

# Challenge Story

## **A long wait to return home...**

On 6<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022, two rescue operation were conducted by the Tilak Nagar Police Station and Vihaan rescuing five victims of sex trafficking. The victims were of Nigerian nationality who were trafficked to India on the false pretext of lucrative jobs and forced into prostitution. They were sexually exploited, wrongfully confined and physically assaulted. The victims were threatened and their passports were confiscated. Consequently, their movement was restricted and they could not escape. The victims were threatened of dire consequences if they tried to resist or approach the police for help.

A First Information Report was registered after each rescue operation and the survivors were medically examined. As per the order of accommodation passed by the magistrate, all survivors were placed in a government shelter home.

Waiting for the repatriation order has been and still is the biggest challenge for the victims. It is an exhausting period which requires immense level of patience until there can be a clear green signal for them to leave for their homeland in Nigeria. That being said, the decision of repatriation is the prerogative of the courts and the police when a case is pending. Once the FIR was registered until the completion of the investigation, the Investigating officer was not of the opinion nor in favour of the immediate repatriation of the victims. In June, a police report was filed by the Investigating officer before the Trial Court. In the first week of July, our lawyer filed an application for recovery of the passports and visa of the survivors (as the same were in the custody of the Investigating officer) and also seeking repatriation of the victim. Survivors were also present before the court and they expressed their wish to the court to return home. The court informed the survivors that it will not allow repatriation until their evidence is completed. Evidence or testimony of the victim in any given case can take a lot of time. It can be finished in next 3 to 6 months or might even take more than a year. Our application for repatriation is still pending and we will continue to press it for seeking return of the survivors to their homes as early as possible.