

AIR Spotlight - Government Initiatives for Welfare of Women and Children

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panelists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, a discussion about the various government initiatives for the welfare of women and children is featured.

Participants:

1. Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, Minister of Women and Child Development of India
2. Sonu Sood, AIR Correspondent

Context:

The interview gives an insight into the achievements of the Women and Child Development Ministry of India in the recent past.

Details

The Minister adds that women have been central to the government's efforts and every department of all the ministries have put in consolidated efforts for the cause of women and children.

A few initiatives and their achievements are to be seen below:

- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)**
 - It was launched on April 8, 2015, by the Prime Minister to provide loans to micro and small business units.
 - MUDRA is the acronym for Micro-Units Development Refinance Agency.
 - Under MUDRA, entrepreneurs get loans of various amounts up to Rs.10 lakhs to start their business.
 - This scheme apart from providing support to small businesses also links them to the formal sector i.e. to the banking sector.
 - It is to be noted that even though the scheme is not gender-specific, about 70% of beneficiaries from the scheme are women.
 - **Know more about the [Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana](#) in the link.**
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)**
 - It was launched by Shri Narendra Modi in August 2014.

- It is a national mission to provide access to various financial services including Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension, Banking Savings & Deposit Accounts in an affordable manner.
- Around 70% of the women now have their savings account compared to 28% earlier.
- **10 crore** toilets built as a part of the **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** have also reaped benefits for women.
- **The Ayushman Bharat Program**
 - It is an umbrella health scheme of the Government of India that was launched in 2018.
 - The scheme offers eligible families an insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakh per annum per family.
 - This would cover 10 crore women and girls and provide them with affordable healthcare.
 - **Know more about the [Ayushman Bharat program](#) in the link.**
- India has also seen the rise of women in various leadership and entrepreneurship roles in the manufacturing and banking sectors.

Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021

A bill was introduced seeking to raise the legal age of marriage for women from 18 years currently to 21 years, in the winter session of the Parliament in December 2021.

Reasons for Introduction of the Bill

- NFHS-4 reported that around 8% of girls between the ages of 15 and 18 were found to be pregnant.
- A survey of women aged 23-24 years revealed that around 23% of them were married before the age of 18.
- Early marriage also has a huge effect on the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR).
- The early age of marriage and pregnancies have huge implications on the overall health and mental wellbeing of mothers and children.
- The bill is also aimed at empowering women who are denied access to various social-economic benefits due to early marriage.
- After 75 years of Independence, it is also required to bring uniformity in the age of marriage between men and women.
- It is also required that the right to equality should prevail with respect to all women from all faiths to get equal and uniform rights in marriage.

Know more about the [Prohibition of Child Marriage \(Amendment\) Bill, 2021](#) in the link.

Initiatives to assist Women & Children affected due to COVID Pandemic

- The government announced a special “PM CARES for children” program for all children orphaned by Covid-19 who lost their parents or single parents or legal guardians or adoptive parents due to Covid-19.
- A digital platform was created to integrate data from every district magistrate about the children affected due to the pandemic.
- All women helpline numbers were made to function 24/7 during the initial lockdown.
- Creation of a one-stop service centre to help protect women against violence during the lockdown and amalgamate the police, legal and medical services across the country in over 700 districts.
- The women's shelter homes and childcare institutions were provided with the required support by the local administration.
- It is also important to acknowledge the role played by female frontline workers, ASHA workers, and Anganwadi workers during the tough times.
- Jan-Dhan Yojana and Bank Sakhi Yojana provided assistance to women in digital transactions.
- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection Amendment) Bill, 2021** has also been introduced recently, which gives increased powers and responsibilities to the District Magistrates who are being made to ensure speedy trials, increase protection for children and also speed up the adoption processes in the country.

ChildLine India Initiative

- ChildLine 1098 is an initiative for rescuing and assisting children in distress.
- It is currently being operated by an NGO called **ChildLine India Foundation** working under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- A new proposal is underway to transfer the administrative control of Childline 1098 to the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- This will facilitate the transfer of the calls directly to the Police officials and negate the delay in the process.

Poshan Abhiyan

- Poshan Abhiyaan, also known as the National Nutrition Mission (NNM), was launched in 2018 to tackle the problem of malnutrition that is prevalent in India.
- Poshan Abhiyaan is India’s flagship scheme to improve the nutritional outcomes of adolescents, children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.
- Recently the government introduced the **Poshan Tracker**, a mobile-based application that uses technology for dynamic identification of stunting, wasting, under-weight prevalence among children, and last-mile tracking of nutrition service delivery.
- The robust system currently tracks around 9 crore beneficiaries daily and fills the gaps prevailing in the system.

Conclusion

Though several conferences and programs like the Poshan Pakwada, Rashtriya Poshan Maah, and National Conference on Women Winning against TB have been taken up by the ministry for sensitizing people and creating awareness, there is a need for societal understanding that changes from within the communities and families are required to safeguard women from violence.

