

Labour experts group decides to increase sample size of Labour Force Survey

Islamabad: The Labour Social Protection Expert Group of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has decided to increase the sample size of Labour Force Survey (LFS) to enable data disaggregation by category of informal labour groups.

The Labour Social Protection Expert Group of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has met four times since its creation including twice this week. The Expert Group was constituted under the aegis of Ehsaas, the government's signature social protection programme.

The Group is mandated to give evidence-based but feasible and practical recommendations regarding extension of social protection services to the informal labour sector in the first phase of its working.

In its third meeting, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics gave a detailed presentation on the Labour Force Survey (LFS), highlighting the methodology used for conducting the LFS.

The group decided to increase the sample size to enable data disaggregation by category of informal groups, to inform policy in the future. Several presentations were made in both the meetings this week by provincial Labour departments. The group was of the unanimous opinion that the first problem to tackle is the informal worker and, therefore, the key matter under consideration related to registration of informal workers. International experiences were discussed, in particular the Brazilian model, where the government has been successful in formalising the informal economy. Implementation of the Domestic Workers Bill in Philippines was also presented as an example.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Dr. Sania Nishtar said that the government's main focus was on developing social security solutions for the informal sector as an entry point to labour force public policy. At the conclusion of the first meeting she stated that there are several categories of informal labour sector; those that are self-employed, home-based and domestic workers, but the most serious issue is one of enterprises not registering themselves.

"As the result of this, their workers cannot benefit from social security entitlements. Better governance of the labour market is a necessary prerequisite to create social welfare solutions for the informal sector." She urged the Labour Expert Group to come up with 'disruptive' but 'constructive' solutions to challenge status quo.

The second meeting of the Expert Group was held on May 30, where a presentation was given on international best practices in extending social services to the private sector. The group was presented examples of laws and regulations that have worked in other parts of the world. Provincial examples were studied in depth in both the meetings. The group is scheduled to convene after Eid and will come up with final recommendations and a plan for formalizing the informal sector

The meeting were attended by key labour stakeholders including Zahoor Awan, Secretary General of the Pakistan Workers Federation; Ingrid Christensen, Country Director International Labour Organisation; Majid Aziz, President Employer's Federation Pakistan; Chief Poverty, Planning Commission, Shahid Naeem; Provincial Directors of Labour Departments, and Federal secretaries of the Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety Division and the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development. Dr. Sania Nishtar also attended the both the meetings.