

1. BISP PLAYED HISTORIC ROLE IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: MARVI

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International Women's day BISP played historic role in women empowerment: Marvi

Says programme gives 5.2m poor women quarterly stipends of Rs4,700

A OUR CORRESPONDENT
ISLAMABAD

State Minister and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), Marvi Memon on the occasion of International Women's Day said that the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has played a historic role in women empowerment.

She said that by giving 5.2 million poorest of the poor women quarterly stipends of Rs4,700, BISP was the largest stakeholder in women empowerment in Pakistan and a role model organisation being followed in many developing countries.

Marvi said 2016 would be a historic year for BISP for many reasons. The actual game changer 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.

Moreover, a fresh survey will be conducted this year to update demographics of the real poor before 2018 and assist all governments in targeting programmes for poverty reduction, Marvi said.

She said that by transiting to biometrics and more payment points, BISP would finally have a handle over the middlemen who charge fee from illiterate women to help them draw stipend from ATMs.

Marvi said that BISP's 45,000-strong beneficiary committees were the largest women empowerment platform which would increase financial social empowerment, decrease violence in society and give confidence.

Moreover, BISP role was historic with its contribution to million children enrolment and PM National Health Insurance Scheme.

2. BISP PLAYING HISTORIC ROLE IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: MARVI

Published in Daily Times, March 8, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Marvi Memon said on Monday that BISP was playing a historic role in women's empowerment.

In her message on the eve of the International Women's Day, Memon thanked Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for increasing the BISP budget and empowering the most vulnerable women of Pakistan. She said that BISP was the largest stakeholder in women's empowerment in Pakistan and a role model for many developing countries, as it was giving Rs 5.2 million stipend to poor women, Rs 4,700 per woman every quarter. She congratulated the BISP board and donors for their support. She praised BISP Secretary Saleem Ranjha and 2,500 programme officials working at more than 450 offices throughout Pakistan.

Memon said that BISP was meant to provide financial support to vulnerable women with dignity. She said that 2016 would be a historic year for the BISP for many reasons. First, 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 programmes for women empowerment and poverty reduction. Second, she said, the BISP would finally have a handle over the middleman by transiting to a new payment system and tightening transparency through the biometric system. Third, she said, BISP beneficiaries would steer themselves out of poverty because they would be linked to federal and provincial poverty alleviation programmes.

Memon said the BISP e-commerce facility in 2016 would be the real game changer for women empowerment. She said this facility would give the

products made by women access to online markets. She said that 45,000 BISP beneficiary committees were symbols of women's empowerment and they would add to women's financial and social empowerment. She said these committees would help curb violence against women in the society. She said these committees were the best gender equalisers keeping local customs and traditions in view. Moreover, BISP role in health, education and enrolment of one million children in schools was historic. She said that stunting could be tackled by concentrating on BISP beneficiaries. She said there was no bigger national integrator for women in the country than the BISP.

In her message on the International Women's Day, she said, "We the women of BISP are thankful to Nawaz Sharif for women's empowerment, dignity, basic rights, awareness about education programme, health programme and interest free loans. We appreciate the significant increase in the monthly financial assistance for poverty alleviation that has given us a positive meaning of life. We are trying to struggle out of poverty through self-esteem and appreciate the efforts of the prime minister who is introducing positive packages for women's empowerment."

Finally, she said, the struggle for women's empowerment was a lifelong mission, but the BISP was the one organisation of the federal government that was taking a lead in this regard.

3. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT, GENDER PARITY STRESSED

Published in The News, March 8, 2016

A number of messages stressing for women empowerment and gender parity were issued by women political leaders on the occasion of International Women Day.

In her message, Secretary Women's Parliamentary Caucus MNA Shaista Pervaiz Malik called all men, women and children to pledge for parity in order to

become the strength of each other for a prosperous, healthy and a brighter future for our children as well as our nations

She said that Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah emphasized on gender equality from the very genesis of Pakistan's freedom struggle and integrated this ideal within the formation of the state. He consistently advocated for gender equality and wished to see women as equal partners in all walks of life.

Her statement mentions that despite legal framework and efforts towards women empowerment, they remain excluded, disadvantaged and invisible in most countries across the globe. "One of the main reasons, apart from low literacy rates, lack of access to productive resources etc, is the undermined involvement of men in advocacy and implementation of these frameworks." It further says that men have a crucial role to play in preventing physical and sexual violence, ensuring women's access to education, and their socio-economic and political rights and opportunities.

In her statement, State Minister and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme Marvi Memon 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 Rs4700, BISP was the largest stakeholder in women empowerment in Pakistan and a role model organization being followed in many developing countries.

A statement issued by former chairs of National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) on this occasion paid tribute to Pakistan's vibrant women's movement for its untiring and heroic struggle against discrimination and anti-women practices (karo kari, vani, swara, forced marriage) and for bringing women's issues into the mainstream discourse.

The former chairpersons, including Justice (r) Majida Razivi, Dr Arfa Syeda Zehra, Anis Haroon and Khawar Mumtaz, appreciated Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's statement made at the screening of Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy's documentary 'A Girl in the River-The Price of Forgiveness' that "there is no honour in killing" and that this kind of killing is "evil," and that the law that gives impunity to murderers will be changed.

(Business Recorder, Patriot, Jang, Dunya, Naiibaat, Jinnah, Pakistan and Khabrain also carried the story).

4. IS THE FIX FOR POVERTY AS SIMPLE AS A CHEQUE IN THE MAIL?

by Malone Mullin

Buried under a whack of promises, the Ontario budget contains an unusual pledge. Kathleen Wynne and company are on the hunt for a guinea pig, a city willing to pay each of its residents hundreds of dollars a month, no matter their employment status or salary, in return for absolutely nothing.

The idea's called "guaranteed basic income," or "mincome," and it's being hailed as a possible answer to income inequality.

The single-city project is "still in its inception stage" and has yet to be designed, according to a Ministry of Finance spokesperson. But in theory, it's a simple fix for poverty, underemployment, precarious work and the rising cost of living.

Of course, if you're already raking in cash from a decent job, you'll end up paying the windfall back and then some at tax time. But if you're on sick leave, have lost your job or are going back to school, mincome ensures you won't go hungry.

Mincome proposals have been bouncing around in various forms since the days of Thomas Paine, championed by economists and politicians of all stripes

ever since and invariably discarded, like other unorthodox ideas, as a pipe dream – a potentially expensive one at that.

Back in the 1970s, a pilot in Dauphin, Manitoba met with reasonable success. Recent months have seen mincome once again garnering attention from the feds. Justin Trudeau's Liberals have resolved to develop and deploy a mincome experiment, potentially in Prince Edward Island. Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi endorses the idea, as does Alberta's finance minister, Joseph Ceci.

The Association Of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) officially supports mincome as the best means to prevent illnesses inflicted by poverty. And federal Minister of Social Development Jean-Yves Duclos, in a 2008 report, recommended mincome as the leading solution to economic instability for working-age adults. Duclos told the Globe and Mail last month that he's interested in making basic income a part of his poverty-reduction mandate.

There's an economic advantage to mincome when you consider the growing costs of poverty. Factoring in health, employment insurance, social transfers and justice system expenses, the national annual burden exceeds \$70 billion. Although solutions stare us in the face, we continue to pay for widespread destitution. For example, it'd be cheaper to provide the homeless with their own apartments than having them sleep in a shelter bed that can cost \$1,200 a month.

Our safety nets are all over the place: a medley of cash transfers for the old, debt relief for students, monthly support for parents and 13 distinct welfare programs make up the Canadian social assistance model.

What we're left with is a disjointed system that sometimes fails to help much at all. To compound the problem, "welfare rates fluctuate according to political whim," says Sheila Regehr, former director of the National Council of Welfare. "There is no rationale. There's nothing that pegs it at a rate that means something substantial. It's just 'How low can we get it?'"

Regehr and her colleagues established the Basic Income Canada Network seven years ago as a national offshoot of a larger global movement. Chaired by Regehr, the network consists of municipal groups made up mostly of regular people fed up with an irrational system.

Mincome is “far more possible in Canada than just about anywhere else,” says Regehr, pointing out that we already have a kind of basic income in place for seniors, with a universal benefit and a top-up for those in need.

“We’ve been doing that for years, and we have proof that it works in lots of ways,” she says. “Seniors eat better, they have less stress, they’re more active – and healthier – than their younger counterparts.”

But despite growing support, mincome has its opponents.

Jonathan Rhys Kesselman, a public policy researcher at Simon Fraser University, points out that allotting an average of \$10,000 in annual benefits per person would result in a gross expense of \$350 billion, an amount far exceeding the current annual federal budget. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, in a 2009 study, estimated an amount comparable, concluding that a full mincome policy is “out of our immediate financial reach.”

Richard Pereira, a basic income researcher at the University of Birmingham, disagrees with Kesselman’s number-crunching. His 2015 study in *World Economic Review* demonstrates that most of the funds would come from a systemic overhaul, funnelling money from redundant programs into a basic income pool. Kesselman’s figure, he concludes, overshoots the real cost of mincome. He places the net expense at \$76 billion, or about what poverty costs us today.

Nobody’s numbers seem to agree, but to proponents, that doesn’t matter. Regehr insists that the money exists and funding options abound. In every financial transaction, for instance, lies a latent source of millions, provided we tax a penny on every exchange.

Corporate levies can be raised, says Regehr. Doing away with parts of the tax credit system would also provide a solid mincome basis. “Canada gets the gold medal for the biggest amount of tiny, stupid tax - credits,” says Regehr.

Perhaps as precarious employment rises from its current 52 per cent in Canada’s largest city, mincome will emerge as a viable means of keeping both the standard of living and poverty spending at reasonable level.

Some people find the idea of replacing the welfare system difficult to accept. Mincome’s “getting a little bit more publicity now,” says Regehr, but “it needs to go off as light bulbs in people’s heads.”

A trial project would provide experimental data, but Toni Pickard, a mincome supporter and professor emeritus of law at Queen’s University, cautions that a pilot could stand in the way of progress.

“Pilots risk delaying implementation,” she says.

She points to successful basic income initiatives in other countries, like Brazil’s Bolsa Família grant program, which supplements the incomes of families with children (provided kids attend school and get vaccinated). Brazil wants to universalize the grant, which has not only helped the poor, but the economy as a whole – for every Brazilian real spent, the government receives a 178 per cent return.

“Our economy is supposed to be driven by demand,” says Regehr, but if people don’t have money to spend, their demand means little. “That’s why a basic income has such a profound effect. You’re not just giving individuals or families a basic income – you’re actually providing the basis of an economy.”

<https://nowtoronto.com/news/is-fix-for-poverty-as-simple-as-cheque-in-the-mail%3F/>