

A Study on Operation MUSKAAN-Concept, Need, and Importance of Missing Children

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Abstract

This present paper describes about 'Operation Muskaan,' it is a significant law enforcement initiative, was not limited to a single city instead, it was a nationwide effort in India. Launched by the Indian government, it aimed to rescue and rehabilitate missing and trafficked children. This extensive campaign was carried out across various states and cities throughout India. The primary objective is to locate and rescue children who had gone missing, been abducted, or were victims of human trafficking. Law enforcement agencies, including the police and child welfare organizations, collaborated to conduct extensive search and rescue operations. By employing search teams, conducting raids, and leveraging intelligence networks, it reached children who had often been forced into child labor, domestic servitude, or even prostitution. Once found, these children were provided with medical care, counseling, and support to reintegrate them into society. The paper explores the concept, need and importance of operation MUSKAAN.

Keywords: Operation Muskaan, Functions of Operation Muskaan, and Missing Children.

Introduction

Operation Muskaan is a project launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to locate and rehabilitate missing children. It is a month-long campaign in which State Police employees engage in various actions to identify and rescue missing children and reconnect them with their families. It is also called as operation muskaan, and it is a dedicated campaign for a month where several activities are taken up by the state police personnel to trace and rescue the missing children and reunite them with their families. It is an initiative of the ministry of home Affairs to rescue/rehabilitate missing children. While addressing a virtual convergence meeting on operation muskaan-VIII, Additional Director General of Police, Women Safety Wing, officers said, "Tracing of missing children, bonded/child labour, rescue of street children, beggars and trafficked children is the duty of those who are going to participate in the operation."

Operation Smile was first launched by the Ghaziabad Police Department in Uttar Pradesh in September 2014. The operation was a massive success, resulting in the rescue of 227 children within a month. This achievement inspired the Central Ministry to provide training to state police units and implement Operation muskaan across the country. The operation was carried out by police personnel who were trained and dispatched to various regions of the nation, to locate missing children linked to FIRs lodged at Ghaziabad police stations. More than 100 police officers from various levels and ranks were assigned and trained for this purpose. They were enlightened about various issues such as the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, the Protection of Child Rights Act, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, relevant sections of the Cr PC and IPC, and Ministry of Home Affairs Advisories, among other things. The use of various forms of technology, such as print and media, was also instrumental in disseminating information and locating the missing children. The authorities realized that most of the children found homeless and living on the streets, in religious centres, and at train stations were also children who had been separated from their families due to various reasons. These children might have gone missing due to reasons like kidnapping, running away from home due to family problems or poverty, or getting lost while travelling.

Hoping for better coordination among the stakeholders of Operation Muskaan in order to realise the objectives of the programme, the rescued children should be provided good education, working skills to make them self-reliant and only then they would be able to lead their lives with dignity and respect in the society. This programme envisages that the rescued children have to be reunited with their families or sent to the Child Care Institutions or other hostels and the rescued children (boys and girls) would be admitted in the specialised schools in coordination with the Education Department.

Concept of Operation Smile

In September 2014, the Ghaziabad Police Department in Uttar Pradesh launched this operation, which resulted in the rescue of 227 children in a month. This successful operation prompted the Central Ministry to train state police units and implement Operation Muskaan. It was a month-long campaign in which State Police officers participated in various events. This effort was carried out by police personnel trained and dispatched to various regions of the nation, to locate missing children listed in FIRs lodged at Ghaziabad police stations. More than 100 police officers from various levels and ranks were assigned and trained for the purpose on issues such as the

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, the Protection of Child Rights Act, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, relevant sections of the CrPC and IPC, and Ministry of Home Affairs Advisories, among other things.

The use of various forms of technology, such as print and media, was also influential in sharing information and locating the missing children. This trip made authorities aware that the majority of the children found homeless and living on the streets, in religious centres, and at train stations were also youngsters who had been separated from their families for various reasons. These youngsters might have gone missing for various reasons, including kidnapping, fleeing their homes owing to familial circumstances or poverty, or going missing while travelling.

Importance and Outcome of the Operation Muskaan

Operation Muskaan was carried out in several phases by our country's various state police units. As a result, many missing children have been reunited with their families due to the campaign, which is an excellent success for the different state police agencies. The Union Home Ministry also recognizes and rewards police officers from various States/UTs who have performed outstanding roles throughout the operations. Many of the rescued youngsters were working as child labourers at restaurants, garages, and homes, and some were even exploited for begging and human trafficking. As a result, this campaign has helped limit these kid exploitations to some extent. According to reports, 19,195 children were rescued during the Operation Muskaan campaign in July 2015. In addition, 12,233 children were discovered during the July 2016 Campaign.



Understanding Operation Smile: Key Features of Operation Muskaan

Here are some key characteristics of Operation Muskaan that can boost your Current Affairs knowledge:

- The primary objective of the mission is to locate and rehabilitate children who have gone missing.
- Building the capacity of the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) at the district level to deal with cases of missing children.
- Aligning the activities with the state's child protection initiatives.
- Improving the coordination of Social Welfare department functionaries, SJPUs, NGOs, Child Welfare Committees (CWC), and community organizations at the district level as part of the country's Integrated Child Protection Scheme.

Initiative with UNICEF: Missing Persons Monitoring

The main aim of the Missing Persons Monitoring Cell is to deal with the cases of missing persons efficiently using state of the art technology and thereby restoring them to their families with dignity. The cell has been started in association with UNICEF, WCD and NIC as key stakeholders to trace missing people and to assure their safety until they are reunited with their family or rehabilitated.

Tenets for formation of Missing Persons Monitoring Cell

- A missing persons cell was created in 2011 in CID with the help of UNICEF and NIC created a website for the missing persons.
- The unit included 2 Technical persons, 1 Supporting staff from UNICEF. Data was collected from ECOPS, Wakf boards, Churches etc.
- Through the case of Bachpan Bachao Andolan vs Union of India writ petition(Civil) No.75 it was said to register FIRs to trace the missing kids and directed NALSA (National Services Authority) to help facilitate a network to quickly restore missing children to their family.
- When a complaint is made regarding missing kids same should be under the FIR and it shall be noted under Sec. 154 Crpc with the presumption of either abduction or trafficking.
- If a case is not recovered within 4 months, then it may be forwarded to AHTU unit.

Composition of Missing Persons Monitoring Cell

The team consists of SP rank officer who will head the team, 1 Inspector, 1 Sub Inspector, 1 PC from analysis team of WSW (from AHT module), 3 coordinators/supporting staff, 1 staff from UNICEF, 1 PC from AHT and 1 PC from Cyber Module.

- Help Desks will have Woman Police Constables as receptionist who will receive reports about the missing persons.
- The missing cases information is passed to local CCI/DCPU, Bus Stands, Railway Stations, etc.
- Victims can file complaints on Dhruv website, WhatsApp (9440700906) or as email to TS Police Mail ID, AHT mail or Official police mail IDs

Functions and Characteristics of Operation Muskaan

Functions and Characteristics of Operation Muskaan one should know to boost their Current Affairs knowledge:

- The mission's principal goal is to find and rehabilitate the children who have gone missing.
- Building the capacity of the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) at the district level to deal with missing children situations.
- Bringing the activities in line with the state's child protection efforts.
- As part of the country's Integrated Child Protection Scheme, improve the coordination of Social Welfare department functionaries, SJPUs, NGOs, Child Welfare Committees (CWC), and community organizations at the district level.

Activities Involved

- The professional staff of the police department inspects all minors living on the streets, railway stations, and other public places. They must gently obtain information from the youngster without frightening or making them feel uneasy.
- During the operation, the respective State Police are expected to upload the data of any identified youngsters to the Ministry of Women and Child Development's 'Missing Child' webpage. It is critical to retain and communicate all data, including complete information on the number of missing children cases at the intra-state and inter-state levels. Pieces on the CWCs would be written and sent to rescue teams and stakeholders.
- When necessary, rehabilitation measures will be implemented in collaboration with other departments such as the Department of Women and Child Development, the Police, and the Labour Department. As a result, the risk of re-victimization is reduced.
- Media, commercials, and national initiatives are also used to raise public awareness.

Challenges

- The challenges were significant; many children could not recall their home towns, leaving the team in a quandary. Undeterred, they combed every street of the district, leaving no stone unturned until the families were found. Technology, especially the Aadhar Card system, emerged as a valuable ally in this noble endeavour, facilitating reunions between lost children and their families.
- What emerged as a common thread among these missing cases were poignant reasons –parental disputes, domestic violence, poverty, elopement, and the impact of social media, which often led children astray. This team, driven by compassion, managed to reunite children who had been missing for a decade, bringing tears of joy and relief to many families.

The officers further informed that in the second phase of Operation Muskan, they will expand into neighbouring districts. His team plans to create an album featuring shelter home children from various districts, aiming to extend their search and reunite more families. The initiative has garnered widespread support, with several districts adopting similar strategies to tackle the heart-wrenching issue of missing children.

Conclusion

In summary, 'Operation Muskaan' was a nationwide initiative carried out across various cities and states in India, with the goal of rescuing and rehabilitating missing and trafficked children. It is a dedicated campaign for a month where several activities are taken up by the State Police personnel to trace and rescue the missing children and reunite them with their families. It is a Ministry of Home Affairs project (MHA). The Ministry trains to State wing police officers to handle the operation wisely and save the child.

Images of Operation Muskaan



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