

1. Female Foeticide:

Prelims Level: Policies

Mains Level: GS-II Welfare schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States and the Performance of these Schemes; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Context:

- Recently, Punjab's Department of Health and Family Welfare became the first state to hire a detective agency to Check Female Foeticide.

What is Female Foeticide?

- Female foeticide refers to 'aborting the female in the mother's womb'.
- The active methods of killing girls through selective sex abortion and passive methods like discrimination in care and nutrition are used to eliminate the girl child.
- Sex ratio in India stand at 940 in 2011 and child sex ratio has shown more continuous decline since 1961 but more alarming after 1991.

Reasons Behind Prevalence of Female Foeticide:

- The Indian society generally shows cultural bias against women.
- Any kind of investment in girl's education and empowerment is considered as investment in failed enterprise. Their physical security is added responsibility on the family.
- Practice of dowry puts extra burden on the parents and all these results into general preference for son and girl foeticide and Infanticide.

Impact of Female Foeticide:

- The low sex ratio resulting from female foeticide which are manifesting themselves in various ways like
- Trafficking of women for sexual work and marriage. Such marriages are not sustainable because of cultural differences and results into instances of physical, mental and sexual abuse of the bride.
- Increased crimes against women like sexual harassment, lewd remarks against women, and instances of eve teasing.

Steps taken to stop it:

- **PCPNDT Act (Pre- Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique Act-1994)** was enacted to ban the use of sex selection techniques before and after conception and prevent the use of prenatal diagnostic techniques for Selective Abortion.

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- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP):** This programme have been launched to ensure survival, protection and empowerment of girls by eliminating the differential in the sex ratio, infant mortality rate and improving their nutritional and education status.
 - **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana:** It is a component of BBBP programme aims to ensure equitable share of the girl child in family savings. The savings can be used for the education of girl child and her marriage, thus helping in the empowerment of girl and reducing the economic burden that families face at the time of marriage.
 - **Balika Samriddhi Yojana:** It is a scholarship scheme designed to provide financial support to young girls and their mothers who are below the poverty line. The key objective of the scheme is to improve their status in society, increase the marriageable age of girls and improve the enrolment as well as retention of girls in schools.

Way Ahead:

- Implementation of laws has been the big issue in India and many violators have been left scot-free. So, PCPNDT Act should be stringently implemented.
- The attitudes of the people towards girl child should be changed by creating awareness for bringing socio-cultural changes.
- Ensure participation of various religious groups, social organizations and education system to not only teach but practise the value of gender equality.