



Progress in Ending Child Marriage

For Prelims: [Sustainable Development Goal 5.3](#), [UNICEF](#), [Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2006](#), Child Marriage Prohibition Officers, Dhanalakshmi Scheme.

For Mains: Major Factors Associated with Child Marriage, Legislative Framework and Initiatives Related to Child Marriage in India.

[Source: ET](#)

Why in News?

A recent study published in 'The Lancet Global Health' journal sheds light on the **prevailing scenario of child marriage in India**, revealing both progress and setbacks in the fight against this deeply rooted practice.

What are the Major Trends Highlighted by the Study?

- **Status in India:**
 - Girl child marriages declined from **49% in 1993 to 22% in 2021**. Boy child marriages reduced from **7% in 2006 to 2% in 2021**, indicating an overall national decline.
 - However, between **2016 and 2021**, the progress plateaued, with certain states experiencing a troubling rise in child marriages.
 - Notably, six states witnessed an **increase in girl child marriages**, including **Manipur, Punjab, Tripura, and West Bengal**.
 - Eight states observed a rise in boy child marriages, encompassing **Chhattisgarh, Goa, Manipur, and Punjab**.
- **Global Trends:** Globally, progress against child marriage has been notable, but the [Covid-19 pandemic](#) threatens this advancement, putting approximately **10 million more girls at risk of child marriage** over a decade.

What are the Major Factors Associated with Child Marriage?

- **Economic Factors:** Families living in poverty might see **marriage as a means to reduce the economic burden** by transferring responsibility for the girl to her husband's family.
 - In some regions, the tradition of providing dowry can influence families to **marry off daughters at a young age to avoid higher dowry costs later**.
 - Also, in areas prone to [natural disasters](#) or **agrarian crises**, families facing economic hardships might resort to early marriage as a coping mechanism or to secure stability.
- **Social Norms and Traditional Practices:** Long-held customs and traditions often prioritize **early marriage as a social norm**, perpetuating the practice across generations.
 - **Pressure from the community or family** to conform to prevalent customs and traditions lead to early marriages, particularly for girls.
- **Gender Inequality and Discrimination:** Unequal power dynamics and **limited agency for girls compared to boys** contribute significantly to early marriage.

- **Lack of access to education and opportunities for girls often pushes families to opt for early marriages**, viewing it as a way to secure their daughters' futures.

Note

[UNICEF](#) categorizes **child marriage as a human rights violation** due to its adverse impacts on the development of both girls and boys.

- [Sustainable Development Goal 5.3](#) states that Child marriage elimination is pivotal in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5, aiming for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls by 2030.
- According to the UN, **1 in 5 young women worldwide** (19%) were married in childhood in 2022.

What are the Legislative Framework and Initiatives Related to Child Marriage in India?

- **Legislative Framework:** India enacted the [Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2006](#), establishing the legal age for marriage at 21 for men and 18 for women.
 - Section 16 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act allows State Governments to appoint '**Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPO)**' for specific areas.
 - CMPOs are responsible for preventing child marriages, collecting evidence for prosecutions, counseling against promoting or aiding such marriages, raising awareness about their harmful effects, and sensitizing communities
 - Government has introduced a bill namely '**the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021 for raising the age of marriage of women to 21 years** to make it at par with the men.
- **Related Initiatives:**
 - **Dhanalakshmi Scheme:** It is a conditional cash transfer scheme for a girl child with insurance coverage.
 - It also aims to **eliminate child marriage by offering parents insurance coverage** of medical expenses and encouraging the education of the girl child.
 - Schemes like [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao \(BBBP\)](#), also aims to empower girls through education, health and protection, and discourage child marriage.

Note

Odisha Government has devised a comprehensive strategy to tackle child marriage. They track girls' school attendance and village presence and utilize the "**Advika**" platform for girls aged 10 to 19.

- Guidelines are in place to **declare villages free of child marriage**, with incentives for vulnerable tribal groups.
- Districts implement various approaches, such as maintaining girl databases and mandating [Aadhaar numbers](#) in marriages.

Way Forward

- **Economic Empowerment Initiatives:** Offering **vocational training and entrepreneurship opportunities to girls at risk**, providing viable alternatives to early marriage.
 - Facilitate access to microloans for families, encouraging income generation and reducing financial pressure for early marriages.
- **Community Engagement through Art and Media:** Organizing **art-based workshops, theater performances, or community storytelling sessions** to engage and educate on the

consequences of child marriage.

- Collaborate with local artists and influencers to create impactful campaigns via music, street art, or short films.

▪ **Peer Education and Mentorship Programs:** Training **young leaders as advocates against child marriage**, empowering them to educate and mentor peers within their communities.

- Introducing comprehensive education modules within schools, fostering discussions and awareness among students.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Examine the main provisions of the National Child Policy and throw light on the status of its implementation. **(2016).**

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