

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) Step towards Social Inclusion in India

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Abstract: Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) is major steps towards Social inclusion by providing Free LPG connection to every BPL household. The purpose of the scheme is to bring affordability to the poor for use of cleaner fuel, reduction in air pollution and improving health and sanitation. Around 41% of households in India are still using fossil fuel for cooking which causes air pollution and health hazard. From study it is seen that the accessibility to cleaner fuel and affordability is the key issue to the rural poor. The PMUY is helping to address these issues by subsidizing LPG connections, LPG 1st refill and LPG Stove to economically weaker and socially marginalized families. This scheme is also fostering to women empowerment and living healthy society. The shift towards use of cleaner fuel may ultimately lead to passing on clean environment to our next generation.

Keywords: PMUY, LPG, PNG, BPL, OMCs, SECC, Jan Dhan Account, Social inclusion, Affordability, Women empowerment.

Abbreviations: PMUY = Prime Minister Ujjwala Yojana, LPG = Liquefied Petroleum Gas, PNG = Piped Natural Gas, BPL= Below Poverty Line, OMCs= Oil Marketing Companies, SECC = Socio Economic Caste Census 2011.

I. INTRODUCTION

India has around 24 crores household out of which 41 percent households i.e about 10 crores households are still dependent on fossil fuel for cooking even after 68 years of independence (Times of India 29th December, 2016). The fossil fuel includes firewood, coal, kerosene and biomass like animal dung, cakes and crop wastes etc. The smokes from burning such fuels contain hazardous substances and carbon monoxide which causes alarming pollution to household and neighboring areas. The indoor air pollution created from use of such un-cleaned fuel adversely affects the health of women, children and other people residing nearby such households causing respiratory diseases / disorders like lung cancer, heart disease, stroke and chronic and obstructive pulmonary diseases. From study it is revealed that, the smoke inhaled by women while cooking on such unclean fuel is equal to burning of 400 cigarettes in an hour. An estimates around five lakh death occurs annually in India while a large number of people suffers from respiratory disorders due to use of unclean cooking fuels (WHO Summit at Geneva -2009 on Public Health and the Environment) In addition to this the children and the women take the drudgery of collecting such fossil fuel.

A large section of Society especially the poor and rural landless peasant workers have lagged behind in the economic and social development. They also have not benefited from the government policies and programs and remained socially excluded from socio economic development. They have limited access to the cleaner fuel liquefied Petroleum gas (LPG) and the piped natural gas (PNG). The use of cleaner

fuel has mainly spread to urban and semi urban areas covering mostly the rich and the middle class families.

Bringing up every household towards the use of cleaner fuel has been the target of every successive government for a decade by slowly covering the urban to semi urban and then the rural through different programs like Rajiv Gandhi Gramin LPG Vitrak (RGGLV), DEEPAM Scheme etc that is the reasons for continuing subsidy on domestic LPG so long. But however the pace of coverage was very slow. In order to reduce the social degradation and health hazard, this new government has come up with mega action plan popularly named as '**Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana**'. This mega social inclusion plan for covering each BPL household was launched by our honorable Prime Minister on 1st May'2016 at Balia, UP. The purpose behind the scheme is to bring out affordability to the poor and facilitate them towards the use of cleaner fuel.

Objective:

The objective of study is to explore the social inclusion of poor and marginalized BPL families through the government scheme popularly known as Pradhan Mantari Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY).

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is descriptive and exploratory in nature where empirical study has been made about the poor, backward and marginalized society, their economic and social inclusion by government plan and schemes. Attempt has been made to clarify on the understanding and workability of Pradhan Mantari Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY). The benefits flowing from use cleaner fuel by social inclusion of BPL families through this scheme has also been analyzed. The researcher has relied on the reports, news and survey for descriptive analysis.

III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is opposite to Social exclusion. The individual or groups of individual who are socially excluded do not fully participate in economy, social life and political life of the nation. This reduces solidarity, increases social tension and holds back economic development of the country. People are born in the complex web of social and economic strata of the society, which determine their assets endowment, behavior and thinking pattern. This is due to these circumstances or habits or alienations some people or group of people remained outside the main stream of the Society and slowly became poor, backward and downtrodden. Social inclusion is a process, which seeks to bring about the reforms or policy changes to reduce inequities in access to assets, capabilities and opportunities. It is about giving concessions, incentives to marginalize or socially excluded group of people to develop capacity and empowerment to enable them to actively participate in social and economic development of the country.

In Social inclusion process the government lays especial emphasis to provide opportunity and assist for the economic and social development of downtrodden and weaker section of the Society. The World Bank defines the Social inclusion as the process of improving the ability, opportunity and dignity of people disadvantaged on the basis of their identity to take part in the Society (World Bank, 2013).

Ever after 6 decade of our independence the social inclusions of a large section of society such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, religious minorities, women, children and persons with disabilities has lagged behind in the process of socio economic development. These group of population have not benefited equally from the public policies and public spending over last six decade as a result of which a large number of population are still leading life under below poverty line (BPL) in India. In other word it can be said that these BPL families have still remained socially excluded from the main stream to reap the benefit of economic development. A number of efforts have been made to include these families to main stream by fostering through distinctive and incidental benefits through government policies like Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) for Schedule Tribes, the special component Plan for Scheduled Castes (SCP of SCs), Prime Minister 15 point program for Minorities and Gender Responsive Budgeting. This government (NDA-National Democratic Alliance) has initiated a number of social security measures for upliftment of poor and weaker section like Atal Pension Yojana (APY), life insurance scheme by contributing just Rupee one per month 'Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), the accidental death or disability insurance scheme 'Pradhan Mantri Surksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) etc. While the introduction of Jan Dhan Yojana and Ujjwala Yojana by Modi government is the major path breaking in social inclusion removing social deprivation for the poor and rural folk.

Use of Solid Fuel in India

The tradition fuel i.e solid fuels are being used since ages in the world. As per WHO assessment (March'2006) 74% of Indian population were using Solid fuel in their houses. The Indian position on use of solid fuel as compared to other South Asia countries is appended below.

Region / Country	Percentage
South East Asia	74
Indonesia	72
Sri Lanka	67
Thailand	72
Bangladesh	88
India	74
Myanmar	95
Nepal	80

(Source: Percentage of population using solid fuels, by country and WHO region- Multiple Implications for the Millennium Development Goal" in Environment Health Prospective, Volume 114 Number 3 in Mar'2006)

From table it is evident that India needed a great push to direct households towards use of cleaner fuel. Since the availability of cleaner fuel is still a major challenge for rural poor households and health of women and children are getting affected due to use of unclean fuel, the government is committed to provide cleaner fuel to poor households the idea of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) was evolved.

IV. PRDHAN MANTRI UJJWALA YOJANA (PMUY)

Every successive government has tried to increase the availability and use of cleaner fuel LPG through different program and scheme. Continuing subsidy on LPG domestic by the government was step in this direction. The launch of Rajiv Gandhi Gramin LPG Vitrak (RGGLV) by the previous government was made to increase the availability of LPG in rural area. This government has come up with mega action plan popularly named as 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana' with a target to provide free LPG connections to 5 Crores BPL households over a period of 3 years effective 1st April'2016. While 2.20 Crores LPG connections has already been issued to BPL families during 2016-17 itself (News report 07 May'2017). As per the scheme a deposit free LPG connections are being released in the name of woman belonging to the BPL family suffering from at least one deprivation under SECC-2011. This Ujjwala Yojana is bringing the affordability to poor households to shift from the use of solid fuel to cleaner fuel LPG.

The Procedures:

- The women above 18 years belonging to BPL families not having access to LPG connection may apply for new LPG connection in a prescribed format to LPG distributor. While submitting the application the woman must submit the details like address, Jan Dhan / Bank Account number and Adhar number (Adhar if not available to be coordinated with UAID for issuance of Adhar to BPL household)
- The LPG field officials will match the application against SECC-2011 database to ascertain the eligibility under BPL status. After that the name and address will be entered on OMC's portal to eligible applicants.
- OMCs will take electronically the de-duplication exercise and other major due diligence for issuance of new LPG connection under the scheme.
- OMCs will issue the new free LPG connection to eligible beneficiaries. As the connection charges are borne by the government, the OMCs will provide an option to new consumers under this scheme to opt for if so desires for EMIs for the cost of cooking stove and 1st refill. The EMIs shall be recovered from the amount due to consumer on account of subsidy on their refill.
- In case any state government or voluntary organization or an individual wishes to contribute to the cost of cooking stove and 1st refill, may do so in coordination with OMCs.
- OMCs will also organize the education and awareness campaign or Melas at various locations to release of connection to BPL families. The release of connection shall be done in presence of public personalities or distinguished personalities of the area.
- The scheme will cover BPL families under all form of distributorship and for various sizes of cylinders like 14.2 KGs or 5 KGs.

SECC:- Refers to Socio Economic Cast Census exercise initiated in 2011.

Workability of Scheme: For cooking on LPG fuel the standard LPG equipments like LPG Cylinder and Pressure Regulator along with Rubber pipe and Gas Stove is needed. The LPG distributors from Oil Companies provide the standardized LPG equipment to customers taking LPG Connection on payment towards the cost of the equipment. In the given scheme the Central Government is reimbursing the

cost of cylinder and pressure regulator (1400+200) to Oil Company for giving LPG connection to BPL family. The BPL family has also option to buy the low cost gas stove and refill or opt for EMI for the 1st refill and gas stove. In case of opting for EMI the Oil Company is providing the 1st Refill and low cost Gas Stove through distributor network. In this case the cost of 1st Refill and low cost Gas Stove Rs.1620 (i.e Rs 630+Rs. 990) shall be recovered from the subsidies on LPG payable to the BPL family on subsequent refill. Taking the present subsidy on LPG around Rs. 200 per cylinder refill, it will take 8-9 months to offset the initial cost of gas stove and one free refill through EMI. The other individual or organization can also contribute to this social cause by sponsoring the cost of gas stove and refill in coordination through Oil companies. The Punjab State Government has also sponsored for the cost of Gas stove being given to BPL families in Punjab under the scheme. (Business Standard, 2016)

Survey on Ujjwala Beneficiaries: A survey was undertaken by a financial consulting firm “Micro Save Asia” (Mr Manoj Sharma, Director Micro Save Asia, 2017) in 12 district of eastern, central and western Uttar Pradesh with the beneficiaries of the Ujjwala scheme. The survey covered the LPG dealer, the village level representatives, the PMUY beneficiaries and non users (who had applied but yet to get connection). The result of the survey revealed the following.

The cooking on gas stove has helped to save 1-2 hours daily, which is being used for leisure or other pursuit of work by the woman. The reduction in cooking time is primarily due to faster cooking on gas stove and the saving in time earlier used in collection of fire wood etc now no more needed.

The women found the utensils stain free and their houses smoke free and cleaner while using LPG as compared to conventional fuel. The lack of smoke has also reduced the health problem in women, such as burning sensation in the eyes, coughing and headaches etc

Most of the beneficiaries appeared to be satisfied as the enrolment of applicant was also smooth and orderly and it took 10-15 days for every eligible family in getting LPG under the scheme.

However the safety instructions are to be strictly followed by the targeted households having no prior exposure of LPG, low rise thatched ceiling, poor ventilation, flammable house materials and clothing etc.

V. BENEFITS OF UJJWALA SCHEME

Affordability:-

Affordability is major concern for households to shift from solid fuels to cleaner fuels. The poor people do not afford to pay a higher price for LPG connection and the cost of cleaner fuel. This move of providing free LPG connection to BPL families is social move in right direction. The central government has allocated budget for Rs. 8000 crores over 3 years for implementation of scheme. The money is being utilized from the saving of subsidy through “give it up” campaign.

Women’s Empowerment: The time spent in collection of bio fuels has totally been saved while that on cooking has greatly reduced for the women. These free times are being used for leisure activities and other house hold pursuit. With more time at their disposal the women are spending in other social and economic activities raising their social and economic status.

Further the LPG connection is issued in the name of woman head of the BPL family and the subsidy amount on purchase of refill is also being credited in to the bank account of the woman head of the BPL family. This is giving them power of making financial decisions in the family matters.

Healthy Society: As we know that the smokes from burning solid / fossil fuel contain hazardous substances and carbon monoxide. The air pollution causes respiratory diseases / disorders like lung cancer, heart disease, stroke and chronic and obstructive pulmonary diseases. Shifting BPL families towards the use of cleaner fuel through PMUY is reducing such disease leading to formation of healthy social fabric.

Clean Environment: Passing on clean environment to next generation is a critical aspect for each successive generation. We are over using the scars natural resources and polluting our environment with toxic air and water pollutant. The eco balance is shattering, the water bodies like, river, ponds are drying up and a lot of creations are getting extinct. The air pollution created through use of solid / bio fuel for cooking is also contributing to air pollution besides vehicular and industrial pollution. Providing cleaner fuel (LPG) to rural BPL families is great steps in reducing air pollution. The Swatch Bharat program is also being pursued vigorously for providing clean environment to our nation.

CONCLUSION

The PMUY is a big step towards social inclusion of poor people. The women are saved from the drudgery of collecting and using unclean fuel and they are getting more time at their disposal for other activities due to easy and faster way of cooking through LPG. The women are also getting involved in other financial decision of the family like ordering for LPG refill, maintaining bank account for subsidies etc. The nation as a whole is benefiting due to reduced air pollution, clean environment and healthy society. Though this one time assistance to BPL family by the government is giving a greater push towards use of cleaner fuel but however the affordability will remain core issue as the bio fuel is cheaply available unless the BPL family develops the capacity of using cleaner fuel.



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