

Government initiatives for women empowerment in Uttar Pradesh India with special reference to Ujjwala Yojana

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Abstract

The paper discusses about Ujjwala Yojana, a government initiative launched in Uttar Pradesh, India is a big push for women empowerment. It gives brief explanation of how Ujjwala yojana came into picture for women empowerment. As per traditional belief in rural India cooking is main activity performed by women in every household.

But with traditional belief came traditional method of cooking which impacted women well-being resulting in no vision for women empowerment. Census 2011 stated that nearly 121 million families in India are still using traditional method of cooking i.e by using biomass fuels. Still in India there is lack of access for clean fuel energy for cooking food by 40 percent of households in India. Considering such facts Pradhan Mantri UjjwalaYojana was launched on May 1, 2016, in Balia, Uttar Pradesh by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The paper also points out the importance of Ujjwala scheme and what are the benefits of this scheme for society. It discusses briefly how the scheme impacted women's health and lifestyle in Uttar Pradesh and how ujjwala yojana is a push for women empowerment.

Key words:- Women empowerment, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG),Biomass, Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Ujjwala

I. Introduction:-

India is one of the most diverse and multi-cultural country with rich heritage having different cultures, castes, creed, religions, traditions, foods and languages. It is known for its spices, land of spirituality, philosophy, science & technology and of course for people who live here together from all major religions sometimes facing occasional problems created by politics makes India famous for common saying of "Unity in Diversity". In the land where 142.86 crore people's well-being is the responsibility of the government a new concept is accelerating the pace of economic growth and development. The new concept is known as women empowerment in which women gain greater share of control over material resources, human and intellectual resources like knowledge information ideas and financial resources like money and access to money and control over decision- making in the home, community and society and nation to gain power. In present world a person is recognized by the amount of power he or she holds. The identity of a person is linked with the power which determines their position, status, importance and role in society. It is observed that from ancient times of the Advent of Aryans the status of women was relatively equal to men as women were not able to occupy higher positions and after the later Vedic age women became one of the most exploitative section of the society and were deprived of all their rights and powers. Women entered dark era where darkness can only be removed by light and to prevent such situation for women and considering the well- being of women in this 21st century government's Ujjwala yojana bring light in the lives of women.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is a hope for women empowerment. Ujjwala Yojana gets women back on track to achieve their goal of women empowerment. The key to transformation in the women's life lies in the government initiative through Ujjwala Yojana. In India women make up nearly half of India's population and 48.6 percent of females constitute rural population. Their empowerment is very important for the socio-economic development of the country. That is why the Government of India has started initiative like Ujjwala Yojana to empower the women especially those living in rural parts of the country. During ancient times worship of the mother Goddess was a common feature of religion and in present times Nari Tu Narayani" (All women are Goddesses) has been the tradition of Indian society. With this belief Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Ujjwala yojana which became a drive for women empowerment.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:-

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is a government scheme launched on May 1, 2016, in Balia, Uttar Pradesh by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The tagline of the scheme implies in simple terms that clean fuel is gateway for better life that is “Swachh

Indhan, Behtar Jeevan”. The aim of the Ujjwala scheme is to provide LPG (Liquified petroleum gas) connections to poor households and reduce health risk associated with biomass. As per the Centre the scheme is providing to the eligible financial aid of Rs 1600 per connection with a deposit free LPG connection. The scheme also ensures health empowerment for women as it aims to meet the basic needs of women belonging to lower economic strata especially from BPL (below poverty line) families by distributing 50 million LPG connections to women belonging to this category.

Three phases of Ujjwala Yojana

Ujjwala Yojana 1 st may 2016	Ujjwala Yojana 2.O 10 August 2021	Ujjwala Yojana extension
May 2016 to August 2021	August 2021 to September 2023	September 2023 - 24 to 2025-26
50 million free LPG connections	Additional 10 million free LPG connections	Release of 75 lakh free LPG connections

Applicant 1. Woman above 18 years 2. Citizen of India 3. Belong to below poverty line 4. Women under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. (PMAY) 5. Women belong ing to ST/SC category. 6. Beneficiaries of Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Forest dwellers, tea gardens, islands, most backward classes.	Applicant 1. Woman above 18 years 2. Citizen of India 3. Belong to below poverty line 4. Women under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. (PMAY) 5. Women belong ing to ST/SC category. 6. Beneficiaries of Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Forest dwellers, tea gardens, islands, most backward classes. 7. Migrants living in other states who find difficult to submit address proof.	Applicant 1. Woman above 18 years 2. Citizen of India 3. Belong to below poverty line 4. Women under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. (PMAY) 5. Women belong ing to ST/SC category. 6. Beneficiaries of Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Forest dwellers, tea gardens, islands, most backward classes. 7. Migrants living in other states who find difficult to submit address proof.
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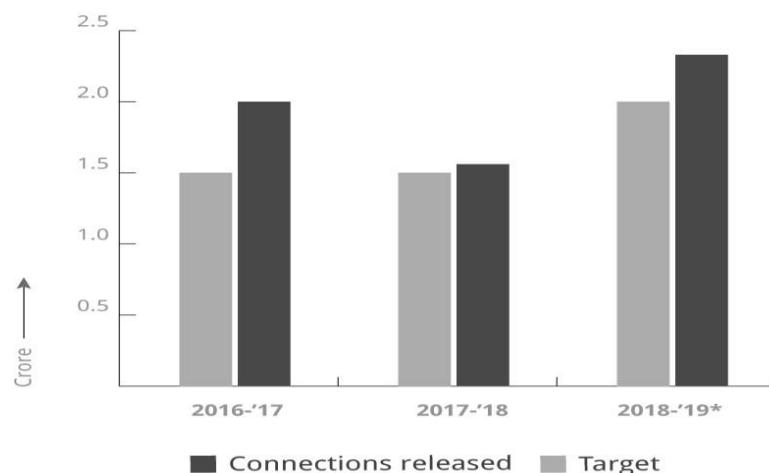
Ujjwala Yojana targets the well-being of rural women and opened away for them to access the opportunities in various ways by maintaining their health, enhancing their skill and raising their status and standard of living thus leading towards the reducing use of fossil fuel and growth and development of the economy and the whole nation.

Objectives of Ujjwala Yojana:-

1. Empowering women and protecting women’s health
2. Reducing the health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel.
3. Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
4. Preventing young children from serious lung condition causing low blood oxygen due to the pollutants in the smoke caused by burning fossil fuel inside the house.

Ujjwala2.O gave double present to the beneficiaries by not only providing a deposit-free LPG connection but also the first refill and a hotplate free of cost.

New gas connections under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana since 2016



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Source: Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
*As on 28/12/2018

The following table displays the coverage of Ujjwala Yojana

	Target set	Target Achieved
2016 - 2021	5 crore LPG connections	8 crore LPG connections
2021-2022	Additional 1.6 crore LPG connections	9.6 crore LPG connections
2023-2025	75 lakh free LPG connections	-

(Source:-<https://www.pmuy.gov.in>)

Benefits of the PMUY Scheme:-

1. Under Ujjwala Scheme five crore LPG connections are being provided to families below poverty line.
2. The scheme also provides financial support of Rs 1600 for each LPG connection for BPL households and government is the bearer of the administrative cost of this support. It is this subsidy which is meant as security fee for the cylinder, pressure regulator booklet, safety hose and other fitting charges.
3. As a supplement oil marketing companies also provide interest-free loans refilling and purchasing stoves.
4. All the BPL families that come under all forms of distributorship and distribute various sizes of cylinders (14.2kg, 5kg, etc) as per the field situation are covered by the Ujjwala Yojana.
5. The benefits of this scheme are also available for the people of all Hilly states including the NE States (who are treated as 'Priority States').
6. The hurdles that come while accessing LPG for cooking purposes by the people in the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura are effectively addressed by the Ujjwala scheme.

II. Literature Review:-

(Yashi Yadav 2020) The PMUY has provided big boost to the social, economical condition of women and developed the life of women who are living in villages.

PMUY Scheme by providing clean liquified petroleum gas (LPG) not only prevented the harmful effects on women health but also provided them with the opportunities to explore themselves in other working areas other than household chores thus leading to women empowerment. (Dr. Mahananda Chandrakant Dalvi 2022) A significant role is carried on by women in supporting their households and communities in achieving food and nutrition security generating income and improving rural livelihoods and overall well-being. Women empowerment with respect to financial aspect was significantly associated with PMUY. By supporting women's economic participation PMUY schemes help to empower women, thus promoting gender equity and improving household well-being. When women have empowered, they contribute to their family's income and become active change leaders in their communities. (Devi 2017) a study was firmly established about the hurdles Ujjwala Yojana faces in India. Some ideas such as construction of adequate mechanism by government for

worthy beneficiaries and development of a strong supply and distribution channel for continual supply of fuel to all households are proposed by the study. Suggestions were also given for improvement of Ujjwala initiative. (Pillai & Ammal 2017) According to their observation clean fuel means better working environment leading to better health resulting in proper education, income and occupation which are very important growth indicators for Ujjwala scheme causing positive influence on demand, import and consumption needs of the country. (Namita Kumari, Pushpa Singh 2022) Schemes like Ujjwala are formulated by government with the intention of improving the general quality of life, increasing the speed of India's growth and development and empowering specific sections. A comprehensive approach is required for the effective implementation of the scheme. Some measures such as better cooking technologies, behavior communication techniques are also required to be taken as supplementary measures along with LPG as a cooking fuel. (Suzuki et al 2023) set out into an international comparative exploration of corresponding schemes across different countries. It was discovered by the researchers that the availability of LPG connections resulted in benefits such as improvement in the health of women and reduced indoor air pollution, but also stimulated wider cultural changes. Some cases of women appeared where women, having acquired access to clean cooking fuel, wholeheartedly participated in community affairs, smashed the glass ceiling of gender norms, and surfaced as society's leading lights. Such findings bring out the global significance of the Ujjwala initiative and its potential to be a mechanism for female empowerment on an international scale. (Mishra et.al 2002) According to him in developing countries indoor air pollution is a major health problem worsening the health and causing million deaths annually specially among poor people in which mostly are women and children. So, it recognizes that the most effective way to deal with this issue is use of cleaner fuel. (Pavithra 2021) Women in India belonging to rural areas are likely to be pioneer in the country's aspiration of transformation to be environment friendly economy. For this it is recommended that women should be participant of renewable energy sector and contribute the economy in a significant manner.

Uttar Pradesh and Ujjwala Yojana:-



Uttar Pradesh is a significant northern state in India. It is the fourth largest and populous state in India covering total area of 243,290 square km in north central part of the country. It is famous for historical heritage and holy rivers such as Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswathi making sacred site known as Triveni Sangam at Prayagraj a major religious destination. These holy rivers themselves depicts the importance of females in Indian society religiously, socially and economically. Women are important that is why their empowerment is equally important and for that Ujjwala yojana plays a significant role in inducing it in the society. In Uttar Pradesh schemes like Mission shakti, Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangla Yojana, Beti bachao beti padhao etc have contributed significantly for women empowerment but Ujjwala yojana lays bigger hand as contributor of women empowerment.

Uttar Pradesh total population

Total population	236,484,000	23.65 crores
Male population	123,136,000	12.31 crores
Female population	113,348,000	11.33 crores

(Source:-<http://statisticstimes.com>)

Uttar Pradesh Urban and Rural population

	Urban	Rural
Male	23,487,515	80,992,995
Female	21,007,548	74,324,283

(Source:-censusindia.co.in)

As we can see from the table that female constitute one third of the UP's population and the number of females in rural areas are much larger than in Urban area. So empowering women especially those belonging to below poverty line becomes essential for the government as it will increase human work force of the country. Considering how crucial women empowerment is for the country's growth and development Ujjwala Yojana was first launched on May 1, 2016, in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, later Ujjwala2.0 was launched by Chief Minister Mr. Yogi Adityanath on 25 august 2021 which provided 20 lakh new LPG connections.

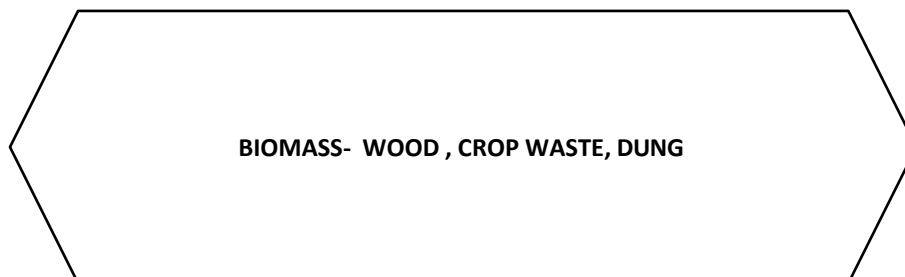
Importance of Ujjwala Yojana:-

1. Ujjwala Yojana is important as it improves health condition of women by providing clean fuel for cooking food which ensures clean and safe working environment.
2. For country's growth and development Ujjwala Yojana is important as it leads to women empowerment.
3. Ujjwala Yojana proves that the government in country is for the people as it ensures well-being of the needy section of the society.
4. A clean, safe and healthy environment is need of the hour and Ujjwala yojana provides clean fuel which ultimately makes it significant for sustainable development.
5. Ujjwala yojana is important for upliftment of women as this initiative raises standard of living of women.

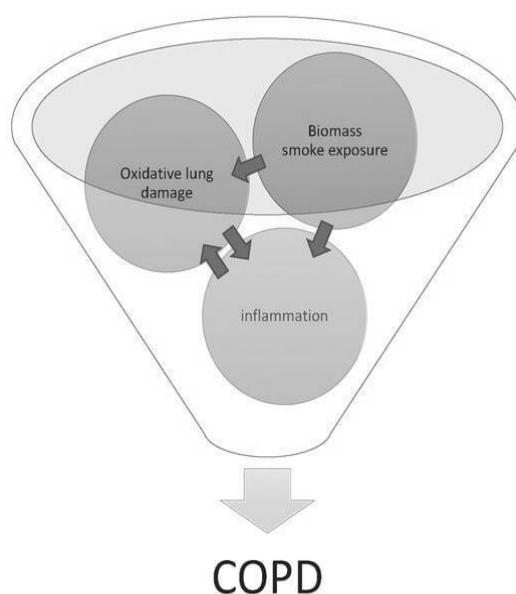
States with highest ujjwala beneficiary list 2024

UTTAR PRADESH	1,47,86,745
WEST BENGAL	88,76,053
BIHAR	85,71,668
MADHYA PRADESH	71,79,224
RAJASTHAN	63,92,482

(Source:-bankbazar.com)



The figure displays impact of biomass on individual health



(Source:-www.mdpi.com)

Benefits of Ujjwala Yojana on Women residing in Uttar Pradesh:-

1. Ujjwala yojana enabled village people to afford free gas connection who were earlier not able to afford LPG due to higher prices.
2. Emergence of healthy society is possible now as the facility of using clean fuel is being provided by the Ujjwala yojana.
3. Use of clean fuel creates clean and safe environment as there is reduction in air pollution which were caused due to the burning of fossil fuel while cooking.
4. Ujjwala yojana lead to women empowerment because it enables women to save time as earlier, they were only confined in kitchen but now they have time to spend on other productive activities and become capable of being financially independent and participate in other community affairs.
4. There has been significant improvement in the standard of living of women in rural areas. As now they could save more time which was otherwise spent on hard menial. Now they are able to take on other economic activities and self- development
5. The interaction between mother and children was blocked because there was no time for mothers as they were busy in wandering on dangerous places in search of firewood, then cooking for hours. So, they were unable to interact with their children regarding their studies, school or social life but now they have time to interact with their children which lead to strong family bonding through unblocked interaction.

Impact of Ujjwala Yojana on women's life and health in Uttar Pradesh:-

1. **Healthy lifestyle:-** Use of clean fuel under Ujjwala scheme has improved women's health to quite a extent. Now women don't have to suffer from health issues in the form of diseases like lung cancer, heart disease, breathing problems, vision problems, stroke, chronic an obstructive pulmonary disease which are caused by the smoke created during the burning of waste materials like cow dungs and impure fuels.
2. **Modern Outlook:-** This scheme led to the shift in traditional outlook. Modern outlook emerged in the society. It brought modern perspective in the minds of women by breaking the traditional method of cooking food in chulhas made o clay, using biomass fuel. It has given a modern outlook that sometimes-using modern methods such as gas and stove and clean fuel can give healthy results in future.
3. **Quality time:-** Earlier it was not possible for women to take out some quality time for themselves because cooking food using biomass fuel was a time-consuming activity as arrangement for firewood, fossil fuel etc used to take time. So, women's whole day was spent on cooking then cleaning the char on utensils created by burning impure fuels by using quite a lot of energy. But now with LPG gas connection directly at door service under Ujjwala scheme cooking become less time-consuming activity and women get enough quality time for themselves.

4. Financially Independent:- As cooking became less time consuming activity it gave women the opportunity to spend rest of their time to enter into new fields other than just indulging in household chores and explore new activities which can become a source of income generation and enable women to become financially independent.

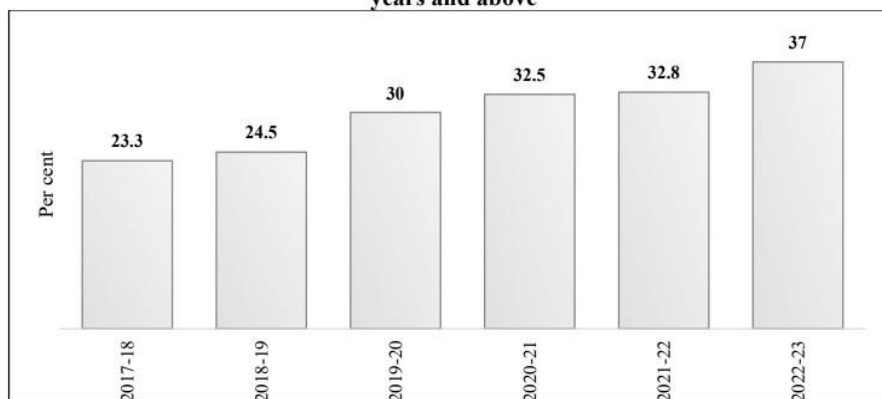
It is possible because of this scheme women have the opportunity to work in income generating activities and explore new activities where they can earn some income and become financially independent.

5. Standard of living:- Working in clean and safe environment living a healthy lifestyle, opportunity to become financially independent caused increase in standard of living of women. Women are living a quality life as they are now on the path of self-development.

Women empowerment through Ujjwala Yojana in U.P:-

Women felt a sense of pride after the launch of Ujjwala scheme as now they have the opportunity to step out from household kitchen in the economic world and challenge themselves to have better future. This opportunity for women leads to easy accessibility towards becoming independent financially as they have time to spend on income generating activities and contribute towards growth and development of society. In the rural areas the percentage of self-employed women increased from 78.5 to 86.9 percent between 2017-18 and 2020-21. This is due to increase in the number of agricultural labors from 75.1 to 90.6 percent in the same reference period. The bulk of rural women in UP are self-employed to earn some income.

Female Labour Force Participation Rate (rural+urban), usual status, 15 years and above



(Source:-iwwage.org)

Now women holds managerial power as the scheme is registered only under the name of women so women have the power to manage the household affairs as well as the official affairs.

MMR of Uttar Pradesh:-

Year	Per thousand
2010-12	292
2011-13	285
2014-16	201
2015-17	216
2016-18	197

(Source:- MMR Bulletin (Sample Registration System)

Working in clean and safe environment will not only be beneficial for women health but also for her family health as well as for her upcoming generation. All this leads to foundation for the establishment of healthy society because good health accelerates individual to utilize their potential productively.

The scheme is stated in such clear and simple terms that it is easily understood by every woman. The scheme promoted itself by reaching door to door at most of the houses and spreading awareness about the hazardous impact of using biomass fuels for cooking.

Women are becoming aware about important things like health, financial independence, ending financial burden and that government cared for women section in society.

Table stating increase in the lives of female in rural areas of UP

Indicators	Uttar Pradesh
Literacy rate	19%
Death ratio	6.8
Sex ratio at birth	881/1000
Decadal growth rate	20.23%
Employment rate	18%
MMR	918

(Source:- www.census.of.india.com)

Empowerment is not only about participating economically but it is also about accepting existence of self-worth and bringing out positive behavioral changes in herself like not only sticking to the old belief that cooking food on traditional chulhas is tastier and more nutritious. It is significant for women to realize their importance and aware society of their importance by registering and availing benefits of schemes like Ujjwala Yojana. Women now have time to take actions for their self- development which raises their standard of living. Development of strong family relations begins from women only which was earlier restricted due time-consuming activity but now the scheme has managed to solve this hurdle as well. By providing LPG gas connection directly at door service cooking become less time-consuming activity and now women are able to interact with their children regarding their studies, school or social life which lead to strong family bonding with time for proper communication.

III. Conclusion:-

Ujjwala yojana played a significant role in upgrading women life. As this scheme made possible for women to engage in self-employed activities other than just indulging in household cores. It is found that 90.6 percent of rural women are now working in agriculture and fishing sector, 5.3 per cent in manufacturing and 2.7 percent in wholesale and retail trade. Ujjwala scheme ensures health safety factor as by providing clean fuel it enables women to work in safe and clean environment which is also one of the reasons that has led to increase in the female workforce participation rate from 23.3 percent to 37 percent in 2022-23 all over Uttar Pradesh. Some government schemes are formulated prioritizing few aspects of needy sections, but Ujjwala scheme is formulated considering several welfare aspects such as health, financial support, clean environment, inducing modernization, women empowerment, etc. which indicates that Ujjwala scheme is a sort of a developmental scheme for needy sections of society. The scheme is stated in simple and clear terms, so the problem of unawareness has been tackled automatically which led to easy accessibility of the scheme even in the hilly areas like Himachal Pradesh etc.

Overall, PMUY is able to produce a big change and improvement into the lives of poor women, folk in villages, where most of the beneficiaries live in. Provision of cleaner fuel has a good impact on their health. It has been observed that cooking on gas stoves helped save at least 2-3 hours daily giving them opportunities for leisure activities or other household activities. This was partly because cooking on gas was faster, and because it saved them the time and effort needed to go out to collect firewood. Their home environment is cleaner now due to the absence of smoke emissions that would earlier form with using biomass and firewood also staining their utensils and roofs with soot. Due to use of LPG, women do not have to face the problem of smoke, burning eyes, headache and coughing problems. So PMUY acted as an instrument of Women Empowerment and Smoke Free Environment.

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