

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY):-Woman Empowerment in India

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Abstract: Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is an ambitious social welfare scheme of Narendra Modi Government launched on 1st May 2017 from Ballia in Uttar Pradesh. Under the PM Ujjwala Yojana, the government aims to provide LPG connections to BPL households in the country. The scheme is aimed at replacing the unclean cooking fuels mostly used in the rural India with the clean and more efficient LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas). In India, the poor have limited access to cooking gas (LPG). The spread of LPG cylinders has been predominantly in the urban and semi-urban areas with the coverage mostly in middle class and affluent households. But there are serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuels. According to WHO estimates about 5 lakh deaths in India alone due to unclean cooking fuels? Most of these premature deaths were due to non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer. Indoor air pollution is also responsible for a significant number of acute respiratory illnesses in young children. According to experts, having an open fire in the kitchen is like burning 400 cigarettes an hour. The LPG Panchayat was organized by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas as an awareness drive with an aim to provide a platform for LPG consumers to interact with each other, promote mutual learning and share experiences and the Ministry intends to conduct 1 lakh such Panchayats across India before March 31, 2019; each LPG Panchayat will have around 100 members. On February 7, 2018 the Centre has decided to ramp up the target of 5 crore to 8 crore and allocated an additional ₹4,800 crore to this end after setting aside ₹8,000 crore during the inception of the scheme. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Scheme (PMUY) – the scheme for providing LPG connections to the women of Below Poverty Line (BPL) households. This paper focus on the contribution of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) for Woman Empowerment in India and it is found that Ujjwala Yojana provide various facilities and funds to woman so that they can manage and protect themselves from the various natural hazards.

Keywords:- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Focus of the Government for Woman Empowerment in India, Socio- Economic aspects of India, Success of Ujjwala Yojana.

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I. Background

Providing LPG connections to BPL households will ensure universal coverage of cooking gas in the country. This measure will empower women and protect their health. It will reduce drudgery and the time spent on cooking. It will also provide employment for rural youth in the supply chain of cooking gas. Target beneficiaries under the scheme, five crore LPG connections are to be provided to BPL households. The identification of eligible BPL families will be made in consultation with the State Governments and the Union Territories.

BPL is a person/ household who suffer from at least one deprivation under the Socio-Economic Caste census (SECC) - 2011 Database. While the selection of beneficiaries would be from the BPL families only, preference would be given to SC/ST and weaker sections of society. While providing the new connections to BPL households, priority would be given to the States which have lower LPG coverage (compared to the national average) as on 1st Jan, 2016.

Release of LPG connection under this Scheme shall be in the name of the women belonging to the BPL family. The Government has also decided to cover the following categories under the Scheme:-All SC/STs household's beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) (Gramin) Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) Forest dwellers Most Backward Classes (MBC) Tea & Ex-Tea Garden Tribes People reside in Islands People residing in river islands. Duration of the scheme The Scheme would be implemented over three years, namely, the FY 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 across the country.

Benefits to the citizens under the scheme, five crore LPG connections are to be provided to BPL households. The Scheme provides a financial support of Rs 1600 for each LPG connection to the BPL

households. The administrative cost of Rs. 1600 per connection, which includes a cylinder, pressure regulator, booklet, safety hose, etc., would be borne by the Government.

Implementation modalities of the scheme, woman of the BPL household, who does not have access to LPG connection may apply for a new LPG connection to the LPG distributor. While submitting the application form, the woman will submit details, like Address, Jandhan/ Bank Account and Aadhar number (if the Aadhar number is not available, steps would be taken in coordination with UIDAI for issue of Aadhar number to the woman of BPL household) The LPG Field officials will match the application against SECC - 2011 database and, after ascertaining their BPL status, enter the details (name, address etc) into a dedicated OMC Web portal through a login/ password given by the OMCs OMCs will undertake electronically the de-duplication exercise and other measures for due diligence for a new LPG connection The connection shall be issued by the OMC to the eligible beneficiaries (after completion of various stages above). While the connection charges would be borne by the Government, the OMCs would provide an option for the new consumer to opt for EMIs, if she so desires, to cover the cost of a cooking stove and first refill. The EMI amount may be recovered by the OMCs from the subsidy amount due to the consumer on each refill; In case the State Government or a voluntary organization or an individual wishes to contribute the cost of a stove and/or first refill, they would be free to do so in coordination with the OMCs. However, this would be under the overall umbrella of PMUY and no other Scheme name/ tagline would be allowed without express approval of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoP&NG) OMCs will also organize Meals' at various locations for release of connections to BPL families. This will be done in the presence of public representatives and distinguished personalities of the area. The scheme will cover BPL families under all forms of distributorship and for various sizes of cylinders (like 14.2 kg, 5 kg, etc.) depending on f the field situation. Benefits under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana have been extended to people of all Hilly States including NE States by treating them as 'Priority States'. This step will effectively address the difficulty faced by poor people residing in the States of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura in accessing LPG for cooking purposes.

Importance of Ujjawala Yojana

- 1- Ujjawala Yojana is strengthening women's empowerment and also enabling rural women to escape the drudgery and negative health effects of using firewood and PMUY is rightly seen as one that lifts the health and quality of life of rural women.
- 2- The Economic Survey mentions that on an average, women spend around 374 hours every year for collection of firewood, thus LPG saves cooking time and this extra time can be utilized in some income generating activity.
- 3- Factors such as the difference in the taste of food when prepared on chulhas (wood-fired stoves) and the ease of using cook-stoves were key in determining the popularity of cook-stoves over traditional methods.
- 4- LPG as cooking fuel has its advantages, those who have access to alternative cooking fuels – wood, cowdung cakes – continue to use it as well.

How Ujjawala Scheme works

The customer, however, has to pay for the LPG stove and first refill charges. She can make an upfront payment or get into an EMI with the oil marketing company to pay for the LPG stove, or the first refill.

PMUY scheme include the following elements

- 1- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) successfully provided LPG connections to over 2 crore Below Poverty Line (BPL) and 1.5 crore Above Poverty Line (APL) families in the financial year 2016-17. Since its launch on 1 May 2016, PMUY has registered 72.84 per cent LPG coverage against 61.9 per cent the previous year.
- 2- As of 1 May 2017, 2.2 crore women under BPL category have received free LPG connections in rural areas. "LPG connection in the country has registered 10 per cent growth in the last three years," Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan said at a press meet on the one-year anniversary of the PMUY.
- 3- "During 1955 and 14 May 2014, there were only 14 crore active consumers using LPG as cooking fuel. Today, India has over 20 crore LPG consumers,"

Some facts about Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana Scheme

- The aim of the scheme is to provide five crore LPG connections to BPL families, especially women, with a subsidy of Rs.1, 600 per connection in the next three years.
- Total expenditure of Rs.8000 crore has been set aside for target of five crore connections.
- Beneficiaries will receive direct LPG subsidy through PAHAL digital payment scheme.

- In 2016-17, PMUY recorded the highest number of LPG connections at 2,16,59,870 against the target of 1.5 crore. It was achieved in just 11 months. By 2019, the scheme will add 10 crore new connections and 5 crore BPL families.
- Overall, 3.25 crore new LPG connections were given in 2016-17, which is also the highest in the country.
- Around 85 per cent Ujjwala beneficiaries have returned to book LPG refills, among which 38 per cent beneficiaries belong to SC and ST category.
- Uttar Pradesh has achieved 75 per cent growth so far, higher than the national average, while Odisha scored the highest jump from 12 to 33 per cent.
- Safety clinics and camps at all villages have been set up for educating first time LPG consumers about the use of LPG and understanding the Yojana.
- Digital platforms have been set up to monitor and implement the PMUY as well as PAHAL schemes. The platforms will help in identifying and selecting new LPG beneficiaries as well as the location to set up LPG distributorships. Such platforms will also assist in filling up KYCs of new beneficiaries.

II. Findings

- 1- While more than 15 percent of rural households use LPG, firewood remains the dominant fuel. The Economic Survey 2017-18 claims that 79 per cent of the PMUY beneficiaries return for refills, taking as many as four refills per year on an average which is impressive.
- 2- Out of the total 25 crore-plus registered customers, 22 crores are live. Of this 22, about 12 crores are urban and about 10 crores urban plus rural (including those under Ujjwala).
- 3- For the urban market, the annual average consumption pattern is seen as 7-7.5 cylinders per household. For rural, urban (which includes small towns), including Ujjwala beneficiaries, it is about 4-6 cylinders annually.

III. Conclusion

This is the first most crucial step by the government towards tackling the developmental issue of enabling clean cooking energy throughout the rural areas. This will not only be beneficial as a contribution towards a clean environment but also address the health issues faced by rural population (due to use of unclean fuels). However, the government also needs to focus on issues of cash flow, awareness, availability and administration apart from subsidizing connections and fuel costs.

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