

'Childcare leave to benefit less than 1% of women' ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Vasundhara Raje announced to grant two years of childcare leave to women workers, social activists were quick to point out that less than 1% of women in the state are in the formal employment sector. This two-year childcare leave will benefit a small number of women.

The National Food Security Act provides for Rs 6,000 as maternity entitlement. The Centre has already limited this, by announcing that this will be available only for the first child, and the sum will only be Rs 5,000. On Monday, as the Budget announcements were made, Kavita Srivastava of People's Union for Civil Liberties pointed out that Tamil Nadu had already implemented maternity benefit of Rs 18,000. Why should Rajasthan not follow suit, she asked, recommending that the state should go even further – maternity benefit of Rs 12,000 to Rs 18,000 each month should be made available to women covered under National Food Security Act (NFSA) in the state for six months, so that poor women can take a break from work and tend to newborns without worrying about loss of wages.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has found that nearly 30% of children under five years of age in India are underweight. Poor maternal health and high rate of anaemia among women in the fertile age range are causes of continued malnutrition among children.

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