



## Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BWCCI)

### Organizational Profile

<b>Name of the organization:</b>	Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI)
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<b>Legal Status of the Organization or other legal government registration</b>	Registered with Joint stock Company under Ministry of Commerce of Bangladesh Government, Affiliated as an “A” class chamber with FBCCI, UN consultative status with its Economic and Social Council

### **A brief description of BWCCI:**

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, 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 more than 5000 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.

### **BWCCI's Vision**

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

### **BWCCI's 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.

### **BWCCI's 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 44 members. Major training courses include-

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

- **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 and 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)

## List of Projects and Programs in 2016 and 2017

Project Name	Duration	Contributor
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)
Socio- economic Empowerment Of Women Through Promotion Of Natural Fiber-based Products From Agricultural Wastage-INSPIRED	November 2013 – September 2016	European Union (EU). Contracting authority: Ministry of Industries. Govt. of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh
Strengthening Knowledge of Women Entrepreneurs for Participation in Politics through Women's Political Leadership Academy (WPLA)	May-September 2016	Women Democracy Network, IRI
Empower 5000	June 2014 - December 2020	BWCCI
Economic Empowerment for Poor and Vulnerable Women in Bangladesh (EEP).	February 2013- January 2017	BRAC
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
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
Enabling Poor Women's Benefits From Enhanced Access To Energy In Hatiya Island	October 2015 – September 2016	Asian Development Bank
Rural Women Entrepreneurship Skill Development Training Program	February 2015- January 2017	The Ministry of Women And Children's Affairs of Bangladesh (MOWCA), Govt. of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh
Stress Management Program for Business Women	November 2016- February 2017	IPA
B-SkillFull	Swiss Contact	3. B-SkillFull

Women's Political Education Forum	Women Democracy Network, IRI	4. Women's Political Education Forum
Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP)	Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP), Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, GoB	5. Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP)

### **Highlights of Activities and Initiatives through the year 2016-2017**

#### **Special Achievement of 2016**

#### **BWCCI won the 7th CACCI Local Chamber Award in Big Chamber Category in Taiwan**



Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI) won the 7th Local Chamber Award in the 30th Confederation of Asia Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) Conference which was held on November 23, 2016, at Taipei, Taiwan. 27 countries participated and out of the 5 finalists, BWCCI clinched the title, competing against 4 male chambers. President and Founder of BWCCI, Ms. Selima Ahmad, received the award.

#### **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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