

**Government of Pakistan**

**Benazir Income Support Programme**

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**Press Release**

**March 7, 2016**

**MARVI SAYS BISP'S ROLE IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT HISTORIC**

State Minister and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program Marvi Memon on occasion of International Women's day said that BISP's role in women empowerment is historic. She thanked Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar for increasing the budgets of BISP and empowering the most downtrodden vulnerable women of Pakistan through the largest social safety net in Pakistan. She said that by giving 5.2 million of the poorest women quarterly stipends of Rs 4700, BISP was the largest stakeholder in women empowerment in Pakistan and a role model organization being followed in many developing countries.

Ms Memon congratulated her BISP board, and donors for their guidance and BISP staff led by Secretary BISP Saleem Ranjha of 2500 BISP officials spread over 450 tehsil offices of Pakistan who were trying to serve those women who needed state assistance the most. She said that it was the most humbling responsibility for her entire team and that despite being a government organization BISP was trying to inculcate a service culture.

She said PMLN's top leadership's instructions to her organization were not just to give financial support but dignity, empowerment, meaning to life to the most vulnerable women. She said 2016 would be a historic year for BISP for many reasons. Firstly, a resurvey would be conducted of Pakistan's only National Socio Economic Registry which would update demographics of the real poor before 2018 and assist all governments in targeting programs for women empowerment and poverty reduction.

Secondly, she said that by transiting to new payment systems and tightening transparency by introducing biometrics and more payment points, BISP would finally have a handle over the middle man mafia culture.

Thirdly, she said that linking to federal and provincial government programs of poverty reduction like interest free loans BISP beneficiaries would start exiting poverty versus and not just surviving poverty.

Ms Memon said the actual game change for women empowerment from BISP platform would be BISP e commerce in 2016 which would give market access to women made products through online systems.

Ms Memon said that BISP's 45,000 beneficiary committees were the largest goldmine women empowerment platform which would increase financial social empowerment, decrease violence in society and give confidence bringing a real women revolution in line with tenants of Islam. She said these committees were the best gender equalisers keeping local customs and traditions as key. Moreover for health and education, BISP role was historic with its contribution to one million children enrolment and PM National Health Insurance Scheme. She said stunting could only be tackled by concentrating on BISP beneficiaries bringing a hike of 3 percent in GDP growth rate. She said there was no bigger national integrator for women in the country's different provinces and territories than BISP because it treated all equal keeping their poverty rates as the only priority.

Her message on International women day, she said, was not hers alone as chairperson but the voice of all BISP beneficiaries from all areas of Pakistan who were joining a public campaign online through a unique social media video message which pledged the following:

"We the women of BISP are thankful to Nawaz Sharif for women's empowerment, dignity, basic rights, awareness about education program, Health program, interest free loans and appreciate the significant increase in the monthly financial assistance for poverty alleviation which has given us a positive meaning to life. We are trying to struggle out of poverty through self-esteem and appreciate the efforts of PM Nawaz Sharif who is introducing positive packages for women's empowerment."

Finally she said that the struggle for women empowerment was a lifelong mission but BISP was the one organization of the federal government which was taking a lead in promoting vision of PM Nawaz Sharif for women keeping within the most empowering tenants of the most empowering religion for women namely Islam.

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