

## **UN Global Compact 'Communication on Progress'**

**Submitted by: Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry**



### **Organization Profile Information:**

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## **BWCCI at a glance**

Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI) is a non-profit, non-political organization established in June 2001 with an enlightened aim to encourage and strengthen women's participation in the private sector as entrepreneurs through promoting a woman friendly business environment. BWCCI is the country's first women Chamber of Commerce, a trade body exclusively working on women's economic and social empowerment nationally. It has been registered with the government under the Ministry of Commerce. It is also registered with Joint stock Company of Bangladesh Government. It has also been affiliated as an "A" class chamber with the Federation of the Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), the main umbrella organization of the trade bodies in Bangladesh, since 2008. BWCCI is a strong community voice, lobbying for micro and macro women entrepreneurs to improve their social and economic prospects. Since its establishment, BWCCI has been providing support to women entrepreneurs of 64 districts of Bangladesh through policy advocacy, training, market linkages, and access to finance, networking, business awareness and capacity building. As a result of its unbroken efforts towards promotion of a gender friendly business environment, private sector development and grassroots women participation in economic sectors, BWCCI has already emerged as advocacy organization with increased acceptance among cross section of people at the national and the international level. In recognition of its contribution, BWCCI has achieved UN consultative status with its Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The women entrepreneurs of Bangladesh are energetic, willing to learn, innovative, hard working, and are willing to take risks. Small amount of assistance is extremely effective for them to graduate from micro to more sustainable small and medium sized entrepreneurs. Recognizing this potential of women entrepreneurs to play a more effective role in private sector development in the country, BWCCI was formed to act as a nucleus to assist, activate, inform, organize, and assimilate Bangladesh's women entrepreneurs.

BWCCI is committed to being a leader of broad based economic development in Bangladesh for business women & industrialists. Our will is to support the women business community by providing training, management & financial resource, expertise & support networks that enable small businesses to succeed & prosper. We serve all businesses with a special focus on small, micro rural women entrepreneurs. The members of BWCCI are from the entire range of socio-economic spectrum. Although the members are predominantly engaged in various traditionally women dominated sectors, such as food, beauty, fashion, health products, handicrafts etc., its membership is also increasing among the emerging group of women entrepreneurs in various non-traditional businesses such as IT, media, publication and other services. Starting with only 24 at the time of its inception, BWCCI now has around 4000 members across the country. The rapid increase in its membership from diversified sectors every year and expansion of its working areas and services across the country may be mentioned here as one of the indicators of its successful and dynamic journey towards its enlightened vision.

## **Our Vision**

To build a prosperous Bangladesh through progress and economic empowerment of women

## **Our Mission**

To evolve as a national platform for urban and rural women entrepreneur with an aim to enhance their contribution in all spheres of life through attaining sustainable financial strength, and recognition in family, society, economic and public life.

## **Our Objectives**

- To mobilize economic growth among the urban and rural women of Bangladesh by 2020
- To ensure women's strong voice in all spheres of economic and political activity with an aim to build a healthy and prosperous nation
- Become the most credible and strong voice among stakeholders in bringing about policy, legal, social and regulatory changes.
- Lead the nation towards progress through economic, political and social empowerment of women.
- To promote entrepreneurship among women in rural and urban areas through Capacity Building program by counseling, training ,product and market development
- To advocate for a gender friendly environment and policies enabling growth of women owned enterprises

## **BWCCI's Major Activities**

### **• Advocacy and Policy dialogues**

BWCCI's prime focus is on reformation in the policies to create an enabling environment for women across the country. Since inception, BWCCI has regularly been conducting various advocacy interventions with key policy organizations, ministries, public and private institutions, both at local and national level and brought some remarkable impacts in some intended areas including access to finance, capacity building, increased awareness among relevant stakeholders and increased participation by grassroots' people in discussion on economic policy reform. To achieve these, BWCCI conducts massive advocacy activities that include seminars, workshops, media campaigns, public speaking, rallies, TV talk shows and so on. Furthermore, It maintains regular liaisons with the local government authorities; local MPs, city mayors, civil society organizations, NGOs, community based organizations and media and is working with them for addressing women development issues.

- **Roundtable meetings and workshops on National budget**

Each year BWCCI conducts round table meetings and pre-budget workshops with civil society representatives, similar minded organizations, women activists, policy makers and women entrepreneurs to address specific areas of the National budget that can be made more effective to promote women entrepreneurship and in respect to that, make necessary recommendations in favor of women entrepreneurs.

- **Public Private Partnership (PPP)**

In order to accelerated its journey towards a progressive Bangladesh, BWCCI has been working through Public Private Partnership where different stakeholders like Public institutions, local government, financial institutions, civil society organizations, community based organizations, NGOs, women organizations, trade bodies, women entrepreneurs, women activists, academicians, researchers, development professionals and journalists are contributing in promoting women in Bangladesh.

- **Capacity building trainings**

BWCCI conducts various trainings for capacity building of women to enhance their economic empowerment. It has a trainers' pool consisting of 10 members. Major training courses include-

- i. Gender and Women rights
- ii. Linkage and Networking
- iii. Training on how to avoid corruption and anti- corruption Advocacy
- iv. Entrepreneurship development
- v. Business planning, management and marketing
- vi. Product diversification and development
- vii. Finance and Accounts management
- viii. Fashion Designing
- ix. IT and e-commerce
- x. Legal procedures of business including VAT, Tax, insurance
- xi. Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR)

- **Facilitating trade fair participation**

Identifying local and export potential of members' products in respective domestic and overseas countries, BWCCI facilitates trade fair participation for its members. Facilitation of women entrepreneurs to participate in the national and international trade fairs help members understand the market, buying behavior, quality of the products and marketing methodology.

Thus BWCCI enables members develop the quality of their products up to the domestic and international standard and encourage women entrepreneurs in their respective businesses.

- **Business Counseling and legal literacy services**

In order to make sure that women entrepreneurs apply their knowledge and skills which they have gathered from capacity building trainings, BWCCI provide business counseling support to them to help their business grow. In addition to this, as women entrepreneurs of Bangladesh are less familiar with the existing policies and legal issues regarding entrepreneurship development so BWCCI also help them in this regard through legal consultation and counseling meetings.

- **Promoting marginalized group**

BWCCI always gives emphasis in bringing forward the women belonging to marginalized group e.g. women artisan through building their business capacities and creating economic opportunities with the intention of graduating them from informal to formal sector.

- **Voice Raising of Grassroots' Women**

BWCCI has been working to increase the capacity of local women through networking, training and access to information to ensure women's active participation in socio economic and civil life.

- **Livelihood and Food Security:**

BWCCI also carries out livelihood and food security activities for disaster affected people. Most notably, it contributed to the improvement of livelihood and food security of rural women by increasing availability and access to food and Income generation as well as improving its utilization by the rural women in two SIDR affected districts of Bangladesh.

- **Market Promotion**

BWCCI works to establish marketing networks and channels for member entrepreneurs through visiting the local importers, traders, retail houses and stores for marketing the members' products and also liaise with the business community both national and international level. In this respect, BWCCI maintain a strong link with export promotion bureau (EPB).

- **Research and Publications**

Research and development are an integral and key part of the BWCCI activities. The organization carries out research studies to address various important issues related women

development with a view to influence national policy, regulation and standards-setting. Besides this, BWCCI issues regular publications and IEC materials each year to inform women and relevant stakeholders about chamber activities, women's constitutional rights, and issues in women's civil, political and economic participation etc.

#### **WNBA:**

It is worth to mention that, BWCCI has developed the first ever comprehensive document of Women's National Business Agenda (WNBA) that identified three major areas of barriers like social, financial and capacity building as despite the involvement of a number of women all over Bangladesh in business, they were historically fighting to develop their own path to flourish themselves as entrepreneurs in a highly male dominated socio-economic, cultural and political structure.

- **Anti-Corruption activities**

Another important activity of BWCCI is its awareness and social mobilization programs on anticorruption movement. Through seminars, workshops, media campaigns, rallies, capacity building trainings etc, the chamber has been working to engage women in anticorruption reform efforts. BWCCI also runs an Anti-Corruption Hotline to provide support to women in fighting corruption in their day to day business activities.

- **Green Initiative: Promoting Renewable Energy And Natural Fiber Based Enterprises**

BWCCI is focusing a significant amount of attention on environment conservation through new and green activities. BWCCI is implementing activities to enable poor women's participation in the renewable sector, specifically on ways to adopt renewable energy sources and improving access to energy in remote regions through the introduction of improved cook stoves.

BWCCI is also doing a project to develop a process of extracting high quality natural fiber from the banana and pineapple plant to be used in making handicraft items. Not only is this environmentally friendly, but the substitution of natural fibers in reinforcing fillers in polymer composites can be achieved at a lower cost than traditional methods, as well as providing SMEs with a new green market for product manufacturers.

#### **Empower 5000**

With a view to achieve its vision *to build a prosperous Bangladesh through progress and economic empowerment of women*, BWCCI is going to implement 'Empower 5000', with a commitment to develop 5000 women into entrepreneurship and leadership by 2020. Thematic areas of Empower 5000 are:

- **Capacity Development**

- Product development
- Marketing
- Research & Development
- Leadership development
- Export market promotion
- Facilitating access to Finance
- Advocacy
- ICT, E- Commerce and Digitalization
- Environment conservation
- Reduce gender disparities
- Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights (SRHR)

### **Highlights of Activities and Initiatives through the year 2013-2015**

SL	Project Name	Duration	Contributor
1	Economic Opportunities And Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights-a Pathway Of Empowering Girls And Women in Bangladesh	April 2013 - Dec 2016	The Ministry of Commerce, Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Funded by-United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
2	Enable Poor Women's participation In Renewable Energy Sector In Bangladesh	August 2013 - October 2014	Asian Development Bank (ADB)
3	Socio- economic Empowerment Of Women Through Promotion Of Natural Fiber-based Products From Agricultural Wastage- INSPIRED	November 2013 – May 2016	European Union (EU). Contracting authority: Ministry of Industries. Govt. of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh
4	Transformational Leadership: An Initiative To Promote Women Leaders-WDN	August 2014 – December 2014	Women Democracy Network, IRI
5	Empower 5000	June 2014 - December 2020	BWCCI
6	Promoting Women Entrepreneurship Through Improving Regional Cooperation	August 2014 - June 2015	South Asia Women Entrepreneurship Symposium (SAWES)
7	Women Entrepreneurship Development Training Program	June 2013 - June 2014	The Ministry of Women And Children's Affairs of Bangladesh (MOWCA), Govt. of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh
8	Women Entrepreneurs'' Skills Development Center And Hostel Facilities Program	September 2013 - June 2016	The Ministry of Women And Children's Affairs of Bangladesh (MOWCA), Govt. of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh
9	Women Entrepreneurship Development Resource Centers	February 2014 - June 2016	The Ministry of Women And Children's Affairs of Bangladesh (MOWCA), Govt. of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh

### **President, BWCCI, Ms. Selima Ahmad Received “Oslo Business for Peace Award 2014”**

President, BWCCI, Ms. Selima Ahmad has received the internationally acclaimed **Oslo Business for Peace Award 2014** for maintaining commitment to social responsibility and ethical values. This was a great achievement for Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry. She was given the award amidst a special function on May 15th in the City Hall, Oslo; the same auspicious venue where the Nobel Peace Prize is presented every year. This award is considered the highest form of recognition given to individual business leaders for fostering peace and stability through creating shared value between business and society. The Oslo Business for Peace 2014 Honorees were selected by the Foundation’s independent consisting of Nobel Prize winners in Peace and Economics.

She has been working for the private sector development for last 28 years and with her deep understanding of the plight of women in a male dominated society, she focuses on developing entrepreneurial talent, and organizing financial and marketing resources in order to enable women to overcome hurdles and expand their business beyond the micro threshold. Ms. Ahmad is an advocate who promotes democracy, gender equality, anticorruption and women entrepreneurship not only in Bangladesh but around the globe.

### **Selima Ahmad Received “2014-2015 TIAW World of Difference Lifetime Achievement Award”**

International Alliance for Women (TIAW) has announced Selima Ahmad, as the **2014-2015 TIAW World of Difference Lifetime Achievement Award** recipient. This prestigious honor is bestowed each year upon a woman of great achievement, whose actions have truly made a difference globally in the economic empowerment of women.

Recognizing TIAW World of Difference Award recipients is a highlight of TIAW when it holds a gathering of women from around the world to participate in the Global Forum that informs and inspires a broad base of influential local and international participants. This year's Global Forum event took place on October 21 - 23, 2015 in Washington; DC. Selima Ahmad has delivered a keynote speech on this grand ceremony.

In the e-bulletin, it was also written that, “TIAW includes women's networks representing thousands of women around the world to promote the economic empowerment and advancement of women, so on behalf of every one of them, we congratulate Ms. Selima Ahmad for the outstanding impact she has made throughout the world.”

## **International events where BWCCI's President attended**

### **Program: Regional Capacity Building Workshop**

26-27 January-2014, Venue: Hotel Kingsbury in Colombo, Sri Lanka

### **Program: First Arab States Regional South-South Development EXPO**

18-20 February 2014, Venue: Doha, Qatar

### **Program: Global Entrepreneurship Congress - GEC 2014 Moscow**

March 17 – 20, 2014, Venue: Moscow, Russia

### **Program: seminar on 'South Asia Women Network, Advocating for Policy Reform'**

June 16-20, 2014, Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE)

Organized by: Federation of Woman Entrepreneurs Association of Nepal (FWEAN) in partnership with

### **Program: Learning visit to India about natural fiber production process under INSPIRED**

August 1-8, 2014, Venue: Chennai, Tamilnadu

### **Program: The Hague Conference on Business and Human Security, organized by The Hague**

September 2, 2014, Venue: Hague, Netherlands

Institute for Global Justice

### **Program: The 28th CACCI Conference**

September 17-19, 2014, Venue: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

### **Program: PNG Women Chamber of Commerce**

October 23-27, 2014, Venue: Papua New Guinea

### **Program: Validation Forum on Gender Dimensions of Regional Cooperation and Integration in South Asia**

October 28-30, 2014, Venue: Auditorium D, ADB Headquarters, and Manila, Philippines

Organizer: - The Asian Development Bank (ADB),

### **Program: The RETA 6337 Regional Workshop, arranged by SARC.**

November 10-11, 2014, Venue: Manila, Philippines

### **Program: NETWORKING MEETING WITH WOMEN CHAMBERS AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS AT YANGON .**

February 03-06, 2015, Venue: Yangon, Myanmar

### **Program: 59<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW59)**

March 09, 2015, Venue: United Nations Headquarters, New York

**Program: The 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Summit will be held in Nairobi, Kenya**

July 25-26, 2015, Venue: Nairobi, Kenya

**Program: 29<sup>th</sup> CACCI Conference**

October 29-30, 2015

Venue: Hong Kong

**Program: The World Movement's Eighth Assembly**

October 31-November 5, 2015

Venue: Seoul, Korea

**About this Report:**

This report provides brief highlights of actions that Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry is taking on a local and global basis to address UNGC principles on human rights, labor, the environment and anti-corruption. BWCCI is committed to being a leader of broad based economic development in Bangladesh for business women & industrialists. Our will is to support the women business community by providing training, management & financial resource, expertise & support networks that enable small businesses to succeed & prosper.

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