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# International Day of Families 2026: "Families, Inequalities and Child Wellbeing"

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**SOCIAL ISSUES****POLITY**

CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

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# International Day of Families 2026: "Families, Inequalities and Child Wellbeing"

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## WHY IN NEWS

The **United Nations** observes **International Day of Families** annually on **May 15**. The **2026 theme is "Families, Inequalities and Child Wellbeing"**, focusing on how widening economic and social disparities affect family structures and children's development outcomes globally. The observance was established by **UN General Assembly Resolution 47/237 in 1993**; the first observation was in **1994**.

## THE 2026 THEME – FAMILIES, INEQUALITIES AND CHILD WELLBEING

### Why This Theme?

Global and Indian data reveal that growing inequality translates directly into worse child outcomes:

INDICATOR	GLOBAL CONTEXT	INDIA CONTEXT (NFHS-5)
Child stunting (under-5)	148 million children (UNICEF 2023)	<b>35.5 per cent</b> (NFHS-5, 2019-21)
Child wasting (acute malnutrition)	45 million	<b>19.3 per cent</b>
Anaemia in under-5s	40% globally	<b>67.1 per cent</b>
Under-5 mortality	4.9 million/year globally	<b>32 per 1,000 live births</b>
Out-of-school children	250 million (UNESCO)	~3 crore (estimated)

Families in the bottom income quintile are systematically disadvantaged: lower access to nutrition, healthcare, education, and social protection – compounding inter-generational inequality.

## UN FRAMEWORK – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The 2026 theme links directly to:

- **SDG 1 (No Poverty):** End poverty in all forms everywhere
- **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger):** End hunger; achieve food security; improve nutrition

- **SDG 3 (Good Health):** Ensure healthy lives for all ages
- **SDG 4 (Quality Education):** Ensure inclusive, equitable, quality education
- **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities):** Reduce inequality within and among countries
- **SDG 16 (Peace, Justice):** Strong institutions; civil registration of births

## INDIA'S FAMILY WELFARE AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT ARCHITECTURE

### Key Schemes

SCHEME	MINISTRY	FOCUS
<b>Poshan Abhiyaan</b> (National Nutrition Mission)	WCD	Reduce stunting, wasting, anaemia, low birth weight
<b>Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)</b>	WCD	Cash transfer Rs 5,000 for first live birth
<b>Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)</b>	WCD / Education / Health	Improve child sex ratio; girl education
<b>Mission Shakti</b>	WCD	Women empowerment + safety (subsumes Beti Bachao + Ujjwala + One Stop Centre)
<b>Saksham Anganwadi</b>	WCD	Upgraded anganwadi centres for early childhood development
<b>PM POSHAN (Mid-Day Meal Scheme)</b>	Education	School nutrition; reduce dropout
<b>Mission Parivar Vikas</b>	Health	Family planning; fertility reduction in 146 high-TFR districts
<b>PM-JAY (Ayushman Bharat)</b>	Health	Health insurance Rs 5 lakh per family/year

### NIPUN Bharat (Foundational Literacy and Numeracy)

- National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy
- Launched in July 2021 by Ministry of Education
- Target: **every child achieves FLN by end of Grade 3** (by academic year 2026-27)
- Directly addresses “learning poverty” – inability to read simple text by age 10

## INDIA'S CHILD RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

INSTRUMENT	KEY PROVISION
<b>Article 21A (Constitution)</b>	Right to free and compulsory education for 6-14 years (inserted by 86th CA, 2002)
<b>Article 24</b>	Prohibition of child labour in factories/mines for under-14
<b>Article 39(f)</b>	DPSP: children's right to development; protection from exploitation
<b>RTE Act, 2009</b>	Operationalises Article 21A; neighbourhood school; no-detention policy (modified 2019)
<b>POCSO Act, 2012</b>	Protection of Children from Sexual Offences; gender-neutral; mandatory reporting
<b>JJ Act, 2015</b>	Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act; Child Welfare Committees; Juvenile Justice Boards
<b>Child Labour Act, 1986</b> (amended 2016)	Prohibits under-14 in all work; under-18 in hazardous occupations

## FAMILY STRUCTURE – INDIA'S CHANGING LANDSCAPE

**Census 2011 data** (Census 2027 anticipated):

- Average household size: **4.4 persons** (declining from 5.3 in 1971)
- Nuclear families: **~74 per cent** of households
- Single-parent households: rising (no comprehensive national data)
- Urban-rural divergence: rural households larger; extended family networks more intact

**NFHS-5 (2019-21) fertility data:**

- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR): 2.0** (below replacement level of 2.1 for the first time nationally)
- 19 of 29 states/UTs already below replacement TFR
- High-TFR states: **UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Manipur** (still above 2.1)

## UPSC RELEVANCE

### GS Paper 1 – Society

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- Family structure in India; changing demographics
- Social issues: child nutrition, gender, inequality

### GS Paper 2 – Welfare Schemes

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- Poshan Abhiyaan, PMMVY, BBBP, Mission Shakti, NIPUN Bharat
- RTE Act; child rights framework

### Essay Paper

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- Family as the first unit of society; inequality and inter-generational poverty traps
- Child welfare as a precondition for demographic dividend

### Mains Angles

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- 1 India's NFHS-5 reveals that the overall TFR has fallen below replacement level even as child malnutrition remains very high. Examine this paradox and the policy responses.
- 2 Discuss the architecture of India's child development and nutrition schemes. How effective has Poshan Abhiyaan been in addressing the triple burden of malnutrition?
- 3 Increasing single-parent and nuclear family structures are reshaping India's social fabric. What policy interventions are needed to support vulnerable families?

Established by **UN GA Resolution 47/237 (February 1993)**; first observed **May 15, 1994**; annual; 2026 theme: “Families, Inequalities and Child Wellbeing.”

National Family Health Survey Round 5; India’s fifth NFHS; conducted by MoHFW / **IIPS (International Institute for Population Sciences), Mumbai**; sample of ~6.37 lakh households.

Total Fertility Rate – average number of children per woman over her lifetime; India’s **TFR 2.0 (NFHS-5)**, first time at/below replacement level (2.1) nationally.

Launched **March 8, 2018** (International Women’s Day) at Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan; National Nutrition Mission; targets – reduce stunting by 2%/year, wasting by 2%, anaemia in women/children by 3%/year, low birth weight by 2%/year.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana; maternity benefit scheme; Rs 5,000 for first live birth (in three instalments); under the **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017**; administered by MoWCD.

Inserted by **86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002**; right to free and compulsory education for children aged 6-14; operationalised by RTE Act, 2009 (in force April 1, 2010).

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015; replaced JJ Act, 2000; introduced Child Welfare Committees (CWC), Juvenile Justice Boards (JJB), Special Adoption Agencies; administered by MoWCD.

Centrally Sponsored Scheme; merged Mid-Day Meal Scheme (since 1995); covers Classes 1-8 in government/aided schools; approximately **11.8 crore children** covered.

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[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/05/15/international-day-of-families-2026-inequalities-children/>

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