



## PMMVY Implementation Concerns

**For Prelims:** [Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana](#), [International Labour Organization](#), [Janani Suraksha Yojana](#), [POSHAN Abhiyaan](#)

**For Mains:** National Food Security Act, 2013, Social security for women and maternal health in India.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

Despite maternity benefits being a legal entitlement under the [National Food Security Act \(NFSA\), 2013](#), the [Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana \(PMMVY\)](#) faces significant implementation challenges, leaving millions of pregnant women without essential benefits.

### What is PMMVY and its Concerns?

- **PMMVY:** The **PMMVY** is **Centrally Sponsored** scheme launched in 2017 under the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**, provides maternity benefits to eligible pregnant and lactating women.
  - However, government employees and those receiving similar benefits are not eligible.
- **Objectives:** PMMVY ensures maternal nutrition, promotes institutional deliveries, supports financial stability, and encourages the birth of girl children.
- **Key Features:** Provides **financial assistance** to support maternal health and nutrition.
  - **First child:** Rs 5,000 is provided, and additional benefits under [Janani Suraksha Yojana \(JSY\)](#) ensure that women receive around **Rs 6,000** in total.
  - **Second child (only if a girl):** Rs 6,000 is given to promote **gender equality** and discourage **female feticide**.
- **Concerns:**
  - **Restricted Coverage:** The scheme violates the **NFSA, 2013**, which mandates universal maternity benefits, by limiting benefits to only the **first two children**, with the second child covered only if it is a **girl**.
  - **Budget Cuts:** In **2023-24**, the **central government allocated just Rs 870 crore** for the scheme, only one-third of what was allocated in 2019-20.
    - Covering **90% of births** at Rs 6,000 each would require at least **Rs 12,000 crore**.
  - **Poor Implementation:** The scheme's effective coverage dropped from **36% in 2019-20 to just 9% in 2023-24**.
  - **Bureaucratic and Digital Hurdles:** The scheme is plagued by **Aadhaar-based verification issues**, complex application processes and frequent software failures, making it difficult for **poor and digitally illiterate women** to access benefits.

**Note:** State-specific schemes outperform PMMVY, with Tamil Nadu (84%) and Odisha (64%) achieving higher coverage than PMMVY (<10%). They offer Rs 18,000 and Rs 10,000 per child, respectively, highlighting PMMVY's inefficiency.

## What are the Provisions for Maternity Benefits Under NFSA?

- **NFSA 2013:** Aims to provide **food and nutritional security** by ensuring access to affordable food grains for a large section of India's population.
  - The Act marks a shift from **welfare-based to rights-based food security**, making the **Public Distribution System (PDS)** more structured and legally binding.
- **Maternity Benefits Under the NFSA, 2013:** All pregnant women (except those in the formal sector) are entitled to **Rs 6,000 per child** as maternity benefits.
  - **Maternity benefits** help ensure **proper nutrition, healthcare, and rest** for pregnant women, which is crucial for maternal and child health.

**Note:** Women in the **formal sector in India receive 26 weeks of paid maternity leave**, as per the **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017**.

- Globally, 51% of countries provide maternity leave of at least 14 weeks, the standard set by the **International Labour Organization (ILO) Maternity Protection Convention, 2000**.

## Way Forward

- **Grassroots Implementation:** Involve **Accredited Social Health Activists, Anganwadi workers, and Panchayati Raj institutions** to identify and assist eligible beneficiaries.
  - Extend benefits to **low-income workers in the informal economy**, as many are outside the scope of **paid maternity leave**.
  - Extend benefits to all pregnant women, as mandated by the NFSA instead of restricting it to the first child and second child.
- **Holistic Approach:** Ensure better linkage with JSY, **POSHAN Abhiyaan**, and state maternity schemes (state models like Tamil Nadu and Odisha) to provide comprehensive maternal care.
  - Combine cash transfers with **free nutrition kits, antenatal care, and postpartum support** for better maternal and child health outcomes.
- **Monitoring:** Conduct regular independent audits to evaluate fund utilization and beneficiary reach.
- **Remove Digital Hurdles:** Introduce **alternative identity verification** to prevent exclusion due to Aadhaar-related issues.
  - Ensure payments are credited without delays by **integrating with Jan Dhan accounts** and **removing unnecessary bureaucratic approvals**.

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

How does the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana contradict the provisions of the National Food Security Act, 2013? Suggest measures to align the scheme with NFSA.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q.** In order to enhance the prospects of social development, sound and adequate health care policies are needed particularly in the fields of geriatric and maternal health care. Discuss. **(2020)**

