**Press Release**

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Attn: News Editor/ Chief Reporter/ Assignment Editor /Business Page-in-Charge:

**Gender-Responsive Public Procurement Policy Recommends for Gender Enabling Policy Urged at BUILD-ITC Policy Dialogue**

Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD) in association with the Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) of and the International Trade Centre (ITC)’s SheTrades Initiative organized the 3rd virtual policy dialogue on " Gender-Responsive Public Procurement in Bangladesh: Interview Findings” on March 10, 2021, 2021 to increase women’s participation in the public procurement in Bangladesh,.

Survey results, scored country assessment based on specific questions as developing, meaning of which is inclusion of Women Owned Business(WoB) in the country’s agenda is in place but not yet fully accomplished in case of public procurement. In case of entity assessment in that respect, current situation is marked as developed meaning some action /administration issues have been done but the results are yet to be achieved. Data on WoB shows almost similar number in the case of “yes” and “no”, meaning there are similar number of benefits at the same time barriers for encouraging participation of WE in the tendering process in public procurement.

Masud Akhter Khan, Director (Joint Secretary), CPTU in his speech informed that as the main authority of dealing the public procurement issue in Bangladesh, CPTU has been working very closely with World Bank & ITC to increase the capacity of WoB. He stressed to take initiative to define the definition of ‘women owned businesses” and the Ministry of Commerce & Ministry of Women & Children Affairs may take initiative in that respect. Besides, global best practices need to be analyzed while preparing the roadmap and policy in the context of Bangladesh. Moreover, he noticed that procurement is a complex and comprehensive issue. Prior to engaging in that system, WoB need to upgrade themselves with proper technical knowledge. He welcomed women entrepreneurs(WEs) to come to CPTU so that CPTU can train them to be more competitive in the overall public procurement system.

Ferdaus Ara Begum, CEO, BUILD made a presentation in that respect highlighting the findings of the survey conducted during Jan-Feb’21 for getting Gender Specific information on public procurement. Women entrepreneurs are not totally aware of the prevailing scopes for them in the public procurement domain. She presented country comparison among Nigeria, Chile, Gambia & Bangladesh to have the scenario of public procurement.

She pointed barriers that are faced by WEs in public procurement such as; lack of technological skills, lack of facilitation through policy, lack of sensitization, procedural complexity, knowledge gap on bidding process, financial incapability etc. There may be some relaxation in Public Procurement Policy, such as amplifying the tender time, reduction of security deposit etc. Moreover, Payment procedure in the Sub-Contract must be clearly delineated in the PPR regulation, there should be a guideline for monitoring of payment to subcontractors in the PPR, she added. Financial criterion could be relaxed for WOB for increasing their participation in the JVs. Women may be encouraged to apply in limited tenders, quotation and cash purchase, in that respect Procuring Entity(PE) can prioritize WE as tenderers.

Tanvir Ahmad, Country Coordinator, ITC SheTrades in his speech appreciated the joint initiative of BUILD & ITC for preparing Gender Responsive Public Procurement Roadmap. This roadmap will assist the WEs to cope up with the post COVID economic era as well as it will ensure gender equality in the business community. Findings of the survey interview will be the vital information to prepare a comprehensive roadmap as the reflections of the public and private sector are reflected in the survey.

Anahita Vasudevan, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, ITC- She Trades Initiatives in her presentation described the overall process and methodology to conduct the survey and explained the terms and definition of women owned business (WOB). She also explained the assessment tool. She informed that by the late March, 2021 the final document will be submitted which will help WEs to participate in PPR.

Nazli Hussain, CEO, PRAXIS Architects said that excessive qualification requirement to be engaged in the bidding process is one of the barriers. Qualification criteria should be simplified so that WEs would be able to bid in the procurement.

Ferdausi Sultana, Former Consultant, ADB requested to focus on the employment generation through public procurement issues. Development of the women in the community needs to be addressed. Maximization of the benefits for women through the public procurement policy should be ensured. Digitalization of the trade licenses will also ensure more women participation in the system.

Lucy Akhtary Mahal, President, MWCCI appreciated the e-GP system of the government that ensures transparency in the procurement system as well as reduce administrative complexity.

Khadiza Bilkis from BCCP put focus on the increase of the capacity building of WEs so that this will increase competitiveness of WEs in the bidding process. Allocation of quota for WEs in the sub-contracting in the mega projects may improve the scenario. There is no alternative of the initiation of special treatment to protect the interest of WEs in the overall of public procurement system. Awareness program to encourage WEs to be a part of e-GP system should be organized.

Humaira Chowdhury suggested to include the provision (national budget for FY 2021-22) to allocate 10% quota for WEs in the public procurement system for the growth of SMEs in Bangladesh.

Abdur Rahim Khan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Iqbal Ahmed, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Children and Women Affairs, Judith Fessehaie – Programme Manager,International Trade Centre, Farhana Rahman, Sr Vice President, BASIS and a number of women entrepreneurs from Dhaka and other regional districts participated and spoke at the meeting.

Sincerely

**Ferdaus Ara Begum**∣ CEO ∣ BUILD ∣ Mob: 01714102994∣ Email: ceo@buildbd.org∣www.buildbd.org