

Q. Considering the pandemic, priority should be given to the laws and procedures for the care and protection of orphaned children. Discuss.

Recent COVID-19 pandemic death toll has reached nearly 3 lakh leaving many children orphaned or surviving with single parent <sup>and vulnerable to exploitation</sup>. UNICEF has drawn attention towards the aggravating situation and to provide help to those children as soon as possible.

Present laws for child protection :-

1. Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of children) Act, 2015 - lays down procedure in relation to a child in need of care and protection.
2. India is signatory to UN Convention on Rights of child. (UNCRC)
3. Protection of children from sexual offences Act (POCSO), 2012
4. Prohibition of child marriage Act 2006
5. Child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act 2016.

Way forward :-

1. Karnataka has reported increasing number of cases of child marriage in pandemic, strict implementation of laws is required.
2. Children practicing isolation should be provided special mental health care as they are more vulnerable to emotional distress.

3. Rehabilitation program to those children who got orphaned and proper <sup>monetary</sup> support through government should be given.
4. There are increased no. of cases of bonded labour in the pandemic. Government should ensure every family and children get PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana and MDMS respectively.
5. Awareness about child helplines like 1098 should be spread.

Pandemic has left every section of society in a vulnerable situation, but children are more vulnerable to get exploited. NGOs, civil society and government should come together to rehabilitate the orphaned children.