**Press Release**

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

**Virtual Workshop on**

**Export Trade Procedures for Women-owned Entrepreneurs**

Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD) and International Finance Corporation (IFC), World Bank Group under BICF II funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) organized a virtual workshop on Step by Step Export Trade Procedures and On-line applications of getting better services for Dinajpur Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DWCCI). The key objective of the virtual workshop was to aware the women entrepreneurs on how to enter into the export trade. High officials from Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), Custom House, Dhaka East, and private sector officials of the trade-related agencies participated in the workshop which was organized on August 22, 2021.

Ms. Ferdaus Ara Begum, CEO, Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD) welcomed all the participants. She thanked DWCCI the for their eagerness to respond first to have programs to raise awareness of their members on the trade procedures . She said that the economy of the country amounting 350 billion USD is highly dependent of export. It is necessary to increase export revenue to create more employment. Bangladesh is maintaining its export target comparing to other countries amid COVID-19 pandemic. Trade related procedures are embracing online platform day by day in the country. It is very necessary for the women entrepreneurs to be aware about the trade related procedures where increasingly IT solution are introduced to make it instant and simple. Dinajpur has high concentration on agricultural exportable products, poultry, handicrafts, fashion wear etc. and WoB are coming up in several new ventures which is a good sign.

Kanis Fatama, Senior Research Associate and Shahriar Rawshon, Research Associate, BUILD jointly presented the keynote titled Women-Owned Entrepreneurs (WOE) on Export Trade. In reference to data of IFC (2016) the women-owned businesses(WOB) constitute 6 lack out of the 8 million businesses in Bangladesh. It is hoped that the full functioning of the Economic Zone at Dinajpur will make a vibrant contribution to the local economy. The presentation covered detailed step by step export procedures, time and costs engaged in getting several permission, certificate, approvals etc. in areas of trade license, membership from the local chamber, online licensing module, export registration certificate, export permit, bank account opening, TIN certificate, VAT registration, customs procedure as well as incentives announced by the government to encourage export.

Exporters are awarded with Cash Incentives, Bonded Warehouse Facility and Duty Exemption & Duty Drawback upon their export earnings to ensure their export competitiveness in the export market. In the end detailed case studies on (1) export of fresh vegetables from Bangladesh to the Middle East and (2) export of jute goods from Bangladesh to EU were presented to provide the real and practical scenario of the export procedure from Bangladesh.

In the open session, moderated by CEO, BUILD a number WOB participated, Ms. Shadia Khanom, Member, DWCCI said that she is doing online business in handicrafts sector. She hoped that she may expand her business depending on customers demand, she has her own face book ID and posts her goods in her page to attract customers.

Ms. Suraya Begum, Member, DWCCI, said that she is very happy to be able to join today's program. She said that mainly she is involved in online business, delivers goods to different parts of the country besides Dinajpur. She sought cooperation of all so that he could expand his business and export outside the country.

Ms. Nahida Akter Bubli, Member, DWCCI said that she runs a boutique business. She has an online page also. She is currently selling to acquaintances in the area, she wants to expand her business if she gets help. She also informed that she did not receive the stimulus package for women announced by the government.

Ms. Salma Nasreen, Additional Secretary(former), Ministry of Finance and director Dhaka Stock Exchange and CDBL thanking BUILD, said that the informative presentation would really help the women entrepreneurs in terms of capacity building. She added that more IFC support system needs to be implemented for the women entrepreneurs in the remote area. Most of the women entrepreneurs in the country are in the rural area. It would increase the exposure of the women entrepreneurs in the business arena. She also said that special tax waiver is highly needed for the women entrepreneurs, would act as a stimulus for WOB. It is necessary to see the number of women entrepreneurs and exporters getting benefit from the government announced COVID stimulus package so far.

Ms. Nusrat Nahid Babi, Private Sector Specialist and Task Team Leader Trade Competitiveness for Export Diversification Project Bangladesh Investment Climate Fund II, IFC she informed that IFC-WBG worked for trade facilitation for quite a long time to facilitate the Trade sector and to make the business process easy. In 2018 IFC-WBG conducted a baseline study to identify the difficulties between men or women in trade in collaboration with BUILD. From the study, it has been found that sometimes men need more time than women and sometimes just the opposite. Most of the women importers and exporters are mainly dependent on C&F agents for customs clearance. She also mentioned that based on the type of business the processes are different but some certification and registration processes of the trade like ERC, VAT, TIN etc. are now online. So that anyone can access those services from anywhere from Bangladesh. There is a huge potential for import and export from Birol port. So she suggested that WoB can explore their business and can engage in trade if they are interested in trade.

Dr Nahida Faridi, ADC, Customs Excise and VAT (Dhaka East) and Sub-Project Director, NBR National Single Window Project thanked BUILD and IFC for organizing such dedicated session for WoB and assured that NBR is a WOB friendly organisation and very much dedicated to assist. She requested WEs to visit concern offices to avail better services. Government is very much willing to reduce the procedural complexities of VAT, TAX, Customs issues by making these online. She referred some special tax exemption for WoB such as; up to Tk 70 lac turnover, for men the amount is Tk 50 lac, she suggested to use these benefits.

Mr. Khaled Mamun Chowdhury, Director General-2, Export Promotion Bureau said that it is very necessary to empower the women entrepreneurs and encourage more sectoral participation in businesses. He said that EPB always works as a business friendly organization and is very eager to assist the women entrepreneurs. If all the formalities are done properly and accurately, all the trade related certification can be obtained easily. He encouraged the women entrepreneurs to apply for the stimulus package. It is important to focus on export diversification. He informed about special support for WOB to participate in the trade fair and support them in attending fairs at abroad also. He suggested for establishing a **Help Desk** in BUILD to support WoB and suggested to organize similar program in all district.

Ms. Suraya Begum, Member, DWCCI, informed she delivers her goods to different parts of the country besides Dinajpur. She said many of them did not get incentives, suggested for financial support, women become frustrated, creating various obstacles that delay the expansion of the business. She said the grassroots should be given more and easier opportunities. She also mentioned that there needed to set up some examples so that they believe that they are in a systematic way to get the incentives. A large number of Women Entrepreneur members of DWCCI participated and raise their issues. In total about 46 entrepreneurs and officials participated in the program.

Sincerely

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