

Ministry of Women and Child Development
National Mission for Empowerment of Women

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Subject : A note on suggested changes in the Scheme 'IGMSY'.

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Ministry of Women & Child Development in collaboration with Ministry of Labour and Employment held a day long consultation on the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 on 2nd July, 2013 under the chairmanship of Minister of State(I/C) WCD, Smt. Krishna Tirath. In the meeting, a concern has been raised on the maternity benefit available in the informal sector. Ms. Jashodhara Dasgupta of SAHAYOG has made observations from a study on IGMSY in four blocks across West Bengal, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. The purpose of this study titled "Maternity Entitlements in India: A Question of Women's Health, Nutrition and Rights" by National Alliance for Maternal Health and Human Rights (NAMHHR) is to examine (i) how the IGMSY scheme has been implemented from November 2011-March 2012 and (ii) to focus on women who stand excluded due to the eligibility criteria of the IGMSY scheme. (copy of Study enclosed for ready reference) For this study, data was collected from December 2011 to March, 2012. The findings of the study are as follows:-

- The enquiry into the nutritional status of women revealed that more than half of the pregnant women in the age group 15-49 years are anaemic with their BMI being below normal.
- Due to the delay in roll out, the benefits of IGMSY did not reach the beneficiaries in many cases. There has been exclusion of women with more than two children, who are also socially vulnerable.
- In the poorest classes (SC and ST women) child mortality rate is very high and there has been no way to ensure child survival. Insistence for only two children will penalise those women who have more than two children with no programmes for old age support and social security for them.
- Lingam and Yelamanchili (EPW, 2011) have analysed the NFHS 3 data for India to show the profile and parity of women from vulnerable groups (Table 1 below). The data indicates that in all of India, half the women will get potentially disqualified for the IGMSY; and among vulnerable groups such as SC, ST and non-literate women, almost 60% will potentially get excluded, with two-thirds of non-literate women unable to access the maternity benefit.

Table 1: Social Profile of Women in India Aged 15-49 who recently gave birth & Percentage of selected categories of women and under five child mortality

Category of Women	% of all Women Aged 15-49 who have given birth to children in last year	Among Women Age 15-49 Who Give Birth in a Year		Percentage of Under-five child mortality
		% of Women Aged 19-49 Years having 2 or < 2 Births	% of Women Aged 15-49 years having More than 2 Births	
All women	100	52	48	

SC/ST/poor having no education[i]	66	41	59	
SC and ST	31	44	56	66.4 and 54.4
Poor Women	40	37	63	92.1
No education	46	34	66	

- Source: Lingam and Yelamanchili 2011 and India Alliance for Child Rights (Computed from NFHS-3, 2005-06).
- [i] Figures in categories overlap with more than one variable

From the Study it appears that there are some concerns on maternity benefit which were not answered in the Ministry of Women & Child Development's Scheme 'Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana' (IGMSY). The Scheme provides benefit to pregnant and lactating mothers, provided that there are not more than two live births and the age of the beneficiaries should be from 19 to 49 years. The need is felt from the Study which surveyed poor women in districts Bankura (West Bengal), Bargarh (Odisha), Mahoba (Uttar Pradesh) and Purbi Singhbhum (Jharkhand) that these conditions are rather strict and need to be revised. Accordingly, the following changes in the Scheme IGMSY are suggested:-

1. The disqualification based on the number of children be removed

Explanation – The Scheme attempts to partly compensate for wage loss to pregnant and lactating women both prior to and after delivery of the child only in case of two live births. For more than two live births, the beneficiaries are excluded from the scheme. Women with more than two live births are disqualified. This is a penalty for the women in vulnerable groups whose children do not survive and they have to depend more on children because they have no other social security or future income. The present study showed it clearly that most vulnerable groups of poor women are having more than two births. That means a significant number of poor women will not get benefit from this Scheme. These vulnerable women do not want to have large families out of choice. According to NHFS3 only 15% women want a third child and this desire is more amongst most vulnerable groups. If these vulnerable groups are excluded, the objective of 'inclusive growth' of the Twelfth Five Year Plan will be defeated.

2. The disqualification based on the age of women be removed.

Explanation – Women who are below 19 and forcefully married by their parents in the childhood get excluded from this scheme without any of their own fault. Therefore, age condition is not right for these vulnerable groups.

According to Chapter II Para 4(a) and (b) of the National Food Security Act, 2013 which is recently enacted –

"4. Subject to such schemes as may be framed by the Central Government, every pregnant woman and lactating mother shall be entitled to-

- (a) Meal, free of charge, during pregnancy and six months after the child birth, through the local anganwadi, so as to meet the nutritional standards specified in Schedule II; and
- (b) Maternity benefit of not less than rupees six thousand, in such instalments as may be prescribed by the Central Government;

Provided that all pregnant women and lactating mothers in regular employment with the Central Government or State Governments or Public Sector Undertakings or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force shall not be entitled to benefits specified in clause (b)."

It may be mentioned here that **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has abjured the disqualification for women with two children** in both *Janani Suraksha Yojana* (in non-EAG-states), as well as *National Maternity Benefit Scheme* (vide GO number Z.14018/1/2012-JSY dated 13 May, 2013).

Put up for kind consideration please.

(Padmaja Mehta)
SrEA(NMEW)
4.9.2013

Secretary(WCD)