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Global Girlhood Report 2021: Girls Right in Crisis

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Why in News

Recently, an **Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)**, Save the Children released the **Global Girlhood Report 2021: Girls Right in Crisis**.

International Day of the Girl Child

- **About:**

- It is observed annually on **11th October**. It was declared by the **United Nations** (UN), which was first observed in 2012.

A resolution to declare **11th October** as the International Day of the Girl Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 19th December 2011.

- The day is **dedicated to raising awareness on gender equality** while assuring rights and improving opportunities for girls.

- **Theme for 2021:**

Digital generation. Our generation.

Key Points

- **Rate of Child Marriage:**

West and Central Africa **has the highest rate of child marriage** in the world.

- **Death Due to Child Marriage:**

- **Child marriage kills more than 60 girls a day** globally, 26 girls a day in West and Central Africa and **six girls a day** in South Asia.

South Asia is followed by **East Asia** and the **Pacific** and **Latin American** and the **Caribbean**.

- The deaths are majorly caused from **pregnancy and childbirth** resulting from child marriage.

- **Effect of Covid on Child Marriage:**

With school closures, health services under strain or closed, and more families being pushed into poverty, women and girls face an increased risk of violence during lengthy **lockdowns**.

- **A further 10 million girls** are now **expected to marry by 2030**, leaving more girls at risk of dying.
- Earlier, according to a report published by ChildLine India **the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown have proved to be new drivers of child marriages** in rural Madhya Pradesh.
- Also some activists and organisations of Karnataka have raised the issue of **increased child marriages in Lockdown** with the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

- **Suggestions:** The report called on the governments to:

- **Help Girls Raising Voices:**

Raise girls' voices by **supporting their right to safe and meaningful participation** in all public decision-making.

- **Focus on Gender Equality:**

Address immediate and ongoing risks of **gender-based violence**, including child marriage, by putting **girls' rights and gender equality at the center** of **Covid-19** and humanitarian responses, development policy, and broader efforts to build forward better.

- **Guarantee Girls Their Rights:**

Guarantee the rights of all girls, **including those impacted by different forms of inequality and discrimination** by developing inclusive policies and programs. Safe and ethical data collection must also be improved to better understand and respond in real-time to Covid-19's impact on existing economic, climate, and conflict-related crises.

- **Ensure Participation of Female Staffs:**

Ensure the **safe and unrestricted participation of female humanitarian staff in all humanitarian response efforts**, including needs assessments and the design, implementation, and monitoring, and evaluation of all humanitarian services at every level.

- **Join the Generation Equality Movement:**

The movement is working to deliver on the **Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality** (launched by Generation Equality Forum), which set a target to prevent nine million child marriages in five years.

- **Related Indian Initiatives:**

- The **Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929** restricts the practice of child marriage.
- The **Special Marriage Act, 1954** and the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006** prescribe 18 and 21 years as the minimum age of consent for marriage for women and men respectively.

The **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006** was enacted to address and fix the shortcomings of the Child Marriage Restraint Act.

- The **Union Ministry for Women and Child Development** has set up a committee to examine matters pertaining to age of motherhood, imperatives of lowering **Maternal Mortality Ratio** and the improvement of nutritional levels among women. The Committee is headed by Jaya Jaitely.

The Committee was proposed in the **Union Budget 2020-21**.

- Prevention of Child Marriage is a part of **SDG 5** which deals with gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

Child Marriages India Specific Data

- **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** estimates suggest that each year, at least **1.5 million girls under 18 get married in India**, which makes it home to the **largest number of child brides in the world** - accounting for a third of the global total.

Nearly 16% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 are currently married.

- While the prevalence of girls getting married before age 18 has **declined from 47% to 27% between 2005-2006 and 2015-2016**.

Source: IE