



National Girl Child Day

Why in News

- National Girl Child Day was celebrated on 24, January 2019.
- Theme for this year National Girl Child Day is “Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow”.
- It will be celebrated with objectives of generating awareness on the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and create a positive environment around valuing the girl child.

Introduction

- The National Girl Child Day is celebrated in India every year on January 24.
- It was first initiated in 2008 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- National Girl Child Day aims to promote awareness on a range of issues including education, health, and nutrition, legal rights, medical care, protection, child marriage, freedom etc.

Issues Related to Girl Child

- **Female Infanticide and Foeticide**
 - Killing of a girl child after birth has been observed in the Indian society and was first discovered way-back in 1789.
 - The census of 2011 has recorded the lowest ever sex ratio of 914 in the age group 0-6 years with 3 million missing girls; from 78.8 million in 2001 to 75.8 million in 2011.
 - Female foeticide is due to strong son preference, the practice of dowry and the patrilineal necessity of heir.
- **Early Marriage**
 - Legal age of marriage for a girl is 18 years however, 36.8 percent of girls are married off before attaining 18 years of age and the median age of the girls at the first marriage is 17.2 years.
 - Child marriage results in lack of opportunity to education, sexual exploitation, violence and early pregnancy. It deprives the girl children of their childhood and poses serious health risks for them.
- **Malnutrition**
 - Both boys and girls are almost equally likely to be undernourished. For the girls, the nutritional intake is relatively inferior both in terms of the quality and the quantity. The health of the girls also suffers due to additional burden from early and multiple pregnancies.
 - Due to patriarchal society, boys are given relatively more nutritious food as they are deemed bread winners of family, especially if the family is poor and is not in a position to provide nutritious food to all the children.
 - Poor nutritional status of women during the reproductive period is responsible for the under-nutrition of the children.
- **Education**
 - There is wide gender disparity in access to primary and secondary education. Its elimination has been accepted as the starting point for promoting gender equality and women empowerment.
 - There are several factors responsible for the dropping out of the girls from schools such as early marriage, household works, assisting the family members, looking after siblings,

distant schools, lack of female teacher, lack of toilet facilities etc.

▪ **Health and Mortality**

- The under-five mortality of boy reduced to 39 deaths per 1,000 live births. The under-five mortality of the girl child is 40 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- Numbers are still high if compared to International standards which saw a girl child survival rates are 11 per cent higher than boys.
- Neglect and Discrimination
- Neglect and discrimination against girls denies them their basic human rights. To a large It is socially sanctioned by the norms of our society which denies a girl child personal autonomy, entitlements to proper and balanced food, education, healthcare and other opportunities of growth.
- The discrimination is amply reflected in the gaps in child sex ratio, educational attainment, child marriages, health, malnutrition, IMR, MMR and other development indicators.

Solutions to Gender Problems

- **Raising Social Awareness:** Patriarchal social attitudes and prejudices need to be addressed by including sensitisation on gender issues in school education.
- **Legal Approach** by bringing laws to protect and uplift the women in Indian society e.g. Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994 is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to stop female foeticides and arrest the declining sex ratio in India. The act banned prenatal sex determination.
- **Health and Nutrition:** For addressing the problem of the health and nutrition among the adolescent girls, Kishori Shakti Yojana was launched in 2000 as part of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). Later in the year 2002-03; it was reinforced with the Nutritional Programme for the Adolescent Girls.
 - The recently launched National Nutrition Programme strives to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia and low birth weight babies.
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme:** The sharp decline in sex ratio as pointed by Census 2011 data called for urgent action. Coordinated and convergent efforts are needed to ensure survival, protection and education of the girl child. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme was launched on 22nd January, 2015 in Panipat, Haryana to address the issue of decline in CSR and related issues of empowerment of girls and women over a life cycle continuum.
- **UJJAWALA:** To tackle problem of trafficking a Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-Integration of Victims of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation is introduced.
 - The Scheme has the following main components: 1. Prevention 2. Rescue 3. Rehabilitation 4. Re-Integration.
- **Political Empowerment:** Reservation for women in Lok Sabha can be provided to enhance women participation in policy making on the lines of reservation of seats for women in local self-government which created millions of grassroot women leaders. This will ensure more empathetic policy making to deal with issues concerning women.

Conclusion

- Gender discrimination has high socio-economic cost for women and a society as whole e.g. India has one of the lowest female labour force participation rates (27%) among the emerging market economies and developing nations. Estimates suggest India could boost its GDP by 16-60% by 2025 if it enables women to participate in the economy at par with men.
- India has obligations under Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) e.g. Goal 5 calls for achieving Gender equality as well as goals under National Health Mission e.g. reducing Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) to 1/1000 live births, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) to 25/1000 live births and Prevention and reduction of anemia in women aged 15-49 years need to be met.

