



## 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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