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Q15

Examine the main provisions of the National Child Policy and throw light on the status of its implementation.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · GS II · 12 marks · Governance and Policy

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Core demand of the question

- Examine the main provisions of the National Child Policy and throw light on the status of its implementation

Revision summary

The **National Policy for Children, 2013**, replaced the 1974 policy and defines a child as a person below 18.

- **It rests on the child's best interest and four areas:** survival and nutrition, education, protection, and participation.

MWCD is nodal; **NCPCR** and SCPCRs watch; a **National Plan of Action** is meant to set targets.

RTE, ICDS, POCSO, JJ Act 2015 and the 2016 child-labour amendment carry much of the Policy into law.

Stunting, weak learning, vacant protection posts and thin child participation show incomplete implementation.

Introduction

The **National Policy for Children, 2013**, replaced the 1974 policy and treats every person below eighteen years as a child. It is a rights-based Union statement, not a single Act. It tells all ministries that the child's best interest comes first in survival, health, nutrition, education, protection and participation. Implementation is spread across ICDS, schools, child protection services and criminal law, and it is still uneven across States.

Body

Main provisions of the **National Policy for Children, 2013**

- The child is a rights-holder. The State, the family and the community share duty. The best interest of the child is the guiding test for every law and scheme.
- **Survival, health and nutrition:** the Policy promises safe birth, immunisation, infant and young-child feeding, care of the malnourished, and health services that reach the girl child and the child with disability.
- **Education and development:** free and compulsory education in the 6-14 band is already a fundamental right (**Article 21A** and the RTE Act, 2009); the Policy also stresses early childhood care, the 15-18 years group, play, and protection from child labour that cuts schooling.
- **Protection:** freedom from violence, trafficking, sexual offence, hazardous work, and conflict with law. It backs a juvenile justice approach that is child-friendly, not a mini-adult criminal

court as the first instinct.

- **Participation:** the child's view is to be heard in families, schools, panchayats and proceedings that affect her, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which India ratified in 1992.
- **Equality and non-discrimination:** special attention to SC, ST, minorities, the girl child, street children, children of migrants, and children with disability.
- **Institutional map:** the Ministry of Women and Child Development as nodal ministry; the **National Commission** for Protection of Child Rights (**NCPCR**) and **State Commissions** as watchdogs; a **National Plan of Action** to turn the Policy into targets.
- **Budget and data:** child budgeting, coordination across ministries, and disaggregated data so that a missing girl or a drop-out is visible.

Status of implementation

- **Survival and nutrition:** ICDS and the National Health Mission expanded anganwadis, ASHAs and immunisation. NFHS and hunger measures still show high stunting and anaemia. The Policy's nutrition promise is therefore only partly met.
- **Education:** RTE brought neighbourhood schools, 25 per cent private-school seats for weaker sections, and a ban on screening at entry. Learning outcomes (ASER and NAS) remain weak; many children aged 15-18 are out of a useful course. Early childhood care is still the thinner limb.
- **Protection:** the Protection of Children from **Sexual Offences Act, 2012**, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016, gave the Policy teeth. Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) funds **Child Welfare Committees**, juvenile boards and homes. Vacancies, delayed CWC sittings, and poor home quality are common.
- Trafficking, child marriage (**Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006**) and missing children still show a gap between statute and police-panchayat practice.
- **Participation:** school cabinets and some Bal Sabhas exist; genuine hearing of the child in custody, adoption and school-expulsion cases is patchy.
- **NCPCR** and SCPCRs monitor and inquire, but they are not a substitute for district staff. Child budgeting in Union and State budgets has grown in line items, yet many 'child' heads are general education or health not targeted to the most excluded.
- The **National Plan of Action** for Children (work toward a 2016 plan) tries to set monitorable goals; without State plans and collectors' dashboards, the 2013 Policy remains a preface.

Examine, do not only list

- The 2013 Policy is stronger than 1974 because it is rights-based, defines the child as under-18, and names participation. Implementation depends on State cadres, panchayats and courts, not on the gazette notification alone.
- Criminal law moved faster than nutrition and learning. A child may have a POCSO court in the district and still be stunted and unable to read a grade-2 text.

Flow diagram

NPC 2013 under-18 rights 2013 under-18 rights -> Survival health nutrition

NPC 2013 under-18 rights -> Education development

NPC 2013 under-18 rights -> Protection

NPC 2013 under-18 rights -> Participation

Survival health nutrition -> ICDS NHM NHM

Education development -> RTE Act Act

Protection -> POCSO JJ ICPS JJ ICPS

Conclusion

- **The National Policy for Children, 2013, sets a clear map:** best interest, four priority areas, equality, **NCPCR**, and child budgeting. Implementation is visible in RTE, ICDS, POCSO, the 2015 juvenile law and the 2016 child-labour amendment, but nutrition, learning, protection staff and the child's own voice still lag. The Policy will be real when every district treats those gaps as a failure of duty, not as a missing scheme name.

Facts & figures

National Policy for Children, 2013

Union policy notified in 2013; rights-based successor to the National Policy for Children, 1974.

UNCRC, 1989 / India 1992

India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the 2013 Policy tracks its survival, development, protection and participation pillars.

NCPCR

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, set up under the Commissions for **Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005**.

POCSO Act, 2012

Special law on sexual offences against children, with child-friendly procedures and special courts.

JJ Act, 2015

Rewrote care, protection and juvenile justice; sits beside ICPS structures such as CWCs and JJBs.

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