

Draft national policy: Reproductive rights for women, paid childcare leave for men ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi on Tuesday released the ministry's draft National Policy on Women 2016 in New Delhi. In addition to more traditional women's empowerment programmes, the policy claims to recognise complexities in gender roles brought about by "the new millennium, and the dynamics of a rapidly changing global and national scenario". Among various measures, it points to greater recognition for women's reproductive rights by shifting the focus from female sterilisation to male sterilisation.

As part of its emphasis on single women, the policy suggests legislative, economic and social recognition of the category. According to the 2011 census, 21% of India's population comprises single women, an increase of 40% from the previous census, The Times of India reported.

Attempting to tackle more deeply-rooted forms of patriarchy, the policy suggests that childcare, dependant care and paid leave facilities should be made available to both men and women. This, the ministry believes, will help redistribute gender roles and help employees in both the organised and unorganised sector balance work and family life. However, it does not enumerate how this will work on the ground.

The 24-page draft policy also recommends greater emphasis on collecting national-level data on gender differences in the economic, political and social spheres. It touches upon subjects such as improving women's access to legal aid, housing and shelter, drinking water and sanitation, public infrastructure and sports. It also suggests that more women should be involved in decision-making roles in the media.

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