

**Polio Awareness Campaign for the
Under- privileged
Remarks by Chairperson BISP**

President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari

Ambassador for Polio Eradication, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, ,

Ministers, Parliamentarians,

Ambassadors,

Representatives of International Partner Agencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamo-Alaikum,

I am specially honored by the presence of the President of Pakistan in this function. Despite your busy scheduled your presence here speaks for your commitment to the less advantaged people of Pakistan and the noble cause of making our children safe from the evil effects of polio.

And it is a proud privilege to welcome Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, Pakistan's Ambassador for Polio Eradication and the daughter of our great leader Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed. Your presence here is a source of joy for all of us who have seen in you the spirit of public service, of compassion, of love for the disadvantaged and above all the resolve to take this country forward in line with the vision of your great mother.

Mohtarma Shaheed during her second tenure as Prime Minister introduced a revolutionary agenda in the social sector. She was mindful of the fact that no nation can achieve progress

unless there is investment in the education and health sectors and systems to support the helpless, under privileged and marginalized.

Key initiatives in the health sector during that period continue to serve our nation even today reminding us each day of her foresight and caliber as a leader of great standing. The Polio Eradication Program was launched by Mohtarma in the same spirit realizing that disability is definitely not the destiny of Pakistani children and that we need to come forward and save these innocent lives from this terrible disease that cripples not only one person but a family and perhaps the whole nation.

The revolutionary polio eradication drive was announced by Mohtarma in 1994. This program required that hundreds of thousands of volunteers and health workers would immunize over 30 Million children in every nook and corner of Pakistan.

Resources including vaccines and logistics had to be provided for the purpose in the length and breadth of Pakistan. But above all, a nation had to be awakened to the reality and gravity of the danger posed to our children by a hidden enemy. For this purpose, she led by example mobilizing the masses herself and launching the first polio drive by immunizing her own daughter. She told mothers of the country that for her every child was like Bilawal, Bakhtawar and Aseefa. She showed the way and the nation followed. Over 500,000 volunteers joined the campaign including mosque imams, school teachers, boys scouts, girl guides and people from different walks of life. We saw that despite numerous challenges the spirit she had infused in the nation, made this first campaign a great success and her daughter, the daughter of the nation Aseefa became the symbol of her personal commitment to the cause.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today Aseefa has provided leadership to this initiative to see to it that no Pakistani child ever is crippled by polio and this disease is wiped out from the country. As she continues to make all out effort in this regard, the Benazir Income Support Program stands firmly behind her in supporting the initiative and reaching the people of Pakistan with the message of hope, health and happiness. BISP is now recognized as a landmark initiative for easing the sufferings of those who are less fortunate, in providing help and means of subsistence to the less advantaged.

On behalf of my team I pledge to support the Polio Eradication Program in raising awareness in FATA and high risk districts of Balochistan and Sindh. Poverty survey in FATA is going to kick off today on 20th June 2011 and I find this opportunity to announce that survey teams will work in close collaboration with the polio teams and district health management in mobilizing the communities and ensuring that every household is covered by this program. This would, we are sure, make a huge difference in plugging awareness gaps and awakening the communities as BISP now enjoys a very strong presence and credibility in the far flung and hard to reach areas of the country.

Aseefa is carrying forward a great mission of a great leader. We all are duty bound to stand with her in this noble task till the disease is completely eradicated from Pakistan.

Pakistan Paindabad.