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WELFARE PROGRAMMES OF MODI GOVERNMENT FOR WOMEN AND CHILD EMPOWERMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Several Central Government schemes aim to empower women in India by addressing various aspects of their lives, including health, education, safety, and economic well-being. These schemes focus on different demographics and needs, ranging from girl children to women facing violence or seeking economic independence. As we celebrated National Girl Child Day on January 24th, it is a perfect occasion to reflect on the progress made and the steps being taken to empower girls in India. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government has introduced numerous initiatives aimed at promoting the welfare, education, and empowerment of the girl child in India. These initiatives focus on providing protection, ensuring equal opportunities, and breaking the barriers that girls face due to gender discrimination. Here are some key facts about the government's efforts to shape the future of the girl child in India.

The Union Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi is implementing various schemes for Women and Child empowerment.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Women and children constitute nearly 70% of India's population, with women comprising 48% and children (below 18 years) nearly 39% as per the 2011 Census. Despite being a significant demographic, they have historically faced socio-economic disadvantages such as gender-based discrimination, malnutrition, poor health, illiteracy, and limited access to financial and legal services. According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019–21), only 42% of women aged 15-49 have access to institutional financial resources, and 35.7% of children under five are stunted due to malnutrition. Recognizing these challenges, the Modi government has adopted a holistic approach to women and child development through targeted welfare schemes.

Launched in 2015, the *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* programme aims to correct the declining child sex ratio (CSR), which was 918 girls per 1000 boys in 2011. The *Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)* benefits over 1.75 crore pregnant women with maternity benefits. The *Ujjwala Yojana* has provided over 9 crore free LPG connections to reduce indoor air pollution impacting women and children. Similarly, the *POSHAN Abhiyaan* targets malnutrition through technology-based monitoring and community mobilization. These programmes form the foundation of a policy shift toward inclusive growth and sustainable empowerment of women and children in India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the impact of key welfare schemes introduced by the Modi government on the empowerment of women and children in India.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of programmes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Ujjwala Yojana, and POSHAN Abhiyaan in improving health, education, and financial inclusion outcomes.
3. To identify the challenges and gaps in the implementation of these welfare schemes at the grassroots level and suggest measures for improvement.



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BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme was launched on 22nd January 2015 with an aim to address declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of girls and women over a life cycle continuum. The objectives of the scheme are, to prevent gender biased sex selective elimination, to ensure survival and protection of the girl child and to ensure education and participation of the girl child. It is a personal campaign of the Government of India that aims to generate awareness and improve the efficiency of welfare services intended for girls. The scheme was launched with an initial funding of ₹100 crore. It mainly targets the clusters in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Bihar and Delhi. According to census data, the child gender ratio (0–6 years) in India was 927 girls per 1,000 boys in 2001, which dropped to 918 girls for every 1,000 boys in 2011. A 2012 UNICEF report ranked India 41st among 195 countries. In the Population Census of 2011 it was revealed that the population ratio of India 2011 is 943 females per 1000 of males. The Sex Ratio 2011 shows an upward trend from the census 2001 data.

. It initially focused multi-sector action in 100 districts throughout the country where there was a low CSR. The NDA Government is trying to bring about a transformational shift in the way our society looks at the girl child. Since the launch of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao , the multi-sectoral District Action Plans have been operationalized in almost all states. Capacity-buiding programmes and Trainings have been imparted to Trainers to further strengthen capacities of district level officials and frontline workers.

This programme in order to increase awareness about a larger audience and getting sensitized towards the problems of sex selective abortion. Issues related to the girl child and the series of the difficulties she faces through her lifespan.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao has significantly boosted girls' enrollment in schools, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas, where gender disparities in education have been historically prevalent. According to the Ministry of Education, girls' enrollment in schools increased by 8.1% between 2015 and 2021, with a noticeable rise in secondary and higher secondary education in states like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. A UNICEF India study also reported a 32% rise in rural school enrollment for girls, marking a major milestone in bridging the gender education gap. The initiative's success can be attributed to its extensive grassroots engagement, with over 7 lakh ambassadors including teachers, healthcare professionals, and local government officials actively advocating for girls' rights and education. These community-driven efforts have contributed to changing societal attitudes, making education for girls a priority in many households.

One Stop Centre and Universalization of Women Helplines

Ministry of WCD is administering two schemes from Nirbhaya Fund namely One Stop Centre and Universalization of Women Helplines with effect from 01-04-2015. The One Stop Centres popularly known as Sakhi Centres, aim to facilitate women affected by violence with a range of integrated services under one roof such as Police facilitation, medical aid, providing legal aid and legal counselling, psycho-social counselling, temporary shelter etc. The Women Helpline Scheme provides 24 hours emergency and non-emergency response to women affected by violence, both in public and private spaces by linking them with appropriate authority such as Police, One Stop Centre, Hospital, Legal Services etc. Women Help Line also supports women in distress with rescue van and counselling services in addition to providing information about women welfare schemes and programs across the country. Women can dial 181 short code to avail services from Women Helpline. So far, a total of 816 One Stop Centres have been approved in all 36 States/ UTs, out of which 785 OSCs are operational. Presently, Women Help Line is functional in 35 States/ UTs Except West Bengal.

Mahila Shakti Kendra

The Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme was approved in November, 2017 as a centrally sponsored scheme to empower rural women through community participation. The aims to facilitate inter-sectoral convergence of schemes and programs meant for women. The scheme is implemented through State Governments and UT Administrations with a cost sharing



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ratio of 60:40 between Centre and States except for North East & Special Category States where the funding ratio is 90:10. For Union Territories 100% central funding is provided.

The scheme primarily targeted rural women, aiming to provide them with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health, and nutrition. It emphasized community participation as a crucial element in empowering women and ensuring the success of the scheme. The scheme also involved financial assistance for various initiatives related to women's empowerment. The Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme was discontinued as of April 1, 2022. The decision was made based on the findings of an evaluation and in consultation with stakeholders. The government has since launched "Mission Shakti," an umbrella scheme for the safety, security, and empowerment of women, which came into effect on the same date.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana is a Centrally Sponsored Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme, for implementation across the country with effect from 01.01.2017. The maternity benefit under PMMVY is available to all Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers excluding PW&LM who are in regular employment with the Central Government or the State Governments or Public Sector Undertakings or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force, for first living child of family. Under the scheme Rs.5,000/- are provided to the eligible beneficiary in three installments during pregnancy and lactation in response to individual fulfilling certain nutrition and health seeking conditions. The eligible beneficiary also receives the remaining cash incentive as per approved norms towards maternity benefit under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) after institutional delivery so that on an average, a woman gets Rs.6,000/-.

To provide cash incentive for partial compensation for the wage loss so that the woman can take adequate rest before and after delivery of the first child. To improve health seeking behavioral amongst the Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers. To promote positive behavioral change towards girl child by providing additional cash incentive for the second child, if that is a girl child. Further, all pregnant women and lactating mothers in regular employment with the central Government or State Government or public Sector Undertaking or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force shall not be entitled to benefits under PMMVY.

Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana

Launched in 2015, the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana has emerged as a transformative initiative aimed at securing the financial future of girl children in India. By offering a significantly higher interest rate compared to conventional savings accounts, Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana encourages parents to invest in their daughters' education, marriage, and overall well-being. Since its inception, over 6 crore accounts have been opened across the country, with remarkable participation from rural and semi-urban areas. The scheme's financial inclusivity has particularly benefited underprivileged families, ensuring that girls receive equal financial support and opportunities. With cumulative deposits exceeding ₹60,000 crore as of 2021, the scheme has gained the trust of millions, proving to be a vital tool in promoting long-term savings and economic security for girls.

One of the key advantages of SSY is its lucrative interest rate, which stands at 7.6% per annum as of 2021, making it one of the most rewarding savings schemes in India. These features make Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana an attractive financial instrument for families planning their daughters' future expenses, particularly in rural areas where financial literacy is relatively low. Reports indicate that nearly 40% of the total accounts have been opened in rural regions, highlighting the scheme's role in bridging the economic disparity and ensuring financial stability for girl children from all backgrounds.

Beyond financial security, the scheme plays a crucial role in empowering women by fostering a mindset shift among families regarding the value of investing in their daughters' futures. By allowing partial withdrawals for higher education at the age of 18 and full maturity benefits at 21, SSY enables parents to support their daughters' aspirations without financial



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constraints. The initiative has received international recognition for its contribution to financial literacy and gender equality, reinforcing India's commitment to women's economic empowerment.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana was launched by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi on 1 May 2016 to distribute 50 million LPG connections to women of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. The scheme was replaced by the Ujjwala Yojana 2.0 in 2021. Although the scheme has expanded access to clean cooking technologies, the use of polluting fuels remains common, particularly in rural India.

Working Women Hostel

Working Women Hostel Scheme is implemented by the Government with the objective to provide safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women, with day care facility for their children, wherever possible, in urban, semi urban, or even rural areas where employment opportunity for women exist. Working Women Hostels provide safe and affordable accommodation for working women, often with additional facilities like daycare for children. These hostels are particularly helpful for women who work far from their families or come from lower and middle-income groups.

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam also known as the Women's Reservation Act is a landmark piece of legislation in India that reserves one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies for women. This aims to increase women's representation and participation in India's political landscape. The bill, officially the Constitution 106th Amendment Act, 2023, was passed by the Indian Parliament in 2023. The primary goal is to empower women by ensuring their greater involvement in lawmaking at both the national and state levels. The act reserves one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies for women. This includes seats already reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). While the bill has been passed, its implementation is tied to the delimitation process, which involves redrawing constituency boundaries based on a census. Some reports suggest that the women's quota may be implemented by the 2029 Lok Sabha elections. This act builds upon previous efforts to empower women at the local governance level, such as the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments which reserved one-third of seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipal bodies for women. Increased representation of women in politics is expected to lead to more inclusive policy-making, improved outcomes in areas like education and healthcare, and a greater focus on women's rights and welfare. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam is considered a significant step towards gender equality and democratic strengthening in India. These schemes represent a multi-pronged approach to women's empowerment, addressing various challenges and opportunities to ensure their holistic development and well-being.

Recently, Ministry has launched 'Mission Shakti' (Integrated Women Empowerment Programme) - an Umbrella Scheme in a mission mode aimed at strengthening interventions for safety, security and empowerment of women. It seeks to realise the Government's vision for 'women-led development' by addressing issues affecting women on a life-cycle continuum basis and by making them equal partners in nation-building through convergence across Ministries/ Departments and different levels of governance, greater participation and support of Panchayats and other local governance bodies and Jan Sahabagita, apart from strengthening digital infrastructure for last mile tracking of service delivery.

FINDINGS

1. Improved Female Child Survival and Education:

The Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme has contributed to increased awareness about the value of the girl child. States like Haryana, which had one of the worst child sex ratios, reported improvements after implementation.

2. Enhanced Maternal and Child Health:

Schemes like Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana and POSHAN Abhiyaan have improved maternal health awareness and reduced child malnutrition rates, though regional disparities remain.



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3. Access to Clean Energy:

Over 9 crore women have benefitted from the Ujjwala Yojana, resulting in reduced indoor air pollution and improved health outcomes, especially in rural households.

4. Financial and Digital Inclusion:

The opening of Jan Dhan accounts and Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana have encouraged savings among women and secured futures for girl children.

5. Legal and Social Support Services Expanded:

The setting up of One-Stop Centres and Women Helplines has provided timely legal, psychological, and social support to women in distress.

CONCLUSION

The welfare programmes introduced by the Modi government have significantly contributed to the empowerment of women and children in multiple dimensions—health, education, safety, and economic participation. While the reach and scope of these schemes have expanded, challenges such as regional implementation gaps, lack of awareness, and infrastructural limitations need to be addressed. Overall, these initiatives represent a crucial step toward inclusive development and gender-sensitive governance in India.

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