Bridging the Gender Gap

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Bridging the Gender Gap: Role of Technology in Women Empowerment

Context

Over the past decade, the **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)** has significantly improved access to **nutrition**, **education**, **legal protection**, and **essential entitlements** for women and children. A key driver of this transformation has been the strategic use of **technology** in various government schemes, making services **more efficient, transparent**, and **inclusive**.

How is Technology Used in Government Schemes for Women Empowerment?

1. Modernisation of Service Delivery

- The **Saksham Anganwadi initiative** is aimed at modernising over **2 lakh Anganwadi centres**.

- These centres are being equipped with **smart infrastructure**, **digital devices**, and **interactive learning tools** to enhance delivery of **nutrition**, **preschool education**, and **healthcare**.

2. Data-Driven Interventions

- The **Poshan Tracker** integrates services from over **14 lakh Anganwadi centres**, enabling:

  - **Real-time data entry**

  - **Performance monitoring**

  - **Evidence-based policymaking**

3. Empowering Anganwadi Workers

- Workers are provided with **smartphones** and **training**, improving service delivery and outreach at the last mile.

4. Reducing Leakages

- **Facial recognition systems** have been introduced in the **Supplementary Nutrition Programme** to ensure that **only eligible beneficiaries** receive support.

5. Bridging the Rural-Urban Divide

- The **Poshan Tracker** reimagines Anganwadi centres as **digitally connected hubs**, reducing service delivery gaps in rural areas.

6. Ensuring Safety and Grievance Redressal

- The **SHe-Box portal** acts as a **single-window platform** for women to file complaints under the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**.

7. Integrated Support for Women in Distress

- The **Mission Shakti dashboard** and **mobile app** connect women in need to the **nearest One Stop Centres**, now functional in **almost every district**.

8. Promoting Maternal and Child Health

- Under the **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**:

  - **Cash benefits** are transferred through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)**.

  - The scheme uses **Aadhaar-based authentication**, **mobile registration**, and **real-time dashboards**.

9. Promoting Economic Empowerment

- The **Government eMarketplace (GeM)** enables **women entrepreneurs** and **Self Help Groups (SHGs)** to sell products online, increasing market access.

What Are the Outcomes?

1. Improvement in Sex Ratio at Birth

- As per the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**:

  - **Sex Ratio at Birth** improved from **918 (2014-15)** to **930 (2023-24)**.

2. Reduction in Maternal Mortality

- **Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)** fell from **130 per 1,00,000 live births (2014-16)** to **97 per 1,00,000 (2018-20)**.

3. Strengthening Child Protection

- Under the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**:

  - The **CARINGS portal** has streamlined the **adoption ecosystem**.

  - **Monitoring of childcare institutions**, foster care, and legal support has improved.

4. Enhanced Coordination

- The **Mission Vatsalya dashboard** ensures **better coordination** between different child welfare stakeholders and institutions.

What Are the Challenges in Using Technology for Women Empowerment?

1. Digital Divide

- Many women **cannot afford smartphones or internet access** due to **economic constraints**.

2. Low Digital Literacy

- According to the **78th round of National Sample Survey**:

- Only **21% of women above 15 years** have any form of **digital literacy**.

- This hampers their ability to access and benefit from digital schemes.

3. Infrastructure Gaps

- In **rural and remote areas**, lack of **electricity** and **internet** limits accessibility.

- Women often face **mobility constraints**, making access more difficult.

4. Online Safety Concerns

- Women frequently face **cyber harassment**, **stalking**, and **privacy violations**, discouraging digital participation.

What Lies Ahead?

1. Promoting Digital Literacy

- Capacity-building through **digital training** and **hands-on support** will help women independently access services.

2. Strengthening Rural Digital Infrastructure

- Investments are needed in **hilly**, **remote**, and **rural regions** to ensure equitable access.

3. Leveraging Emerging Technologies

- Use of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **Big Data** can help:

  - **Proactively identify beneficiaries**

  - **Minimise exclusion**

  - **Improve efficiency** and **inclusivity** in scheme delivery