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BISP provides cash grant, life insurance facility to vulnerable families

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ISLAMABAD: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is providing cash grant worth Rs.1,000 per month to the 6.9 million vulnerable families including 300,000 widows, whereas 4.1 million of 6.9 million families are given life insurance facility amounting to Rs.100,000 each.

Farzana Raja, Chairperson BISP said while addressing a consultative workshop organised by Aurat Foundation, in collaboration with South Asian Network for Widows' Empowerment in Development (SANWED) here on Thursday. The workshop focused on challenges

faced by widows and single women across South Asia. Maria Rashid, Programme Director, Rozan, Lily Thapa, Founder, Women for Human Rights (WHR) and General Secretary, SANWED, Ferdous Ara Begum, Gender Issues Specialist, former member UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Shanthi Anusha Sachithanandam, Chief Executive Officer, Viluthu, Centre for Human Resource Development, Sri Lanka, Naeem Mirza, Aurat Foundataion were among the other participants.

"BISP is a national asset that in spite of traditional barriers

especially in FATA and Balochistan, has conducted the poverty scorecard survey across the country. Under the survey, 20 million females in Pakistan have for the first time in their lives made their identity cards and the vulnerable families are getting cash grants through the female head of the family. It is another way to empower women in our patriarchal society", Farzana said.

Farzana Raja revealed that the poverty scorecard survey has been conducted as per the international standards within a period of one-and-a-half year.

The Chairperson said that BISP through its various inter-



ISLAMABAD: Dr Masooma Hassan, President Aurat Foundation Board, presenting a memento to Federal Minister and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Farzana Raja at a workshop on "Mainstreaming Rights of Women in Public Policy" arranged by Aurat Foundation, here on Thursday.—APP

ventions has made significant and emancipation in the coun- inroads regarding women try. She said by providing socio-economic empowerment financial assistance to the bene-

fiary families through the women head of the family has given real sense of empowerment to women and contributed in raising their social dignity.

Maria Rashid, Programme Director, 'Rozan, said that while women constitute approximately 49 percent of Pakistan's population, their unique ability to prevent and mitigate conflict and their role as peace-makers remains unrecognised.

At least from 245 million widows around the world, more than 115 million are living in absolute, devastating poverty, along with their more than 500 million children. There is an urgent need for leg-

islative and policy reforms for removing all forms of discrimination and creating an enabling environment for widows and their families. The numbers are rapidly increasing, due to wars and armed conflicts, ethnic cleansing, natural disasters and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Widows have critical roles to play in their families, communities and societies; widows are the key agents for change and to make contributions to peace-making, peace-keeping and human security

Lily Thapa said that widowhood should not be the determinant in the lives of widows, that widows have the right to live with respect, honour and

dignity, and must be enabled to support their families, to be protected from stigma, marginalisation and violence, and must have the agency to exercise their universal, inalienable human rights to happiness, freedom and identity.

The other participants stressed that the issues faced by women especially the widows in the present system are based on patriarchal structure of the society along with other social and economic factors. Especially the widows are being treated as a 'second' citizen even in the highly civilised areas of the world that should be stopped with immediately through stricter laws.