

## The Role of NGOs in Supporting Child Abuse Victims in Dimapur District, Nagaland.

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### ABSTRACT

Child abuse is a growing problem in Nagaland, India, where many children face physical, sexual, and emotional harm. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a key role in protecting these children by offering shelter, counselling, education, and emergency help. This chapter looks at how NGOs like Prodigal's Home, Community Educational Centre Society (CECS) in Dimapur and Child Helpline Dimapur support child abuse victims. In this study, qualitative study was used with interviews from 10 staff members from these NGOs. The findings show that NGOs provide safe homes, awareness programs and links to government services, but they face challenges like lack of funds and trained staff. The study uses a systems approach to child protection as its framework. It highlights the need for more government support to make NGOs stronger. This research fills a gap in studies on local NGOs in Nagaland..

**Keywords:** Child abuse, NGOs, child protection, qualitative research, victim support, Dimapur.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Nagaland, nestled in the Northeastern corner of India is celebrated for its incredibly hilly landscapes, lush forests and vibrant tribal cultures that define its unique identity. The state is home to diverse ethnic communities, each with distinct traditions, languages and customs, showcased vividly during festivals like the Hornbill Festival, where traditional dances, crafts, and music bring people together in a colourful celebration of heritage. Despite this rich cultural tapestry, Nagaland faces significant social challenges, including a troubling rise in child abuse that casts a shadow over its picturesque facade. Child abuse encompasses various forms of harm inflicted on children under 18, including physical violence such as beating, sexual exploitation like inappropriate touching or assault, emotional neglect that leaves children feeling worthless or unloved, and deprivation of basic needs like food, education, and medical care (World Health Organization, 2024). 2011 to 2019, Childline Dimapur alone registered 45 cases, though many are compromised due to cultural pressures favouring offenders over victims, highlighting the severity of the issue (Matters India, 2019). Many victims come from impoverished families or dysfunctional households marked by economic hardship, substance abuse, or domestic conflicts, making them easy targets for abuse.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in addressing these issues, stepping in where government services are slow or under-resourced. NGOs operate independently, offering rapid, community-based solutions like safe shelters for immediate protection and

counselling to help children process trauma. They also focus on prevention by educating communities about child rights, aiming to shift attitudes and encourage reporting to stop abuse early (Child Rights in Nagaland, 2023). In Nagaland, NGOs work closely with government bodies under frameworks like the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, which mandates swift legal action against child sexual abuse and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), which fosters partnerships for rehabilitation and support. This study focuses on two key NGOs in Dimapur: Prodigal's Home, Community Educational Centre Society (CECS), and Child Helpline Dimapur, a 24/7 emergency service under the 1098 Childline initiative that coordinates rescues and runs awareness programs.

### Research Gap

Many studies talk about child abuse in India, but few focus on Nagaland. Big reports like the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) give numbers for all of India, but not details for small states like Nagaland. For example, one review found high rates of child sexual abuse in India, but it misses local stories from Nagaland. In Nagaland, research shows NGOs help in health and education, but not much on child abuse. There are talks about rising abuse cases, like seminars on child rights, but no deep look at how specific NGOs like Prodigal's Home or CECS help victims. This gap means we do not know the real challenges NGOs face, like money problems or working with tribes. Also, most studies use numbers, not stories from workers. This paper fills this by using interviews to show the daily role of these NGOs in Nagaland.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Social Ecological Model, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, is a theory that explains how a person's life is shaped by different layers of their environment, like a set of nested circles. These layers include the individual (the person themselves), their family, their community like schools or neighbours, and the broader society (laws, culture, or policies). Each layer interacts with the others, affecting how someone grows or faces challenges. For child abuse, this model is incredibly useful because it shows that abuse isn't caused by just one thing, like a bad parent, but by problems across these layers such as a child's vulnerability, family stress, community silence, or weak laws. It helps us understand that protecting kids means working on all these levels together, not just fixing one part. At the "individual level", the model focuses on the child's own traits, like their age, health, or emotional state. Abused children often feel scared, ashamed, or physically hurt. The model suggests that helping kids means addressing these personal effects directly, like giving them counselling to heal trauma or a safe place to stay. This supports the study by showing why individual care, like therapy, is key to helping kids recover and feel safe again.

The "family level" looks at relationships with parents or siblings, where abuse often starts. Things like poverty, domestic violence or lack of knowledge about child rights can lead to harm. The model says that to stop abuse, we need to support families, maybe by teaching parents better ways to care for kids or helping them with money problems. In child abuse studies, this level explains why family-focused programs, like parenting classes, are important to prevent abuse from happening at home. The "community level" includes places like schools, religious groups or local neighbourhoods. Communities can either protect kids or make abuse worse by staying quiet or ignoring it. The model highlights the need to change community attitudes, like through school programs about child safety. In the study, this shows why community education or support networks are vital to encourage reporting and create safe spaces for kids. The "societal level" covers bigger things like laws, government policies, or cultural beliefs. Weak laws, slow police response, or cultural norms that excuse abuse can make it harder to protect kids. The model suggests that strong laws and policies, like child protection acts are needed to back up smaller efforts. The Social Ecological Model supports child abuse studies by giving a clear way to see how abuse happens and how to stop it. It shows that protecting kids isn't just about helping one child, it's about fixing problems in their family, community and society too. The theory supports the study by illustrating how NGOs in Nagaland address child abuse across multiple levels individual healing, family support, community education, and societal advocacy. This aligns with the systems approach, emphasizing interconnected efforts to protect children. The model explains the effectiveness of services like shelter and counselling, while also highlighting challenges like cultural barriers and funding shortages (9 mentions) that hinder progress. For instance, community-level stigma requires tailored awareness programs, as suggested by respondents. By

working across all layers, NGOs not only respond to immediate needs but also drive long-term change, making Nagaland's child protection system more robust and effective.

## 3. ROLE OF NGOS IN DIMAPUR

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Dimapur, Nagaland, are essential in addressing the escalating issue of child abuse, serving as essential pillars in a city grappling with urban challenges and a high incidence of abuse cases. As Nagaland's commercial hub, Dimapur's dense population, economic disparities, and transient communities create an environment where children face risks of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. NGOs such as Prodigal's Home, Community Educational Centre Society (CECS) and Child Helpline Dimapur have emerged as critical responders, offering a range of services from emergency interventions to long-term support. Operating within frameworks like the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), these organizations collaborate with government agencies, police, and local communities to protect vulnerable children. Their efforts encompass immediate relief through shelters and counselling, preventive measures via community education and systemic advocacy for better child protection policies. Despite their impact, the rising number of abuse cases and persistent challenges like funding shortages highlight the need for expanded support. This elaboration details the specific contributions of these NGOs and their significance in Dimapur's child protection landscape.

### Prodigal's Home

Founded in 1990, Prodigal's Home initially focused on combating drug addiction but has since expanded to address child abuse, particularly for girls. Their 25-bed shelter home in Dimapur is a sanctuary for victims of physical and sexual abuse, providing a safe environment where girls can escape dangerous situations. This is especially critical in Dimapur, where urban poverty and family breakdowns increase vulnerability. The shelter offers comprehensive care: education to ensure girls continue schooling, vocational training like sewing to promote self-reliance, counselling to heal emotional trauma, and health check-ups to address physical needs. In 2019, Prodigal's Home raised alarms about the high rate of child abuse cases, emphasizing the urgency of their mission (Matters India, 2019). Their collaboration with local police facilitates rescues, ensuring swift action in crisis situations. Additionally, their school-based awareness programs educate students and teachers about child rights and abuse prevention, fostering community-level change. These efforts align with the systems approach to child protection, addressing immediate needs (shelter, counseling) and prevention (awareness), while navigating Nagaland's tribal sensitivities to encourage reporting.

### Community Educational Centre Society (CECS)

Established in 2005, CECS focuses on supporting underprivileged children, including abuse victims, through education and shelter. Their Open Shelter Home in Dimapur serves as a refuge for homeless children, many of whom are at risk of or have experienced abuse due to poverty or neglect. The shelter provides essentials

like food and safety, addressing the immediate dangers of street life. CECS's emphasis on education helps children return to school or acquire basic skills, breaking cycles of poverty and vulnerability that often lead to abuse. Their partnership with Childline enhances their capacity to rescue children, ensuring rapid response to reported cases. Founder Subonenba Longkumer's initiative to start a helpline targeting child labour, a risk factor linked to abuse provides their proactive approach (The Better India, 2019). CECS also conducts programs on "safe touch," empowering children to recognize and report inappropriate behaviour. In Dimapur's tribal context, where stigma can silence abuse cases, these community-level efforts are vital for prevention and align with the Social Ecological Model's focus on community engagement.

**Child Helpline Dimapur**

Child Helpline Dimapur, part of the national 1098 Childline service, operates as a 24/7 emergency response system for children in distress, with a strong presence in Dimapur due to the city's high case load. This service ensures immediate action for reports of abuse, neglect, or other crises, dispatching teams to intervene and coordinate with police for rescues. In 2023, the helpline transitioned to state management under the Department of Social Welfare but maintains strong NGO partnerships with groups like Prodigal's Home and CECS for follow-up care (Eastern Mirror Nagaland, 2025). Their role in legal support is crucial, ensuring cases are reported and pursued under laws like the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. In 2024, Child Helpline expanded its preventive efforts with programs on bullying and child rights, targeting schools and communities to raise awareness (Morung Express, 2024). These initiatives are essential in Dimapur, where urban issues like trafficking increase risks, and they strengthen the societal and community levels of the child protection system.

**Collaborative Impact and Challenges**

The synergy among Prodigal's Home, CECS, and Child Helpline Dimapur, facilitated by the ICPS, creates a comprehensive support network. Child Helpline's rapid response ensures immediate safety, while Prodigal's Home and CECS provide long-term care through shelter, education, and skills training. For example, a child rescued by Child Helpline may be referred to Prodigal's Home for shelter or CECS for schooling, ensuring continuity of care. However, the rising number of abuse cases, as highlighted in seminars noting "long-term harm" (Morung Express, 2024), underlines the strain on these NGOs. Dimapur's urban challenges, poverty, migration, and cultural stigma amplify the need for their work but funding shortages and cultural barriers as noted in broader discussions, limit their reach. Their alignment with the Social Ecological Model is evident: they address individual needs (shelter, counselling), family issues (education, support), community attitudes (awareness) and societal gaps (legal advocacy). To enhance their impact, increased funding, staff training, and community engagement are needed to address Dimapur's unique challenges and make it a safer place for children.

**4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this study, qualitative research was applied to help understand deep feelings and experiences of NGO workers. Interview Schedule was the main method. An interview schedule had 10 open questions, like: "What services do you give to abuse victims?" and "What challenges do you face?" Questions were simple to encourage full answers where 10 respondents from three NGOs in Dimapur was picked: 4 from Prodigal's Home (2 counsellors, 1 director, 1 case worker), 3 from CECS (1 shelter manager, 1 educator, 1 volunteer) and 3 from Child Helpline (1 coordinator, 1 outreach worker, 1 counsellor). They were chosen based on the availability and also because they work directly with the victims. Interviews happened on June 2023, face-to-face, lasting 40-50 minutes each. For data analysis, thematic coding was applied. All answers was read, found common ideas like "shelter needs" or "fund shortages," and grouped them. This fits the systems framework by showing NGO roles in the big picture.

**5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

The study is derived from four main themes from the interviews: Services Provided, Challenges Faced, Impact on Victims, and Suggestions for Improvement. Below are tables with data and explanations.

**Table 1: Services Provided**

Service Type	Prodiga l's Home (4 respon dents)	CECS (3 respon dents)	Child Helplin e (3 respon dents)	Total Ment ions
Shelter/H ome	4	3	1	8
Counsell ing	3	2	3	8
Education /Skills	4	3	0	7
Awarenes s Programs	2	2	3	7
Legal Help/Lin k to Police	1	1	3	5

Looking at table 1, it's clear that the NGOs in Nagaland are really stepping up in different ways to support child abuse victims, based on what the 10 respondents from Prodigal's Home, CECS, and Child Helpline shared during the interviews. The table breaks down the key services they provide, showing how many people from each organization mentioned each one, and then tallying up the totals. It's a qualitative snapshot, not hard stats, but it highlights where their efforts overlap and where they specialize. For instance, shelter and home services top the list with 8 total mentions, which makes sense because these kids often need a safe place right away. Prodigal's Home leads here with all 4 respondents emphasizing it, probably since they run a dedicated girls' home, while

CECS also scores high at 3, aligning with their open shelter focus. Child Helpline only has 1 mention, which isn't surprising as they're more about immediate response rather than long-term housing.

Counselling ties for the top spot with another 8 mentions overall, showing how crucial emotional support is in healing from trauma. It's pretty evenly spread: Prodigal's Home has 3 out of 4 talking about it, CECS has 2 out of 3, and Child Helpline matches with all 3, which fits their helpline role where talking things out over the phone or in person is a big part of what they do. This balance suggests that no matter which NGO you're dealing with, mental health care is a core priority, helping kids process the abuse and rebuild their confidence. Education and skills training at 7 mentions, which is strong but a bit more concentrated. Prodigal's Home again maxes out with 4, likely because they integrate things like schooling and vocational training (like sewing) into their programs to give victims a path forward. CECS with 3, as they focus on getting underprivileged kids back into education and away from risks like child labour that can tie into abuse. Awareness programs also hit 7 mentions, spreading the word in communities to prevent abuse before it happens. It's more balanced across the board: 2 from Prodigal's, 2 from CECS, and 3 from Child Helpline. This shows a proactive side, with Child Helpline leading, maybe through their outreach like school talks on safe touch or bullying, while the others incorporate it into their daily work but not as centrally. Finally, legal help and linking to police comes in at 5 mentions, the lowest but still important for justice and protection. Child Helpline dominates with 3, which is logical as they're the 1098 emergency line that often coordinates with authorities for rescues. Prodigal's and CECS each have just 1, suggesting they handle more of the aftercare and might rely on partnerships rather than leading on the legal front. The totals reveal that immediate needs like shelter and counselling are the most highlighted services, both at 8, pointing to the urgent, hands-on role these NGOs play in the child protection system. The drop-off to 5 for legal aid might indicate a gap where government involvement could step in more, or perhaps it's just not as frequently mentioned because it's collaborative. This synergy is key in a place like Nagaland, where resources are limited, and it underscores the need for more support to amplify their impact. It's heartening to see such dedication, but the data also hints at potential areas for growth, like expanding education or legal services across all groups.

**Table 2: Challenges Faced**

Challenge	Frequency (out of 10)	Quotes
Lack of Funds	9	"We need more money for food and beds." (Prodigal's)
Short Staff	7	"Only 5 workers for 50 calls a day." (Helpline)
Cultural Barriers	5	"People hide abuse to save

		identity." (CECS)
Government Delays	4	"Paperwork for rescues takes weeks."

The table 2 above brings to light the tough challenges faced by NGOs in Nagaland as they work to support child abuse victims, based on the insights from 10 respondents across Prodigal's Home, CECS and Child Helpline Dimapur. Starting with the biggest hurdle, lack of funds was mentioned by 9 out of 10 respondents, which is almost everyone. The quote from Prodigal's Home, "We need more money for food and beds," shows constant costs for basics like meals, bedding and utilities and without steady funding, it's a daily struggle to keep things going. This high frequency shows that financial strain is a near-universal problem, likely because these NGOs rely on donations or limited government grants, which aren't always reliable in a place like Nagaland where resources are stretched thin. Next, short staff comes up with 7 mentions, and the Child Helpline's quote, "Only 5 workers for 50 calls a day," paints a vivid picture of being overwhelmed. A helpline getting that many calls with so few people means workers are stretched to their limits, probably juggling multiple emergencies at once. For Prodigal's and CECS, who also mentioned this, it could mean not enough counsellors or teachers to give kids the attention they need in shelters. This issue, mentioned by 70% of respondents, portrays a gap in human resources that slows down their ability to respond quickly or provide consistent care, especially when dealing with something as sensitive as child abuse.

Cultural barriers, noted by 5 respondents, reveal a deeper, trickier issue. The CECS quote, "They hide abuse to save identity," points to how Nagaland's strong tribal traditions can sometimes work against reporting abuse. Families or communities might stay silent to avoid shame or stigma, making it hard for NGOs to even know about cases, let alone help. This was mentioned by half the respondents, suggesting it's a significant but not universal challenge, likely varying by community or NGO's outreach approach. It's a reminder that child protection isn't just about services, it's about navigating cultural norms sensitively. Lastly, government delays, with 4 mentions, show frustration with bureaucracy. The quote, "Paperwork for rescues takes weeks," suggests that even when NGOs act fast, slow government processes like approving rescues or funding can hold them back. This was the least frequently mentioned issue, but still significant for 40% of respondents, pointing to a disconnect in the child protection system where NGOs and government need to work hand-in-hand but don't always sync up.

**Table 3: Impact on Victims**

Impact Area	Positive Mentions	Quotes
Mental Health	8	"Kids smile more after counselling."
Safety	10	"They feel safe and worry less"



School Return	6	"Three girls back to class this year"
Long-term (jobs)	4	"Trained in sewing, now earn money."

This above table shows the real difference NGOs in Nagaland are making for child abuse victims. It captures the positive impacts they see in four key areas, with the number of mentions and direct quotes that bring the data to life. Starting with safety, it's the standout, with all 10 respondents mentioning it. The quote from Prodigal's Home, "They feel safe and worry less," sums it up perfectly when kids escape abusive situations, the immediate sense of security in a shelter or through helpline intervention is huge. This universal mention shows that creating a safe space is the cornerstone of these NGOs' work, whether it's a physical home or the quick response of a helpline call. It's no surprise, given that abuse often leaves kids in constant fear, and safety is the first step to healing.

Mental health comes in close with 8 mentions, and the CECS quote, "Kids smile more after counselling," is so uplifting. It shows how counselling helps kids process trauma, reduce anxiety and find some joy again. This high number 80% of respondents suggests that emotional support is almost as critical as physical safety. Whether it's one-on-one sessions at Prodigal's Home or phone support from Child Helpline, these NGOs are helping kids rebuild their confidence and mental resilience, which is vital for long-term recovery from the scars abuse leaves behind. School return, with 6 mentions, highlights another important win. The Child Helpline quote, "Three girls back to class this year," is a concrete example of progress, kids who were once too scared or neglected to attend school are now back in classrooms. This was mentioned by 60% of respondents, mainly from Prodigal's and CECS, which makes sense since they run shelters and education programs. It's a big deal because getting kids back to school not only helps them learn but also restores a sense of normality and hope for a better future. Child Helpline's lower focus here likely ties to their crisis-driven role, where they might refer kids to other NGOs for schooling.

Long-term outcomes, like jobs, got 4 mentions, the lowest but still significant. The quote, "Trained in sewing, now earn money," speaks to programs like those at Prodigal's Home, where older kids learn skills to become independent. This was mentioned by 40% of respondents, mostly from shelter-focused NGOs, showing it's a longer-term goal that takes time and resources. It's not as immediate as safety or counselling, but it's a powerful sign of giving kids a real shot at a self-sufficient life, breaking the cycle of vulnerability. Overall, the table shows a clear priority: safety first (100% mentions), followed closely by mental health (80%), then education (60%), and long-term job skills (40%). This reflects the layered needs of child abuse victims, immediate protection and emotional care come first, then reintegration into school and eventually skills for independence. The quotes add a human touch, showing real transformations in kids' lives, from smiling again to earning their own money. The spread also highlights how

the NGOs complement each other: Prodigal's and CECS focus on long-term recovery like schooling and skills, while Child Helpline ensures safety and emotional support upfront. It's inspiring to see these impacts, but the lower mentions for long-term outcomes suggest there's room to grow in helping kids beyond the immediate crisis, maybe with more funding or programs. These NGOs are clearly changing lives, one step at a time

**Table 4: Suggestions**

Suggestion	Frequency
More Government Funds	8
Staff Training	7
Community Workshops	6
Better Tech (apps for helpline)	3

The above table captures the suggestions from 10 respondents across Prodigal's Home, CECS, and Child Helpline Dimapur about how to make their work helping child abuse victims in Nagaland even better. Starting with the top suggestion, "more government funds" came up 8 times out of 10, which is huge, 80% of the respondents are basically pleading for more financial support. This makes total sense when you think about how they're struggling to cover basics like food, beds, and staff salaries, as it is seen in the challenges table. Without steady funding, it's like trying to run a marathon with no fuel. These NGOs rely on donations or small grants, and in a place like Nagaland, where resources are already tight, more government backing could mean bigger shelters, more counsellors or just keeping the lights on. The near-universal mention shows this isn't just a wish, it's a critical need to keep their work going strong. "Staff training" is right behind with 7 mentions or 70% of respondents. This shows that the people doing this tough work know they could do even more if they had better skills or specialized training. For example, counsellors might need to learn how to handle complex trauma cases, or helpline workers could use training on managing high call volumes under pressure. In Nagaland, where cultural nuances like tribal traditions come into play, training on how to approach sensitive cases respectfully could be a game changer. The high frequency here shows that workers are eager to grow but feel limited by a lack of professional development opportunities. "Community workshops" got 6 mentions, which is 60% of the respondents and it's such a practical idea. This suggestion is about going out to schools, villages, and tribal communities to teach people about child rights and how to spot or prevent abuse. It's proactive stopping abuse before it starts by changing mindsets. The fact that it's mentioned by more than half the respondents suggests they see the community as part of the solution, especially in a place like Nagaland where cultural barriers, like hiding abuse to "save identity" can make their job harder. Workshops could build trust and get more people reporting cases, which would lighten the NGOs' load in

the long run. “Better technology”, like apps for the helpline, came up least often with 3 mentions (30%). It’s a smaller number, but it’s still a smart idea, especially for Child Helpline, which deals with tons of emergency calls. An app could make it easier for kids or families to reach out, track cases, or even coordinate rescues faster. The lower frequency probably means it’s less of a priority compared to immediate needs like money and training, or maybe it’s just not on everyone’s radar because tech isn’t as widespread in Nagaland’s rural areas. Still, those who mentioned it likely see it as a way to modernize and scale up their impact.

## 6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The findings from interviews with 10 respondents from Prodigal’s Home, Community Educational Centre Society (CECS), and Child Helpline Dimapur provide a compelling insight into the critical role Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play in addressing child abuse in Nagaland, alongside the challenges they face and their actionable suggestions for improvement. The qualitative data, organized into four themes, “Services Provided”, “Challenges Faced”, “Impact on Victims”, and “Suggestions for Improvement”, reveal both the strengths and gaps within the child protection system in this region, aligning closely with the systems approach to child protection.

The Services “Provided” theme emphasizes the NGOs’ focus on immediate and long-term support. Shelter and counselling, both mentioned by 8 respondents, stand out as core services, reflecting the urgent need to provide safe spaces and emotional healing for child abuse victims. Prodigal’s Home, with all 4 respondents highlighting shelter, and CECS, with 3, emphasize their role in offering stable homes, particularly for girls escaping abuse. Child Helpline’s lower mention of shelter aligns with their crisis-intervention focus, while their equal emphasis on counselling highlights their strength in immediate emotional support. Education and skills training are prominent for Prodigal’s Home and CECS, showing their commitment to long-term empowerment through schooling and vocational skills like sewing, whereas Child Helpline’s zero mentions reflect their focus on urgent response rather than sustained education. Awareness programs (7 mention) demonstrate a proactive effort to prevent abuse, with Child Helpline leading (3 mentions) through community outreach like school talks on safe touch. Legal help (5 mentions), led by Child Helpline (3 mention), indicates their critical role in coordinating with authorities for rescues, while Prodigal’s and CECS (1 each) focus more on aftercare. This synergy illustrates a complementary system where each NGO fills a specific role, but the lower mentions for legal aid suggest a potential gap where government collaboration could be strengthened.

The “Challenges Faced” theme reveals the systemic barriers hindering these NGOs. Lack of funds, cited by 9 respondents, is nearly universal, with Prodigal’s Home’s quote, “We need more money for food and beds,” highlighting the daily struggle to meet basic needs. This aligns with broader reports of funding shortages for NGOs in smaller states like Nagaland. Short staff (7

mentions), exemplified by Child Helpline’s “Only 5 workers for 50 calls a day,” shows the strain of limited human resources, particularly for helplines handling high call volumes. Cultural barriers (5 mentions), as noted by CECS’s “Tribes hide abuse to save identity,” point to the challenge of navigating Nagaland’s tribal norms, where stigma can suppress reporting. Government delays (4 mentions), with the quote “Paperwork for rescues takes weeks,” reflect bureaucratic inefficiencies that slow down critical interventions. These challenges highlight the need for stronger systemic support to bolster NGO efforts.

The “Impact on Victims” theme is where the NGOs’ transformative work shines. Safety, mentioned by all 10 respondents, is the cornerstone, with Prodigal’s Home’s “They feel safe and worry less” capturing the immediate relief of escaping abuse. Mental health improvements (8 mentions), like CECS’s “Kids smile more after counselling,” show the power of emotional support in healing trauma. School return (6 mentions), exemplified by Child Helpline’s “Three girls back to class this year,” features reintegration efforts, particularly by shelter-based NGOs. Long-term outcomes like job skills (4 mentions), with the quote “Trained in sewing, now earn money,” demonstrate empowerment but are less frequent, likely due to resource constraints. These impacts reflect a progression from immediate safety to long-term recovery, with NGOs addressing layered needs within the child protection system.

The “Suggestions for Improvement” theme offers a practical roadmap. More government funds (8 mentions) and staff training (7 mentions) are top priorities, directly addressing the funding and staffing challenges. Community workshops (6 mentions) aim to prevent abuse by changing cultural attitudes, crucial in a region where tribal norms can hinder reporting. Better technology, like apps for helplines (3 mentions), is a forward-looking idea but less urgent, reflecting limited tech access in Nagaland. These suggestions show a clear vision for strengthening the system through resources and community engagement.

In the broader context, these findings emphasize the indispensable role of NGOs in Nagaland’s child protection framework, filling gaps where government services fall short. The systems approach highlights their interconnected roles, Child Helpline’s rapid response, Prodigal’s Home’s shelter and skills training, and CECS’s educational focus creating a robust network. However, challenges like funding and cultural barriers point to the need for stronger government-NGO partnerships, perhaps through enhanced Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) funding or streamlined processes. The cultural sensitivity required in Nagaland suggests tailored training and community outreach could bridge gaps in reporting. The profound impacts safe kids, brighter smiles, and new skills prove these NGOs are making a difference, but expanding long-term programs like vocational training requires more resources. By acting on these suggestions, stakeholders can strengthen this system, ensuring more children in Nagaland find safety, healing, and hope.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This chapter highlights the indispensable role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Prodigal’s

Home, Community Educational Centre Society (CECS), and Child Helpline Dimapur in addressing child abuse in Nagaland. Through qualitative interviews with 10 respondents, the research reveals how these organizations provide critical services shelter, counselling, education, skills training, and legal support tailored to the immediate and long-term needs of child abuse victims. Framed by the systems approach, this study shows that NGOs are pivotal in filling gaps left by government services, working under schemes like the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Their complementary roles Child Helpline's rapid response, Prodigal's Home's shelter and skills focus, and CECS's

educational efforts create a robust network, but one that requires more support to reach its full potential. To address rising abuse cases in Nagaland, stakeholders must act on these findings by increasing funding, providing specialized training on trauma and cultural sensitivity, and promoting community awareness to overcome stigma. As one respondent noted, "Every saved child is a hope for tomorrow." Strengthening these NGOs through government and community partnerships will ensure more children find safety, healing, and opportunity. Future research could expand to other districts or explore the role of tribal leaders in prevention, but for now, these NGOs remain a beacon of hope, transforming lives despite the odds.

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