

PM's maternity scheme benefits 23.6 lakh

After initial hiccups in implementing the maternity benefit programme Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), the government has finally made some headway and provided cash incentives to nearly 23.6 lakh beneficiaries out of an estimated 51.6 lakh a year.

The scheme was approved by the Union Cabinet in May 2017 and was expected to be rolled out in September that year. However, until January 2018, the government programme had covered only 90,000 women — a mere 2% of the target.

Under the scheme, pregnant women and lactating mothers are offered a cash incentive of Rs. 6,000 on the birth of their first child as partial compensation for wage loss, to reduce maternal mortality and malnutrition levels among children.

“Many States like Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Odisha and West Bengal have not yet come on board to implement the scheme. As these States account for nearly 25% of the total beneficiaries, we have actually been able to serve 23.6 lakh of the 38 lakh beneficiaries or more than 60% of women,” R.K. Shrivastava, Secretary, Women and Child Development, has said in an interview.

Huge backlog

However, due to a huge backlog from last year, the government needed to provide cash benefits to over 100 lakh estimated beneficiaries by the end of the financial year 2018-19.

The official was confident of meeting the target.

An amount of Rs. 673 crore has been transferred to the accounts of the beneficiaries out of the total budget of Rs. 2,594 crore set aside for the scheme last year, and another Rs. 2,400 crore allocated for the current fiscal. The scheme is being implemented on a 60:40 cost-sharing basis with the State governments.

While States like Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Odisha and West Bengal have their own maternity benefit schemes and have been reluctant to implement the PMMVY, the senior official said they were bound to comply because the scheme was a by-product of the National Food Security Act.

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