# Executive Summary

“People are the real wealth of a nation” these are the words of the first ‘Human development report’ that condensed the essence of the works of Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq , the two renowned economists from the developing nations who altered the course of contemporary research from GDP to Human development. To value the life of its people is the only way a country can give itself a chance of growth. An extension of this thought is the ensuing project to create a ‘Pan India’ system that would streamline and strengthen the processes involved in finding missing persons.

In the year of 2006 the whole of India was shocked to hear of the horrors that had taken place in the sleepy town of Nithari, Noida. It led many to question as to how even though children had been reported missing in the local police stations no one took those reports seriously. This is one of the many cases of missing persons that are languishing in various police stations of the country. We have not been able to address the issue of missing persons with efficient policies and technology. Policies that are already in place vary from state to state; this creates problems of co-ordination between different law enforcement agencies.

One of the bigger issues with missing persons is the organized trafficking of men, women and children. The criminal activities like forced prostitution, organ trade and beggar rackets are some of the reasons for organized trafficking. Therefore the problem is twofold, first to identify whether the missing person case at hand is that of trafficking/abduction or voluntary disappearance and second that of deploying specialized experts to investigate and to trace the missing person.

The project till now has covered three broad areas that would help us create a Pan-India system to trace missing persons and to maintain records in order to help us prevent such cases in the future.

The first area has been to study the processes followed in the state of Delhi for the case of missing person. This was necessary in order to be able to pin point the effective as well as the ineffective practises being followed to trace missing persons.Police departments of various states have a Standard operating Procedure referred to as the SoP for various crimes and cases. Since law and order is a state subject different states have their own SoPs for the same crime. Though this is done to help law enforcement agencies efficiently solve different criminal cases, this unidirectional approach becomes a bane in the case of missing persons. A lot of times people are traced or are abducted or kidnapped to neighbouring or far flung states; and due to non-uniform processes followed in different states; units like Anti human trafficking unit (AHTU) or Missing person squad (MPS) have no idea as to who handles what in the other state.

Even the system that is presently available is not devoid of loop holes and short comings. In order to suggest a Pan India system that would be uniform across all the states of the country, we attempted to learn from the best practises followed by some leading states in the case of missing persons. These states were Andhra Pradesh and Delhi. Along with adopting some of the effective practises of these states, we also attempted to pin point the gaps or the shortcomings in the methods being followed in these two states. A comparative analysis of these two states is due for the final report.

The third area of research has been to look at various models and methods adopted by developed countries in order to find missing persons of their country. We have attempted at locating solutions that would be effective and relevant to the case of India. India with its huge population and cultural, regional and religious diversity needs solutions that are specific to its case.

We have followed a twofold research methodology of literature search and field visits. Literature search involved looking for already present provisions and initiatives and to find shortcomings therein. Field visits were done from time to time to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and the ground realities. Our research till the midterm has led to the following recommendations based on ways of eliminating the shortcomings that we found out during the literature search and field visits.

The recommendations of the project can be divided into broadly three areas of prevention, intervention and rehabilitation. Preventive measures would help in curbing such incidences from happening, intervention includes recommendations for the law enforcement agencies and NGOs during the investigation of a missing person case and rehabilitative measures are needed to help the victims in becoming of the mainstream again.

The recommendations are as follows-

* Prevention
* The knowledge of toll free helpline numbers should become a part of the curriculum of schools
* Studies should be conducted on the data on missing persons that will be available after the latest Supreme Court judgment through NCRB
* Need to change the issue of missing persons from a low priority case to a high priority one
* Need to create an advisory body of NGOs to bridge the gap between the government and the community
* Intervention
* Creation of a team of experts consisting of retired officers of various law enforcement agencies to discharge various roles during the course of investigation. This would also help solve the man force issues of the law enforcement agencies
* Provide basic knowledge of computers to every police personnel. This would save a lot of issues related to entering and retrieving information at various points in the database channel
* Control rooms do not have basic maintenance facilities required for the functioning of equipment. Rooms that hold such valuable data should have a cooling facility to enable the maintenance of equipment.
* India being an IT hub, facial recognition and ageing technology can be harnessed in a cost effective manner.
* There is a need to spread awareness about the rights of adults who have voluntarily run away from homes. But they should be encouraged to inform their family members of their wellbeing in order to decrease anxiety amongst the rest of the family members.
* Rehabilitation
* The advisory body of NGOs would facilitate maintaining of shelter homes/rescue homes/counselling centres with the help of the government.