

**Inauguration of Training Course on “Social services for all
for Human Resource Development in SAARC Region:
Priorities and Programs”**,

**Conducted by SAARC Human Resource Development Centre
(SHRDC)**

At Margalla Hotel from April 18th – 29th, 2011

At the very outset I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all the participants especially our foreign delegates and dignitaries from different SAARC countries who have traveled to Islamabad to participate in this training course.

I hope this course would enhance your both theoretical and practical understanding of the various policy level as well as implementation related issues associated with the delivery of basic social services to our people.

I would also like to thank SAARC Human Resource Development Centre (SHRDC) especially Dr. Riffat Aysha Anis, Director SHRDC in Islamabad and her team for organizing this training course on a very interesting theme of “Social Services for all for Human Resource Development in SAARC Region: Priorities and Programs”.

Provision of Social Services to the masses especially the vulnerable sections of our society and the development of available Human Resource both are of paramount importance for the overall development of SAARC region.

Social services like provision of: basic education; primary health care; clean drinking water and sanitation; nutrition; and shelter are fundamental for the decent human existence. Across the developed world these are considered as the basic human rights, which are to be provided to each and every citizen; but unfortunately, the situation in less developed or developing world is

significantly different. In our part of the world one who has access to all these services is considered very fortunate and blessed.

There is no denying the fact that development of any nation is directly linked with the availability of education, health, nutrition, shelter, safe drinking water and sanitation to its citizens. But it is also a fact that we collectively as a region we under-invest in the social services sector.

Why this is the case? there are plethora of reasons, which are contested by one group and supported by other. Here, I don't want to go into any political debate. Instead what I want to focus is that we should be able to make best use of whatever resources are made available to us for provision of social services.

Better provision of social services definitely enhances the quality of human resource available to us; as an educated, healthy, and socially secure individual could never be compared with an uneducated, unhealthy, and insecure person.

It means that by better utilizing the resources for social services we indirectly will be investing in the human resource development, which is absolutely imperative for the development of SAARC region; as human resource is the biggest resource we have.

It's a matter of simple logic that one should focus on one's strengths and should try to develop the assets available with one; and SAARC as a region has the biggest chunk of the human resource available in the world.

Human resource is our biggest strength as well as the most precious asset. If we managed to develop this resource in an effective and efficient manner we could match the developed regions of the world in very short time; on the other hand, if we failed to cater for the needs of this resource it could prove a ticking bomb in our hands, as nothing could be more dangerous than an ignorant mind with empty stomach.

Recognizing this various initiatives have been taken at national, regional and global level for better provision of social services to the inhabitant of this planet. But one of the major problem with many of these initiatives is that the non-poor benefit first and most from the better delivery of basic social services and the more deserving under privileged segments of the society remain at the far end of the line.

Realizing this it was Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the first elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, who had said in 1970 that " We consider the removal of inequalities, the achievement of a fair distribution of wealth, and the establishment of a welfare society as a proper function of the state"

Ladies & Gentlemen, let me share with you the brief outline of one of such initiative taken by the Government of Pakistan for better provision of social services to our masses especially the marginalized segments of our society.

Considering the provision of social services as basic human right, this initiative with the name of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) was launched as a means to provide financial assistance to the poorest of the poor adversely affected by the high inflation and the impact of the international economic crisis.

However, we are developing BISP in to a comprehensive social protection net by provision of Monthly Cash Grant, Vocational & Technical Training, Micro Finance for gainful self-employment and Life Insurance for the bread earner of the beneficiary's family.

We also believe that provision of social safety net facilities to each and every deserving citizen of Pakistan is not only the moral duty of the state but it is also an investment in the huge human resource of the country as through this approach we can enable the huge chunk of our population living below the line of poverty (almost 40 %) to start doing something for generation of resources for them and their families.

Lack of resources and skills is the major impediment in the quest for sustenance of the under-privileged segments of our society

By provision of social protection facilities to these sections of our society we can basically make a huge portion of our population economically active thus enhancing their capabilities as human resource.

Realizing this, BISP is not only providing monthly cash grants to its beneficiaries but we are also providing them interest free financial assistance to start any small business of their choice.

Along with this financial assistance we are also providing them counseling and training to start any viable business. Thus promoting small entrepreneurial activity in the national economy.

Besides facilitating this entrepreneurial activity, BISP is also providing demand driven technical and vocational training to the one member of beneficiary's family thus enabling them to start any technical job or small business and become economically self sufficient. This is again a major step in the direction of human resource development.

Inflow of technically trained human resource in the domestic market could further improve the quality of production thus benefiting the overall economy of the country.

BISP, in a short span of two and half years, has reached out to more than 4 million families across the country; and by the end of June 2011 we are expected to enroll more than 5 million under privileged families across the country.

I hope you would get to know more in detail about the BISP and other similar initiatives when you will analyze the innovative intervention and best practices in the field of social services in SAARC region.

I have gone through the format and methodology of this training and hope that at the end of this course you would be better informed on the various aspects and issues related with the effective delivery of the social services; and will be better placed to critically analyze the social services policies and programmes with a focus on achieving the desired goal of better human resource development through provision of basic social services.

Ladies & Gentlemen, in the end I would like to tell you that our collective efforts for the betterment of our people through universal provision of basic social services, without any consideration of religion, political affiliation and geographical location can make a huge difference in the lives of our coming generations.

I wish you all a very successful course and a very pleasant stay in Islamabad.