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# National Girl Child Day 2026 – BBBP, Sex Ratio, and the Unfinished Agenda

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# National Girl Child Day 2026 — BBBP, Sex Ratio, and the Unfinished Agenda

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## WHY IN NEWS

India observed National Girl Child Day on January 24, 2026, marking progress under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme — with the Sex Ratio at Birth improving from 918 to approximately 934 girls per 1,000 boys since 2015. The day spotlights what has been achieved and what remains to be done for India's 500 million girls.

## THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE DAY

When India observes National Girl Child Day, the country is confronting a simple demographic fact with complex social causes: **for most of its post-independence history, India's Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) — the number of girls born for every 1,000 boys — has been lower than the biological norm of approximately 952.**

The deficit is not natural. It is manufactured — by a combination of son preference, gender-selective abortions (made possible by widespread access to sex determination technology), differential investment in girl children's nutrition and healthcare, and the dowry system that turns daughters into a financial burden in many communities.

**Key improvement:** The SRB has improved from **918 girls per 1,000 boys** (2014–15) to approximately **934 girls per 1,000 boys** (recent data) — a gain of 16 points. This represents real progress, but the gap from the biological norm (952) remains significant.

## NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY — ORIGINS

**National Girl Child Day (NGCD)** was established by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in **2008** under the UPA government, with the date set at **January 24** to mark the birth anniversary of Indira Gandhi (the first woman Prime Minister of India, born November 19, 1917 — though the date January 24 specifically reflects the ministry's calendar planning, not her birth date directly).

### Objectives of NGCD:

Raise awareness about inequalities faced by girl children in India

Promote girls' right to education, health, nutrition, and protection from violence

Address deep-rooted son preference and gender discrimination

Strengthen enforcement of the PC-PNDT Act

## BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO — SCHEME ANALYSIS

### Launch and Structure

**BBBP was launched on January 22, 2015 at Panipat, Haryana** — a state with one of the lowest SRBs in the country — by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The scheme represented a multi-ministry convergence:

Ministry	Role
Women and Child Development	Scheme coordination, awareness campaigns
Health and Family Welfare	Maternal health, PC-PNDT enforcement
Education	Girls' school enrolment, retention

### Phase 1 (2015–2020): 100 Districts

BBBP initially focused on **100 gender-critical districts** — those with the lowest Child Sex Ratio (CSR: girls aged 0-6 per 1,000 boys). These were spread across states known for strong son preference: Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra.

### Phase 2 (2020 onwards): National Expansion

The scheme was expanded pan-India from 2020, integrating with other WCD schemes — Poshan Abhiyan, ASHA and Anganwadi networks.

### What Worked

**Media and awareness campaigns:** “Selfie with Daughter” went viral internationally; state government campaigns reduced stigma around girl births

**Community mobilisation:** Local leaders, religious institutions, panchayats engaged to shift social norms

**PC-PNDT enforcement:** Registration of ultrasound clinics improved; sting operations against illegal sex determination

**School enrolment:** Girls' enrolment in primary and upper-primary increased significantly

**Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY):** A savings scheme specifically for girl children launched in 2015 — allows parents to save for education/marriage at attractive interest rates (8.2% p.a. as of 2024, tax-exempt under Section 80C)

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GIRL CHILD PROTECTION

**Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC-PNDT) Act, 1994** — the primary law against sex determination and sex-selective abortion:

- Prohibits sex determination tests before or after conception

- Mandates registration of all ultrasound machines and clinics

- Penalties: imprisonment up to 3 years + fine for first offence; 5 years + fine for subsequent

- Amendments in 2003 strengthened enforcement

### Other relevant laws:

- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012:** Protects minors from sexual abuse

- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006:** Minimum marriage age 18 for girls, 21 for boys (amendment to raise girls' age to 21 pending)

- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** Prohibits giving/taking dowry

- Juvenile Justice Act, 2015:** Child welfare and protection provisions

## THE UNFINISHED AGENDA

Despite BBBP's progress, critical challenges remain:

**Child marriage:** India accounts for the largest number of child brides globally. States like Rajasthan, West Bengal, Bihar, and Assam have the highest child marriage rates. Child marriage perpetuates the cycle: girls who marry young have lower education, higher maternal mortality risk, and their own daughters are more likely to face the same fate.

**Secondary school dropout:** Girls' dropout rate at the secondary level (Classes 9-12) is higher than boys — driven by early marriage, safety concerns (walking long distances to school), household work burden, and lack of separate sanitation facilities.

**Nutrition gap:** Girl children, particularly in rural areas, receive less food and nutritional support than boys. Anaemia among adolescent girls remains a significant public health problem (Anaemia Mukht Bharat targets this).

**Digital divide:** Girls' access to smartphones, tablets, and internet is lower than boys — widening the digital learning gap, especially post-COVID.

**Violence:** POCSO cases continue to be filed across India; sexual violence against girl children remains a serious concern in many states.

## CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

**Article 15(3):** Allows the state to make special provisions for women and children — the constitutional basis for affirmative schemes like BBBP.

**Article 21A:** Right to free and compulsory education (inserted by 86th Constitutional Amendment, 2002) — implemented through the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009.

**Article 14:** Equality before law; **Article 15(1):** No discrimination on grounds of sex — together form the constitutional mandate for gender equality.

**Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5:** Gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls — India's National Indicator Framework tracks progress.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

*National Girl Child Day: January 24 (established 2008, Ministry of WCD); BBBP launched January 22, 2015, Panipat; SRB baseline 918 → ~934; PC-PNDT Act 1994; Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY) 2015; POCSO Act 2012; Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006; Article 15(3); Article 21A (86th Amendment 2002); SDG 5.*

*Status of women and children in India; sex-selective practices; child marriage; gender gap in education.*

**GS-2:** *Women-related schemes — BBBP, SSY, Poshan Abhiyan; constitutional provisions for gender equality; implementation gaps; welfare vs rights approach.*

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

### NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY:

Established: **2008** (Ministry of Women and Child Development)

Date: **January 24** annually

### BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO (BBBP):

Launched: **January 22, 2015**, Panipat, Haryana (PM Modi)

Ministries: WCD + Health + Education (convergence scheme)

Initial coverage: **100 gender-critical districts**

**SRB at launch (2014–15):** 918 girls/1,000 boys

**SRB improved to:** ~934 girls/1,000 boys (recent data)

**Natural SRB:** ~952 girls/1,000 boys

Now expanded pan-India

### SUKANYA SAMRIDDHI YOJANA (SSY):

Launched: **2015** (as part of BBBP)

Interest rate: **8.2% p.a.** (FY 2024-25)

Eligible: Girl children up to age 10 years

Tax benefit: Section 80C (EEE — exempt at deposit, interest, and withdrawal)

### KEY LAWS FOR GIRL CHILD PROTECTION:

**PC-PNDT Act, 1994:** Bans sex determination; penalties up to 5 years for repeat offenders

**POCSO Act, 2012:** Protection from sexual offences for minors

**Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006:** Min. age girls 18, boys 21

**Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961**

### CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS:

Article 14: Equality | Article 15(1): No sex discrimination | **Article 15(3):** Special provisions for women/children | **Article 21A:** Right to Education (86th Amendment, 2002)

### OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

**Child Sex Ratio (CSR):** Girls aged 0–6 per 1,000 boys; Census 2011: 918; improved by 2021

**Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB):** Different from CSR; measures girls born per 1,000 boys

**Anaemia Mukh Bharat:** Targets anaemia in adolescent girls; part of POSHAN 2.0

**SDG 5:** Gender equality — India's progress tracked by National Indicator Framework

**Gender Parity Index (GPI):** India achieved GPI >1.0 at primary level; gap at secondary

**Census 2011:** India's sex ratio was 943/1,000; SRB was 914 (census measured)

Sources: PIB, The Hindu, Ministry of WCD

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