

NEWS TODAY

Friday, August 12, 2016

1. BISP UNDERTAKES SURVEY TO FILTER UNWARRANTED ELEMENTS

Published in Dawn, Aug 12, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The government has initiated a nationwide survey to verify beneficiaries and include those eligible for financial assistance in the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

Surveyors had started the pilot project phase in Haripur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where fresh data of those receiving support was being prepared, names being deleted of those whose financial position had improved and names of those pushed below the poverty line being included in data bank. The survey will complete by 2018.

BISP chairperson MNA Marvi Memon chaired a meeting held on Thursday to review last year's progress and discuss modus operandi of the new survey. Participants were informed that the first-ever survey on such a large scale was being undertaken through tablets to avoid inclusion and exclusion errors while deleting fake beneficiaries.

It was further told that the de-crediting and re-crediting policies for bank accounts of beneficiaries had been revised to ensure cash transfer to valid beneficiaries.

Currently more than 94 per cent payments are being made through technology-based payment mechanism.

Biometric-based payments have already been started in Larkana which will be expanded

throughout Pakistan in a phased manner for more transparency.

The BISP, it was told, had achieved the target of 5.3 million eligible beneficiaries under the Unconditional Cash Transfer programme. The organisation had enrolled 1.3 million children in schools by June 2016 under the Waseela-i-Taleem programme and hoped to reach the target of two million by December.

2. FAKE BISP SMSS: 7,000 CELL NUMBERS BLOCKED

Published in The Nation, Aug 12, 2016



ISLAMABAD - The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has got blocked around 7,000 fraudulent mobile numbers from which fake SMSs were sent, and the law-enforcement agencies have been requested to initiate action against persons in whose names these numbers had been registered.

Showing zero tolerance for corruption and fraud, seven cases of different nature have been forwarded to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

Meanwhile, around 10,000 dead beneficiaries have also been identified, resulting in the saving of Rs40 million in the last tranche of 2015-16, according to the data discussed at an

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annual performance meeting of BISP chaired by its chairperson Marvi Memon.

Moreover, establishment of a Vigilance Cell is in process for continuous review of systems and procedures, while a new audit department has already been set up which is giving periodic reports to ensure transparency.

During the meeting, the BISP chairperson said that the Programme had come a long way under the incumbent government in terms of budgetary allocations, operational capacity, new initiatives, payment mechanisms and state-of-the-art technological solutions.

Realising the need for updating data through foolproof targeting tools, BISP launched the pilot phase of poverty survey in June 2016 in Haripur.

The phase will be completed in 16 districts across country by February 2017, and will be followed by the national roll out of resurvey to be completed by March 2018.

The participants were apprised that for the first time in history of Pakistan, such a large scale survey is being conducted through tablets in order to avoid any inclusion and exclusion errors.

Hiring of firms for review of targeting process, Data Sanity Exercise and Case Management System for the current survey will address the issue of fake beneficiaries.

The participants were informed that the de-crediting and re-crediting policies for the bank accounts of beneficiaries had been revised in order to ensure cash transfer to valid beneficiaries.

Currently, more than 94 percent payments are being made through technology based payment mechanism.

Biometric based payments have already started in Larkana that would be expanded throughout Pakistan in a phased manner in the coming years to ensure more transparency.

It was informed that in order to ensure transparency, eliminate middleman culture and facilitate the beneficiaries, BISP had developed a biometric based withdrawal system with more than 25,000 touch points across the country.

It was also told that BISP had achieved the target of enrolling 5.3 million eligible beneficiaries under Unconditional Cash Transfer programme and enrolled 1.3 million children in schools under Waseela-e-Taleem by June 2016.

The organisation targets to enroll 2 million children by Dec 2016.

BISP has established 50,000 BISP Beneficiary Committees (BBCs) in 32 districts to mobilise women for child education, immunisation, women health and encourage women to speak out against violence.

BISP E-commerce has been launched to promote handicrafts made by beneficiaries, so they could come out of poverty through online sale of their products.

BISP has also launched its new Communication Outreach Strategy that includes street theatres to illustrate eligibility criteria and spread key messages on Waseela-e-

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Taleem, women empowerment, social and health issues.

The initiatives of 'Sisters in Success' and 'BISP Empowers Talk' focus on encouraging idea generation, success transfer and motivation for beneficiaries to come out of poverty.

On weekly basis, the BISP chairperson takes live radio calls for addressing grievances of the beneficiaries.

Development partners of BISP, including ADB, WB and DFID, are providing it support in achieving its targets.

The performance of BISP under 12th IMF Review has been termed highly satisfactory.

(Patriot, Express, Nawaiwaqt, Dunya, Naibaat, Pakistan, Ausaf and Khabrain also carried the story and picture)