

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
BENAZIR INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMME

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BISP AIMS TO BECOME NUMBER ONE SOCIAL SAFETY NET PROGRAM IN THE WORLD: MARVI

Minister of State and Chairperson BISP, MNA Marvi Memon held a press conference at Karachi Press Club on BISP achievements and future plans. While talking to the reporters, Chairperson BISP said that BISP services over 5.3 million women and gives stipends of Rs. 4700 every 3 months, based on a survey conducted in 2010 which is internationally acclaimed as number 5. Its budgets have been increased from Rs 40 billion to Rs 115 billion due to commitment of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar and PMLN government to poverty alleviation and management. Chairperson BISP informed that the new poverty survey of BISP is being done in line with international best practice of



resurvey after 5 years. BISP aims to be the pride of Pakistan and be number one in the world through this survey. The process was initiated in 2015 when she took charge of BISP as Chairperson. She further said that it takes one year of preparation

because provinces were consulted as well as detailed technical international evaluations were made. She added that the reason for new survey is that new people have entered poverty that need to be captured in new survey and some people in existing survey should have graduated out of poverty and should not be included in new survey.

The Minister reiterated that the survey is not being conducted because of corruption as highlighted by a certain segment of media. For corruption issues, first time in BISP's history, Internal Audit department has been set up, data sanity checks were conducted, staff has been suspended, payment mechanisms are being changed to make all payments biometric starting from September 2016 and ending next year.

Discussing the details of new survey, Chairperson BISP said that the pilot phase of resurvey started in Haripur district on June 15, 2016. In 2016, 16 districts will be covered. Rest of Pakistan will be covered in 2017 and early 2018. Thus well before next general elections all districts will be covered.

The Minister informed that to make resurvey fool proof, tablets, not forms, are being used and its computer based not paper based. It has an operational review process for double checked data. Local governments, media and civil society have access to a hotline for complaints so that survey details can be improved. The Poverty Means Test and scorecard methodology have been technically improved and filters have been added. Survey is testing desk based approach where women come to desks in each union council. Door to door approach is also being employed.

Talking about the improvement in payment procedures, the Minister apprised that initially Pakistan post was used in 2008 for payments to beneficiaries, then smart cards and mobile phone banking were used. Now BISP has moved on to Debit cards/ATM cards. 94% payments are being made electronically. Pakistan post had good reach but transparency issues existed, thus, from 2.4 million the number has been reduced to just over 300,000 beneficiaries receiving payment from Pakistan Post. This number will be further reduced. Meanwhile, efforts are being made to make the system biometric for proof of payment and those found in malpractices are being charged. Recoveries from them have also been initiated.

She informed that at present, 11 districts are on Pakistan Post, 122 on BDC ATMs, 1 on mobile banking, and 5 on biometric payment mechanism. In September 2016, new system of biometric verification is being started which should take one year to cover entire Pakistan and make system safe.

Chairperson BISP also said that Internal Audit department gives periodic reports for each department and district and immediate action is taken if there is any connivance among bank, ATM guards, agents, and BISP officials. Data sanity exercise discovered 125, 714 wrong updated accounts. Their payments were stopped and legal action was taken. Complaints received related to fraudulent SMS were 16,255. Over 7000 numbers have been blocked and FIA has been asked to intervene. She does a radio talk show weekly to take live calls and resolve the issues of beneficiaries on spot.

The Minister also discussed the Waseela-e-Taleem initiative of BISP and informed that over 1.3 million children have been enrolled in schools by BISP by giving them Rs 250 per child per month in 32 districts. This ensures 1.3 million children off child labour market. 50,000 BBC BISP beneficiary committees have been set up for awareness which can be used for other programs like immunization, family planning, malnutrition and violence against women.

While talking about development partners of BISP, Chairperson BISP stated that 90% of the budget is government funded while 10% is funded by ADB, WB and DIFID. Their technical assistance gives BISP international recognition. League of social safety nets is being created by Pakistan with the help of ADB in order to coordinate efforts of all Asian social safety nets.

Earlier in the day, Chairperson BISP attended a meeting at Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industries (OICCI) where she addressed the members of OICCI. Secretary General OICCI, Mr. Shahab Rizvi was also present on the occasion.

The purpose of the visit of OICCI by Chairperson BISP was to make an appeal to the corporate heads and chambers to join hands with BISP under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

During her address, Chairperson BISP informed that the initiative of BISP E-Commerce aims at providing entrepreneurial opportunities to beneficiaries by online marketing and sale of their products. She added that the corporate sector may invest in the purchase of handicrafts of beneficiaries. This will encourage beneficiaries to build upon their potential and gradually exit out of poverty.

The Minister also said that BISP has the most accurate data of 27 million households of the country. She offered that database to the corporate sector in order to locate the poorest people across Pakistan for philanthropic purposes.