

2. Maternity Scheme Reaches Only One-Third of Beneficiaries

Prelims Level: Scheme

Mains Level: GS-II Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the Performance of these Schemes; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Why in News?

- Researchers assert that extrapolation of RTI data show only 31% of eligible mothers got benefits.

About Maternity Benefit Scheme:

- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** is a maternity benefit programme being implemented in all districts of the country with effect from 1st January, 2017.
- It is a centrally sponsored scheme being executed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- Cash benefits are provided to pregnant women in their bank account directly to meet enhanced nutritional needs and partially compensate for wage loss.
- Beneficiaries receive a cash benefit of Rs. 5,000 in three instalments on fulfilling the following conditions:
 1. Early registration of pregnancy
 2. Ante-natal check-up
 3. Registration of the birth of the child and completion of first cycle of vaccination for the First Living Child of the Family.
- The eligible beneficiaries also receive cash incentive under **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)**. Thus, on an average, a woman gets Rs. 6,000. Implementation of the scheme is closely monitored by the central and state governments through the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana - Common Application Software (PMMVY-CAS). PMMVY-CAS is a web based software application that enables tracking the status of each beneficiary under the scheme, resulting in expedited, accountable and better grievance redressal.

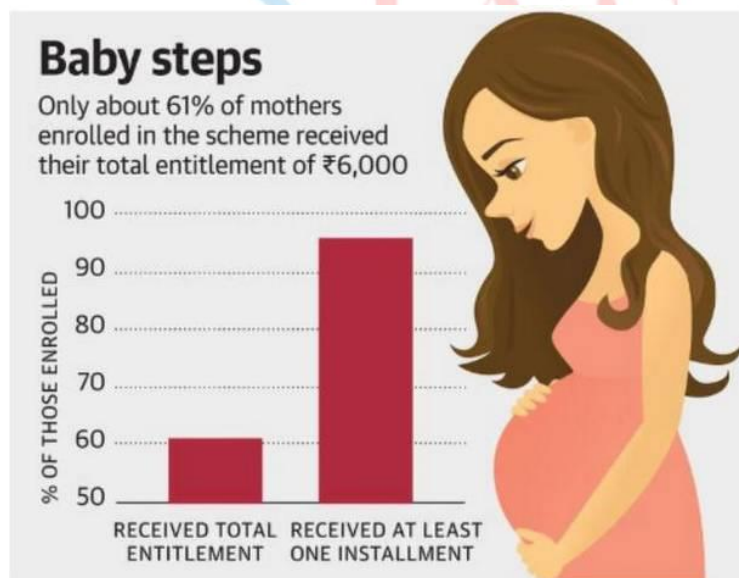
Who are the Beneficiaries?

- All Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW&LM), excluding those who are in regular employment with the Central Government or the State Governments or PSUs or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force.

- All eligible Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers who have their pregnancy on or after 1st January 2017 for the first child in the family.

What does the RTI Extrapolation say?

- A vital programme to support lactating mothers and pregnant women by compensating them for loss of wages during their pregnancy has been able to reach only less than a third of the eligible beneficiaries.
- Almost 61% of beneficiaries registered under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) between April 2018 and July 2019 (38.3 lakh out of the total 62.8 lakh enrolled) received the full amount of ₹6,000 promised under the scheme.
- The scheme brings under its ambit 23% of all births and pays full benefits to a mere 14% of all births, which was at 270.5 lakh for 2017.
- The data extrapolated from the RTI reply is also consistent with a survey coordinated by three development economists.
- The survey team covered a district each in six States — Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha — in 2019 to interview women and inspect anganwadis. A total of 706 women were interviewed, including 342 pregnant and 364 lactating women.



Inadequate Awareness:

- The study found that only 50% of pregnant women and 57% of nursing women surveyed were eligible for the scheme.

- It also throws light on the need for higher awareness among the pool of beneficiaries — only 66% of pregnant women and 69% of nursing women knew about the scheme.
- Only 8% of pregnant women and 23% of nursing mothers received some benefits.
- Several factors impeded proper implementation of the programme that aims to fight malnutrition among children.
- These include an application form of about 23 pages, a slew of documents such as mother-child protection card, Aadhaar card, husband's Aadhaar card and bank passbook aside from linking their bank accounts with Aadhaar.
- The requirement to produce the husband's Aadhaar card results in excluding women who may be living with men they are not married to, single mothers and those who may be staying at their natal home.
- Women must also have the address of their marital home on their Aadhaar card, which often results in newlyweds being either left out or forced to go from door-to-door when pregnant and needing rest and care.
- The survey findings also highlight the need to pay greater attention to the special needs of pregnancy — good food, extra rest and health care.
- Only 22% of the nursing women surveyed reported that they had been eating more than usual during their pregnancy and the average weight gain was barely 7kg when it should be at least 13-18kg.
- Almost all the respondents had done household work regularly during their last pregnancy — 21% of nursing women said that they had no one to help them with domestic chores and 63% said that they had been working right until the day of delivery.