



# Surajpur Becomes Model for Child Marriage Eradication

## Why in News?

**Surajpur district in Chhattisgarh** has made a remarkable achievement by declaring 75 of its village panchayats as "**Child Marriage-Free Panchayats**" on 17th September 2025.

- This recognition marks a major victory for the district's relentless social reform efforts and public awareness campaigns under the "**Healthy Women, Empowered Families**" initiative.

## Key Points

- **About:**
  - The announcement of the 75 child marriage-free panchayats coincided with the launch of [National Nutrition Month](#) and the ongoing "Healthy Women, Empowered Families" campaign. These panchayats were recognized for having reported no cases of child marriage in the past two years.
  - On 10th March 2024, Chief Minister **Vishnu Deo Sai** launched the "**Child Marriage-Free Chhattisgarh Campaign**" with the support of [UNICEF](#). The initiative aims to make the entire state child marriage-free through active awareness, monitoring, and community participation.
- **Implementation:**
  - The **Women and Child Development Department** led consistent awareness drives in the region.
  - **Anganwadi workers, panchayat representatives, and voluntary organizations** played a crucial role in spreading awareness about the detrimental effects of child marriage.
  - Educational dialogues emphasized the importance of **child rights, education**, and the necessity of **delaying marriage** to ensure better health and socio-economic outcomes for girls.
  - This created a shift in mindset where **parents began prioritizing education and self-reliance** for their daughters over early marriage.

## Child Marriage

- [UNICEF](#) categorizes child marriage as a human rights violation due to its adverse impacts on the development of both girls and boys.
- [Sustainable Development Goal 5.3](#) states that Child marriage elimination is pivotal in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5, aiming for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls by 2030.
- According to the UN, 1 in 5 young women worldwide (19%) were married in childhood in 2022.

## Legislative Framework

- India enacted the [Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2006](#), establishing the legal age for marriage at 21 for men and 18 for women.
  - **Section 16** of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act allows State Governments to appoint

'Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPO)' for specific areas.

- CMPOs are responsible for preventing child marriages, collecting evidence for prosecutions, counseling against promoting or aiding such marriages, raising awareness about their harmful effects, and sensitizing communities
- The government has introduced a bill, namely 'the **Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021** for raising the age of marriage of women to 21 years to make it at par with men.

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