
NATIONAL SOCIAL AND LEGAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

{VOLUME I ISSUE V}

*A Critical Analysis on Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana and Challenges
Faced in Its Implementation*

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Giving voices, Shaping Careers

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON PRADHAN MANTRI MATRU VANDANAYOJANA AND CHALLENGES FACED IN IT'S IMPLEMENTATION

The Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) was launched in 2016 as a flagship maternity benefits programme of the Government of India. Earlier it was known as the **Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana** and is run under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The government's maternity benefit scheme, or Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), has crossed 1.75 crore, eligible women, till the financial year 2020. A total sum of Rs. 5,931.95 crore was paid to 1.75 crore eligible beneficiaries between the financial year 2018 and 2020. Cash benefits are provided to pregnant women in their bank account directly to meet enhanced nutritional needs and partially compensate for wage loss.¹

This article will provide you with relevant facts on PMMVY, objectives of the scheme, who are the beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana etc

PRADHAN MANTRI MATRU VANDANA YOJANA (PMMVY)²

The scheme is aimed at pregnant or lactating women aged 19 years or above for the first live birth. The programme provides partial compensation for wage loss during childbirth and afterwards during childcare. It also aims to provide information on good feeding and nutrition for mother and child pursuant to the National Food Security Act, 2013.

PMMVY is implemented through a centrally deployed Web Based MIS Software application and the main point of implementation would be the Anganwadi Centre (AWC) and ASHA/ ANM workers.

PMMVY objectives

The PMMVY scheme has the following objectives:

- Providing cash compensation against wage loss so that the mother can take adequate rest before and after the birth of the first living child.

¹ wcd.nic.in

² Wcd.nic.in

- Promoting good nutrition and feeding practices to reduce infant mortality and malnutrition. It would also promote healthier behaviour among pregnant/lactating mothers.
- Promoting the use of health services and institutional care to reduce the risk of disease.

PMMVY Beneficiary List

The PMMVY is targeted at the following beneficiaries:

- Pregnant/Lactating Mothers except those who are employed with the Central Government, Public Sector Units or State Governments or those who receive similar benefits from similar laws for the time being.
- Women whose pregnancies commenced after 01.01.2017 and this would be the first child in the family.



PMMVY Provisions³

The PMMVY allows women who undergo miscarriages or stillbirths to collect the remaining benefits whenever they have their next pregnancy. The PMMVY provides the following benefits:

- Rs 5000 in three instalments on fulfilling the respective conditionality, viz. early registration of pregnancy, ante-natal check-up and registration of the birth of the child and completion of the first cycle of vaccination for the first living child of the family.
- The PM Matritva Vandana scheme also asks mothers to:
 - Breastfeed for the first six months and give the child complementary food after that
 - Vaccinate the child with DPT and Polio vaccine
 - Attend two counselling sessions when the child is between 3-6 months old.

The mechanism through which the Government of India finances this scheme is as grant in aid funding to state governments, which in turn handle the actual implementation of the scheme. The

³ wcd.nic.in

PMMVY is a continuation of the Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) launched in 2010. It was relaunched in 2014 as Matritva Sahyog Yojana in 2014 and took its present form in late 2016.

CHALLENGES BEING FACED BY GOVERNMENT IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME

Slow implementation since its inception: The scheme's implementation was predicted to be slow due to the initial steps that needed to be completed. A year after the launch of the scheme, it was found that the regarding instalment payments made via direct cash transfer with respect to PMMVY, only 96,460 beneficiaries had received that amount as opposed to the 1.8 percent of the estimated 51.6 lakh women the government scheme aims to help annually. Therefore the scheme was not implemented to its full potential⁴. The government was unable to effectively track the recipients and the monies allotted to them due to a lack of appropriate IT infrastructure at the block level. As a result, the opening of escrow account within states was also a slow process.

Delay in the verification process: The operationalization of any new scheme takes time (PTI, 2018). This initiative took a long time to implement, especially when it came to compiling a list of recipients, having their information validated by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), and sharing data with the national government's public financial management system (Report, 2016).

No integration between Public Financial Management System (PFMS), Local Government Directory (LGD) and Aadhaar systems: The states took a long time to link the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana scheme to the Public Finance Management System (PFMS) and map out villages using the local government directory (LGD) of panchayats and local bodies, therefore biggest problem was seen here. In addition, there is no effective monitoring mechanism in place for disbursement management, therefore it is not accurately appraised. The issue of the government's software being regularly updated to keep track of beneficiaries' information (including instalments made over time) is a technical one (Report, 2016). A dedicated department should be established to investigate the situation.

⁴ wcd.nic.in

Lack of monitoring: The initiative was implemented and executed in an unexpected manner, resulting in a significant loss for the government. As a result, resources were not accurately channelled to beneficiaries, resulting in even more waste and misunderstanding.

BENEFITS OF SCHEME

Improvement in inequality gap: Primarily the scheme acts as a step towards mending the inequality gap between people so that a poor woman is able to afford her prenatal care. If a mother is well nourished, so is the child in her womb. A well-nourished child has one third of the chance that undernourished children have to move out of poverty. These children will not only be healthy but also learn better in school and turn out to be productive assets to the country. This is because good nutrition will provide them brainpower and strength to face any obstructions to leading a better life. Thus, nutrition is considered to be the centre of all efforts to eradicate poverty, combat disease, advance educational standards, and wrestle climate change (World Bank Annual Report, 2013).

Better fertility decisions: PMMVY has influenced the fertility decisions of individuals in terms of maintaining birth spacing. Consequently, people plan how soon after their first children to have their second ones. This will not only lead to the betterment of the health of the mother but also of the child. Further, the beneficiaries are clearly dependent on such cash incentives and retrieve them entirely as soon as they are to be redeemed. Thus, the government has created escrow accounts where cash was directly transferred to the beneficiary. However, this scheme also indicates an improvement in policy implementation for the timely disbursement of cash amounts to the beneficiaries who have registered under the scheme (Kupwara, 2018) which is a positive aspect of the scheme.

Increased awareness: States have also organized intensive IEC Campaigns (Information, Education and Communication Campaigns) for creating awareness about the program and widening its scope across the nation. These campaigns aid women in understanding how important prenatal care is for

their child's proper and overall development. Also, the government has appointed a special staff that monitors the progress of the scheme

CONCLUSION

A maternity benefit program serves to fulfil the needs of mothers as well as their children. According to the World Bank Development Indicator data from 181 countries, the neonatal mortality rate was projected to be 22.4 deaths per 1000 live births with respect to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in 2017 (The World Bank, 2018). In India, the neonatal mortality or death in the first month of life is much greater in comparison to the country's economic development process. However, in reality, this rate is around 26%. Also, India stands as the 12th worst among 52 "lower middle-income countries" that pose risks for new-borns (Agar Brugiavini, 2017). Therefore, this segment appears to be one of the major segments that require good investment by the central as well as state authorities. Similar to other benefit programs, this scheme has many shortcomings. When the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna went into effect in 2017, the Modi government cut the number of beneficiaries in half by limiting the scheme to only firstborns instead of the previously applicable "first two live births." This resulted in restricting many women from enjoying the benefits of the scheme, i.e., those who were working and pregnant for the second time. The statistics reflect that the government made poor planning decisions for its finance allocation to the scheme and was not making serious efforts at effective execution. So, there were many individuals that were too poor and viewed this amount as a major aid in their delivery stage. On the other side, there were people in the medium and upper income brackets who could easily pay much more for the mother and child's care. As a result, the scheme received a mixed response. Many beneficiaries, on the other hand, were fully reliant on this sum for the betterment of the mother's and child's health. This organisation is in charge of improving the people's nutrition and standard of living, as well as improving public health in India. Overall, it can be said that the plans have both advantages and disadvantages. Many people have benefited from the programmes so far, but they have not yet reached many. Despite the fact that this scheme has benefited many pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, the government must make A Critical Evaluation of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana effective and timely cash allocations in accordance with the needs of states across the country. In addition, adequate training of administrative workers, particularly those involved in scheme registration and monitoring, is critical. It is the responsibility of the government authorities to provide rights to women with respect to better

reproductive as well as prenatal and postnatal maternal healthcare. As per the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the State must take initiatives “for the reduction of the stillbirth-rate and of infant mortality and for the healthy development of the child” (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2017). Despite India’s considerable progress in the socio-economic sphere, it has shown an adverse performance with respect to maternal healthcare. The care of the mother pre- and post-delivery as well as the health of the child is very important for the proper growth and development of a nation. If a mother is undernourished, then so is the child in her womb. This indicates that early life interventions can prove to be an effective policy tool for improving the health and human capital of the Indian population.

