

## **MaherGhar Scheme in Maharashtra.**

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In India, National Health Mission (NHM) has played an important role in reducing maternal and child deaths and increasing institutional deliveries. Under the NHM, many scheme or programme has been started for pregnant women and child, such as Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) – to increase institutional delivery by providing financial support, Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) – for providing the free cost transportation and diagnosis services, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)- conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for the first live birth etc. Simultaneously many states have also initiated their own schemes/programmes along with centre-sponsored schemes to promote institutional delivery and reduce maternal and child mortality. These programmes proved to be effective to increase institutional delivery and in the reduction of maternal and child mortality. However, studies have shown that the benefits of these schemes have not reached every section of society equally. As studies have found that the quality of antenatal care services was better in the non-tribal district compared to the tribal districts.

In the state of Maharashtra, although schemes like JSY, JSSK, PMMVY etc are successfully implemented; however, it is very difficult for pregnant women in the tribal areas to reach the health centres in time, as many of the tribal padas (Lok Basti) do not have pucca roads. Even if pucca roads are available, there are no reliable transportation facilities for transferring pregnant women into labour to nearby health centres. In addition, these hilly or remote areas usually do not have adequate/proper mobile network coverage, making it difficult to call an ambulance for pregnant women to be transferred to the nearest health centre. This is an important cause of high maternal and neonatal mortality among tribles in Maharashtra.

In view of the low utilization of maternal and child health care services and a higher rate of maternal and child mortality among tribal, the Government of Maharashtra started a Scheme in nine tribal districts in the name of Maher Ghar. The nine districts where this scheme is implemented are Palghar, Nandurbar, Nashik, Nanded, Yavatmal, Amravati, Gondia, Chandrapur and Gadchiroli. The aim of the scheme is to reduce maternal and child deaths.

The scheme was specifically started for pregnant women living in the tribal and remote areas like the hilly region of the state, which are usually inaccessible. The scheme is meant to increase institutional deliveries in tribal and remote areas and reduce maternal and child mortality. Under this scheme, a Pregnant woman is admitted to Maher Ghar four to five days before her

expected date of delivery to avoid the risk of maternal and child death at the last moment, as tribal areas are disconnected from the main road and transport facilities. Maher room is of one room with local building materials is constructed in PHCs premises. The Maher room has amenities like one sanitary block (Toilet and bathroom), one kitchen ota with smokeless chulha and one solar water heater system. The maintains of the Maher room and supply of food to the mother and her younger child along with one relative is provided in the scheme by Self Help Groups, identified by Local RKS.

This scheme is proving helpful in State Government's efforts to prevent pregnant women's death. Institutional deliveries are increased in inaccessible areas, and maternal, and child death has reduced due to the Maher Ghar scheme. A pregnant woman is paid Rs.300 per day as absent wages under this scheme.

Table 1: Number of Maher Ghar by District of state of Maharashtra

Sr. No	Name of the District	Number of Maher Ghars
1	Gondia	8
2	Chandpur	7
<b>3</b>	<b>Gadchiroli</b>	<b>31</b>
4	Nandurbar	9
5	Nashik	2
6	Amravati	9
<b>7</b>	<b>Yavatmal</b>	<b>2</b>
8	Nanded	3
9	Palghar	8
<b>Total</b>		<b>79</b>

Source: NRHM, Maharashtra Government 2021

The 'MaherGhar ' scheme is active at 90 PHCs of nine tribal districts of Maharashtra. During 2017-18 and 2018 - 19, nearly 2500 and more than 2500 women delivered safely to their new-borns under this scheme, respectively (Express News Services, 2019). In addition, the Maher Ghar scheme plays an important role in the lives of pregnant women in tribal and remote areas by admitting them to Maher's room four or five days before their expected delivery date. Institutional deliveries are increased, and the pregnant mother and child death ratio is decreased in these tribal areas due to this scheme. These services are most beneficial for mother and child death improvement in the overall health status. The scheme was started in 2010 – 11; therefore, to understand its impact and strength in these tribal areas, there is a need for an assessment of the Maher Ghar Scheme.

