

# Report on the Dissemination Seminar on the Study: "Women Entrepreneurs in SMEs: Bangladesh Perspective"

Held on: July 21, 2010 at CIRDAP Auditorium, Dhaka



Prepared by:



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## **Report on the Dissemination Seminar**

The SME Foundation and Micro Industries Development Assistance and Services (MIDAS) jointly organized a half-day Dissemination Seminar on the study on 'Women Entrepreneurs in SMEs: Bangladesh Perspective' in Dhaka on July 21, 2010 at CIRDAP Auditorium in Dhaka.

### **Objective:**

The seminar aimed at disseminating the findings of the study to the women entrepreneurs, concerned government and non-government agencies and development partners of Bangladesh.

### **Program:**

The program schedule has been placed at **Annexure 1**.

### **Participants:**

The seminar was presided over and moderated by Mr. Aftabul Islam, Chairperson, SME Foundation and Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Hon'ble State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was present as Chief Guest. The full list of participants is at **Annexure 2**.

### **Major points raised and suggestions made:**

The following are the main points raised and suggestions made in the seminar after the presentation of the report:

1. Women education is imperative for providing them access to all occupations. In Bangladesh, women constitute half of the total population. Therefore, to turn them into an efficient and educated work force with appropriate skill, women education along with training on various subjects is very important.
2. There are various Government activities under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. Poverty Alleviation and Micro Credit through which credit is provided to women merit special attention. However, more emphasis should be laid on matters relating to loan disbursement and its effective utilisation for making women self reliant.
3. For gaining economic empowerment and for making economic contribution to the national economy, it is very important that women come up as SME entrepreneurs.
4. The findings of the Report are based on statistics, which is appreciable. These findings will facilitate formulation of women specific plans by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. Moreover, the study findings will help strengthening activities being pursued under the Ministry.

5. The control of women over property is minimal in Bangladesh. As such, the lending procedures should be made more flexible and women specific so that they may avail themselves of loans on easier terms along with other support services. These measures are essential for women's progress as entrepreneurs.
6. Many women entrepreneurs are not aware of the Bangladesh Bank Programs relating to SMEs. Proper dissemination of information on the Bangladesh Bank Programs for women entrepreneurs is important so that women may have access to various facilities provided there-under.
7. Assistance should be provided to women entrepreneurs to develop market linkages for effective marketing of their products.
8. Only 9-10% of women entrepreneurs are represented in the business community of Bangladesh, whereas it is about 25% in the developed world.
9. Entrepreneurship is related to individual leadership. There should be recommendations on how to build leadership among women.
10. In the report it is mentioned that about 51% of women have business plans, mostly prepared by themselves. But in reality, business plans in proper form are rarely found.
11. The contribution of the private sector to SME development should be mentioned. The private sector has certain dynamics that can do some showcasing about how to bring them onboard and work with them closely.
12. Standard Chartered Bank has recently introduced the practice of checking the credit worthiness of small entrepreneurs on the basis of bank statement, cash flow, etc. This is a significant move regarding SME development.
13. IFC\_BICF and World Bank are collaborating very closely with SME Foundation in a pre-feasibility study for an SME Park. It is difficult to do something among a million women in Bangladesh. The proposed SME Park should have provision for some special privileges for women entrepreneurs. First of all, it should be made sure in the design of the project for establishing an SME Park that a definitive portion of land is allocated to women entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, the study on women entrepreneurs shows that in the 3 sectors targeted by IFC\_BICF, the involvement of women entrepreneurs is very low. This limitation can be solved by creating a zone where lots of training for women entrepreneurs may be arranged like training on how to export, creating special financing for women, creating value chain for targeted 3 industries. Creating value chain for the 3 industries calls for services, supplies and packaging provided by very small companies. If something is created very specifically for women entrepreneurs, other women entrepreneurs will be encouraged to enter the market and start businesses.
14. Women entrepreneurs can only be strong when they speak in one voice. There are many women organizations in Bangladesh, and it is heartening that many of those organizations have been covered by the survey.

15. A word of caution—a lot of times something is done hoping that this would help women entrepreneurs. But actually it does not. For example a couple of years ago Bangladesh Bank introduced a special credit facility at 5% interest for women entrepreneurs. Bangladesh Bank provided funds to Financial Institutions at 5% and Financial Institutions were to charge interest at 10% maximum from women entrepreneurs. But this initiative of Bangladesh Bank didn't work at all. One of the problems was that men came along and they wanted to take advantage of this loan. Men would just register the company in the wife's name and would get 10% loan for a business not actually female-owned. As a result women did not benefit at all, it is just their husbands who benefited. Therefore, the policy makers should look below the surface, the same mistakes should not be made again.
16. It transpires from the study findings that married women have more freedom to do business. That should not imply that married women enjoy more freedom in the society.
17. Instead of giving general recommendations, recommendations should be more sector-focused for women entrepreneurs.
18. It is mentioned in the recommendation that there should be more IT training for women entrepreneurs. The exact IT services needed by them should be identified. This would facilitate women entrepreneurs to have more access to the market.
19. Problems faced by small enterprises are totally different from those of medium enterprises. As such survey samples should have been framed accordingly.
20. The report has dwelt on fund utilization capacity and fund availability, but not fund diversion. It is a fact that funds are often diverted to sister concerns, to the husband's business, etc.
21. A lot of studies were conducted in the past, but the recommendations were not implemented mainly due to lack of assignment of roles and responsibilities to the concerned Government Agencies.
22. The Bangladesh Bank policy states that BDT 25 lacs are the maximum limit for offering collateral free loans. However, the respective Financial Institution would decide their respective ceilings within the Bangladesh Bank's stated amount of BDT 25 lacs.
23. There is a vast difference between individual leadership and entrepreneurship. One cannot call everybody a leader. Entrepreneurs become leaders after teaching and empowering other leaders.
24. There is no official format for Business Plan expected of women entrepreneurs. A Business Plan is the first priority before setting up anything.
25. The private sector is quite important. Particularly in PPP, apart from the regulatory board members, entrepreneurs should be included in the Board so that realistic policy recommendations may be made.

26. Access to information and finance is very crucial which is lacking at present. Nobody knows where to go. Even if there is an organization like SME Foundation, it is difficult for an entrepreneur to access information. It is important that women entrepreneurs know exactly where to go for sourcing information.
27. Training is important to certify and train people. It is not just training that women entrepreneurs need; they need certification and recognition. This is how image and branding may be helped to go up.
28. Most of the data of the study is uni-variate. However without a multivariate causal analysis, it is not possible to draw inference about the relative importance of one factor over the other.
29. Women entrepreneurship is still at the ground level. Improvements should have been visible by now. The Government announced so many policies in the past. Special Project Facility (SPF) is one such initiative. Implementation of SPF has not been very promising as only 5% has been implemented. This reason behind women entrepreneurship still remaining inchoate is that they are not ready yet to take the benefit of these announced policies.
30. There is a vast gap between policy issues and implementation, although a lot of seminars were organized in the past.
31. A large number of women entrepreneurs are taking part in various important foreign trade fairs without any prior preparation. As such exposures gained through these participations could not be utilized properly for the benefit of women entrepreneurs.

**Photo Documentation:**

Some of the Photographs taken during seminar are at **Annexure 3**.

**Media Coverage:**

News on the seminar appeared in the national dailies. Copies of news clippings are at **Annexure 4**.

# **Annexure**

**The Program Schedule**

1:45 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.	Registration and Guests take their seats
2:00 p.m. to 2:05 p.m.	Recitation from the Holly Quran
2:06 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.	Welcome Address by Mr. Syed Rezwatul Kabir Managing Director, SME Foundation
2:16 p.m. to 2:20 p.m.	Background of the Study by Dr. Nurul Quadir Deputy General Manager, SME Foundation
2:21 p.m. to 3:20 p.m.	Presentation by Mr. A.S.M. Mashi-ur-Rahman, GM, MIDAS Prof. Masuda M. Rashid Chowdhury, Gender Expert, MIDAS
3:21 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.	Open Floor Discussion Moderator: Mr. Aftab ul Islam, FCA Chairperson, SME Foundation
4:16 p.m. to 4:25 p.m.	Address by the Chief Guest Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
4:26 p.m. to 4:35 p.m.	Concluding Remarks by the Chair Mr. Aftab ul Islam, FCA Chairperson, SME Foundation
4:36 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.	Vote of Thanks Mr. Abdul Karim Managing Director, MIDAS
4:46 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.	Refreshment

**List of Participants**

<b>SI</b>	<b>Name and Organization</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>Name and Organization</b>
1.	Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh	2.	Mr. A. Razzaque BEIOA
3.	Mr. S. Sinha Choudhury Bangladesh Bank	4.	Mr. Md. Ashrafal Alam Bangladesh Bank
5.	Mr. Habibullah-Al-Amin Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd.	6.	Mr. Golam Touhid PKSF
7.	Mr Momtaz F Chowdhury SMESDP	8.	Mr. Mantasha Ahmed SMESDP
9.	Ms. Ferdous Ara Begum DCCI	10.	Ms. Fahmida Chowdhury BIBM
11.	Mr Malcolm Norman IFC	12.	Ms Hosna Ferdous Sumi Katalyst
13.	Ms. Dilruba Banu GTZ-BD	14.	Ms. Ummee Saila JICA
15.	Ms. Shahnaz Begum ADB	16.	Dr. Naeem Chowdhury ADB/Bangladesh Bank
17.	Dr. M. Osman Imam Dhaka University	18.	Prof. M. A. Hye North South University
19.	Mr. Golam Kibria Dhaka University	20.	Ms. W. Tasnim Shampa Dhaka University
21.	Mr. Tapati Saha PLAGE-II	22.	Mr. M. Munirul Islam TMSS
23.	Ms. Nigar Sultana Shakhti Foundation	24.	Mr. Salekeen Alamgir Shakti Foundation
25.	Ms. Shilpi BNA	26.	Mr. Shafiqul Islam SI Foundation
27.	Ms. Bertha Gity Baroi CORR. The Jute Works	28.	Mr. Tanvir Ahammed Torus Bangla
29.	Mr. Gertrude Gomes CARITAS Bangladesh	30.	Ms. Naima Islam Ayon Craft
31.	Mr. Tariqul Islam S.B	32.	Ms. Afsana Ahmed DALSANEA
33.	Ms. Tania Wahab Karigar	34.	Ms. Shikha Karigar
35.	Ms. Rubina Farouq Institute of Hotel and Hospitality Management	36.	Mr. Muhammad Nazrul Islam Freelancer
37.	Ms. Sultana Rahman GUP Batik	38.	Ms. Ruby Ali Damal Ruby Shilpakutir
39.	Mr. G.R. Jamil MAPASK	40.	Mr. Jamel Uddin The New Nation
41.	Mr. Adnan Faisal The New Nation	42.	Mr. Saifullah Mahmud Dalal The New Nation



<b>SI</b>	<b>Name and Organization</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>Name and Organization</b>
43.	Mr Swapan Bhuiyan Bangladesh Shamoy	44.	Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed Janakantha
45.	Mr. Maksud Alorjagat	46.	Mr. Rajib Ahmed Kalerkantho
47.	Mr. Iqramul Hasan The Daily Star	48.	Mr. Faisal Mahmud The Independent
49.	Ms. Nilufar Sultana MIDAS Financing Ltd	50.	Mr. Aftabul Islam, FCA SME Foundation
51.	Mr. Syed Rezwatul Kabir SME Foundation	52.	Dr. Nurul Quadir SME Foundation
53.	Ms. Farzana Khan SME Foundation	54.	Mr. SM Nurul Alam SME Foundation
55.	Mr. Shaheen Anwar SME Foundation	56.	Mr. Md. Masudur Rahman SME Foundation
57.	Mr. Abdul Karim MIDAS	58.	Prof. Masuda M. Rashid Chowdhury Gender Expert, MIDAS
59.	Mr A.S.M. Mashi-ur-Rahman MIDAS	60.	Mr. Ziaul Moquit MIDAS
61.	Mr. AKM Shamsuddin MIDAS	62.	Mr. Md. Ebrahim Hossain MIDAS
63.	Mr. Akramul Haider MIDAS	64.	Mr. Mahfuzul Haque MIDAS
65.	Ms. Kamrun Nahar MIDAS	66.	Mr. Azizur Rahman MIDAS
67.	Ms. Ayesha Begum MIDAS	68.	

Photo Documentation



Annexure 4:

Media Coverage