Syllabus subtopic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

News: According to a survey, the PMMVY has been able to reach less than a third of the eligible beneficiaries.

Prelims and Mains focus: Key Highlights of the PMMVY, funding and beneficiaries, challenges present and ways to address them.

Key concerns:

1. The scheme has failed to reach at least 49% of all mothers who would have delivered their first child (an estimated total of 123 lakh for 2017 according to the researchers).
2. Given the stipulated conditions, the scheme brings under its ambit 23% of all births and pays full benefits to a mere 14% of all births, which was at 270.5 lakh for 2017.
3. Only 66% of pregnant women and 69% of nursing women knew about the scheme. Only 8% of pregnant women and 23% of nursing mothers received some benefits.

Challenges in implementing the scheme:

1. An application form of about 23 pages, a slew of documents such as mother-child protection card, Aadhaar card, husband’s Aadhaar card and bank passbook aside from linking their bank accounts with Aadhaar.
2. The requirement to produce the husband’s Aadhaar card results in excluding women who may be living with men they are not married to, single mothers and those who may be staying at their natal home.
3. Women must also have the address of their marital home on their Aadhaar card, which often results in newly weds being either left out or forced to go from door-to-door when pregnant and needing rest and care.

About PMMVY:

- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a maternity benefit rechristened from erstwhile Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY). The IGMSY was launched in 2010.
- The scheme is a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women.
- It provides a partial wage compensation to women for wage-loss during childbirth and childcare and to provide conditions for safe delivery and good nutrition and feeding practices.
- They receive a cash benefit of Rs. 5,000 in three instalments on fulfilling the respective conditionality, viz. early registration of pregnancy, ante-natal check-up and registration of the birth of the child and completion of first cycle of vaccination for the first living child of the family.
- The eligible beneficiaries also receive cash incentive under Janani Suraksha Yojana
(JSY). Thus, on an average, a woman gets Rs. 6,000.

Exceptions: The maternity benefits are available to all Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) except those in regular employment with the Central Government or State Government or Public Sector Undertaking or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force.

Funding: The scheme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under which cost sharing ratio between the Centre and the States & UTs with Legislature is 60:40 while for North-Eastern States & three Himalayan States; it is 90:10. It is 100% Central assistance for Union Territories without Legislature.

Way ahead:

Under-nutrition continues to adversely affect majority of women in India. In India, every third woman is undernourished and every second woman is anaemic.

An undernourished mother almost inevitably gives birth to a low birth weight baby. When poor nutrition starts in-utero, it extends throughout the life cycle since the changes are largely irreversible.

Owing to economic and social distress many women continue to work to earn a living for their family right up to the last days of their pregnancy.

They resume working soon after childbirth, even though their bodies might not permit it, thus preventing their bodies from fully recovering on one hand, and also impeding their ability to exclusively breastfeed their young infant in the first six months.