Technology for the Empowerment Women and Children

> Mains Syllabus: GS II - Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Why in the News?

Over the last decade, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has strengthened access to nutrition, education, legal safeguards, and essential entitlements.

How are technology used in government schemes for women empowerment?

- **Modernization of Schemes** - Saksham Anganwadi initiative, designed to modernise and empower over 2 lakh Anganwadi centres across India.
- **Effective Service Delivery** - These centres are being upgraded with smart infrastructure, digital devices, and innovative learning tools, enabling more effective delivery of nutrition, healthcare, and pre-school education services.
- **Evidence-Based Policy Interventions** - The integration of services provided by 14 lakh Anganwadi centres across the nation with the Poshan Tracker has enabled real-time data entry, performance monitoring, and evidence-based policy interventions.
- **Capacity Building of Anganwadi Workers** - By equipping Anganwadi workers with smartphones and comprehensive training, the initiative ensures quality service delivery at the last mile.
- **Reduces Leakages** - Facial recognition system has been introduced in Supplementary Nutrition Programme to ensure that eligible beneficiaries alone receive nutrition support.
- **Bridges Rural Urban Divide** - Poshan Tracker reimagines Anganwadi centres as digitally empowered community hubs that bridge the urban-rural divide.
- **Ensures Safety and Support** - The SHe-Box portal provides single-window access to every woman to lodge complaints under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- **Integrates Assistance to Women** - Mission Shakti dashboard and mobile app provide integrated assistance to women in distress, connecting them to the nearest one-stop centre, now operational in nearly every district.
- **Promoting Positive Reinforcement for Daughters** – Under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) cash benefits are provided through direct benefit transfer.
- PMMVY is a fully digital programme leveraging Aadhaar-based authentication, mobile-based registration, doorstep assistance from Anganwadi/ASHA workers, and real-time dashboards.
- **Economic Empowerment** – Government eMarket Place (GeM) enables women and self help groups to sell their products online.

What are the outcomes ?

- **Increase in Sex Ratio at Birth** - The latest reports from the Health Management Information System of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) reveal that the Sex Ratio at Birth has increased from 918 (2014-15) to 930 (2023-24).
- **Decline in Maternal Mortality Rate** – It has declined to 97 per 1,000 births (2018-20) from 130 per 1,000 births (2014-16).
- **Child Protection and Welfare** - Under the Juvenile Justice Act (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, the Ministry has strengthened the adoption ecosystem through the CARINGS portal (Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System).
- **Strengthening Supervisions** - Digitisation has also improved monitoring of child care institutions, foster care placements, and statutory support structures under the Act.
- Platforms developed by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights are tracking violations of child rights.
- **Better Coordination** - The Mission Vatsalya dashboard strengthens convergence and coordination among various child welfare stakeholders.

What are the challenges in using technologies for women empowerment?

- **Lack of Access to Digital Devices** - Women face economic constraints that limit their ability to afford smartphones, computers, or reliable internet access.
- **Inadequate Digital Literacy** - Data from the 78th round of the National Sample Survey 78th indicates that only 21% of all women above the age of 15 having some form of digital literacy.
- This reduces their ability in harnessing benefits provided by digitalized schemes.
- **Infrastructure Limitations** - Poor or non-existent infrastructure (electricity, reliable internet service) in rural or remote areas disproportionately affects women who often have less mobility to access public tech facilities.
- **Online Harassment and Discrimination** - Women often face specific threats online, including harassment, privacy breaches, stalking, and non-consensual sharing of images, which can deter them from using digital platforms.

What lies ahead?

- Capacity development of women through digital literacy program and hand on training can enhance their ability to directly access digital services.
- Strengthening public digital infrastructures in remote places like hilly, terrain and rural places.
- Use of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence, big data to make government schemes proactive and reduce exclusion of beneficiaries and make them inclusive.

References

[The Hindu | Using tech to empower women and children]



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