

## **2. Abuse of Women during Childbirth is Widespread: Report**

**Prelims: Indices & Reports; Rights Issues.**

**Mains: GS-II- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector or Services relating to Health.**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ A recent study published in The Lancet medical journal has stated that more than one-third of the women in Asia and Africa were subjected to physical abuse during childbirth. This has been further confirmed by the observations of WHO.

### **Highlights of the Lancet Report:**

- ▶▶ The report states that more than one-third of women in four low-income countries in Africa and Asia were slapped, mocked, forcibly treated or otherwise abused during childbirth in health centers and suggests that such mistreatment occurs worldwide.
- ▶▶ Also, women of these regions have experienced high rates of caesarean sections and surgical cuts to the vagina, or episiotomies, without their consent – and often without a painkiller.
- ▶▶ Mistreatment during childbirth can amount to a violation of human rights, and could be a powerful disincentive from seeking facility-based maternity care,” the study said.

### **Observations of WHO:**

- ▶▶ The new study led by the World Health Organization followed more than 2,000 women during labour and interviewed more than 2,600 women after childbirth.
  - ❖ Some 42% reported physical or verbal abuse or discrimination during childbirth. Some women were punched, shouted at, scolded or forcibly held down.
  - ❖ Younger, less-educated women are at risk of such mistreatment which also includes neglect by health workers or the use of force during procedures, the study said.
  - ❖ Most of the abuse occurred in the 15 minutes before and during childbirth. The study cited research that found that “midwives and doctors described women as ‘uncooperative’ during this period and some justified using physical and verbal abuse as “punishment”.
  - ❖ The abuse also includes instances where women are forcibly separated from their new-borns for several days.
- ▶▶ Health officials say the mistreatment of women during childbirth appears to be global, including in developed countries.

**About WHO:**

- ▶▶ World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations' specialized agency for Health was founded in 1948.
- ▶▶ Its headquarters are situated in Geneva, Switzerland.
- ▶▶ There are 194 Member States, 150 country offices, six regional offices.
- ▶▶ It is an inter-governmental organization and works in collaboration with its member states usually through the Ministries of Health.
- ▶▶ The WHO provides leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.
- ▶▶ It began functioning on **April 7, 1948** – a date now being celebrated every year as World Health Day.

