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Maternity Scheme Exclusionary: PMMVY

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Why in News

The **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** which is a pan-India maternity benefit programme has been criticised for its **exclusionary nature**. It has led to **single women and young brides** being left out of its purview.

Issues with the Scheme

- Registration for the scheme requires an applicant to **provide her husband's Aadhaar details** along with her own. It affects **single women, including unwed mothers,**

deserted wives and widows.

Tedious documentation

HOW PMMVY EXCLUDES

- 1 Only for the first born
- 2 Provided after meeting several conditionalities -registration of pregnancy, at least one ante-natal check-up, registration of child birth and vaccinations
- 3 Proof of address of marital home
- 4 Husband's Aadhaar card
- 5 Minimum age of 19 years
- 6 Father and mother need to give separate undertaking that the child is the first living child for both of them

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

- Total 6 application forms to be filled, with total 30 of 32 pages to be filled by the beneficiary
- As many as 9 IDs to be produced: copy of Aadhaar card (or enrolment slip), copy of Identity proof, copy of Voter ID card (as age proof) for both husband and wife, copy of ration card (as proof of address of marital home), copy of passbook, Mother and Child Protection Card

The form also requires separate undertakings on **“the first living child”** from the **woman and her husband**.

- A mother seeking benefits needs to provide **address proof of her marital home**. It is **challenging for a newlywed** expecting a child and often residing in her natal home during pregnancy.
- The scheme requires an applicant to be **at least 19 years old** which leaves out younger brides, who get married at the legal age of 18 years but hesitate in getting their marriages registered.

30-35% of first-time mothers are under the age of 18 years.

- The documentation work **leaves out many women living on the margins** such as sex workers, women in custody, migrant and those living in post-conflict situations. They all are unable to claim benefits even though **they are most in need of monetary compensation**.
- Women have to pay a **hefty bribe** during the application process. It goes as high as ₹500/- for each of the three forms so it is not easy for the women coming from financially weaker sections.

Suggestions

- There is a need for reviewing the scheme and **making it universal by removing restrictions** on the number of children as well as including all women, whether they are in the formal or informal sector, engaged in paid or unpaid work.
- The sum promised should be at least **on par with minimum wages for women in self-employment**, unpaid work, or working for less than minimum wages.
- Activists and grassroots workers must make a formal representation to the government highlighting their concerns so that corrective actions can be taken.

Source: TH