

1. National Girl Child Day – Polity

National Girl Child Day is celebrated annually on January 24

National Girl Child Day

About National Girl Child Day– National Girl Child Day is observed annually on 24 January since 2008. It is spearheaded by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

The day seeks to

1. Promote awareness about the rights of the girl child.
2. Highlight issues of gender discrimination, survival, protection, and education.
3. Encourage equal opportunities for girls in social, economic, and political spheres.

It aligns with India's commitments under–

1. Constitutional guarantees of equality (Articles 14, 15, 21).
2. Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Challenges Faced by India in Ensuring Girls' Rights

Cultural and Social Factors

Cultural Preference for Sons– Sons are traditionally viewed as carriers of lineage, performers of last rites, and providers of old-age security. Daughters are often perceived as an economic liability due to dowry-related practices.

Rigid Social Norms– Patriarchal norms restrict girls' mobility, decision-making power, and career aspirations. Early assumption of domestic responsibilities limits personal growth.

Demographic and Survival Challenges

Gender Discrimination in Nutrition and Healthcare– Girls often receive less nutritious food and delayed medical care compared to boys. This has historically contributed to higher female infant and child mortality rates.

Female Infanticide– In extreme cases, female infants have been abandoned or killed due to social stigma and economic concerns.

Sex-Selective Abortion– Misuse of prenatal diagnostic technologies led to skewed Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB). This necessitated stringent enforcement of the PCPNDT Act.

Education and Human Capital Constraints

Limited Access to Education– Rural, tribal, and economically weaker regions face shortages of secondary schools and female teachers. Dropout rates rise due to poverty, household work, and early marriage.

Digital Divide– Girls have relatively lower access to digital devices and internet connectivity, affecting learning outcomes.

Safety, Security, and Legal Issues

Gender-Based Violence– High incidence of sexual harassment, domestic violence, trafficking, and cyber abuse. Fear of violence discourages families from sending girls to schools or workplaces.

Child Marriage– Still prevalent in several regions, especially among marginalised communities. Leads to early pregnancies, health risks, school dropouts, and intergenerational poverty.

Economic Factors

Perceived Lower Economic Returns– In agrarian and informal economies, male labour is often considered more productive. Women's unpaid care work remains undervalued and unrecognised.

Government Initiatives for the Girl Child

Flagship and Supporting Schemes

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao– Focuses on prevention of gender-biased sex selection. Promotes education and survival of the girl child through multi-sectoral action.

Sukanya Samridhi Yojana– Encourages financial security and savings for the girl child.

Legal and Institutional Measures– Enforcement of the PCPNDT Act to curb sex-selective abortions. Child Marriage Prohibition Act, supported by Child Marriage Prohibition Officers.

Education and Infrastructure Support– Expansion of girls' hostels, scholarships, bicycles, and sanitation facilities in schools.

Health and Nutrition Interventions– Adolescent health programmes, anaemia control initiatives, and menstrual hygiene schemes.

Achievements So Far

Demographic Improvement

Improved Sex Ratio at Birth– SRB improved from around 918 (2014–15) to 930 (2023–24) at the national level, reflecting impact of sustained awareness and enforcement.

Education Outcomes

Progress in School Education– Gross Enrolment Ratio of girls at secondary level reached 80.2% (2024–25) as per UDISE. 97.5% of schools now have functional girls' toilet facilities, reducing dropout rates.

Social Protection and Legal Enforcement

Prevention of Child Marriage– By January 2026, 2,153 child marriages prevented. 60,262 Child Marriage Prohibition Officers appointed nationwide.

Menstrual Health and Dignity– Increased distribution of sanitary products and awareness programmes in schools and communities.

Financial Inclusion

Sukanya Samridhi Yojana– Over 4.2 crore accounts opened by 2024, indicating strong public trust and outreach.

Way Forward

Community and Behavioural Change– Strengthen community-based campaigns to challenge son preference and dowry practices. Engage local leaders, women's self-help groups, and youth in advocacy.

Health and Nutrition Focus– Improve access to quality maternal, adolescent, and child healthcare in rural and tribal areas. Address anaemia, malnutrition, and mental health among adolescent girls.

Education and Skill Development– Enhance transition from secondary to higher education and skill training. Promote STEM education, digital literacy, and vocational skills for girls.

Safety, Legal Awareness, and Enforcement– Strengthen gender-sensitive policing and fast-track courts for crimes against women. Expand awareness about legal rights and helplines at the grassroots level.

Data-Driven Governance– Robust, real-time data collection on sex ratio, education, and health indicators. Continuous research to identify region-specific drivers of gender inequality and evaluate scheme outcomes.

Source– <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2217624®=1&lang=1#~~~text=National%20Girl%20Child%20Day%20is,and%20overall%20welfare%20of%20girls>