remains a persistent concern.**

## 3.3 Intended Institutional Design of AHTUs



### **SPECIALISED AND DEDICATED UNITS**

Policy guidance envisages AHTUs as specialised units distinct from regular police stations, staffed with trained personnel who can conduct intelligence-led investigations, register FIRs in trafficking cases, coordinate rescues, facilitate survivor rehabilitation, and support prosecution and victim compensation processes. The expectation is that AHTU personnel should not be overburdened with unrelated policing duties, as additional charge undermines their specialised mandate.



### **MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION**

AHTUs are designed as nodal coordination bodies within a broader anti-trafficking ecosystem. The legal and policy framework emphasises coordination with: Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), Shelter homes and rehabilitation services, District Legal Services Authorities (DLSA), Prosecution departments and labour departments (in labour trafficking cases). Effective coordination is central to rescue, rehabilitation and victim compensation.

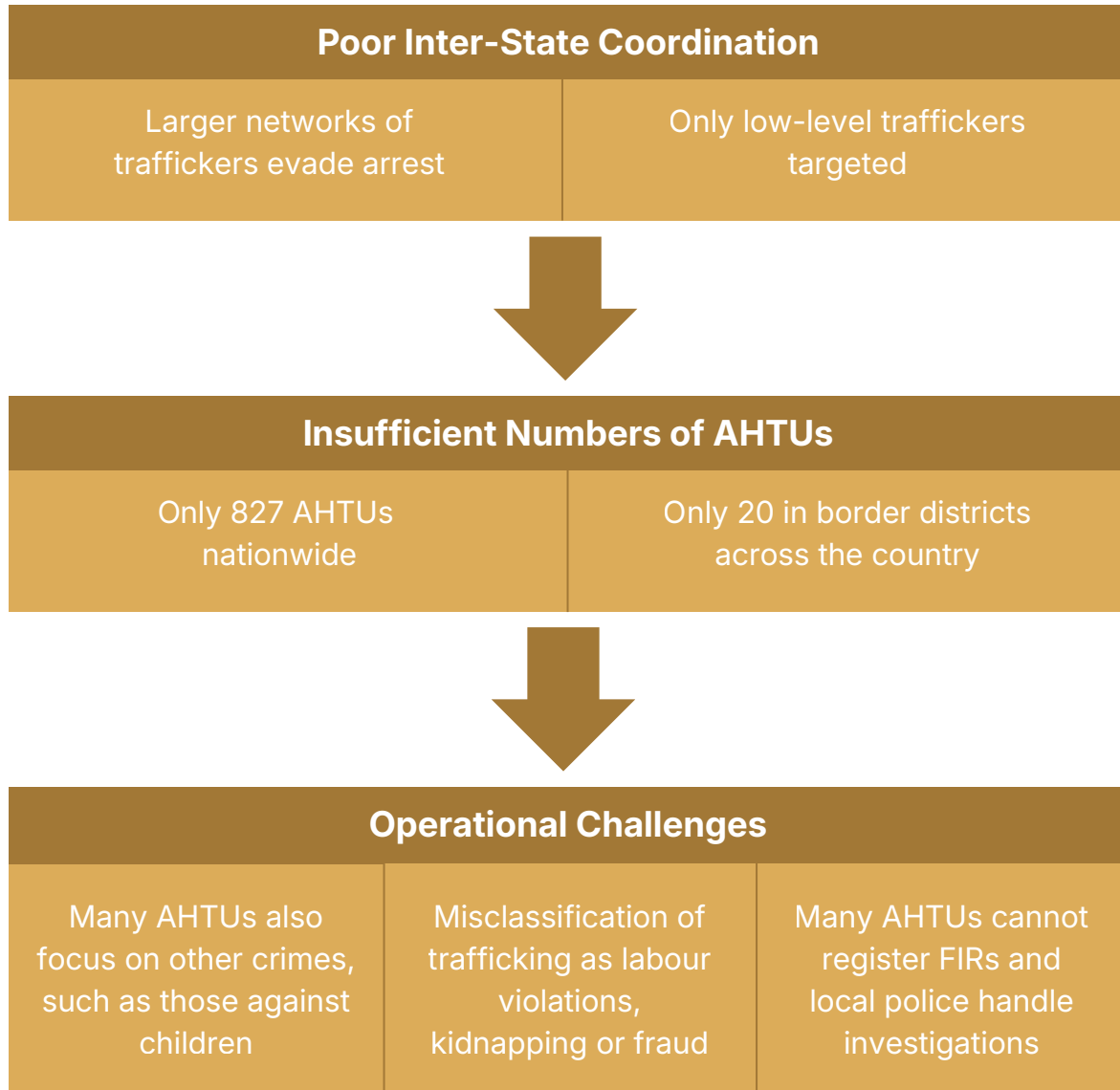


### **FIR AUTONOMY AND INVESTIGATIVE AUTHORITY**

The framework implicitly supports the operational autonomy of AHTUs in registering FIRs, conducting investigations, and filing charge sheets in trafficking cases. Functional AHTUs are expected to lead investigations rather than merely assist local police stations or receive transferred cases. AHTU autonomy is crucial because trafficking cases often involve interstate networks, organised crime and evidence collection, which requires specialised handling beyond routine policing.

## 3.4 TIP, NHRC and Institutional Concerns on AHTU Functionality

As per the 2025 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, AHTUs still face **major operational and coordination challenges**:



**Figure 8: TIP Report on why AHTUs are ineffective**

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has repeatedly raised concerns regarding lack of trained personnel, poor case management practices, gender-insensitive responses in anti-trafficking policing and weak coordination across institutional stakeholders. Additionally, in a press release on 31 May 2024, the NHRC highlighted the importance of appointing Nodal Officers at the state level to ensure monitoring, vigilance, and interdepartmental coordination in trafficking cases.

# Chapter FOUR

## DASHBOARD-15 YEAR SNAPSHOT OF AHTU FUNCTIONALITY (2010–2025)

### **National Snapshot:**

A 15-year longitudinal review shows a landscape of asymmetric functionality, where a few high-performing jurisdictions contrast with widespread systemic fragility

## 4.1 Overview of the Snapshot

This dashboard provides a consolidated, longitudinal snapshot of Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) functionality across Phases 1–3 of AHTU Watch.

S. No	State/UT	% of functional AHTUs notified in Phase 1	% of functional AHTUs notified in Phase 2	% of functional AHTUs notified in Phase 3
1	Andaman & Nicobar Island	Not provided	33%	33%
2	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	Not provided	100%	100%
3	Himachal Pradesh	44%	92.3%	92.3%
4	Jammu & Kashmir	Not provided	Not provided	100%
5	Ladakh	Not provided	100%	100%
6	Meghalaya	Not provided	Not provided	50% (active from 2022–25)
7	Nagaland	Not provided	100%	6 districts without AHTUs
8	Rajasthan	Not provided	Not provided	100%
9	Telangana	Not provided	93.9%	93.9%
10	Uttar Pradesh	Not provided	5 AHTUs notified, 35 functional	Not provided
11	Uttarakhand	Not provided	53.8%	46.1%

**Table 2: Evolution of AHTU Coverage over Phases**

The above table can provide a visual reference of institutionalisation of AHTUs over time, with the limited data provided via RTIs.

## 4.2 Rating Framework

The dashboard applies the six-indicator framework outlined in Chapter 1.

Each indicator is categorised as follows:

- **Functional** (●): Clear evidence of institutional systems, documentation, and operational autonomy
- **Partially Functional** (●): Fragmented or inconsistent institutional

performance with visible gaps

- **Weak / Systemically Fragile** (●): Nominal existence of AHTUs with minimal operational capacity
- **No Data** (●): Non-disclosure, no RTI response, or absence of verifiable information, treated as an accountability concern

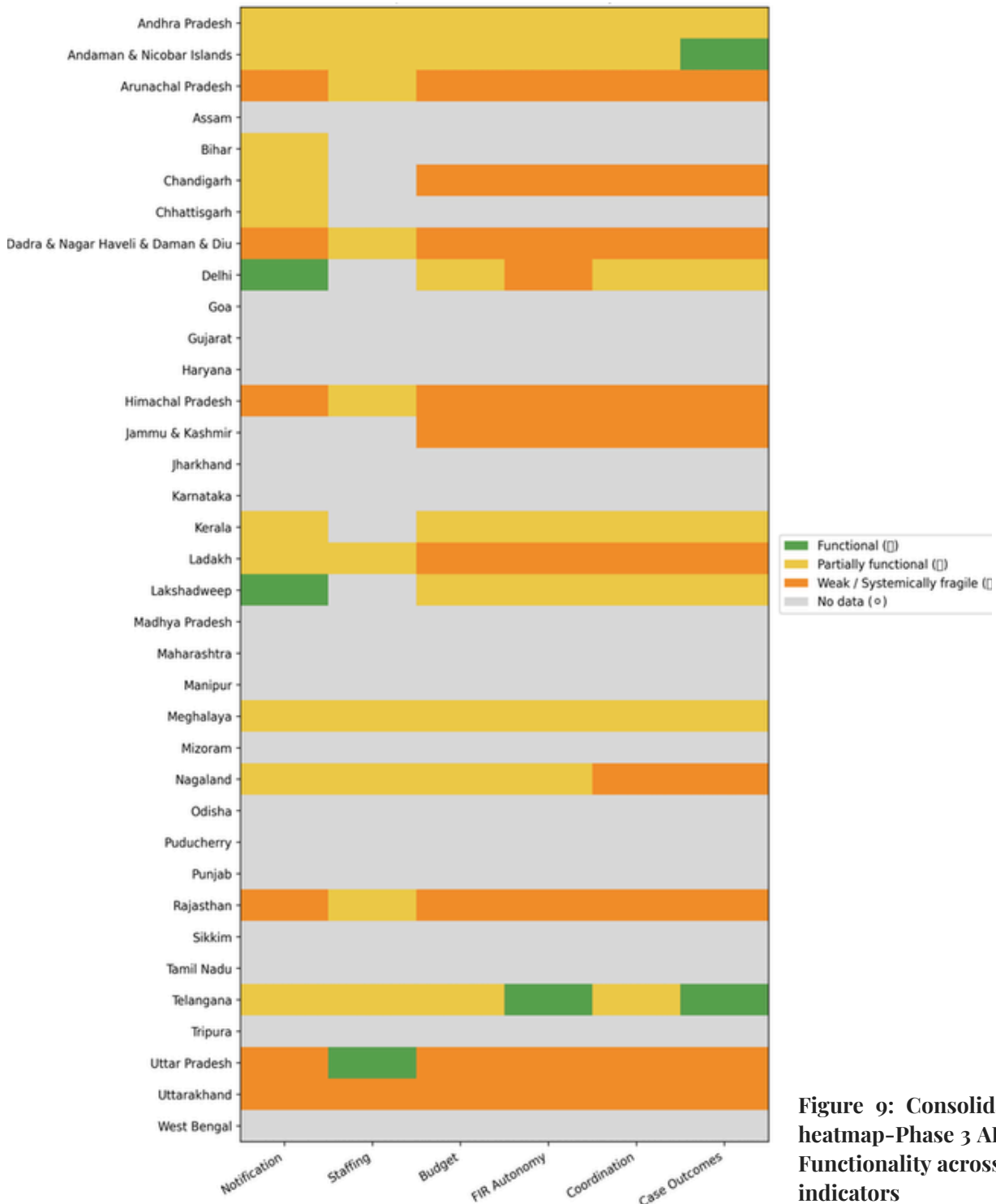


Figure 9: Consolidated heatmap-Phase 3 AHTU Functionality across Six indicators

## 4.3 Consolidated Trends

### Slow and Uneven Progress in AHTU Notification

Across the three phases, formal notification of AHTUs has remained fragmented. Despite policy advisories and institutional emphasis, progress in notification has slowed rather than accelerated in several jurisdictions, suggesting stagnation in this institutional strengthening.

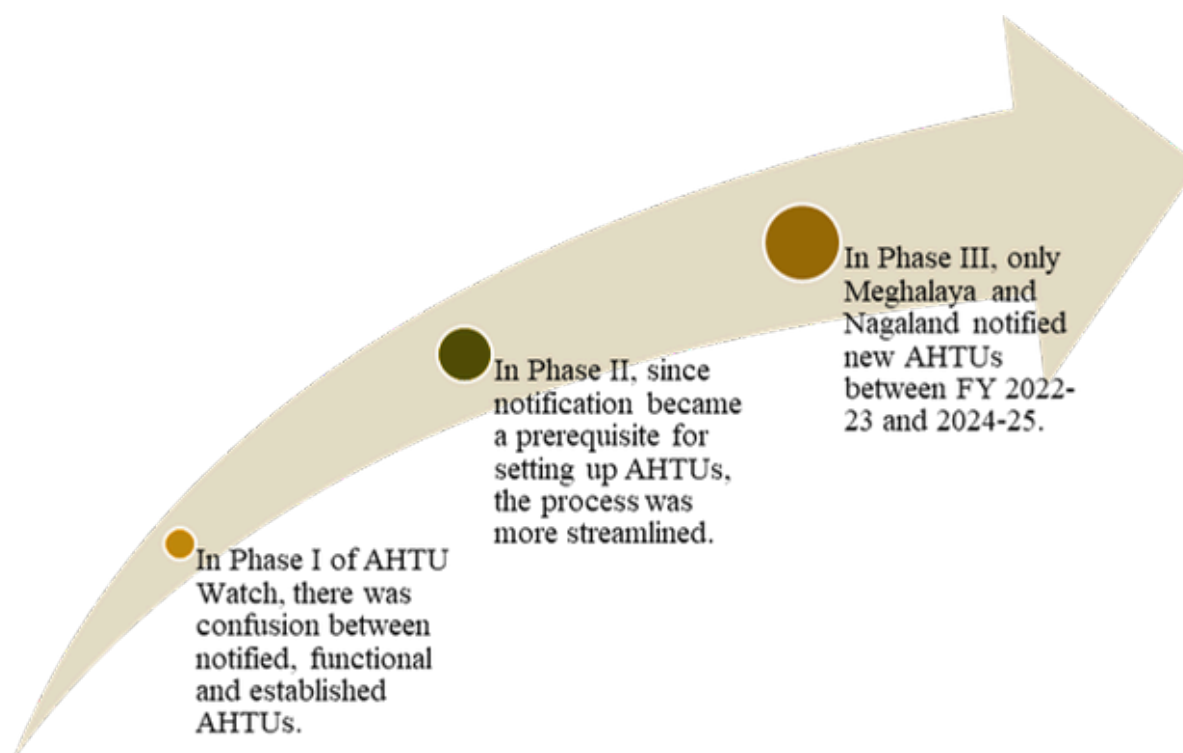


Figure 10: Observations on Notification of AHTUs

### Staffing Instability and the ‘Additional Charge’ Problem

One of the most consistent trends across all phases is the reliance on additional charge staffing. Only Uttar Pradesh has no members with additional charge, as of Phase 3. Survivor testimonies corroborated, reporting that officers themselves expressed difficulty managing both general policing duties and AHTU responsibilities simultaneously. This structural burden directly affects case follow-up, survivor interaction, and coordination efforts.

### Budget Allocation: Emphasis on Infrastructure

Allocated funds are often directed towards physical infrastructure (vehicles, office equipment, and basic facilities) rather than intelligence gathering, specialised investigations, research and data systems and survivor support mechanisms. There is a misalignment between financial utilisation and the investigative mandate of AHTUs, suggesting that more strategic budgeting processes are required.

## Irregular and Unfocused Capacity Building

Capacity-building has been done through largely police-focused training programmes.

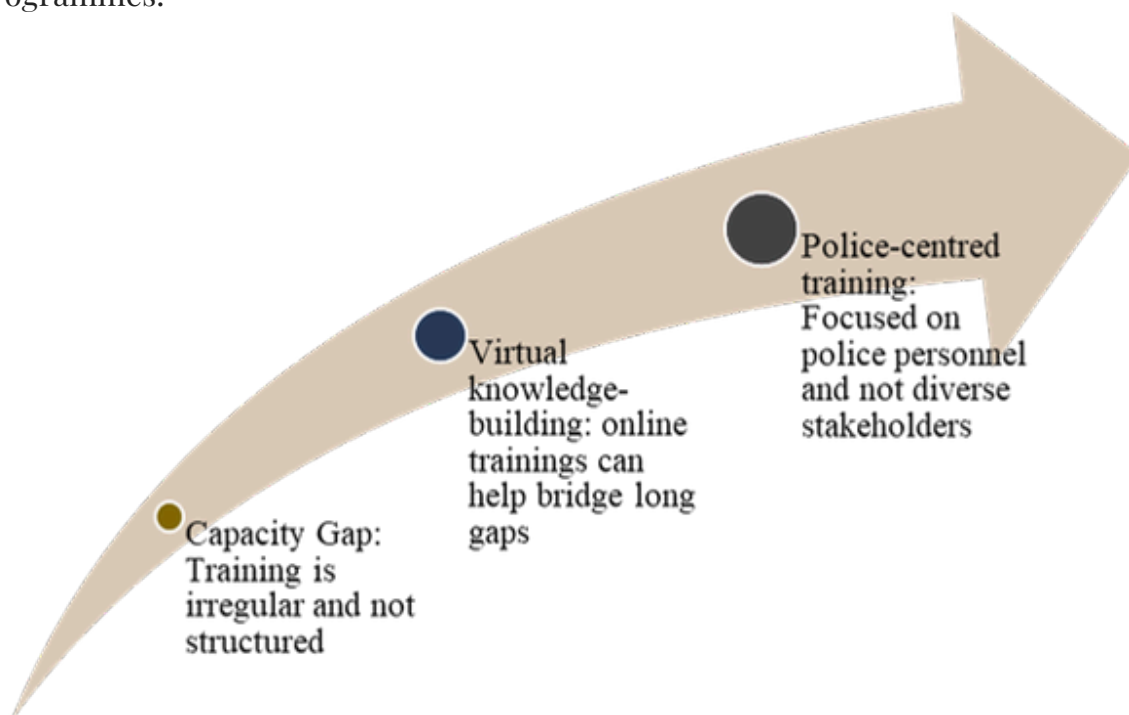


Figure 11: Observations on Training and Capacity Building of AHTUs

## FIR Autonomy as a Key to Functional AHTUs

States/UTs demonstrating higher AHTU effectiveness (Telangana, Delhi) often show clearer evidence of FIR registration autonomy and independent investigative activity. Conversely, where FIRs remain controlled by local police stations (Bikaner, Rajasthan), AHTUs function in a largely coordinative or nominal capacity.

## Weak Coordination Mechanisms

Coordination emerges as a fragile aspect of AHTU functioning. Some RTI responses claim coordination with shelters (Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Telangana), legal aid authorities (Meghalaya, Telangana, Uttar

Pradesh), and child protection systems (Delhi, Meghalaya, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh). However, triangulated data indicates informal and case-specific coordination, lack of institutional protocols and over-reliance on NGOs (Daman Diu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand).

## Disconnect between Case Activity and Case Outcomes

While certain states/UTs show active rescues, arrests, and case registrations (Telangana, Delhi), these do not consistently translate into robust prosecution and conviction outcomes (only Telangana in Phase 2 had 72 convictions out of 980 chargesheets filed, as the most substantial outcome).

## 4.4 AHTU functionality is Asymmetrical across India

The snapshot highlights that AHTU functionality in India is not uniformly weak but asymmetrical.

High-Efficiency States/UTs	Moderate and Partial Functionality	Lowest Efficiency and Systemic Fragility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some states/UTs show strong performance in FIR autonomy and case activity.</li> <li>• Some states/UTs demonstrate relatively better notification clarity or staffing structures</li> <li>• Certain jurisdictions reflect improved training trends in recent phases</li> <li>• e.g. Telangana, Andaman &amp; Nicobar, Delhi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable but partial institutional functionality across phases.</li> <li>• These states/UTs represent potential “next-tier good practice” jurisdictions where targeted investments in staffing, coordination, and training could yield substantial improvements.</li> <li>• e.g. Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, West Bengal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification remains unclear or absent</li> <li>• Staffing is dependent on additional charge</li> <li>• Budget data is missing or nil</li> <li>• Lack of or undocumented coordination mechanisms</li> <li>• e.g. Meghalaya, Assam</li> </ul>

**Table 3: Comparative Summary of Notification Status and Investigative Powers across Studied States/UTs**

## 4.5 Data Transparency

An important insight is the correlation between RTI responsiveness and institutional transparency. High-incidence trafficking states/UTs that did not show complete data, show limited

institutional transparency and/or an inability to accurately assess anti-trafficking performance. This reinforces the need to interpret ‘No Data’ as systemic accountability gaps rather than mere information gaps.

# Chapter FIVE

## INDICATOR I– NOTIFICATION FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF AHTUS

### **The Power of the Seal:**

Formal notification of AHTUs as specialised police stations is not a mere administrative formality; it is the legal bedrock that transforms a unit from a supportive bystander into an empowered investigative body with the autonomy to register FIRs and lead justice for survivors.

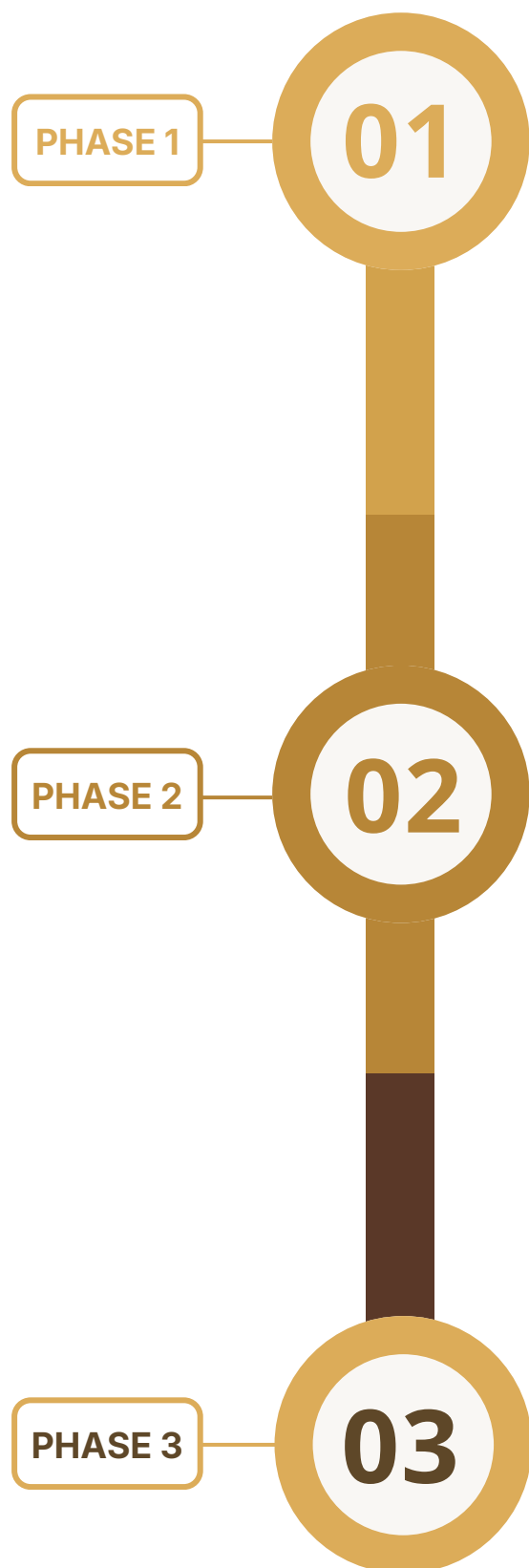
## 5.1 Overview: Notification and AHTU Functionality

Formal notification of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) establishes the legal identity, powers and jurisdiction of AHTUs. Without formal notification, AHTUs risk operating as symbolic units embedded within local police structures rather than as specialised anti-trafficking institutions.

## 5.2 Comparative Status of AHTU Notification: Phases 1–3 of AHTU Watch

S. No	State/UT Name	% of functional AHTUs notified in Phase 1	% of functional AHTUs notified in Phase 2	% of functional AHTUs notified in Phase 3
1	Andaman & Nicobar Island	NA	33%	33%
2	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NA	100%	100%
3	Himachal Pradesh	44%	92.3%	92.3%
4	Jammu & Kashmir	NA	NA	100%
5	Ladakh	NA	100%	100%
6	Meghalaya	NA	NA	50% (active from 2022–25)
7	Nagaland	NA	100%	6 districts without AHTUs
8	Rajasthan	NA	NA	100%
9	Telangana	NA	93.9%	93.9%
10	Uttar Pradesh	NA	75 AHTUs notified, 35 functional	NA
11	Uttarakhand	NA	53.8%	46.1%

**Table 4: Number of AHTUs and Notification Details**



### LIMITED POLITICAL WILL AND PARTIAL INSTITUTIONALISATION

Only limited AHTUs were formally notified with complete powers and resources (Delhi). Some AHTUs existed in name but lacked clear administrative notification and operational autonomy (Bikaner, Rajasthan).

### INCREMENTAL BUT FRAGMENTED IMPROVEMENTS

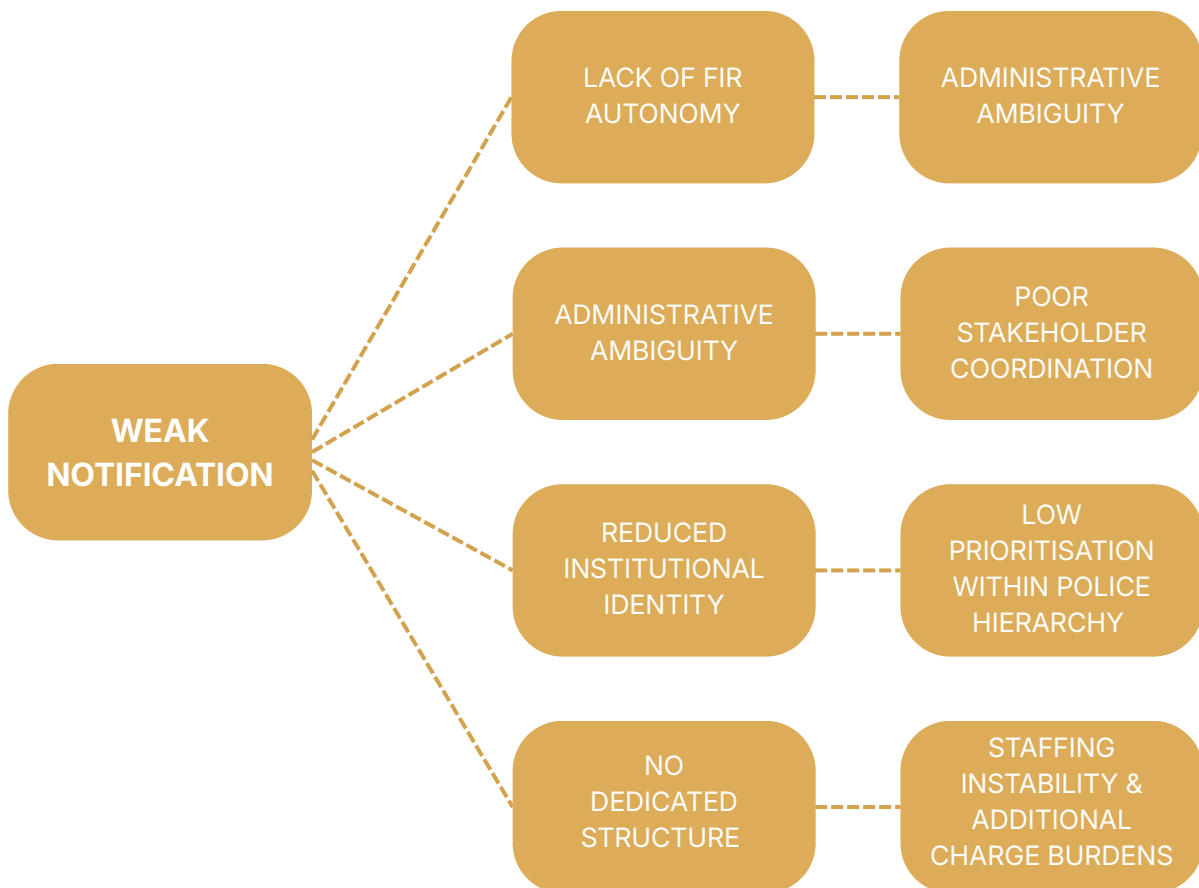
There was marginal improvement in the formal existence and recognition of AHTUs (Himachal Pradesh increased coverage from 44% to 92.3%).

### PERSISTENT FRAGMENTATION AND DOCUMENTATION GAPS

RTI responses in Phase 3 reveal continued inconsistencies in disclosure of notification details, including a lack of clarity on number of notified AHTUs (Uttar Pradesh), absence of documentation on notification as police stations and incomplete or non-uniform responses across states/UTs (Uttar Pradesh did not reply, Nagaland mentioned districts without AHTUs).

## 5.3 Links Between Notification and Other Aspects of AHTU Functionality

Lack of proper AHTU notification has cascading effects across multiple aspects of the system.



**Figure 12: Cascading Effects of Weak AHTU Notification**

Thus, notification is directly linked to staffing stability, investigative autonomy, coordination efficiency, and case outcomes.

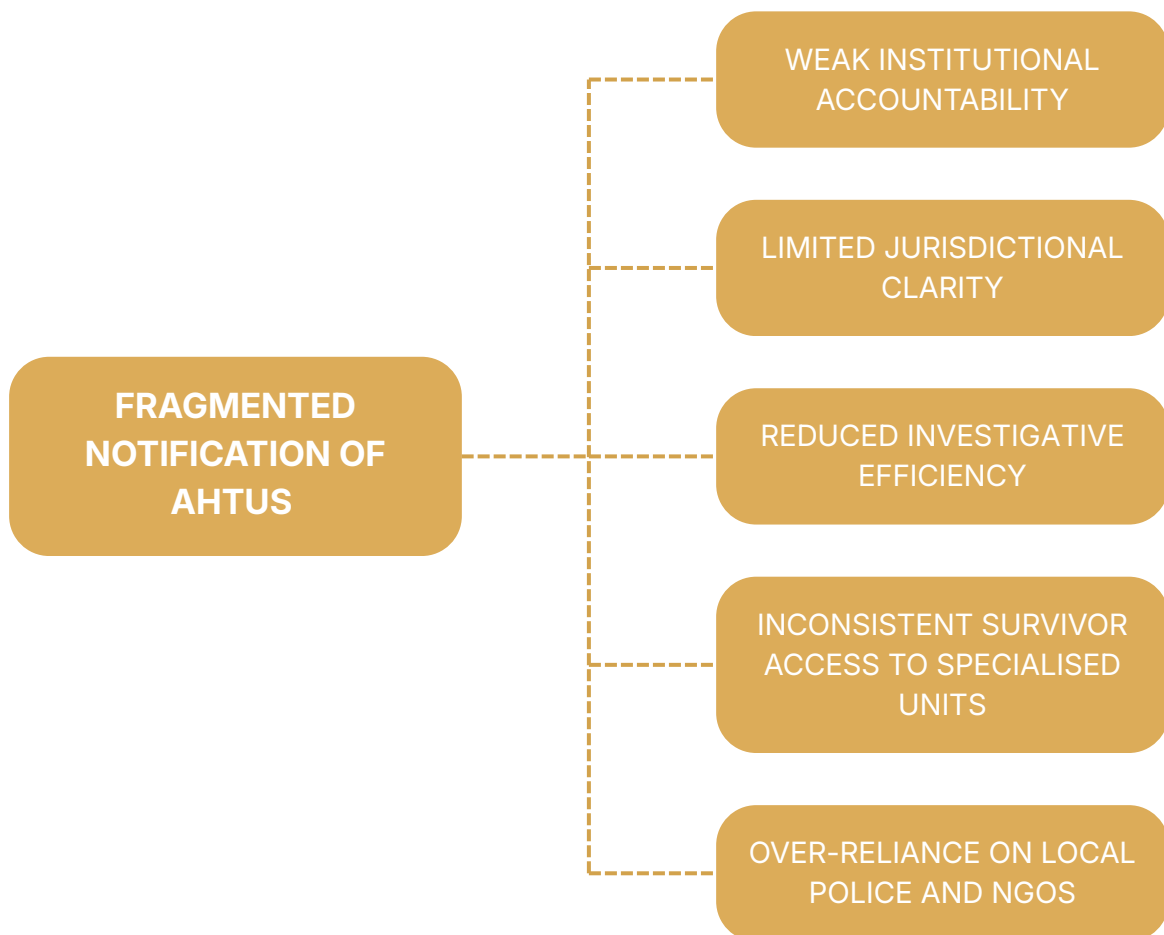
## 5.4 Survivor and Stakeholder Perspectives

Survivor testimonies and civil society inputs indicate that the identity of AHTUs as an institution, particularly when they operate from local police stations, creates hesitation and fear among survivors in approaching them.

## 5.5 Gap between Notification and Operational Empowerment

Even in states where AHTUs are formally notified, such notification without dedicated staff, consistent and transparent budget allocation, FIR autonomy and robust coordination protocols results in administrative compliance without functional effectiveness.


## 5.6 Implications for Anti-Trafficking Systems



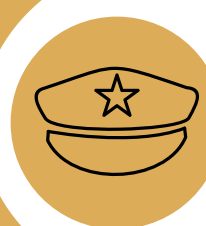
**Figure 13: Impact of fragmented notification of AHTUs**

In high-trafficking contexts, such structural ambiguity can delay investigations, weaken prosecutions, and adversely affect survivor justice outcomes, including victim compensation eligibility.

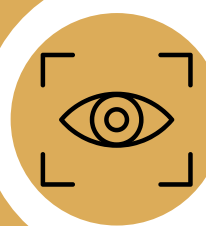
## 5.7 Targeted Recommendations on AHTU Notification

- 


**1 Mandatory and Standardised Notification Framework**

Governmental mandate for uniform AHTU notification as specialised units with defined jurisdiction, powers, and accountability.
- 


**2 Notification as Dedicated Police Units with FIR Authority**

Formally notify AHTUs as specialised investigative units with FIR registration and charge sheeting authority for operational autonomy.
- 

**3 Public Disclosure and Transparency Measures**

Publicly accessible records on the number of notified AHTUs, jurisdictional coverage and organisational structure. Strengthen transparency and enable independent monitoring.
- 

**4 Distinction from General Police Stations**

Clear differentiation of AHTUs from general police stations to improve survivor accessibility and enhance credibility.
- 


**5 Staffing Reform**

Removing additional charge, dedicated AHTU posting and specialised training to ensure that notification translates into actual functional strengthening.



# Chapter SIX

## INDICATOR II– STAFFING, STABILITY, AND ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF AHTU PERSONNEL



### **The 'Additional Charge' Crisis:**

Reliance on personnel with general policing duties is the primary structural bottleneck preventing AHTUs from functioning as specialized investigative units

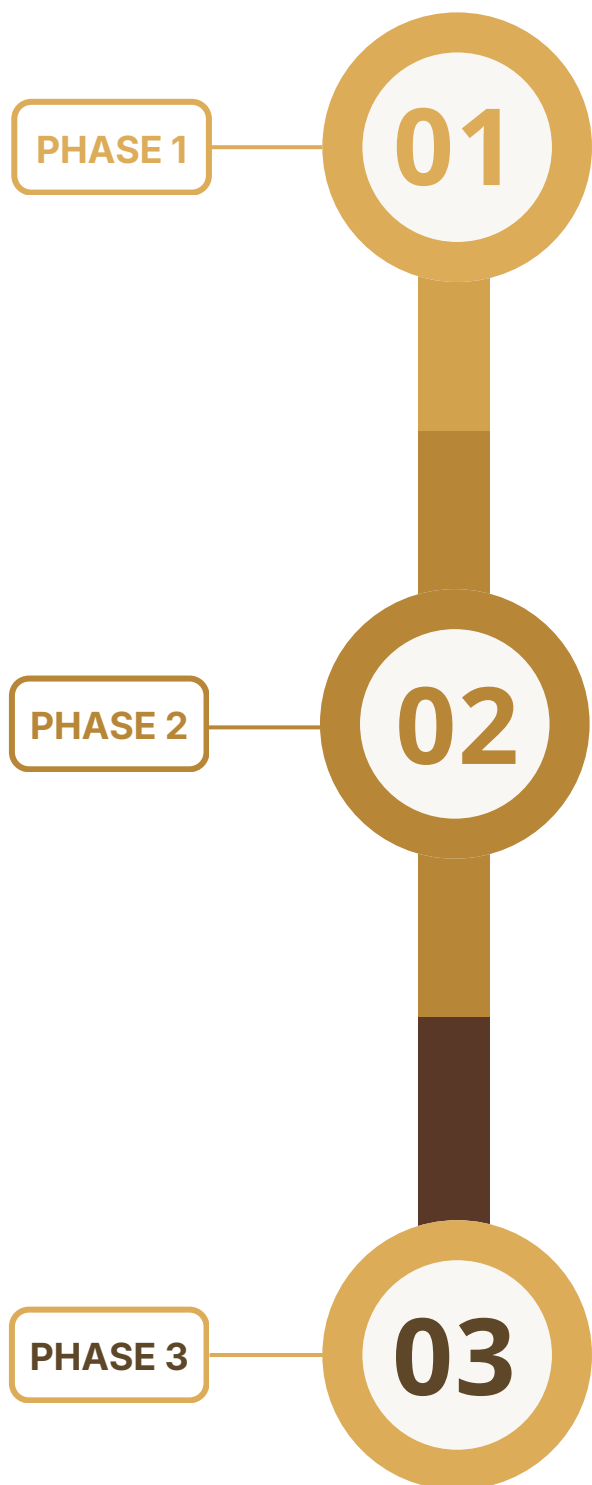
## 6.1 Overview: Staffing as the Operational Backbone of AHTUs

Dedicated and stable staffing is significantly important to ensure operational effectiveness of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs). However, longitudinal evidence from AHTU Watch indicates that staffing instability and the additional charge problem as mentioned in Chapter 4.4 remain among the most significant structural constraints affecting AHTU functionality across India.

## 6.2 Comparative Staffing Trends-Phases (2010–2025)

S. No	State/UT Name	Additional Charge in Phase 1	Additional Charge in Phase 2	Additional Charge in Phase 3
1	Andaman & Nicobar Island	NA	1 out of 6 members	1 out of 4 members
2	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NA	NA	All
3	Delhi	NA	4 out of 19 members	NA
4	Himachal Pradesh	All	7 out of 13 AHTUs have members with additional charge	All
5	Ladakh	NA	All	6 out of 7
6	Meghalaya	NA	NA	All members have additional charge. 3 in 2023, 3 in 2024, 1 in 2025
7	Nagaland	All	All	All
8	Telangana	NA	None	1 out of 5 members
9	Uttar Pradesh	All except 2 AHTUs	NA	None
10	Uttarakhand	2 out of 7 members	NA	NA

**Table 5: Additional Charge of AHTU members across Phases**



**NOMINAL STAFFING AND INSTITUTIONAL MARGINALISATION**

Many AHTUs operated with inadequate staffing (Nagaland, Jharkhand, Kerala)

**PARTIAL IMPROVEMENT BUT CONTINUED STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS**

Phase 2 indicated some improvement in staffing structures compared to Phase 1 (Himachal Pradesh reduced from all members to 7 out of 13 having additional charge; Mizoram had no additional charge). Staffing composition remained largely uniform and police-centric.

**PERSISTENT RELIANCE ON ADDITIONAL CHARGE STAFFING**

RTI responses and field observations in Phase 3 confirm that many AHTUs continue to function through personnel who simultaneously manage responsibilities at local police stations (Dadra Nagar Haveli, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland). In such cases, AHTU roles are treated as secondary assignments, trafficking cases are deprioritised and survivor coordination is delayed.

## 6.3 The “Additional Charge” Problem: A Systemic Challenge

Additional charge refers to the assignment of AHTU responsibilities to officers who are already tasked with regular policing duties within local police stations or other units, which is a systemic staffing pattern across multiple states/UTs. Survivor testimonies consistently highlighted that police officers were unable to simultaneously manage general police duties and AHTU responsibilities, affecting investigation progress and their availability to survivors.

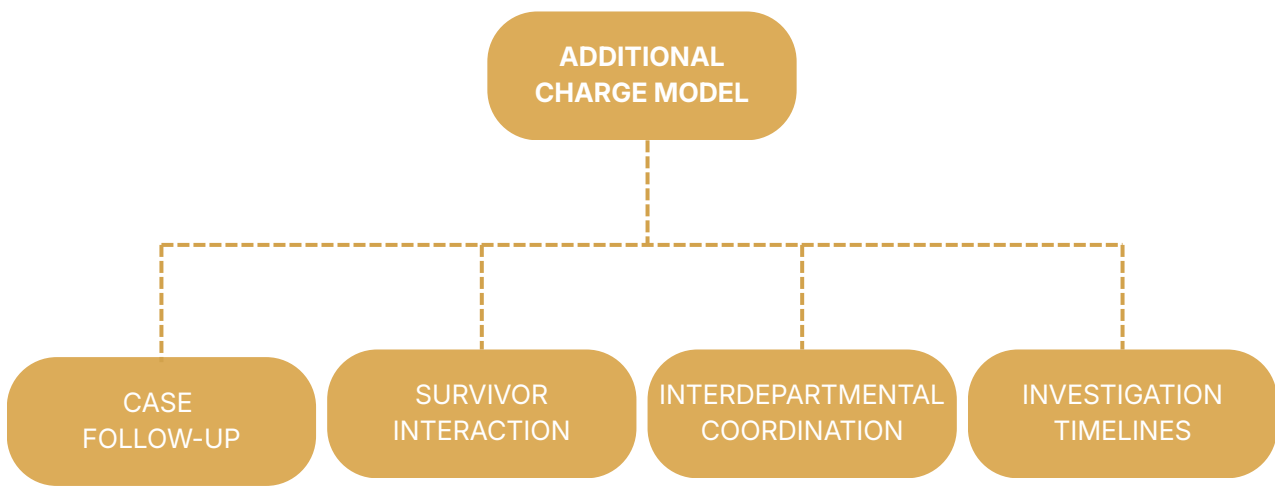


Figure 14: Areas directly impacted by lack of dedicated staffing

Systemic staffing gaps need institutional reforms in recruitment, postings and resource allocation.

## 6.4 Survivor Perspectives on Staffing and AHTU Responsiveness

Survivors interviewed repeatedly observed that many AHTU officials had a lack of specialised expertise, which could contribute to insensitive questioning, delays in case documentation, misclassification of trafficking offences and weak case-building.



**AHTU officials were overburdened with general policing responsibilities and often unavailable due to additional charges unrelated to trafficking cases.**

**-Survivor Quote**



## 6.5 Appointment of Nodal Officers: Institutional Oversight and Gaps

The Ministry of Home Affairs in a Notification dated 27 December 2019 amongst others, stated that Nodal Officers would monitor the functioning of AHTUs set up at the district level, by holding quarterly meetings with District Level AHTU-officials and half-yearly meetings with the Anti-Trafficking Cell of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The appointment of Nodal Officers at the state level is to monitor AHTU functioning and maintain vigilance against corruption and procedural delays.

S. No	State/UT	Functional AHTUs in Phase 3	Nodal Officers	Duration of Appointment	Designated Officers for ITPA/IPC 370 cases
1	Andaman & Nicobar Island	1	6 (IPS Officers)	1 month (2); 3 months (1); 6 months (1); 10 months (1); 1 year (1)	1 in 2022-23 2 in 2023-24 1 in 2024-25
2	Delhi	NA	5 (ACPs)	2021: 2 2021-22: 1 2022-23: 1 2023-25: 1	NA
3	Himachal Pradesh	12	2	5 years (Kinnaur) 1 year (L&S)	Not provided
4	Ladakh	2	2	2022-24: 1 2024-till date: 1	NA
5	Meghalaya	6	1	NA	NA
6	Nagaland	11	10	NA; one Nodal Officer in each AHTU	NA
7	Telangana	31	1	NA	NA

Table 6: Appointment of Nodal Officers

### 6.5.1 Challenges in Nodal Officer Appointments

RTI data indicates that Nodal Officer appointments are inconsistent across states/UTs and tenure is often short-term. In some States/UTs (Andaman and Nicobar, Delhi), Nodal Officers were reportedly appointed for brief durations (ranging from a few months to a year), limiting continuity in institutional oversight and strategic planning.

### 6.6 Links Between Staffing Instability and AHTU Functionality

Staffing deficiencies have systemic consequences for AHTU functionality as follows:

Staffing Gap	Systemic Consequence
Additional charge	Reduced investigation focus
High turnover	Weak case continuity
Police-centric teams	Limited survivor-sensitive responses
Absence of nodal oversight	Weak coordination and monitoring

**Table 7: Impact of Staffing Instability on AHTU Functionality**

## 6.7 Targeted Recommendations on Staffing and Stability

- **1 Removal of Additional Charge Burdens**

State Governments should ensure that AHTU personnel are relieved of unrelated policing duties and assigned exclusively to anti-trafficking responsibilities.
- **2 Dedicated Sanctioned Posts for AHTUs**

Clear sanctioning and filling of dedicated AHTU posts should be prioritised to ensure operational continuity and specialised expertise.
- **3 Institutionalisation of State Nodal Officers**

Each State should appoint a permanent nodal officer with a clearly defined tenure and mandate to oversee AHTU functioning and inter-state coordination.
- **4 Multidisciplinary Staffing Model**

AHTUs should progressively adopt a multidisciplinary structure including: (a) trained investigators; (b) counsellors; (c) legal coordinators; & (d) rehabilitation liaison officers
- **5 Specialised and Continuous Training**

Staffing reforms must be complemented by structured training on: (a) trafficking and investigation techniques; (b) labour trafficking identification; (c) survivor-sensitive interviewing, & (d) victim compensation processes
- **6 Institutional Repositioning of AHTU Postings**

AHTU roles should be recognised as specialised and high-priority postings within the policing system to improve motivation, retention, and professional accountability.




## **The Cost of Opacity:**

Inconsistent and untraceable budget flows directly result in operational resource shortages and a continued reliance on survivors' families to finance their own justice

# **Chapter SEVEN**

INDICATOR III–  
BUDGET  
ALLOCATION, FUND  
UTILISATION, AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
READINESS



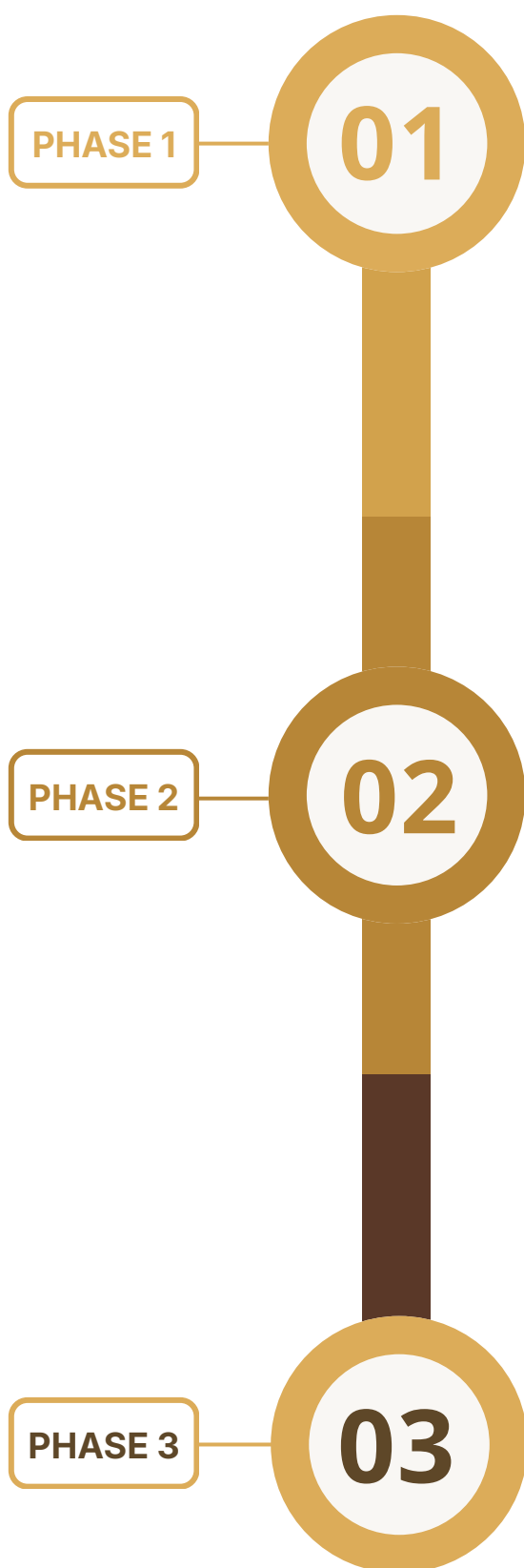
## 7.1 Overview

Adequate and transparent financial allocation is a critical requirement for the effective functioning of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs). Budgetary support directly influences investigation capacity, ability to finance rescue operations, interstate coordination, survivor support services and infrastructure. Longitudinal findings from AHTU Watch reveal persistent inconsistencies in budget sanction, utilisation, and disclosure across States and Union Territories.

## 7.2 Comparative Budget Trends: Phases 1–3

State/UT	Funds Allocated Phase 1	% Used Phase 1	Funds Allocated Phase 2	% Used Phase 2	Funds Allocated Phase 3	% Used Phase 3
<b>Arunachal Pradesh</b>	62.74 lakhs (AHTUs) + 2.1 lakhs (intelligence & research)	92.7% (AHTUs) 33.3% (intelligence & research)	INR 3.51 Crores (MHA)	<b>0.0% Not utilised</b>	₹330.00 lakh (Thirty-Three Crore only) in FY 2022–23	NA
Chandigarh	NA	NA	INR 15 lakhs	Under consideration	No dedicated budget allocation	NA
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NA	NA	INR 45 lakhs (MHA)	18.3%	No dedicated budget allocation	NA
Jammu & Kashmir	NA	NA	No funds received till date	None	No funds received till date.	NA
<b>Ladakh</b>	NA	NA	INR 15,01,350	<b>100%</b>	No funds sanctioned	NA
<b>Nagaland</b>	INR 45.48 lakhs	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(MHA) New AHTUs: INR 75 lakhs</li> <li>Existing AHTUs: INR 72 lakhs</li> </ul>	<b>100%</b>	No funds sanctioned	NA
<b>Telangana</b>	NA	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>INR 4.35 Crores (MHA)</li> <li>INR 22.74 lakhs (State Govt.)</li> </ul>	<b>99.92% (100% utilisation of MHA amount; none of State Govt.)</b>	No direct budget allocation from 2022–25	NA
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	NA	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(MHA) New AHTUs: INR 600 lakhs</li> <li>Existing AHTUs: INR 420 lakhs</li> </ul>	<b>97.7%</b>	NA on funds allocation	NA
<b>Uttarakhand</b>	INR 53.06 lakhs	100%	(MHA) INR 1 Crore 74 Lakhs	<b>96.5%</b>	No funds sanctioned	NA

Table 8: Budget Allocation and Utilisation



### LIMITED INSTITUTIONAL INVESTMENT

When funds were allocated, they were often unsupported by utilisation records (Haryana and Chhattisgarh). A few states such as Uttarakhand, Nagaland (100%) and Kerala, Mizoram (99.9%) claimed high utilisation. lack of structured funding in intelligence (only Arunachal Pradesh was allocated Rs. 2.1 lakhs) AHTUs' ability to conduct intelligence-led investigations.

### MISALIGNED ALLOCATION

Some increase in budgetary allocation (Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Uttarakhand) but as a trend, funds were spent on physical infrastructure (Nagaland, Tripura, Uttarakhand), rather than intelligence gathering or research. There was administrative expenditure without balanced strengthening operational capacity.

### FRAGMENTED FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE AND UTILISATION GAPS

RTI responses in Phase 3 reveal three major challenges:

1. Non-sanctioning of funds in certain jurisdictions (Chandigarh, Dadra Nagar Haveli, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Nagaland, Telangana, Uttarakhand)
2. Lack of utilisation data despite reported allocation (Arunachal Pradesh)
3. Mismatch between state-level funds and actual district-level AHTU access (KII from AHTU Bikaner)

Failure of budget allocation or utilisation details indicates institutional deprioritisation of anti-trafficking systems and financial opacity.

## 7.3 Categories of Budget Challenges

Based on RTI analysis and stakeholder inputs, budget-related constraints can be categorised into three distinct levels:

Funds Not Sanctioned	Funds Sanctioned but Poorly Documented	Funds Allocated but Not Reaching AHTUs
<p>Some states/UTs reported either ‘no dedicated AHTU budget’ or reported reliance on general police funding structures.</p> <p>Low policy prioritisation of specialised anti-trafficking mechanisms.</p>	<p>In several cases, budget allocation was reported without corresponding data on utilisation, making it difficult to assess actual spending efficiency and operational impact</p> <p>Lack of documentation also reflects weak financial accountability and record-keeping systems.</p>	<p>A significant gap between state/UT-level financial sanction and actual resource availability at district-level AHTUs. Even where funds are allocated centrally or at the state level, AHTUs on the ground may continue to operate with resource shortages due to administrative bottlenecks.</p>

**Table 9: Levels of Resource Allocation in AHTUs**

## 7.4 Budget Allocation as an Indicator of Political Will

Budgetary trends often reflect institutional or governmental priorities. Nil allocation, irregular funding or absent utilisation records suggests that AHTUs may not be treated as strategic policing units despite the seriousness of trafficking offences.

In some cases (Tripura, Nagaland, Uttarakhand), states reported infrastructure-related expenditure while core functions including investigation, survivor coordination and research remained unfunded. This indicates a structural emphasis on visible administrative compliance rather than functional strengthening.

## 7.5 Infrastructure Readiness: Physical vs Functional Capacity

### Within Police Stations

Survivor testimonies indicate that AHTUs housed within existing police station premises (rather than functioning from dedicated spaces) reduce the systemic distinction between AHTUs and local police officials. The association with local law enforcement results in survivors hesitating to approach them, in fear of hostile and insensitive treatment.

### Lack of Dedicated Survivor-Centric Facilities

Infrastructure readiness is not limited to office space but includes support infrastructure for survivors as well as for women in AHTUs. There seems to be a shortage or absence of services for women (KIIs). RTI findings on AHTU coordination also indicate that AHTUs are largely dependent on shelter homes (Phase 3 data from Telangana, Delhi). This over-reliance on institutional shelters may limit survivor agency and, in certain contexts, increase vulnerability to re-trafficking.

## 7.6 Systemic Reliance on NGOs for Resource and Rehabilitation Support

Budget constraints also contribute to reliance on external support actors such as CSOs or NGOs (see Chapter 10).

## 7.7 Link Between Budget Constraints and Operational Outcomes

Budget Constraint	Operational Impact
No dedicated funds	Delayed investigations and rescues
Poor utilisation tracking	Weak accountability mechanisms
Infrastructure-only spending	Limited investigative strengthening
Lack of survivor facilities	Reduced survivor engagement and trust
Resource shortages	Over-reliance on NGOs and ad-hoc coordination

**Table 10: Impact of Budget Constraints on Operational Outcomes**

Budget gaps result in survivors and their families informally bearing costs related to travel, documentation, or legal follow-ups, further exacerbating vulnerability (survivor interviews in Phase 3 of research).



**Budget gaps result in survivors and their families informally bearing costs related to travel, documentation, or legal follow-ups, further exacerbating their vulnerability.**

**-Field Insight**



## 7.8 Transparency and the Missing Data Challenge

Missing financial data indicates transparency gaps, while nil allocation points to a lack of overall funding and low prioritisation of AHTUs within governmental budgets. The lack of disclosure of financial data should be treated as an issue of accountability, especially in established high-incidence states like Maharashtra, Gujarat and Assam, which did not respond to RTI applications in any of the phases.

## 7.9 Targeted Recommendations on Budget and Infrastructure

1



### **Dedicated AHTU Budgets**

Establish dedicated budgets for AHTU operations with structured allocation plan

2



### **Mandatory Financial Disclosure and Utilisation Reporting**

- Annual public disclosure of allocated budget & utilisation
- Potential avenue for campaigning
- District-level funds to be transparently disbursed

3



### **Strategic Reallocation Towards Skill and Knowledge Building**

Budget to prioritise intelligence gathering, specialised investigations, inter-state coordination

4



### **Dedicated Infrastructure for AHTUs**

States should establish dedicated AHTU offices with confidential spaces, gender-sensitive facilities, record-keeping systems for operational efficiency and survivor accessibility

5



### **Community-Based Rehabilitation**

Policy frameworks should explore CBR that enhances survivor agency and reduces risks of prolonged detention or re-trafficking

# Chapter EIGHT

## INDICATOR IV– TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF AHTU PERSONNEL

### **The Specialisation Gap:**

Training must evolve from sporadic, police-only orientation to a standardized, multi-stakeholder curriculum that empowers officials to recognise labour trafficking and engage survivors with trauma-informed sensitivity.

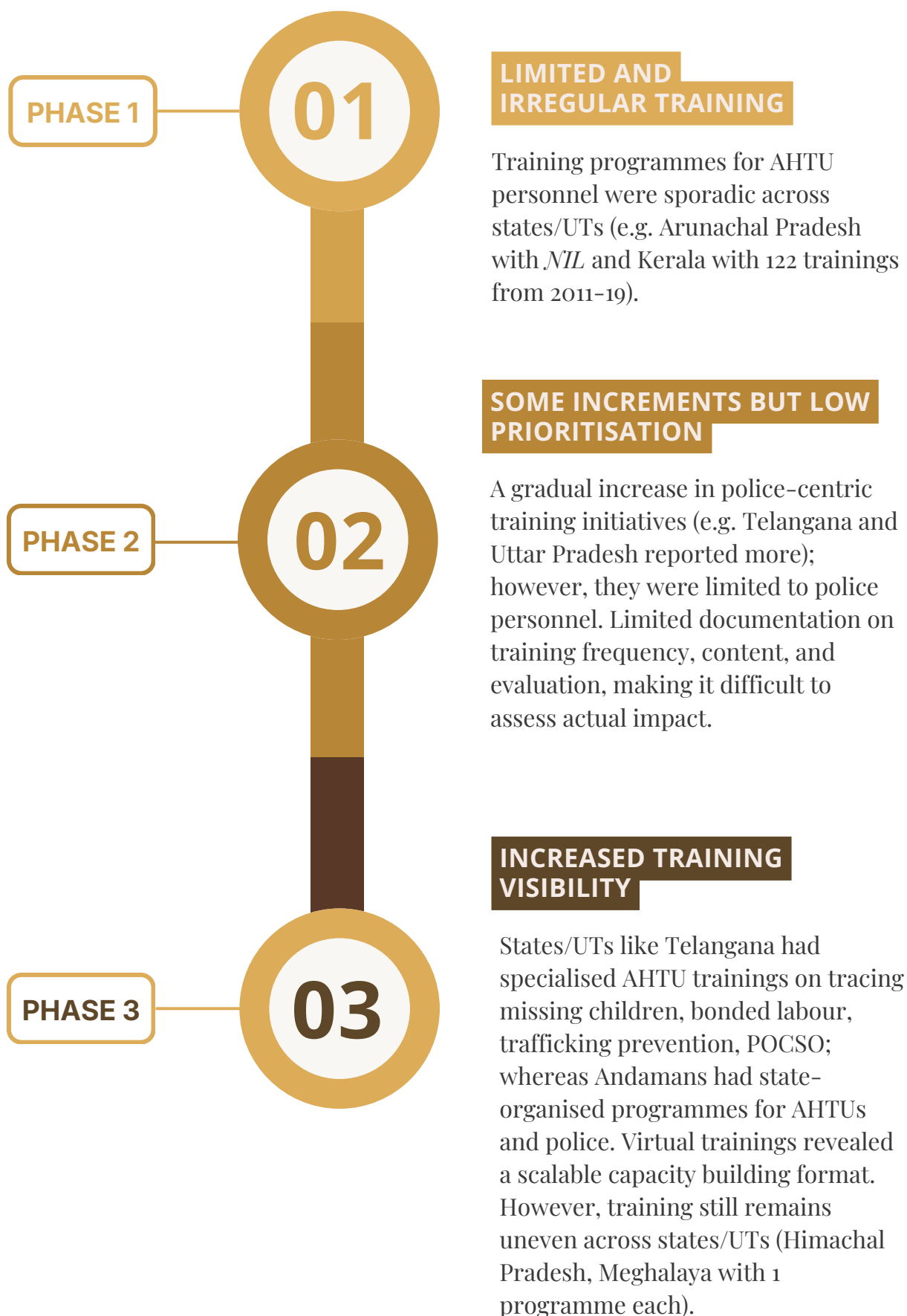
## 8.1 Context: Training and AHTUs

Training is a core institutional requirement for specialised trafficking investigation and survivor-sensitive case handling. MHA advisories since 2009 mandate continuous specialised anti-trafficking training for AHTU personnel. However, findings across all three phases of AHTU Watch indicate that training remains inconsistent, police-centric, and unevenly implemented across states.

## 8.2 Comparative Training Trends Across Phases (2010–2025)

S. No	State/UT Name	Training Phase 1	Training Phase 2	Training Phase 3
1	Andaman & Nicobar Island	NA	NA	13
2	Chandigarh	NA	NA	3
3	Delhi	NA	32	3
4	Himachal Pradesh	Nil	1	1
5	Ladakh	NA	4	4
6	Meghalaya	NA	NA	1
7	Telangana	NA	5	9
8	Uttar Pradesh	22	1	5
9	Uttarakhand	14	NA	7

**Table 11: Training and Capacity Building of AHTUs Across Phases of Research**



## 8.3 Nature and Scope of Training Programmes Reported

### Police-Centric Training Models

A significant trend observed across phases is the predominantly police-centric nature of training programmes (except Mizoram). While law enforcement training is essential, limited involvement of other stakeholders, like social workers, counsellors, legal aid authorities and rehabilitation stakeholders reduces the multidisciplinary effectiveness envisioned for AHTUs. This narrow training focus does not sufficiently address survivor rehabilitation, victim compensation, and coordination mechanisms.

### Content Gaps in Training Modules

KIIs from Phase 3 suggest that training programmes often emphasise general legal awareness and procedural aspects but inadequately cover critical areas such as labour trafficking identification or even investigative techniques specific to trafficking cases. These content gaps have direct implications for case classification and investigative outcomes.

## 8.4 Training Gaps, Survivor Perspectives and Case Misclassification

Survivor testimonies in Phases 1 and 3 indicate that many AHTU personnel were transferred from local police stations without specialised training in handling trafficking cases. This often resulted in insensitive questioning, procedural delays, poor documentation, no clarity on survivor rights and victim compensation and weak investigations. These findings highlight that training is not merely a technical requirement but a core component of survivor trust and institutional credibility. Further, inadequate training can lead to misclassification of trafficking cases as simple labour disputes (KIIs Phase 3), missing persons and/or kidnapping cases (survivor testimonies Phase 1). Such misclassification weakens prosecution under anti-trafficking laws (KIIs with lawyers from Phase 1).

## 8.5. Link Between Training and Other Aspects of AHTU Functionality

Training Gap	Systemic Impact
Lack of specialised training	Misclassification of trafficking cases
Police-only training	Weak coordination with other stakeholders
Irregular training	Reduced capacity, especially with transfers
Absence of sensitivity training	Reduced survivor trust and engagement
Limited legal training	Weak investigative and charge-sheeting outcomes

**Table 12: Impact of Training Gap on AHTU Functionality**

There is a need to treat training as a continuous institutional process rather than a one-time intervention.

## 8.6 Role of Civil Society and Survivor Collectives in Capacity Building

Civil society organisations and survivor collectives have also contributed to training and sensitisation efforts, particularly in survivor-centred awareness and community-level engagement. However, reliance on non-state actors for capacity building reflects institutional training gaps.

## 8.7 Targeted Recommendations on Training and Capacity Building

1



### **Institutionalisation of Continuous Training Frameworks**

States should adopt mandatory, periodic training cycles for AHTU personnel rather than one-time workshops, ensuring sustained skill development.

2



### **Development of a Uniform Training Syllabus**

A uniform curriculum should be developed covering anti-trafficking laws, labour trafficking identification, survivor rights and victim compensation, coordination protocols and sensitive policing.

3



### **Multidisciplinary Training**

Training programmes should include participation from law enforcement, social welfare, legal aid, child protection, civil society and survivor leaders to strengthen coordinated anti-trafficking responses.

4



### **Institutionalisation of Virtual and Hybrid Training Platforms**

Virtual training modules should be used nationally to ensure consistent outreach.

5



### **Training on Legal Classification and Case Documentation**

Accurate identification and classification of trafficking offences to prevent misclassification and improve prosecution outcomes.

6



### **Monitoring and Evaluation of Training Effectiveness**

States should maintain publicly accessible records on number of trainings, participants trained, subjects and test outcomes to enhance accountability.

# Chapter NINE

## INDICATOR V– FIR REGISTRATION AUTONOMY AND CASE HANDLING

### **Nominal Authority:**

Without independent FIR registration and investigative powers, AHTUs remain secondary to local police stations, leading to diluted specialization and stalled cases

## 9.1 Context: FIR Autonomy and Investigation of Human Trafficking Complaints

As outlined in Chapter 3, FIR autonomy is central to the investigative authority of AHTUs.

## 9.2 Comparative Trends in FIR Registration Across Phases (2010–2025)

### Phase 1: High Dependence on Local Police Stations

S. No	State/UT	Investigations
1	Andhra Pradesh	Not provided
2	Arunachal Pradesh	Not provided
3	Bihar (CSEC and Child Labour)	Not mentioned
4	Chhattisgarh	Not mentioned
5	Goa	Not mentioned
6	Haryana	18
7	Himachal Pradesh	12 (local police)
8	Kerala	15 (local police)
9	Meghalaya	1 (local police)
10	Mizoram	6 (local police)
11	Nagaland	1 (AHTU) + 4 (local police)
12	Tripura	1 (Gomati AHTU) + 1 (Gomati local police)
13	Uttar Pradesh	Not mentioned

Table 13: Investigations by AHTUs/local police in Phase 1

## Phase 2: Partial Increase in Case Handling and Transfer

State/UT	Investigations
Andhra Pradesh	1081 (by local police)
Andaman & Nicobar Island	1 (chargesheet filed)
Delhi	34 complaints transferred from local police and 40 investigations
Tripura	Nil (AHTU) and 1 (local police)
Uttarakhand	6 (AHTU) and 54 (local police)

Table 14: Investigations by AHTUs/local police in Phase 2

## Phase 3: Asymmetrical FIR Autonomy and Investigative Authority

S. No	State/UT	Transferred to AHTU	Investigations
1	Andaman & Nicobar Island	Not provided	1 POCSO (chargesheet filed)
2	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	Not provided	7
3	Delhi	31	Nil
4	Himachal Pradesh	Not provided	Nil
5	Jammu & Kashmir	Not provided	17
6	Ladakh	Not provided	None
7	Meghalaya	Not provided	2
8	Nagaland	Not provided	Nil
9	Telangana	Not provided	980 chargesheets
10	Uttar Pradesh	4	1
11	Uttarakhand	Not provided	Not provided

Table 15: Transfers to AHTUs and Investigations in Phase 3

Across all three phases, FIR registration largely remained dependent on local police stations, indicating limited operational autonomy despite increased administrative recognition.

Phase 3 reveals a mixed national landscape. Only Delhi (31 cases transferred from local police) and Telangana (980 chargesheets filed) demonstrate FIR registration and active investigations by AHTUs.

## 9.3 Case Handling Practices: Key Observed Patterns

### Transfer-Based Case Handling

In jurisdictions like Delhi, Nagaland and Uttar Pradesh, trafficking cases are initially registered at local police stations and transferred to AHTUs. In West Bengal, such transfer is not seamless, with survivors having to legally petition for AHTU involvement (KIIs from Phase 1 and survivor testimonies from Phase 3). This in turn creates procedural delays, affects case ownership, investigations and discourages survivor engagement with criminal justice institutions.

### Rescue-Led Functionality

AHTUs are often actively involved in rescue operations but play a limited role in long-term prosecution processes. This suggests an operational focus on immediate actions rather than sustained follow-through.

## 9.4 Misclassification of Trafficking

## Cases (A Systemic Issue)

Training gaps and weak FIR autonomy jointly contribute to case misclassification (see Chapter 8).

## 9.5 Survivor Perspectives on FIR Registration and Case Progression

Survivor testimonies suggest that delays in FIR registration and documentation often prolong legal processes and create additional distress (KIIs in Phase 1 and 3). Survivors also highlighted (West Bengal KIIs in Phase 1) that when specialised (CID) officers handled cases directly, documentation and follow-up were comparatively more structured and responsive and protection for complainants was also provided in some cases, reinforcing the importance of AHTU-led investigations.

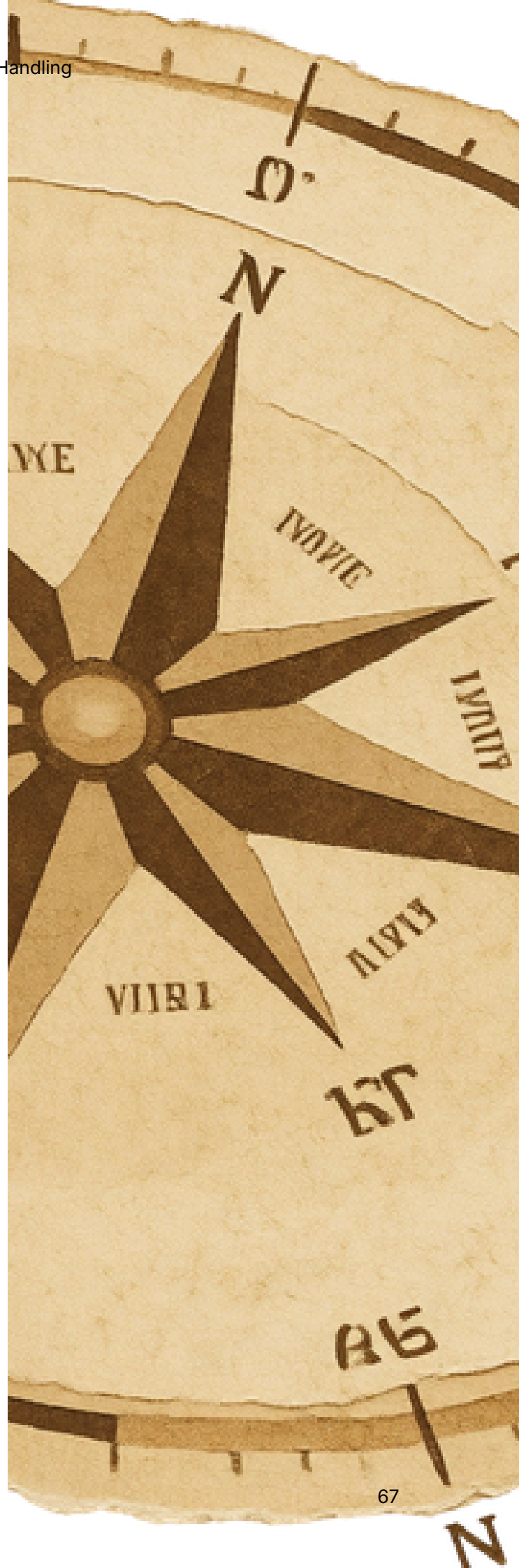
Weak FIR autonomy delays legal recognition of trafficking offences and affects survivor access to compensation and timely justice (see cross-indicator synthesis in Chapter 11)

## 9.6 Case Progression: From FIR to Prosecution

Available data across phases indicates that while rescues and arrests are reported in several jurisdictions (Jammu & Kashmir, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh), case progression to conviction remains limited (e.g. Andamans, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Uttar Pradesh reported zero convictions in Phase 3). This gap between case initiation and final judicial outcomes reflects systemic challenges in the anti-trafficking criminal justice process.

## 9.7 Transparency Gaps in FIR and Case Data

RTI disclosures revealed inconsistencies in reporting FIR and case statistics, including incomplete data on FIR numbers (Nagaland did not respond in Phases 2 and 3), non-standardised case classification (e.g. in Andamans in Phase 3, a kidnapping case was brought within the scope of trafficking; Telangana did not provide any disaggregated data in Phase 3) and the absence of prosecution and conviction records in some states/UTs (e.g. no conviction nor acquittal data from Uttarakhand, Delhi and Jammu & Kashmir). Such data opacity restricts accurate assessment of investigative and prosecutorial performance within AHTUs.



## 9.8 Targeted Recommendations on FIR Autonomy and Case Handling

1



### **Formal Empowerment of AHTUs to Register FIRs**

Notify AHTUs with independent FIR registration and investigative authority in trafficking cases

2



### **Standardised Case Documentation**

Uniform documentation formats for trafficking cases to improve record-keeping, monitoring and prosecution outcomes.

3



### **Legal Training on Accurate Case Classification**

Regular training should be conducted on distinguishing trafficking offences to prevent legal dilution

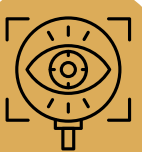
4



### **Strengthening Coordination with Prosecution Departments**

To ensure timely charge-sheeting and stronger conviction outcomes

5



### **Monitoring FIRs to Conviction**

Updated and publicly accessible data on FIRs, investigations, charge sheets, conviction for transparency and accountability



# Chapter TEN

## INDICATOR VI– COORDINATION MECHANISMS AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER RESPONSE



### **The Missing Link:**

Weak inter-agency coordination with DLSAs and CWCs remains the chief cause of delayed victim compensation and prolonged survivor distress.

## 10.1 Overview: Coordination to Ensure Survivor- Centric Anti- Trafficking Response

As per the policy framework discussed in Chapter 3, AHTUs are designed as nodal coordination bodies. The Crime Multi Agency Centre (Cri-MAC) was launched in March 2020 to facilitate information dissemination for crimes including human trafficking, nationally. This enables interstate coordination, locating and identifying survivors, preventing, detecting and investigating crimes. Findings across all three phases of AHTU Watch indicate that coordination remains one of the most structurally fragile indicators of AHTU functionality.

## 10.2 Comparative Coordination Trends Across Phases (2010– 2025)

### Phase 1: Absence of Formal Coordination Protocols

KIIs revealed a near absence of

institutionalised coordination mechanisms between AHTUs and key stakeholders such as CWCs, DLSA, and rehabilitation services.



**Coordination between law enforcement, DLSAs, and government departments is not proactive and remains highly dependent on survivor-led or NGO-facilitated interventions.**

### -Field Insight



### Phase 2: Increased Acknowledgement but No Institutionalisation

In Phase 2, increased functionality of AHTUs was mirrored by AHTUs with diverse compositions (e.g. Dadra & Nagar Haveli had representatives from Community and Primary Health Centres, a social worker, labour inspectors and a Child Protection Officer, apart from law enforcement, as AHTU members) indicating institutionally easier coordination between law enforcement, protection and rehabilitation stakeholders.

### Phase 3: Reported Coordination and Ground-Level Gaps

S. No	State/UT	Survivor Support & Rehabilitation	Interstate Coordination	AHTU Transfers	Monitoring & Stakeholder Coordination
1	Andaman & Nicobar Island	DLSA/SLSA but no VC applications	Cri-MAC for sharing vital trafficking information	2 cases transferred between 2022-25	NA
2	Daman Diu & Nagar Haveli	Via NGOs	No coordination with NIA, no state monitoring committee	No information	No conferences, or inter-agency meetings held from 2022-25.
3	Delhi	Govt/CWC shelters house survivors. AHTU coordinates with local units for case handling & victim support.	NA	Local Police & AHTU coordination for investigations	NA
4	Jammu & Kashmir	NA	Cri-MAC & NCL	NA	NA
5	Meghalaya	CWCs & NGOs; DLSA recommends VCS	No comments on Cri-MAC	NA	NA
6	Telangana	SLSA, CWCs, SCPCR, NGOs	Cri-MAC	Local Police to AHTU	District-level convergence meetings
7	Uttar Pradesh	SLSA for VC, CWC/NGOs	No use of Cri-MAC	Local police transfer	State Monitoring Committee: 30 January 2006
8	Uttarakhand	NGOs for rescue, counselling, legal aid, family tracing, home verification, shelter, education, reintegration Relief under Bonded Labour Rehab Scheme and VCS	GRP/RPF & border forces like BSF/SSB	FIR to be registered at the place of detection/rescue or transit; can be transferred	Diverse rescue teams

Table 16: Coordination Mechanisms Used by AHTUs

Phase 3 indicates coordination with shelters (e.g. Telangana), legal aid bodies (e.g. Uttar Pradesh, Meghalaya) and child protection systems (e.g. Delhi, Meghalaya, Telangana). However, survivor testimonies and KIIs (Phases 1 and 3) suggest that NGOs continue to play a primary coordination role with other stakeholders.

KIIs also reinforce that coordination between law enforcement (AHTUs/local police), DLSAs (for victim compensation) and government welfare departments is not proactive and highly dependent on survivor-led or NGO-facilitated interventions. This divergence between reported coordination and lived experience reflects a broader implementation gap in multi-stakeholder anti-trafficking systems.

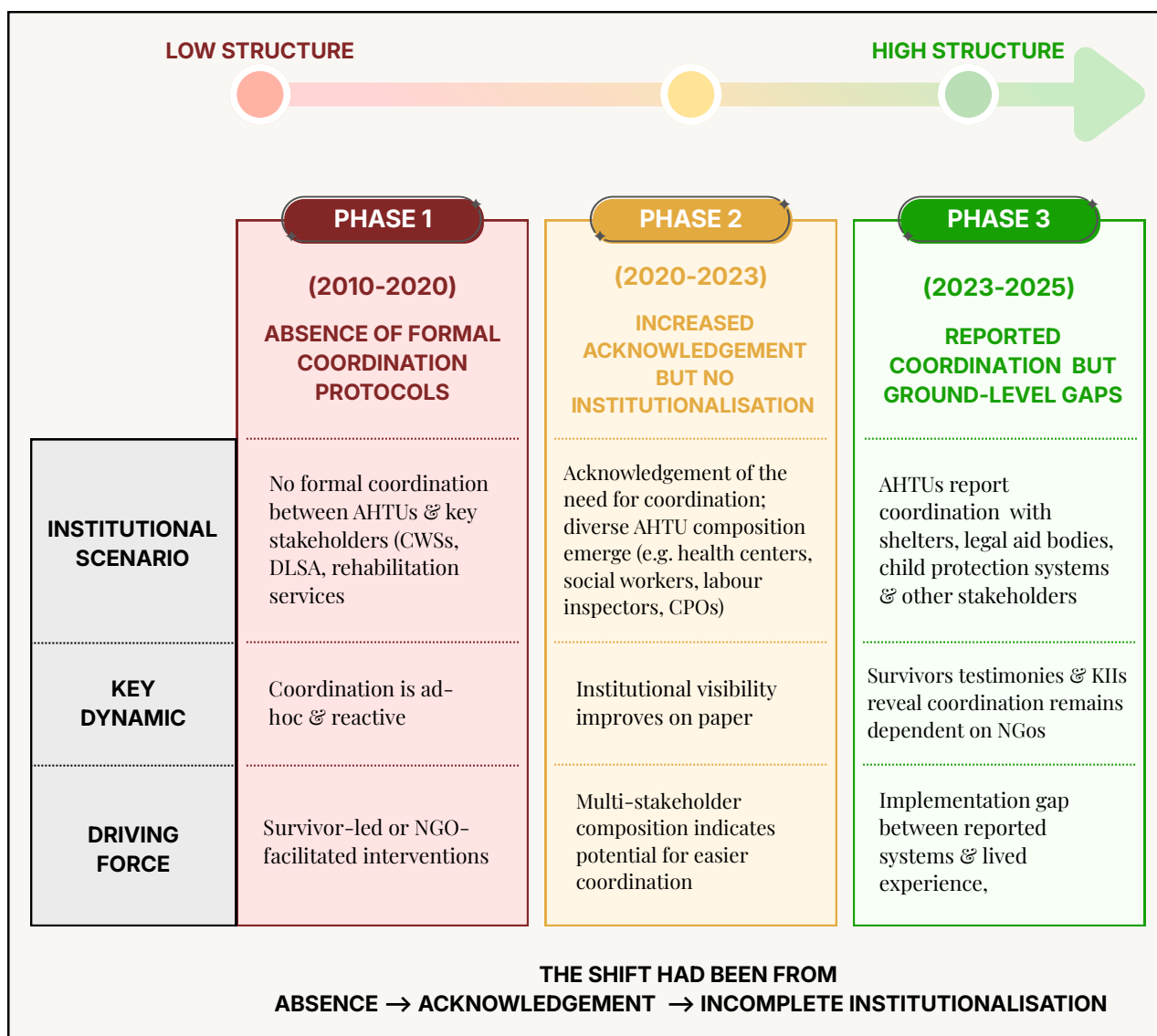


Figure 15: Comparative Coordination Trends across Phases (2010-2025)

## 10.3 Key Stakeholders in the AHTU Coordination Ecosystem

### Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) and Child Protection Systems

CWCs play a crucial role in the care and protection of minor survivors of trafficking. Effective coordination between AHTUs and CWCs is essential for child rescue procedures, interim care orders, medical care, rehabilitation planning and repatriation processes for geographically trafficked minors.

Findings show non-uniform coordination with CWCs between states/UTs, with some (e.g. Delhi, Meghalaya, Telangana) reporting coordination with child protection services and others (e.g. Andamans, Daman Diu and Uttarakhand) relying entirely on NGOs to provide such access. Such disparity reinforces the overall finding of asymmetrical functionality of AHTUs in the country.

### District Legal Services Authorities (DLSA) and Legal Aid

Coordination with DLSA is vital for legal representation, victim compensation applications, awareness of survivor rights and case follow-up in courts. Survivor testimonies suggest that delays in coordination with DLSA can affect

access to compensation and prolong justice processes. Further, Andamans AHTU claimed coordination with DLSA/SLSA but also stated ‘no VC applications.’ This could indicate ineffective coordination that does not extend to the DLSA actually providing essential support to survivors through victim compensation.

### Shelter Homes and Rehabilitation Services

RTI data indicates that survivor support is frequently routed through institutional shelter homes (e.g. Uttarakhand, Delhi, Telangana) many of which are operated by NGOs rather than state-run systems. This reflects the importance of civil society in rehabilitation and institutional gaps in survivor support infrastructure. Over-reliance on institutional shelters may also increase risks of prolonged institutionalisation and re-trafficking.

### Survivor Collectives and Civil Society Organisations

Civil society organisations and survivor collectives, including advocacy partners and survivor leaders engaged through networks such as ILFAT, play a critical and central role in survivor support for institutional engagement, rehabilitation building community-level intelligence and activating systemic structures for access to justice. NGOs also often spearhead rescue and rehabilitation efforts, especially in contexts where AHTUs face staffing, budget, or coordination constraints.

## AHTU Coordination Ecosystem Map

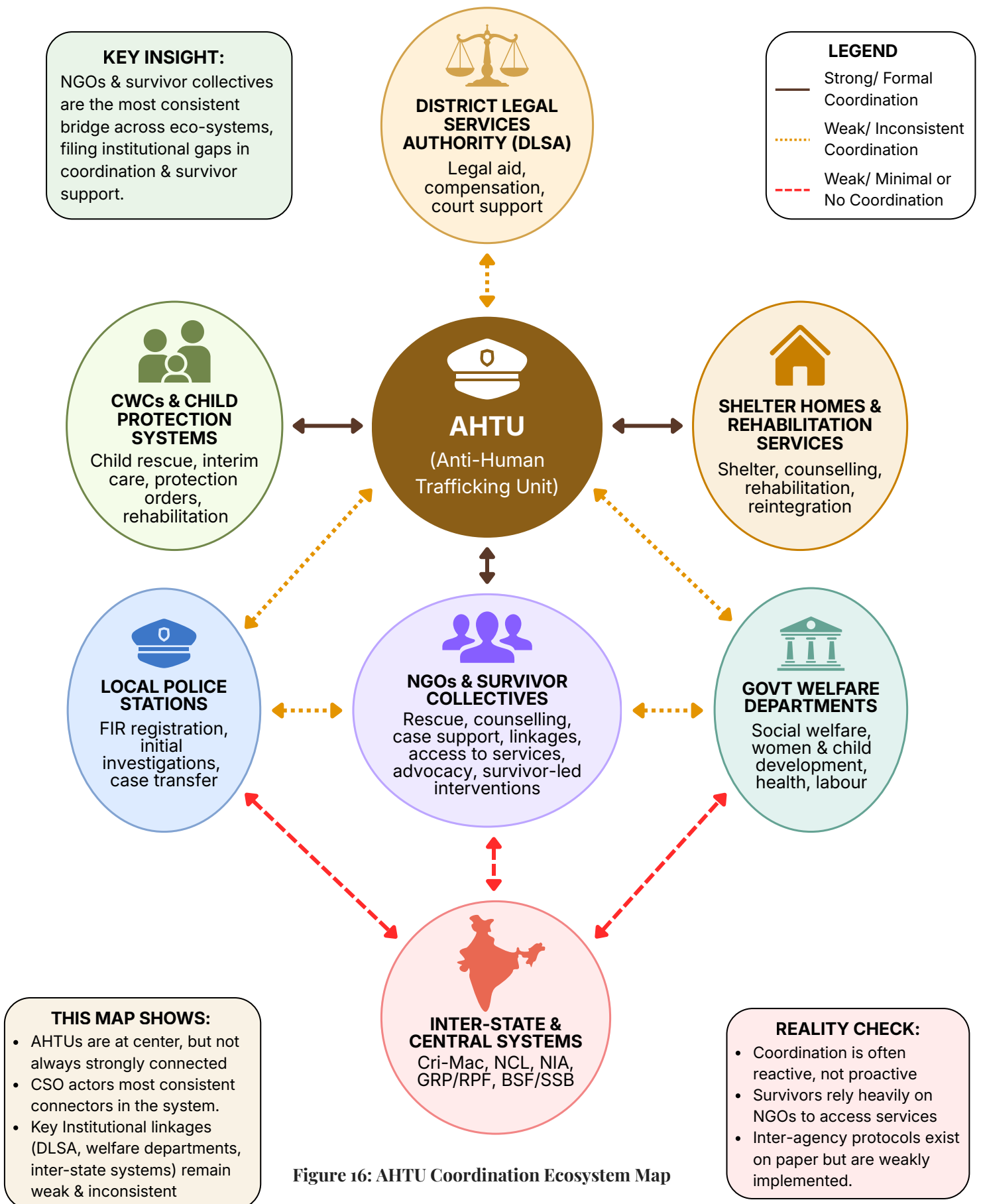


Figure 16: AHTU Coordination Ecosystem Map



### **Survivor Perspectives on Coordination Gaps**

Survivor testimonies highlight several coordination-related challenges, including lack of clarity on compensation procedures, fragmented communication between agencies and reliance on collectives for accessing services and collective bargaining efforts. While rescue operations may involve multiple actors, post-rescue coordination for legal, financial, and psychosocial support is inconsistent and prolonged. This underscores the need for stronger institutional coordination frameworks.

### **Coordination and Victim Compensation**

Weak coordination mechanisms directly affect access of survivors to victim compensation schemes. Victim compensation is closely tied to legal classification of offences and the quality of documentation by law enforcement (KIIs of lawyers in Phase 1), both of which depend on effective coordination between AHTUs, prosecutors, and legal aid providers.

### **Inter-State Coordination in Trafficking Cases**

Given the interstate nature of trafficking networks, coordination between AHTUs across states is essential. However, RTI data and stakeholder inputs suggest that there is limited use of the formal mechanism for interstate information sharing (Cri-MAC), delays in rescue and repatriation and dependence on informal communication channels for rescue (KIIs with survivors in Phase 1). This affects timely rescue and rehabilitation of survivors trafficked across state borders.

### **Data Transparency Gaps**

RTI responses often reported coordination in neutral terms without mentioning implemented protocols, frequency of coordination, designated liaison officers and specific accountability mechanisms. This lack of structured documentation indicates specific, case-based coordination without integration into official criminal justice pathways.

### Link Between Coordination and AHTU Functionality

Cross-indicator synthesis reveals that coordination gaps exacerbate weaknesses in other aspects.

Coordination Gap	Systemic Consequence
Weak links with DLSA	Delayed victim compensation
Poor coordination with CWCs	Delayed child rehabilitation
Sporadic collaboration with NGOs	Inconsistent rescue and support
No coordination with prosecution	Low conviction
No interstate coordination	Delayed rescue and repatriation, poor investigation

Table 17: Impact of Coordination Gap on AHTU Functionality

## 10.4 Targeted Recommendations on Coordination Mechanisms

1



### **Develop Standard Operation Procedures**

Coordination processes between AHTUs, CWCs, DLSAs and rehabilitation agencies.

2



### **Strengthening DLSA and Legal Aid Links**

Formal coordination with DLSA should be institutionalised to improve VC and legal aid access

3



### **Reduce Reliance on Civil Society and Survivor Collectives**

Identify structural gaps filled by CSOs to strengthen support, rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

4



### **Implement Interstate Coordination Mechanisms**

Cri-MAC

5



### **Periodic coordination meetings**

Mandatory inter-agency meetings to be held at district and state levels

## **The Cascading Crisis:**

AHTU functionality is not undermined by isolated failures but by a systemic chain reaction—where weak notification leads to zero FIR autonomy, which in turn results in low conviction rates and the continued impunity of trafficking networks.

# **Chapter ELEVEN**

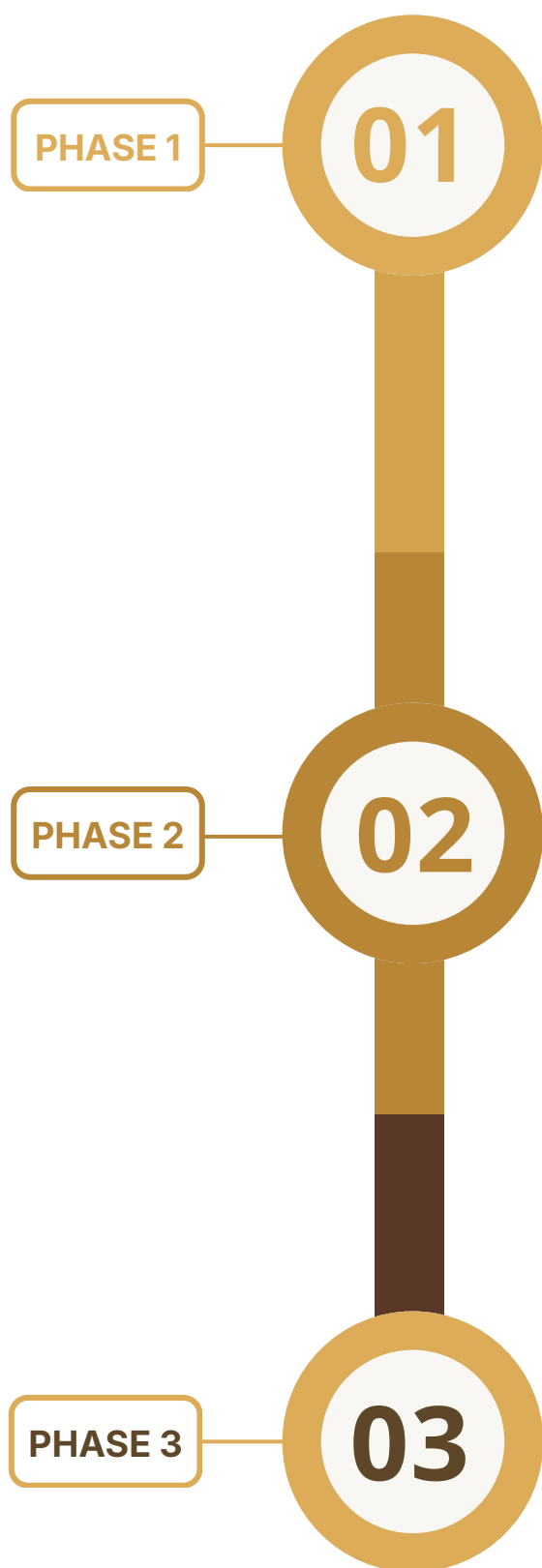
CONSOLIDATED  
ANALYSIS OF AHTU  
FUNCTIONALITY  
ACROSS PHASES  
(2010–2025)

## 11.1 Overview: Indicator-Wise Findings and Systemic Analysis

This chapter has consolidated findings across six indicators of functionality and identified trends across the three phases of the AHTU Watch initiative (2010–2025). This adopts a systems-based approach to identify patterns, interdependencies and longitudinal shifts in AHTU functionality across India.



## 11.2 Evolution of AHTU Functionality Across Three Phases



### INSTITUTIONAL ESTABLISHMENT OF AHTUS WITH UNEVEN OPERATIONALISATION

AHTUs were frequently perceived as extensions of local police stations rather than specialised units, with officials often handling trafficking cases alongside general law-and-order duties. NGOs’ spearheading of rescue and rehabilitation processes indicated limited systemic facilitation of survivor access to services. AHTU in Kolkata was already functioning as a specialised investigative body in certain cases, especially when courts ordered transfer of investigations (e.g., post-Sangita Sahu litigation).

### GRADUAL INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION

Despite incremental administrative recognition of AHTUs (Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Andhra Pradesh and Tripura) structural constraints persisted. For example, Jharkhand (4.16% coverage of AHTUs) and Gujarat (no notification of AHTUs) continued to show a lack of formal institutional recognition of these units. There was progress in AHTUs’ visibility but there was no improvement in operational autonomy.

### IMPROVED DOCUMENTATION BUT CONTINUED IMPLEMENTATION GAPS

Overall, there was increased reporting of training initiatives (Telangana [9], Andamans [13], Uttar Pradesh [6]) and evidence of consistent anti-trafficking documentation in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland, who responded in all Phases of the research. Delays in investigation and rehabilitation linkages were observed due to overburdened officials (additional charge) and inconsistent institutional coordination.

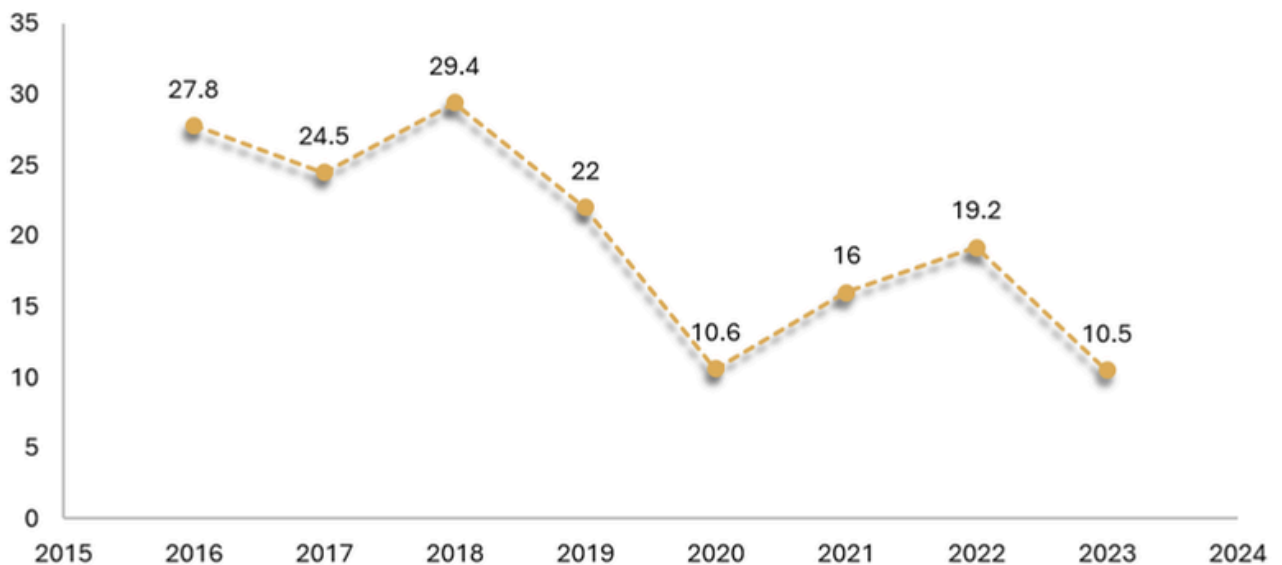
## 11.3 Links Between Indicators of AHTU Functionality

Failure of any single aspect of AHTU functioning could potentially have a cascading effect on other operational aspects of AHTUs.

Primary Gap	Systemic Impact
Weak notification	Reduced FIR autonomy and AHTU authority
Additional charge	Delayed investigations and weak coordination
Poor coordination	Lack of access to legal aid, rehabilitation services
Poor budget allocation	Infrastructure gaps and reduced rescue capacity
Limited training	Misclassification of trafficking cases
Weak FIR autonomy	Low conviction and denial of justice

**Table 18: Overview of Six Indicators for AHTU functionality**

When situated with the ground reality that conviction percentages for human trafficking cases have decreased over the years, the cascading effect becomes even more critical to examine.



**Figure 17: Conviction Rate Decline from 2016 – 2023 (NCRB data)**

## 11.4 Structural Dissonance: Institutional Intent vs Ground Reality

### Policy Intent

The legal and policy framework envisages AHTUs as specialised investigative units that are survivor-sensitive. AHTUs were envisioned to be nodal coordination bodies spearheading anti-trafficking functions, as well as multidisciplinary systems.

### Ground Reality

KIIs (Phase 3) show that AHTUs are administratively present with limited operational authority (FIR autonomy) and are still reliant on survivors' families to finance rescues and on NGOs for rehabilitation. Survivors also reported that AHTU officials lacked specialised training in trafficking cases, reinforcing the gap between design and implementation (Phases 1 and 3). This disparity is a significant evidence-backed national-level findings of the report.

## 11.5 Documentation and Data Transparency

### RTI Non-Responsiveness

A notable pattern across Phase 3 is

uneven RTI responsiveness, including partial information (e.g. West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka) and non-responses from several states (e.g. Gujarat, Odisha, Punjab), including high-incidence trafficking jurisdictions (e.g. Maharashtra, Assam). This lack of transparency affects assessments of functionality and impedes independent monitoring of anti-trafficking systems. Lack of responses can be indicative of a poor accountability mechanism and no documentation protocols, rather than a simple data limitation.

### Inconsistencies in Documentation Systems

Documentation gaps were observed in budget utilisation data (partial responses), FIR and case statistics (varied format state/UT-wise) and training records (unspecified details of programmes). This can indicate systemic weaknesses in record-keeping, accountability and monitoring systems.

## 11.6 Survivor Collectives Play a Critical Role

Across all three phases, a consistent trend is the significant role played by survivor collectives, sometimes with the support of CSOs, in sustaining anti-trafficking responses. Engagement with survivor collectives, including networks such as ILFAT, highlights the importance of survivor-centred advocacy.

## 11.7 Low Institutional Recognition of AHTUs by Governments

Evidence across phases suggests that AHTUs are not positioned as high-priority units. This is seen in the prevalence of additional charge staffing (Ladakh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh), frequent transfers of Nodal Officers (Andaman and Nicobar), absence of dedicated infrastructure (KII from Rajasthan), irregular training programmes (Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Chandigarh) and limited budget transparency (all RTI respondents in Phase 3 provided no utilisation data). This administrative positioning directly affects motivation, capacity, and long-term improvement and AHTU upgradation.



**Policy vs. Practice:** While AHTUs are envisioned as high-priority specialised units, the prevalence of 'additional charge' staffing across nearly all studied states confirms their continued administrative marginalisation.

**-Field Insight**



## 11.8 Consolidated National Findings on AHTU Functionality

- 1 AHTU functionality remains uneven and asymmetrical across states/UTs in terms of all analysis indicators
- 2 Additional charge is a persistent structural issue that impedes AHTUs' capacity to undertake anti-harassment functions, in favour of general policing
- 3 Budget allocation and utilisation lack transparency and strategic alignment, seen through nil states/UTs disclosing utilisation data and discrepancies in how data was presented
- 4 Training has increased but remains inconsistent in frequency, has been police-centric and is rarely specialised to trafficking
- 5 FIR autonomy varies significantly across jurisdictions, affecting operational functionality and enhancing national-level asymmetry
- 6 Coordination mechanisms are largely informal and implemented reactively upon demand of survivor collectives or CSOs
- 7 NGOs and survivor collectives play a foundational role in anti-trafficking responses and systemic activation
- 8 Widespread documentation and data transparency gaps hinder monitoring and accountability
- 9 Rescue efforts are more visible than prosecution outcomes, with lowering conviction rates over time
- 10 There is a major dissonance between the original intent of AHTUs and operational realities.

# Chapter TWELVE

## POSITIVE DEVIATIONS AND AHTU REFORM PATHWAYS

### **Asymmetric Justice:**

The national landscape of anti-trafficking is marked by deep functional disparities—ranging from 'Active Prosecution' models in states like Telangana to 'Systemically Fragile' environments where AHTUs exist only as nominal entities without investigative power.



## 12.1 Overview: Identifying Positive Deviations in AHTU Functionality

There are key differences in how AHTUs function across states/UTs, where some show relatively stronger systemic practices. These can be comparatively analysed across Phases of research, using the six indicators mentioned in this Report. Jurisdictions showing consistency across multiple indicators or notable reforms in any aspect of functionality, has been categorised as emerging good practice models.

## 12.2 States Showing Relatively Strong Institutional Practices

### TELANGANA

Across phases, Telangana showed relatively consistent functioning compared to many other states/UTs. RTI data indicates continued notification, training initiatives, and high charge-sheeting. Training programmes were reported regularly in recent years, and institutional visibility seems relatively high.

However, RTI data suggests that higher investigations and charge sheets do not automatically translate into stronger conviction outcomes. Phase 1 narratives point to gaps in prosecution support, trial coordination, and witness protection. Telangana has operational strength with implementation gaps, rather than systemic fractures.

### ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Despite its smaller scale, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands have a relatively functional AHTU system. There were reported training programmes and documented case progression, which indicates formal protocols. However, overall AHTU coverage is low (33%) indicating the

need for investment and advocacy towards expansion of the multistakeholder system.

## 12.3 States with Moderate but Uneven Functionality

### UTTAR PRADESH

Uttar Pradesh has relatively one of the largest AHTU networks, with substantial notified units and reported training activities. However, RTI activity data and stakeholder inputs indicate that investigations often remained dependent on local police stations, primarily at the initial FIR stage. This undermines the AHTUs' specialised role and affects the pace and quality of trafficking investigations.

### DELHI

Delhi claims to undertake institutional coordination with legal aid authorities, training institutions, and shelter systems, as reflected in Phase 3 RTI coordination data. Training collaborations with DLSA and NIPCCD also indicate institutional engagement, which is a positive coordination effort.

However, available activity data suggests that many investigations continue to be led by local police stations. This again limits the specialised role envisioned for AHTUs and reflects partial autonomy.

## WEST BENGAL:

### Mixed Administrative Disclosure with Strong Qualitative Evidence

West Bengal occupies a distinct position. The state responded to the Phase 1 RTI and provided information, including AHTUs established and notified, as well as case data under IPC, ITPA, and POCSO laws. At the same time, it did not provide complete disclosures on training, funding, and activities in later phases of research.

Several survivor testimonies, lawyer narratives, and NGO inputs across both Phase 1 and Phase 3 come from West Bengal. These qualitative perspectives consistently indicate that AHTU officials were perceived by survivors as more respectful, and sensitive compared to local police in trafficking cases.



**Survivors perceived AHTU officials as more respectful and sensitive compared to local police in trafficking cases**

**-Field Insight**



Lawyers reported that courts increasingly transferred trafficking investigations to AHTUs, following key strategic litigation. West Bengal shows

significant functional engagement by survivor collectives and CSOs, particularly in survivor-facing processes and ensuring specialised investigations.

## 12.4 Structurally Fragile but Evidence-Documented Contexts

### MEGHALAYA

RTI data and Phase 3 inputs indicate that AHTU personnel are largely assigned on additional charge, with limited dedicated staffing and weak monitoring structures. This directly affects their capacity to conduct specialised investigations and sustained coordination.

### RAJASTHAN (DISTRICT FOCUS: BIKANER)

Field visits, KIIs with AHTU officials, and staffing data point to clear operational constraints in districts such as Bikaner. These include severe manpower shortages, infrastructure limitations and additional charge burdens on officers. Such restrictions slow down investigations and reduce the effectiveness of AHTUs in handling interstate trafficking cases.

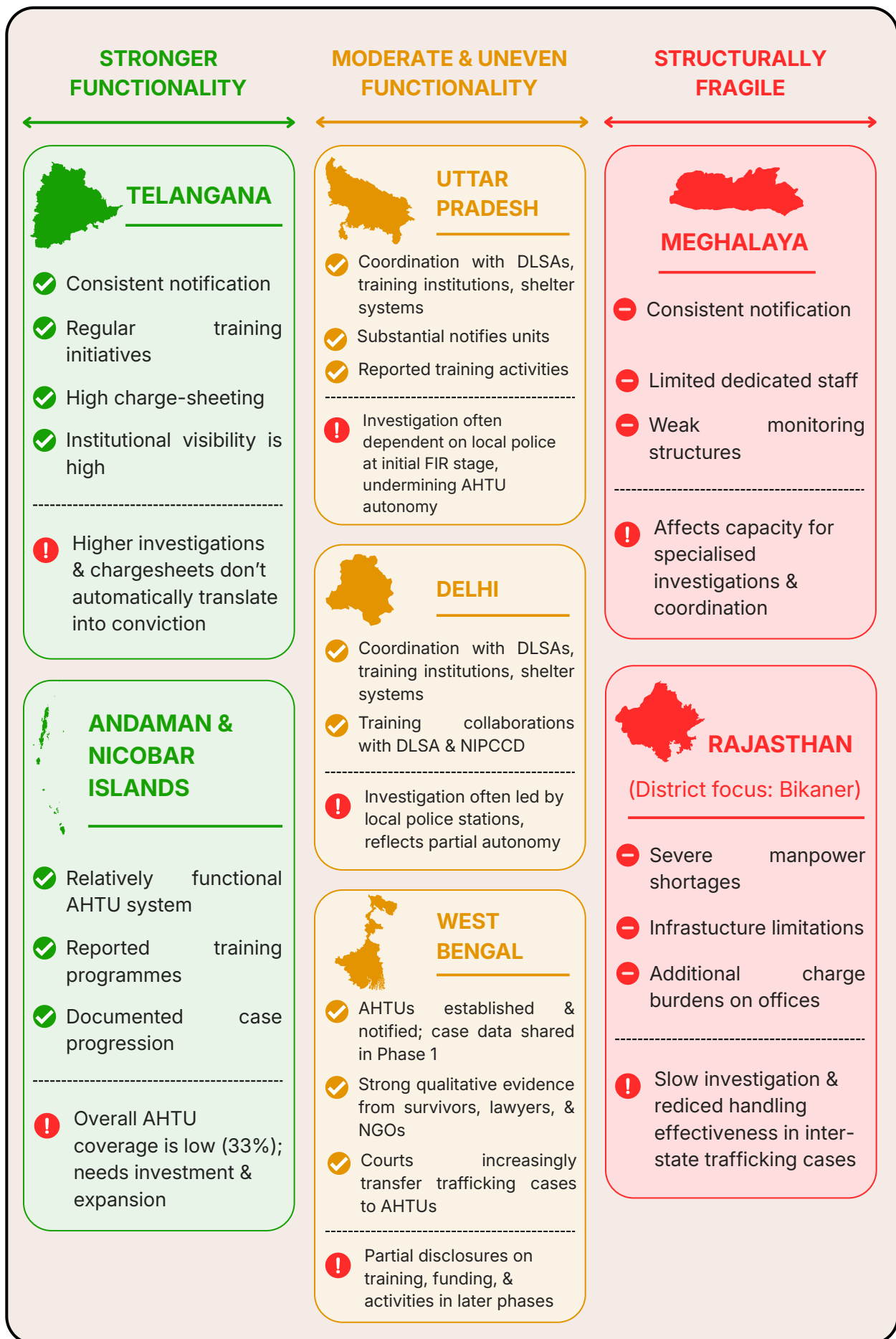


Figure 17: AHTU Functionality Spectrum across States/UTs

## 12.5 Transparency Gaps as a Governance Concern

Several states, including Assam, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Manipur, Sikkim, and Puducherry, showed non-responsiveness to RTI applications across multiple phases. This makes it difficult to assess staffing, training, coordination, and investigative functioning. These gaps could be interpreted as absence of accessible systemic documentation. Such non-disclosure limits accountability, policy planning, and independent monitoring of anti-trafficking systems.

## 12.6 Key Reform Priorities

### **Dedicated Staffing Instead of Additional Charge**

RTI composition data and stakeholder interviews repeatedly show that AHTU officials are often given additional charge responsibilities. Appointing dedicated, full-time personnel is essential for strengthening specialised functioning.

### **Regular and Standardised Training**

Phase-wise RTI responses indicate that training remains inconsistent across states. Some states introduced periodic programmes, while others have not reported any structured training. Mandating regular, trafficking-specific survivor-sensitive training is necessary to improve case handling and victim support.

### **Strengthening Investigative Autonomy**

Lawyer narratives and activity data suggest that trafficking cases are still frequently handled by local police unless specifically transferred to AHTUs. Strengthening FIR autonomy and clarifying investigative mandates would allow AHTUs to function as specialised units rather than auxiliary police structures.

### **Improving Coordination with Support Stakeholders**

Although the AHTU model was designed as a convergence mechanism, coordination with CWCs, DLSAs, shelter homes, and rehabilitation services remains uneven. Stronger formal protocols for inter-agency coordination would improve survivor access to legal aid, compensation, and rehabilitation services.



## 12.7 Strengthening Documentation and Transparency

Even among responding states, partial disclosures on training, budgets, and activities were common. The case of West Bengal illustrates how partial administrative data can coexist with strong field-level engagement, but this also makes systematic assessment difficult.

## 12.8 Concluding Comments

AHTU functionality cannot be understood through a single national narrative. Reforms should be targeted rather than uniform. States with stronger institutional foundations may benefit from improvements in prosecution and coordination, while structurally constrained states require investment in staffing, infrastructure, and monitoring systems. Transparency-constrained states, in particular, require stronger disclosure and documentation frameworks to enable meaningful institutional assessment.

Figure 18: At Glance–Key Reforms Priorities for AHTUs

# Chapter THIRTEEN

## STATE/UT-WISE AHTU FUNCTIONALITY AND REFORM AREAS

### **Beyond Administrative Presence:**

The future of AHTUs must shift from counting the number of units established to measuring the quality of justice delivered. True reform requires a move away from police-centric models toward multi-stakeholder systems that center survivor voices and fiscal transparency.

## 13.1 Scope and Approach

This chapter presents a concise, evidence-based snapshot of AHTU functionality across a curated set of analytically significant states and Union Territories. The assessment is based on six indicators: Notification, Staffing, Budget, Training, FIR Autonomy, and Coordination.

## 13.2 Consolidated Table: State-Specific Functionality and Reform Priorities

State/UT	AHTU Functionality	Key Systemic Gap	Reform
Telangana	Notification continuity, regular training reporting, high charge-sheeting trends	Poor conviction rates despite active investigations	Strengthen prosecution coordination and victim-witness support
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Consistent documentation, reported training programmes, and case progression	Limited operational depth due to small scale and low coverage infrastructure	Develop scalable protocols and advocate for expansion
Uttar Pradesh	Large AHTU network with notification continuity and reported training but uneven investigations across districts	Dependence on local police for FIR registration and investigations	Strengthen FIR autonomy and specialised investigation mandates
Delhi	Moderate coordination disclosures and training, limited independent investigations	Continued reliance on police station-led case handling	Improve investigative autonomy and case ownership by AHTUs

State/UT	AHTU Functionality	Key Systemic Gap	Reform
Uttarakhand	SOP orientation and notification continuity, partial data	Weak documentation of utilisation, outcomes and operational functions	Develop structured monitoring and reporting systems
West Bengal	Notified AHTU presence and documented case handling with strong survivor-facing engagement	Incomplete administrative transparency on training, funding and activities	Advocate for data transparency, structured institutional documentation
Meghalaya	Full additional charge staffing and limited coordination data	Lack of dedicated personnel and weak monitoring structures	Appoint dedicated AHTU staff and appoint Nodal Officers
Rajasthan (Bikaner focus)	No FIR autonomy, operational AHTU presence with staffing and infrastructure constraints at district level	Lack of investigative authority, manpower shortages and additional charge burden	Dedicated staffing, empower AHTU to register and investigate FIRs and transparent district-level resource allocation
Assam, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, Punjab, Manipur, Sikkim, Puducherry	Functionality cannot be assessed due to RTI non-responses across Phases 1–3	Transparency and documentation gaps in AHTU reporting	Mandatory disclosure compliance and periodic audits

**Table 19: State-wise Accountability Matrix: Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, and Recommendations for AHTU Reform**

# CONCLUSION

## A ROADMAP FOR AHTU REFORM (2025–2030)

### ***Phase 1: Institutional Foundation (Immediate)***

- **Mandatory Notification:** Formally notify all AHTUs as police stations with independent FIR powers.
- **State-Level Oversight:** Appoint dedicated Nodal Officers to monitor interstate coordination and institutional accountability.

### ***Phase 2: Operational Stabilization (Short-term)***

- **Eliminate 'Additional Charge':** Ensure AHTU personnel are dedicated solely to anti-trafficking duties to prevent investigative dilution.
- **Fiscal Transparency:** Establish dedicated, regular, and traceable budget heads for AHTUs with mandatory public disclosure of utilization.

### ***Phase 3: Impact & Access to Justice (Long-term)***

- **Mandatory Coordination Protocols:** Institutionalize standard operating procedures (SOPs) for proactive coordination with DLSAs for victim compensation and CWCs for child rehabilitation.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Training:** Shift from police-centric training to integrated programs that include labor departments, prosecution services, and survivor leaders.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** Launch a national toll-free trafficking reporting mechanism to bridge the gap between high-incidence regions and low-reporting statistics.

# ABOUT SANJOG



Sanjog is a social impact organisation founded in 2012 by Uma Chatterjee and Roop Sen. The organisation was conceived as a strategic, lean and agile initiative that is rights-based, democratic, change-driven and grounded in collaboration.

Sanjog works in partnership with grassroots community-based organisations and small and medium-sized NGOs, while also building consortiums and collaborative platforms to create collective impact. Leadership development among people from marginalised constituencies remains a core strategy of its work, with a focus on strengthening grassroots power, participation and influence within larger institutional ecosystems.

The organisation's work centres on addressing the vulnerabilities faced by India's youth affected by structural poverty, unequal access to opportunities, and discrimination based on caste, class, gender and sex. Sanjog works across six core thematic axes:

- Mental Health
- Livelihoods
- Access to Justice
- Leadership Development
- Organisation Development
- Consortium Development

In the anti-human trafficking ecosystem, Sanjog works towards strengthening survivor-centred and rights-based systems through research, capacity building, collective organising and institutional engagement.

# ANNEXURE

## RTI QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AHTUS (FY 2022–2025)

**Data Collection Period: FY 2022–2023, 2023–2024, 2024–2025**

### Section 1: Notifications & Orders (Year-wise)

1. Provide copies of all government notifications/orders that establish, upgrade and/or make AHTUs functional, that are issued in each of these financial years:
  - a. FY 2022–2023
  - b. FY 2023–2024
  - c. FY 2024–2025
2. How many AHTUs were notified as independent police stations with FIR powers in financial years 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025? Provide district-wise details and notification copies for each financial year:
  - a. FY 2022–2023
  - b. FY 2023–2024
  - c. FY 2024–2025
3. How many AHTUs were formed but not notified as police stations in financial years 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025? Provide district-wise details for each year
  - a. In how many districts, the State Government has not notified the AHTUs?
  - b. Please provide a list of such districts where the AHTUs have not been notified.

### Section 2: Functionality & Staffing (Year-wise)

4. How many AHTUs were functional between financial years 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025? Provide district-wise lists for each year.
5. For each financial year from (2022, 2023, 2024, 2025), provide:
  - a. Name and Designations of AHTU members
  - b. How many AHTU members hold an additional charge?
  - c. Please provide a list of AHTU members and the nature of the additional charge.
  - d. Please mention in which year AHTU members were given additional charge.
  - e. Do AHTU members still continue to hold the additional charge?
6. Please provide a list of appointments and transfers of nodal officers between financial years 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025.

7. Are designated officers handling IPC 370/ITPA cases in AHTUs? Provide year-wise officer details from FY 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025.
8. Has an Anti-Human Trafficking Bureau (State level) been set up in the FY 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 as per the advisory issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs on 1st December 2020? Please provide the following details:
- Date of establishment
  - Location of the Anti-Human Trafficking Bureau
  - List of members of the bureau, in the following format:

Name of member	Designation of member	Duties of the member	Does the member hold additional charge? (Yes/No)

### Section 3: Budgets & Funds (Year-wise)

9. How much fund has been allocated by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, for the formation and functioning of the AHTUs in the State between financial years 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025?
10. Out of the funds allocated by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, how much of the fund has been utilized for the formation and functioning of AHTUs in the State in the FYs 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025? Please provide utilization certificates for each financial year.
11. Out of the funds allocated by the State Government, how much of the fund has been utilized for the formation and functioning of AHTUs in the State between FYs 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025? Please provide utilization certificates for each financial year.
12. Please provide details of allocation and utilization of the Nirbhaya Fund (if allocated) for the formation and functioning of AHTUs in the State in the FYs 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025.

Year of allocation	Purpose of allocation	Amount allocated and utilized (attach utilization certificates)

13. Has there been funding from any other source for the formation and functioning of AHTUs in the state between financial years 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025? Please provide details of the amount of funds allocated and utilization certificates.

14. Have Judicial Colloquiums or State Level Conferences been held with assistance of MHA funding for sensitisation of judicial officers and law enforcement agencies regarding human trafficking between FYs 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025? If yes, please specify:

Authority who allocated funds	Source of Funds Amount	Allocated and Used (attach utilization certificates)	Number of conferences/colloquiums held between FYs 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025

### Section 4: Capacity Building & Intelligence (Year-wise)

15. Please provide details, financial year-wise (FY 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025) of number of training programs for AHTU officials:

Date of training	Duration of training	Number of Participants	Designation of Participants	Training Topics	Organisers of the training programs

16. Have AHTUs in the State been allocated a budget for intelligence gathering and research on trafficking cases? If yes, provide year-wise allocation and utilization details from 2022-2025. Please also provide the following details:

Source of funds for intelligence gathering and research	Source of funds for intelligence gathering and research What research has been conducted between FYs 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025?	Has the research been used in any way?

## Section 5: Case Data & Prosecution (Year-wise)

17. For each year (FY 2022–2023, 2023–2024, 2024–2025):
- Number of human trafficking cases registered under:
    - Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 370/370A 372 and 373
    - Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) Sections 143, 144 and 146
    - Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
    - Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012
    - IPC 374 (Labour trafficking)
    - Bonded Labour Act
    - Child Labour Act
18. For each financial year 2022–2023, 2023–2024, 2024–2025, provide a list of:
- a. Victims rescued for cases of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation
  - b. Victims rescued for the purpose of bonded labour and labour trafficking
  - c. Accused arrested in cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation and labour trafficking
  - d. Cases charge-sheeted for human trafficking for sexual exploitation
  - e. Cases charge sheeted for labour trafficking and bonded labour
  - f. Convictions & acquittals in cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation
  - g. Convictions & acquittals in cases of labour trafficking
19. Please provide a list of the number of labour trafficking cases between FY 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025.
20. In cases of cross-border/interstate trafficking investigations between FY 2022–2023, 2023–2024, 2024–2025. Please provide the following details:

No. of complaints filed	No. of FIRs lodged	No. of charge-sheets prepared	No. of investigations concluded

## Section 6: Coordination & Referral Mechanisms (FYs 2022–2023, 2023–2024, 2024–2025)

21. Does the AHTU coordinate with:
- a. DLSA/SLSA for victim compensation? Provide data on applications processed and compensation granted between 2022–2025.
  - b. Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR), or NGOs for survivor support?
22. How many cases have been transferred from local police to AHTUs for investigation in 2022–2025? Provide case-wise details if available.

23. Do the law enforcement agencies including AHTUs in the state use Cri-MAC for interstate coordination with law enforcement agencies in other States for sharing vital information on human trafficking? Please provide names of the law enforcement agencies that have used Cri-MAC for coordination and information sharing on Human Trafficking.

### Section 7: Infrastructure & Resources (FYs 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2025-2026)

24. Provide details on the physical infrastructure available to AHTUs district wise in the following format:

No. of AHTU offices	No. of Vehicles in each office	List of communication equipment in each AHTU office

25. Are dedicated shelters or support services available for rescued survivors via AHTUs? If yes, please specify the following:

- When were the shelters and support services set up?
- Under what scheme were they set up?
- Are they public or private?

### Section 8: Implementation of Guidelines, Notifications, Advisories, Circulars and Orders by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) between FYs 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025

26. Please provide the number of cases referred to the National Information Agency (NIA) under IPC 370/370A. BNS, POCSO, ITPA, Bonded Labour Act and Child Labour Act

27. Have State Monitoring Committees on AHTUs been set up? If so, please provide the following details:

Date of the setting up of State Monitoring Committees on AHTUs	Location of the State Monitoring Committees on AHTUs	Members of the State Monitoring Committees on AHTUs	Designations of members of the State Monitoring Committees on AHTUs	Activities of the State Monitoring Committees on AHTUs

# QUESTIONNAIRE A: FOR TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS

**Introduction:** We are conducting research to understand how Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) work and how they can help survivors better. Your answers will help improve these systems. Participation is voluntary, and your answers will remain private.

## Section 1: Your experience with law enforcement

1. Who rescued you—AHTU or the police? Do you know the difference between AHTU and the police?
2. How did the police or AHTU officers treat you? Did you feel respected and heard?
3. Were you provided with information about your rights, the legal process, or available support services? If yes, was this information clear and helpful?
4. Did you feel safe during your interactions with law enforcement? Were there any moments when you felt uncomfortable or unsafe?
5. How would you describe the attitude of the officers toward you - were they understanding, judgmental, helpful, or indifferent?

## Section 2: Support and services

6. What kind of support did you receive during and after the investigation (shelter, counseling, legal aid, medical care, etc.)? Was this support adequate?
7. Did the officers speak to you in a language you understood? Were interpreters provided if needed?
8. Were you connected to any NGOs or support groups by the AHTU?
9. Were your immediate needs (food, clothing, safe accommodation) met promptly? Were there any delays?
10. Were you allowed to have a support person (family member, counselor, or advocate) with you during questioning?
11. Looking back, what additional support would have been most helpful during that time?

## Section 3: Court process and justice

12. If your case went to court, how was your experience as a witness? Were you prepared and supported adequately?
13. Was the legal process explained to you clearly? Were you able to understand what was happening?
14. Were measures taken to protect your privacy and safety during court proceedings?
15. Are you satisfied with the outcome of your case? Do you feel justice was served?

## Section 5: Suggestions for improvement

16. Based on your experience, what do you think AHTUs are doing well?
17. Where do you think AHTUs need to improve in how they work with survivors?
18. If you could change one thing about how police handle trafficking cases, what would be?
19. How can AHTUs better involve survivors in improving their services and policies?

## Section 6: Current perspective

20. How has your experience with the AHTU impacted your views of police and the justice system?
21. Would you feel comfortable approaching AHTUs again if you or someone you know needed help?
22. What message would you want to give to AHTU officers about working with trafficking survivors?
23. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?

# AHTU WATCH RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

## 1. CID Officials (State-Level Nodal Agency – Oversight Role)

### 1. Strategic Oversight and Evolution

- a. How have AHTU operations evolved over the last 4–5 years?
- b. What shifts or changes have you observed during and post-COVID?

### 2. Coordination and Interstate Investigations

- a. How is coordination managed between CID and district-level AHTUs?
- b. What mechanisms are in place for interstate investigation and collaboration?

### 3. Resource Allocation and Training

- a. What resources (budget, personnel, infrastructure) are provided to AHTUs?
- b. What types of training and capacity-building initiatives are conducted or supported by CID?
- c. What oversight role does CID play over AHTUs?

### 4. Data and Monitoring Systems

- a. How is data from all AHTUs collected and managed?
- b. Is there a centralized database or system for monitoring AHTU performance?
- c. How frequently does CID engage with AHTUs (individually or collectively)?

## 2. Superintendent of Police (SP – District-Level Leadership Role)

### 1. Leadership Insight and Supervision

- a. What is your view on the functionality and effectiveness of AHTUs?
- b. Do you trust that AHTUs are carrying out their assigned responsibilities effectively?
- c. Do you perceive a difference in quality between AHTU-led investigations and regular police investigations?

### 2. Understanding of the Issue

- a. What is your understanding of human trafficking in their district?
- b. What trends or patterns have you observed?
- c. What specific actions or interventions have you led in response?

### 3. Departmental Attitudes and Beliefs

- a. Does district leadership believe AHTUs are necessary, or do you think regular police can manage these cases?
- b. Do you personally believe in the need for a specialised anti-trafficking unit?

**4. Survivor-Centric Evaluation**

- a. Has AHTU presence improved survivor-police interaction?
- b. Has AHTU functioning led to measurable crime reduction in trafficking cases?

**3. AHTU Officials (Police Inspectors / Sub-Inspectors and Constables – Operational Role)**

**1. Role and Responsibilities**

- a. What are your day-to-day roles and how do they execute them?
- b. Are you working full-time with AHTU or on additional duty?
- c. Have you received any specialised training?

**2. Investigative and Operational Methods**

- a. What techniques do you use for investigations and intelligence gathering?
- b. How do you conduct rescues or follow operational procedures?

**3. Resources and Infrastructure**

- a. Do you have dedicated vehicles and logistical support for rescue operations?
- b. Are there sufficient budgetary and human resources to carry out your mandate?

**4. Successes and Challenges**

- a. Can you share any significant successes or good practices?
- b. What are the major challenges you face?
- c. What solutions would you recommend?

**5. Survivor and Stakeholder Engagement**

- a. What has been your experience working directly with survivors and families?
- b. How has your coordination been with NGOs or community-based organisations?

AHTU  
WATCH



#ENDHUMANTRAFFICKING

SAN10G

INSPIRE. INFLUENCE. INVOLVE. IMPACT.

