



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Helping the poor from catastrophic health spending

New York, Tuesday, 20 September: A new fund, the Sania Nishtar Health Fund, has been launched at an event hosted by the Rockefeller Foundation in New York to support the work of Heartfile Health Financing (HHF). HHF is an IT-enabled and mobile health integrated social protection system, which can be accessed by registered health workers to protect poor households from spending catastrophically on medical expenses.

“Our needs are monumental,” said Sania Nishtar, while announcing the fund. “And we urgently require new and increased resources so that we can continue to make cash transfers to impoverished people to help them meet their immediate medical requirements – the costs of which can be crippling.”

The new fund was launched with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, which accompanied the Global Innovation Award, which Sania Nishtar received “for her unique contributions to the field of global health” at the first annual Innovation Awards ceremony in July. At the ceremony, the Rockefeller Foundation stated that it had made the grant “because the Foundation wishes to support its future innovative humanitarian work.”

The Sania Nishtar Health Fund has been launched in the margins of the United Nations Summit on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Dr Nishtar has been a member of the Human Rights and NCDs’ working group, coordinating the key policy recommendations arising from the Summit.

Keynote remarks at the launch function were made by Sir George Alleyne, Chancellor of the University of the West Indies and Director Emeritus of the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), Pakistan’s former finance minister, Syed Babar Ali, and Dr Mehmood Khan, a prominent member of the Pakistani diaspora.

Participating agencies included the Rockefeller Foundation, the American Pakistan Foundation, the World Economic Forum, the World Heart Foundation and Partners for a New Beginning (PNB), an alliance to foster public-private partnerships that are committed to broadening and deepening engagement between the United States and local communities abroad.

“Dr. Sania Nishtar is a change-agent,” said PNB Secretariat Executive Director Toni G. Verstandig, who spoke at the launch. “We are so very fortunate that she is involved in PNB’s work and we are deeply committed to having Heartfile as a PNB priority project. We are looking to leverage this extraordinary project to enhance results on the ground.”

“There can be no better place to launch this fund, than the Rockefeller Foundation which has provided such great support to Sania in this initiative,” said Syed Babar Ali, “This will be yet another story of the foundation’s trailblazing catalytic funding.”

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Notes for editors

Dr Sania Nishtar is Pakistan’s first female cardiologist. She is known internationally for her thought leadership in health and her strategic use of new platforms, technologies and information systems to improve health systems. She is founder of many health institutions in Pakistan – the top health NGO think tank, Hearfile, Pakistan’s Health Policy Forum and the award winning programme, Heartfile Health Financing. She is the author of Pakistan’s first health reform plan, the country’s first compendium of health statistics, and its first national plan for NCDs. She sits on numerous international boards and advisory groups, has published over 200 journal articles and editorials and is the author of six books. She is the recipient of many national and international awards and holds a Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians as well as a Ph.D.

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