

# हमरा बिहार Special Report



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## Workplace Leave Entitlements for Women in Bihar:

Symbolic Policies or Meaningful  
Instruments of Empowerment?

# **Workplace Leave Entitlements for Women in Bihar:**

Symbolic Policies or Meaningful  
Instruments of Empowerment?

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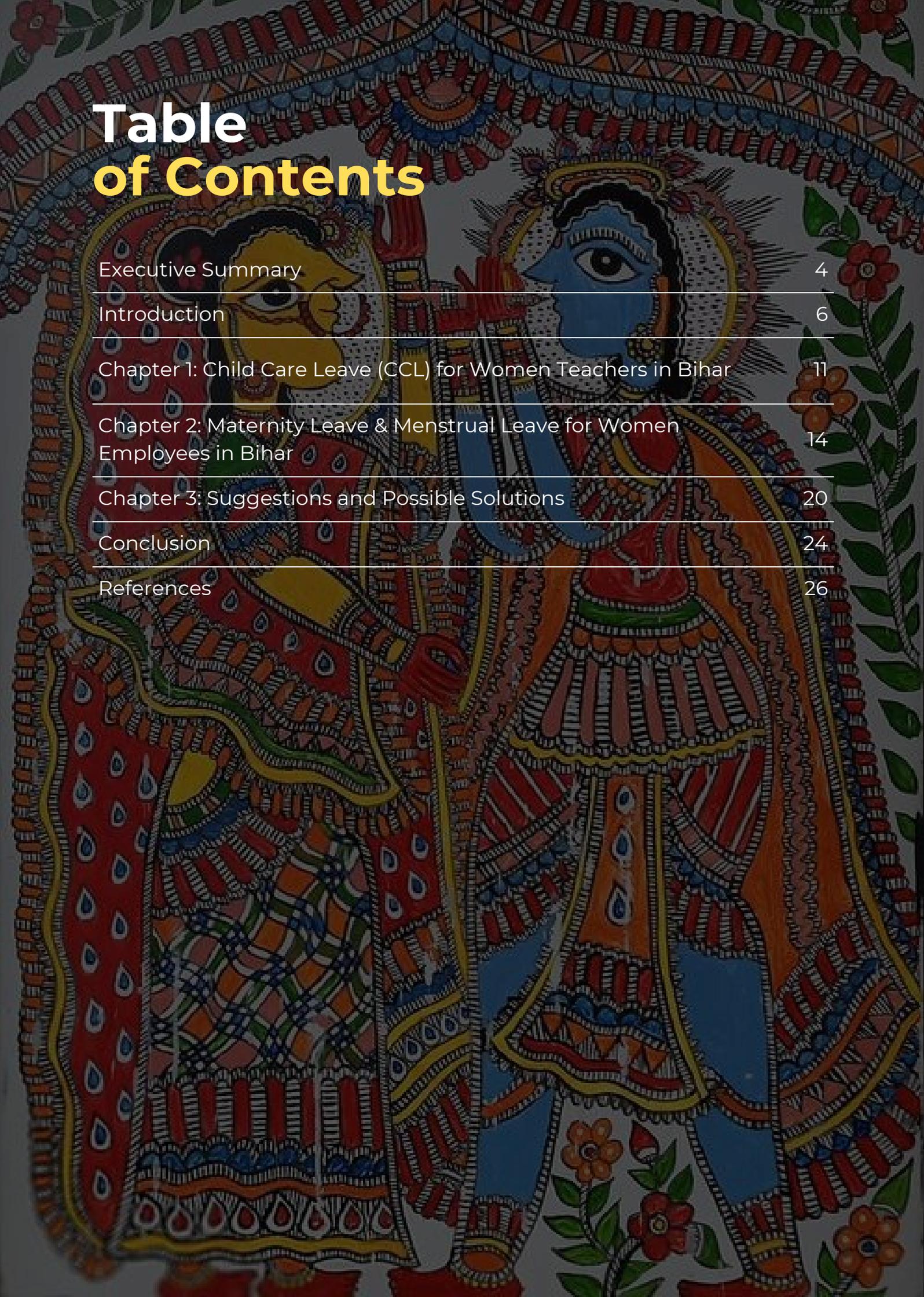
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# Executive Summary

Women's leave entitlements are not just about individual benefits; they are critical levers for advancing gender justice, improving maternal and child health, and ensuring the stability of Bihar's education system. The state has taken important steps by formalizing progressive policies, but without transparent, inclusive, and accountable implementation, these rights remain symbolic. Strengthening women's entitlements will directly contribute to better educational outcomes, healthier families, and a more equitable society.

This report evaluates the status of women's leave entitlements in Bihar, with a particular focus on Child Care Leave, Maternity Leave, and Menstrual Leave for women teachers. It seeks to identify the gap between policy and practice, highlight the challenges faced by women in accessing their rights, and propose actionable solutions to strengthen delivery. The study combines policy analysis with field insights, drawing upon the voices of women teachers across Bihar.

While progressive policies such as Child Care Leave and maternity leave in the education sector align with national legislation and global gender equity norms, their implementation remains weak. Bureaucratic delays, digital hurdles, and administrative discretion often restrict women's access to these entitlements. The e-Shikshakosh portal, intended to simplify leave processes, has instead created new barriers for rural teachers facing limited internet access and inadequate digital training. Awareness of rights is also uneven, with many women unclear about eligibility or distinctions between different leave provisions.



Moreover, large segments of the workforce, particularly contractual teachers, shiksha mitras, and anganwadi workers, remain excluded from such benefits, deepening structural inequities. These systemic gaps compel many women to take unpaid leave or return to work prematurely, negatively affecting maternal health, family well-being, and school functioning. Persistent stigma around women availing leave further entrenches patriarchal attitudes within educational institutions.

This report also contains voices from the ground, which highlight both necessary structural reforms that need to be taken into account as well as the impact of these policies on the everyday experiences of women. To bridge the gap between policy intent and on-ground implementation, the report recommends a set of processes, policies, and institutional reforms. It includes simplification of processes, policy expansion to ensure universal coverage, financial safeguards, gender sensitisation training, strong monitoring programs, and other institutional support mechanisms to ensure transparency and develop a better workplace.

In summary, this report shows that while Bihar has progressive frameworks for women's leave entitlements, gaps in practice dilute their impact. By responding to the real needs expressed by women teachers and implementing structural reforms, the state can transform symbolic policies into meaningful instruments of empowerment.



Women's participation in the workforce has steadily increased across India, yet the structures that support them in balancing professional and familial responsibilities remain inadequate. This tension is also visible in the education system of Bihar, where women constitute a large share of the teaching workforce. According to the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) 2021-22, approximately 40% of teachers in Bihar are women. As both breadwinners and caregivers, women teachers carry a dual burden shaped not only by policy frameworks on one hand but also by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms on the other. Leave entitlements such as maternity leave, menstrual leave, and child care leave are intended to ease this burden, creating conditions where women can sustain their careers. However, the effectiveness of these entitlements depends not only on the laws themselves but also on the way they are communicated, accessed, and implemented in practice.

## **History of Policy Landscape**

Maternity leave, child care leave, and menstrual leave are provisions introduced by the Government of Bihar to promote gender-sensitive employment policies and ensure the health, dignity, and work-life balance of women employees. In line with the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (as amended in 2017), it provides up to 26 weeks of paid maternity leave for up to two surviving children. This policy addresses maternal health, postnatal recovery, and early childcare needs, while also preventing women from losing their employment during this crucial period.



Child care leave (CCL), on the other hand, extends support beyond maternity, recognizing the ongoing caregiving responsibilities that primarily fall on women. In Bihar, as in the central government service rules, women employees can avail up to 730 days (two years) of CCL during their service for the care of up to two children below the age of 18 years.

Menstrual leave is a more recent and progressive measure, introduced to address the physical discomfort and health challenges faced by women during menstruation. Bihar is one of the first Indian states to provide two days of menstrual leave per month for female employees, acknowledging menstruation as a legitimate health concern rather than a taboo.

These provisions appear progressive, aligning with global commitments to gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on gender equity and Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth. Yet the real test of any policy lies in its implementation. Policies must move beyond symbolic announcements to become tools that genuinely empower women to negotiate the conflicting demands of their personal and professional lives.

### **The Policy-Practice Gap**

Evidence from Bihar suggests that there is a considerable gap between policy frameworks and their actual uptake. Women teachers often struggle to access their entitlements due to bureaucratic hurdles, lack of awareness, the approach of school management, and the digital divides. Administrative hierarchies create layers of approval that slow down or obstruct the process. However, cultural perceptions about women's roles as primary caregivers simultaneously normalize their need for leave while also stigmatizing them for taking it. This contradiction produces a situation where women's entitlements, though legally sanctioned, become ambiguous in everyday practice.



## **Structural and Social Barriers**

Several structural barriers exacerbate this policy-practice gap. The digital divide has created exclusionary effects for rural teachers who face limited internet access and inadequate training. Teachers generally consider the process of applying for leave through the e-Shikshakosh portal to be inaccessible, given their levels of digital literacy. Contractual teachers, who constitute a significant portion of Bihar's education workforce, are often excluded from key entitlements such as maternity leave.

At the social level, deep-seated patriarchal attitudes within schools and administrative offices further discourage women from exercising their rights, as availing leave is often perceived as a burden on colleagues and institutions. Together, these structural and cultural barriers sustain the gap between policy intent and on-ground implementation.

## **Why Women's Leave Matters**

The importance of women's leave entitlements cannot be reduced to individual convenience. Menstrual cycle, childbirth, and breastfeeding are not "private issues" but biological realities. Policies granting leave acknowledge reproductive labour as socially valuable, rather than dismissing it as a personal inconvenience. At the societal level, they are integral to ensuring maternal and child health and fostering equity in labor markets. In education, in particular, women teachers play a crucial role not only in delivering quality learning outcomes but also in serving as role models for young girls. As well-being of teachers is equally important for the holistic development of students, when leave entitlements are compromised, it undermines the functioning of schools and the aspirations of future generations. Building on this, the failure to operationalize women's entitlements is not a marginal issue but a systemic concern for Bihar's social and developmental trajectory.





### Research Focus of the Report

This report seeks to critically evaluate the leave entitlements available to women in Bihar, with a specific focus on Child Care Leave, Maternity leave, and Menstrual Leave for women teachers and employees. The aim is to identify the extent to which these policies are accessible, effectively implemented, and transformative in practice. By foregrounding the voices of women through surveys and examining the impact on schools, families, and broader gender equity goals, the report hopes to move beyond descriptive policy analysis to highlight systemic gaps.

The analysis is guided by three interrelated aspects:

1. Policy versus practice
2. Accessibility and awareness
3. Impact and implications

**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

**Govt teacher in Bihar gets maternity leave despite being a male; authorities call it 'technical error'**

***The Indian* EXPRESS**

**Menstrual leave could lead to discrimination against women: Irani**



## Methodology

This report employs a mixed-methods approach combining policy analysis, media review, and primary field research. Official policy documents, circulars, and government guidelines were critically examined to trace the evolution and intent of women's leave entitlements in Bihar. Supplementing this, newspaper reports and secondary literature were analyzed to understand public discourse and institutional responses. To capture lived experiences, questionnaire-based interviews were conducted with women teachers across districts, focusing on accessibility, awareness, and administrative challenges in availing leave. The triangulation of these data sources allows for a grounded evaluation that connects policy frameworks with everyday realities of implementation. Interviews were conducted virtually through questionnaires. They were then analyzed to draw key themes from identified patterns. Responses were also anonymized.

The following chapters explore two entitlements in detail. Chapter one focuses on Child Care Leave for women teachers in Bihar. It examines the contradictions between policy promises and on-ground realities, the barriers created by digital governance, and the experiences of women whose caregiving responsibilities clash with administrative rigidity. Chapter two turns to maternity and menstrual leave for women employees in Bihar, and Chapter three focuses on possible solutions provided by respondents of the survey.

Together, these chapters underscore a central theme that women's entitlements in Bihar, though progressive in intent, face practical, institutional, and cultural challenges that need to be addressed to achieve the goal of democracy.



# Chapter 1

## Child Care Leave (CCL) for Women Teachers in Bihar

The Child Care Leave (CCL) policy in Bihar is progressive in intent, designed to support women teachers in balancing professional obligations with their maternal and caregiving responsibilities. The provision, which allows up to 730 days of leave during a woman's service tenure, represents a significant step toward acknowledging the dual burden that women face.

However, the gap between policy and practice is stark. While circulars issued by the government outline generous entitlements, their implementation at the school level remains inconsistent and subject to bureaucratic discretion. Teachers frequently report that approvals are restricted or delayed, undermining the very purpose of the policy.

### **Accessibility and Awareness: The Digital Divide**

A major challenge in operationalizing CCL lies in the accessibility of the application system. The Bihar government's e-Shikshakosh portal was envisioned as a transparent digital mechanism for leave applications, but it has inadvertently created new barriers.

Many women teachers, particularly in rural areas, struggle with limited digital literacy and unreliable internet connectivity, which hinders their ability to use the platform effectively. Technical glitches and inadequate training have further reduced its usability. As a result, women often become dependent on intermediaries or clerical staff, which exposes them to delays and sometimes harassment. This digital governance mechanism, instead of democratizing access, has deepened the divide between urban and rural teachers, as well as between permanent and contractual staff.



## Implementation Challenges: Hierarchies and Pressures

The approval process for CCL is hierarchical and often arbitrary. Women teachers describe long waiting times for sanction, with their requests subjected to multiple levels of scrutiny. In administrative setups, there is a prevailing attitude that women's leave burdens the school (also highlighted by respondents), creating a work culture that discourages applicants from exercising their entitlements. Principals and education officials frequently cite the lack of substitute teachers as a justification for denial of their leaves. This absence of a backup system makes schools reluctant to grant leave, effectively placing institutional convenience above women's rights. In some cases, teachers report being subtly pressured to withdraw their applications to maintain good relationships with superiors.

## Voices from the Ground

The lived experiences of women teachers reveal the emotional and structural dimensions of policy–practice gaps. While a few respondents appreciated the supportive attitude of school authorities and colleagues, many emphasized the lack of institutional empathy, particularly during the initial days of leave. Several teachers reported being compelled to justify their need for leave repeatedly, even in situations involving medical emergencies of their children. Instances of humiliation and subtle questioning of professional commitment were also noted, reflecting persistent gender biases within educational institutions. Collectively, these accounts underscore how bureaucratic rigidity and patriarchal attitudes reinforce the unequal burden on women, compelling them to navigate guilt, exhaustion, and institutional neglect.

“  
Sometimes I feel guilty like being a good teacher and a good mother are somehow incompatible.  
”

“  
They kept saying that the school will suffer if I stayed home too long.  
”



### **Impact on Women, Families, and Schools**

The ineffective implementation of CCL has cascading consequences. For women teachers, the stress of negotiating leave amid bureaucratic hurdles erodes their morale and creates an imbalance between personal and professional life. Health outcomes are compromised, as many continue working under conditions of fatigue or illness in the family. Families, particularly children, suffer from inadequate care. As pointed out by respondents, schools too are affected, especially when leave is eventually sanctioned without proper substitutes. It disrupts classroom schedules and burdens colleagues who have to absorb the extra workload. Thus, instead of serving as a tool to stabilize the education system by supporting women workers, the poor implementation of CCL undermines both teacher well-being and school functioning.

### **Analytical Reflections**

The case of CCL in Bihar demonstrates the tension between gender-sensitive policy design and patriarchal bureaucratic practice. While the entitlement looks progressive on paper, its delivery is undermined by administrative bottlenecks, digital exclusion, and cultural resistance to women exercising workplace rights. The introduction of e-governance has failed to resolve these issues; rather, it has exacerbated inequalities by privileging those with greater digital access. This gap between promise and practice raises a fundamental question: Is CCL a genuine instrument of empowerment, or merely a symbolic measure to showcase progressiveness?

By failing to provide an enabling environment, the state not only undermines its own policies but also burdens women with invisible costs. Any serious commitment to gender equity in Bihar's education system must therefore move beyond policy announcement to ensuring effective, equitable, and transparent delivery of entitlements.



# Chapter 2

## Maternity Leave & Menstrual Leave for Women Employees in Bihar

Maternity leave constitutes one of the most fundamental entitlements for women in the workforce. In line with the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, women employees in Bihar are entitled to 26 weeks of paid leave. On paper, this provision represents a strong safeguard for maternal and child health, as well as workplace gender sensitivity.

However, its application is limited largely to women in regular government positions. Contractual employees, including the large cadre of shiksha mitras, anganwadi workers, and ASHA workers, often find themselves excluded. This creates a stratified system where the benefits of a progressive law are confined to a relatively privileged group, leaving the majority of women workers outside its ambit.

### Accessibility and Awareness

Awareness about maternity entitlements remains uneven across Bihar. While urban, permanent teachers are relatively informed, women in rural areas often rely on hearsay. Many confuse maternity leave provisions with child care leave or medical leave, reflecting the absence of clear communication from the authorities.



The lack of systematic orientation or official awareness campaigns has led to widespread underutilization, especially among marginalized groups. Consequently, these entitlements remain abstract and are accessible primarily to those with both job security and informational resources.

### **Implementation Challenges**

Even when women are eligible, the process of availing maternity leave is often fraught with obstacles. Teachers report significant delays in salary disbursement during leave periods, caused by administrative inefficiencies. In several cases, women on temporary contracts are denied benefits outright. Moreover, the absence of substitute staff creates a disincentive for schools to allow full leave, with principals often pressuring women to return before medically advisable periods. Bureaucratic hurdles compound the problem, with officials demanding repeated paperwork, medical certificates, or personal justifications. Even when women teachers are eligible for leave under the recognised rules in Bihar, the process of availing it remains subject to complex administrative oversight and procedural delays.

Under the Bihar District Board Secondary and Senior Secondary School Service Rules, 2020, for example, women employees (headmasters, teachers, or librarians) are entitled to maternity leave of up to 180 days, restricted to a maximum of two surviving children. Furthermore, in 2015, the Government of Bihar announced that female government employees would be eligible for 180 days of maternity leave (up from 135) and up to 730 days (two years) of child-care leave for two children during their service. Recent guidelines from the Bihar Education Department affirm that female teachers with fewer than two living children may avail maternity/confinement leave for 180 days, and may also apply for up to two years of child-care leave for up to two children. The guidelines also stipulate that the approving officer (District Education Officer) must respond within seven days of receiving the application.



Moreover, the department has mandated that from 23 June 2025, all government school teachers submit leave applications exclusively through the online portal e-Shikshakosh, which centralises applications and approval, thereby aiming to reduce the need for physical visits or repeated submissions.

However, the absence of a robust monitoring mechanism allows for inconsistent interpretation of rules at the school level, leaving women vulnerable to administrative bias.

### **Voices from the Ground**

Narratives from women employees highlight the precariousness of maternity entitlements and the deep gap between formal rights and practical realities. Many women reported delays in salary disbursements during their leave, leading to significant financial strain. Several respondents shared that their maternity leave was adjusted against casual or earned leave, thereby diminishing their overall entitlement and undermining the spirit of the policy. Some teachers also reported unjust deductions of earned leave despite having applied for casual or maternity leave. Beyond procedural lapses, respondents recounted experiences of post-maternity sidelining, where they were overlooked for promotions or performance evaluations after returning to work.

These discriminatory outcomes reflect enduring gender stereotypes and structural biases within Bihar's educational institutions, as also documented by the IIT-Patna study (Sinha et al., 2025). In some cases, women were pressured to resume duties within weeks of childbirth, compromising their health and the well-being of their newborns. Together, these testimonies demonstrate how informal institutional practices erode the purpose of progressive maternity policies and perpetuate systemic gender inequities.



“ Even during my maternity leave, my salary was delayed. ”

“ It feels like the system punishes women for becoming mothers, instead of supporting them. ”

“ After returning from leave, I noticed I was no longer considered for the same assignments or training programs. ”

### Impact on Women, Families, and Schools

As around 40% of teachers in Bihar are women, the shortcomings in maternity leave implementation have far-reaching consequences. For women, premature returns to work elevate health risks and intensify mental stress as they struggle to balance childcare with professional duties. For children, shortened breastfeeding periods and reduced maternal bonding adversely affect early development outcomes. As reported by UNICEF, in Bihar, approximately 75,000 newborns die within the first month each year, highlighting the critical importance of maternal health and early childhood care.

Moreover, teacher absenteeism in Bihar is a significant issue, with studies indicating that absenteeism rates can be as high as 20% in government schools (Sinha, Banerji, & Wadhwa, 2016). Schools, meanwhile, grapple with prolonged absences without adequate replacement staff, fostering resentment among colleagues who shoulder the additional workload, thereby impacting the overall quality of teaching. This further creates a toxic institutional environment where women exercising maternity entitlements are perceived as burdens rather than beneficiaries of rightful policy provision.

### Analytical Reflections

The analysis of maternity leave in Bihar reveals structural exclusions at multiple levels. Contractual labor regimes, which employ the majority of frontline workers, systematically deny women the benefits of progressive legislation.



This highlights the contradiction between the state's commitment to gender-sensitive policies and its reliance on precarious, low-paid female labor to deliver essential services.

Moreover, the uneven implementation demonstrates how policy capture occurs at the school level, where administrative discretion undermines uniformity. The case also underscores the intersection of gender and class discrimination: while permanent urban teachers benefit most, marginalized women at the grassroots are left behind. Thus, the maternity leave framework in Bihar exposes the broader question of whether the state's approach to women's entitlements is genuinely transformative or merely symbolic.

Globally, maternity leave is recognized as essential for maternal and child health, reproductive autonomy, and work-life balance. While countries like Sweden and Norway even offer extensive paid parental leave, gaps such as lack of national standard policy, limited inclusivity across organised and unorganised sector, economic inequity and discretion of employers to provide paid leave remain in other countries, such as the United States of America.



For Bihar to advance genuine gender equity, maternity policies must be strengthened not just in scope but in delivery, ensuring that no woman is forced to choose between her health and her profession. A truly transformative maternity policy must combine legal entitlement with effective delivery, ensuring health, dignity, and career continuity for all women.



## Menstrual Leave in Bihar

Bihar has been a pioneer in India regarding menstrual leave policies. In 1992, the state government introduced a policy granting female employees two days of paid menstrual leave per month after protests by women employees. This initiative aimed to address the specific health needs of women during menstruation and promote gender-sensitive workplace practices. The policy applies to all government employees, including those on contract, under the jurisdiction of the Bihar Vikas Mission ([bvm.bihar.gov.in](http://bvm.bihar.gov.in))

This move positioned Bihar as one of the earliest adopters of menstrual leave in India, setting a precedent for other states. While the policy has been lauded for its progressive approach, its implementation has faced challenges. There is a lack of uniformity in its application across various departments, and some employees report limited awareness about their entitlements. Additionally, the policy's impact on absenteeism and workplace dynamics remains a subject of ongoing discussion.

In contrast, other states like Karnataka have recently introduced more comprehensive menstrual leave policies. In October 2025, Karnataka approved a policy granting women employees 12 paid menstrual leave days annually across both government and private sectors. This policy aims to create a more supportive and understanding work environment for women.

To enhance the effectiveness of menstrual leave policies in Bihar, it is essential to ensure consistent implementation, raise awareness among employees, and monitor the policy's impact on workplace productivity and employee well-being. Such measures would contribute to fostering a more inclusive and supportive work environment for women in the state.



# Chapter 3

## Suggestions and Possible Solutions

The analysis of Child Care Leave (CCL), Maternity Leave, and Menstrual Leave in Bihar demonstrates a significant policy–practice gap. While entitlements exist on paper, women teachers face barriers of accessibility, bureaucratic discretion, digital exclusion, and cultural stigma. In order to transform these policies from symbolic commitments into effective instruments of empowerment, systemic reforms are essential. The following section presents recommendations based on survey responses from women teachers across Bihar, combined with broader policy analysis. These suggestions are aimed at making leave entitlements transparent, inclusive, and practically beneficial for all women employees.

### 1. Simplifying the Leave Process

One of the strongest demands is the need to make the CCL leave process easy. Women reported that the existing application system through e-Shikshakosh is cumbersome, often inaccessible in rural areas, and prone to technical failures.

- A simplified interface, available in both Hindi and English, should be introduced.
- Offline application options should be retained for teachers in low-connectivity regions.
- Clear step-by-step guidelines, accessible in print and digital formats, must be widely disseminated through schools, training sessions, and circulars.

This would eliminate dependence on intermediaries and ensure women can exercise their rights independently and confidently.



## 2. Transparency and Accessibility

Teachers emphasized the need for a clear, transparent, and easily accessible guideline for availing both CCL and menstrual leave.

- A dedicated Women's Leave Manual should be published by the Department of Education.
- School administrators must be mandated to display leave guidelines on notice boards.
- Information campaigns through WhatsApp groups, SMS alerts, and teacher training workshops could ensure greater awareness.

Transparency would reduce misinformation, bureaucratic harassment, and discretionary misuse of power.

## 3. Universal Coverage

Survey participants stressed that all categories of women teachers should receive the benefit. Currently, contractual teachers, shiksha mitras, and other temporary employees face exclusion. Extending leave entitlements to all women irrespective of employment status would promote equity and reduce systemic discrimination. Exclusion of large sections of women from such rights undermines the credibility of the state's gender commitments.



#### **4. Removing Arbitrary Restrictions**

Another recurring concern was the age barrier to avail CCL. Women teachers argued that caregiving responsibilities are not limited to young mothers. Children of different ages may require parental attention, especially during illness or exam stress. Removing age-based restrictions would acknowledge the diversity of caregiving needs and make the policy more responsive to real-life circumstances.

#### **5. Expanding Coverage to Three Children**

Teachers also suggested that the entitlement should extend to at least three children after entering service. At present, the benefits are often limited to two children, thereby excluding women who may have larger families from these entitlements. Expanding the scope would ensure inclusivity and fairness, especially in rural Bihar, where family sizes tend to be larger.

#### **6. Salary Continuity During Leave**

One of the most pressing demands was that the salary should continue to be disbursed every month during CCL. Many women reported delays in salary payments during their leave, causing financial distress. A system of automatic salary credit during sanctioned leave must be established, with penalties for administrative delays. Ensuring uninterrupted financial support would reaffirm the principle that leave entitlements are rights, not favors.

#### **7. Institutional Support Systems**

Leave policies alone cannot address the challenges unless supported by institutional reforms. Additionally, there is a need to strengthen the following aspects:

- Creation of a pool of substitute teachers to fill in during long absences, ensuring the quality of teaching is not disrupted.





- Regular training for principals and administrators on gender sensitivity and legal obligations.
- Establishing grievance redressal mechanisms at the district level, where teachers can report denial of entitlements.

These measures would distribute responsibility fairly and prevent leave-taking from being seen as a burden on colleagues or institutions.

## 8. Monitoring and Accountability

Without accountability, even the best-designed policies remain ineffective. The state should take the following measures to ensure accountability:

- Introduce real-time dashboards tracking leave applications and approvals.
- Conduct independent audits to monitor compliance and identify delays.
- Hold school heads and district officials accountable for wrongful denial or delay of entitlements.

Transparency in implementation would not only empower women but also build institutional trust.



# Conclusion

The experiences of women teachers in Bihar highlight the critical gaps between policy intent and actual implementation of leave entitlements. While statutory provisions such as maternity leave, child-care leave, and menstrual leave exist on paper, structural exclusions, particularly for contractual and grassroots workers, undermine their effectiveness. Delays in salary disbursement, cumbersome paperwork, and inconsistent application across schools reveal that without robust administrative mechanisms, even progressive policies can fail to empower those they are meant to support. These shortcomings not only compromise women's health, reproductive autonomy, and work-life balance but also adversely affect child development and the overall functioning of the education system.

A forward-looking approach requires reimagining leave policies as instruments of gender justice, rather than mere formal entitlements. Simplifying procedural requirements, integrating digital platforms like e-Shikshakosh, and ensuring real-time monitoring of leave utilization can enhance transparency and accountability. Universal coverage that includes contractual, temporary, and rural staff, combined with the removal of age or service-based restrictions, would ensure equity across the workforce. Institutionalizing menstrual leave alongside maternity and childcare leave further affirms the state's commitment to addressing gender-specific health needs, promoting dignity at the workplace, and normalizing conversations around women's reproductive health.



Futuristically, Bihar can draw from global best practices that combine extended parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and strong anti-discrimination safeguards. Linking leave policies with broader teacher welfare initiatives, such as substitute teacher pools, career progression protections, and professional development during leave periods, can ensure that exercising these rights does not impede professional growth. By centering the voices of women teachers in policy design and implementation, Bihar has the potential to transform its education system into a model of inclusivity, resilience, and gender-sensitive governance. Strengthening leave entitlements is therefore not just a matter of compliance with legislation but a strategic investment in human capital, workplace dignity, and the sustainable development of the state's education infrastructure.



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