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Title: Need to ensure employment opportunities for women under the proposed "National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme".

SHRIMATI C.S. SUJATHA (MAVELIKARA): Sir, in the present flawed draft of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill, the Government seeks to restrict the operation of the Act only to some selective districts, with no guarantee of its expansion.

Equally unfortunate is the fact that the Draft defines a household on the basis of a shared dwelling or a common ration card. It ignores the reality of joint families. In other words, if there are three adult sons and their families, only one amongst them will be eligible for employment under the Draft Bill. This makes a mockery of the CMP assurance.

The past experience of negative consequences of the exclusion of women from the Government Work Programmes has been ignored, and there is no mention of the essential Clause that : "At least, 40 per cent of those who get work under the law should be women." At present, in most rural areas the legal minimum wages are not being paid. Shockingly, the proposed Draft provides sanction to the floating of the minimum wages law by itself, proposing that the Minimum Wages Act should not apply to wages-for-work provided under the proposed Act, but may be decided by the Central Government. There is an ominous indication that the vulnerability of the millions of unemployed in rural India will be used to further push down the minimum wage, which must be prevented. Even though the Scheme is a Centrally-Sponsored Scheme, the draft legislation expects the State to meet 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the cost, which, given the depletion of resources available to the States, would make it virtually impossible for its implementation.

It is, therefore, essential that the Centre takes the responsibility of the entire cost.

MR. SPEAKER: It should be brief and pointed.