



WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP
FOR ENTERPRISE

10th Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting
Partners' Forum (10WPF)

Date: 15 to 17 June, 2013
Dhaka, Bangladesh



Meher Afroze Chumki, MP
State Minister
Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
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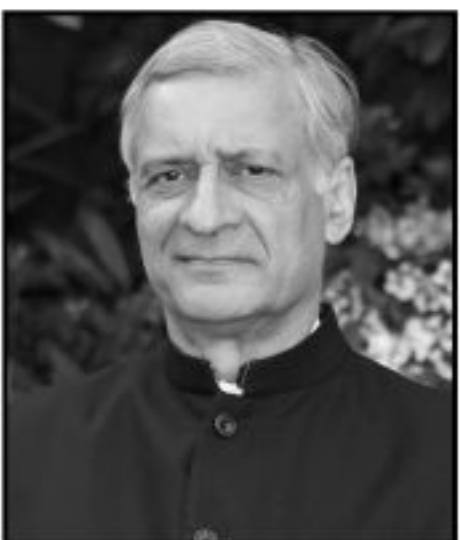
15 June 2013

I am indeed delighted that Bangladesh is hosting this year's Women's affairs Ministerial Meeting of the Commonwealth. It is all the more encouraging that an institution like BRAC, jointly with the Commonwealth Foundation, is hosting the 10WPF that is charged with flagging the issues concern as regards women's enterprise. Access to finance has proven to be one of the factors that further women's emancipation not only in Bangladesh but also around the globe. Bangladesh's own experience, as well as that from other empirical studies, shows that facilitation of women's enterprise also reflects in the betterment of their families and their children.

I am confident that this three-day workshop will be a fruitful one. We hope that the participants will be able to enrich each other with their varied experience and exposure in different fields ranging from academia to activism from Bangladesh and abroad. On another front, Bangladesh is one of the few countries noted for improving upon maternal mortality rates which only reflects heightened awareness and empowerment that the government actively engenders.

We have high hopes that this forum will be a successful one and point towards the right direction, and in the process highlight pertinent issues that the ministers can take back to their governments.

Meher Afroze Chumki, MP



Kamalesh Sharma
Secretary General
Commonwealth of Nations

15 June 2013

The Commonwealth commitment to mainstreaming equality for women and girls means that in planning and in practical programmes of action our work on gender equality is not compartmentalised. Political leadership cannot be seen in isolation from progress towards equal participation by women in economic, professional and social life. Progress made and the actions we take in all these spheres are inextricably bound together.

Empowering women is crucial in making progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, and will continue to be vital as we move forward. Through our submissions to the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, collective Commonwealth wisdom is already contributing to the emerging global development framework. Our Commonwealth programmes and our partnerships aim to support women in practical ways that enhance prospects for social, economic, and political transformation. No collective goal can be greater for our global community.

Kamalesh Sharma

10th Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting Partners' Forum (10WPF)

Every three years Commonwealth Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for women's affairs meet to discuss progress and challenges relating to gender equality in the Commonwealth. From 17 - 19 June the 10th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting (10WAMM) will be hosted for the first time by the Government of Bangladesh under the theme 'Women's Leadership for Enterprise.'

Ahead of 10WAMM BRAC and the Commonwealth Foundation have joined forces to host a three-day side event in its wings. The 10WAMM Partners' Forum (or 10WPF) will run from 15 - 17 June and provides an opportunity for civil society, business professionals, academics, donor agencies and other women's affairs activists to come together under one roof to share and learn from each other, discuss critical issues and barriers to delivering women's empowerment and gender equality and to engage with Ministers and Senior Officials in order to contribute to Commonwealth and global agenda-setting processes.

We are pleased to welcome as our keynote speaker Ms. Salma Khan, whose high profile career highlights include Division Chief of the Planning Commission of Bangladesh, Director General at the Bangladesh Institute of Management and Chair of the United Nations Commission to end the discrimination against women (CEDAW). Ms Khan will take this opportunity to underscore how vital women's leadership is to promoting sustainable development at local, national and international levels and to draw attention to the achievements made - both globally and within Bangladesh - towards women's economic empowerment while shining a light on the critical barriers that remain.

The 10WPF will focus on three main themes: firstly, building an enabling environment to support women's enterprise; secondly, international frameworks and women's leadership in enterprise and lastly, supporting and scaling up women in enterprise. The themes and sessions were designed through an inclusive international process spearheaded by BRAC and the Commonwealth Foundation with two key stakeholder meetings taking place in March, one in the wings of the Commission on the Status of Women conference in New York and the second in Dhaka.

Other speakers and guests include: Sir Anand Satyanand, former Governor General of New Zealand and current Chair of the Commonwealth Foundation; Ms. Selima Ahmad, Founder President of Bangladesh Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI); Ms. Freda Miriklis, President, International Federation of Business and Professional Women; Dr. Anis Chowdhury, Director of Macroeconomic Policy and Development Division at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific (UN ESCAP); Ms. Rokeya Kabir, Founder and Executive Director of Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS) and Ms. Rokia Afzal Rahman, a pioneer woman entrepreneur of Bangladesh.

The Forum's conclusions will be presented to Senior Officials attending 10WAMM and at a Press Conference on 17 June. BRAC and the Commonwealth Foundation are proud to organize an event that embodies the need for governments and non-government organizations to work hand in hand towards gender equality. Such dialogue also highlights the strength of the modern Commonwealth as an association that can bring diverse voices together in pursuit of commonly held goals.

The Commonwealth Foundation is one of the three inter-governmental organizations of the Commonwealth and is dedicated to developing the capacity of civil society to act together and learn from each other to engage with the institutions that shape people's lives. We strive for more effective, responsive and accountable governance with civil society participation, which contributes to improved development outcomes.

BRAC started in 1972 and rapidly became a development success story, spreading solutions born in Bangladesh to 10 other countries around the world and leading the globe in creating opportunities for the world's poor. BRAC stands as the largest NGO in the world and touches the lives of an estimated 126 million people. In January 2013 it was named the best NGO in the world by The Global Magazine.



Tariq-Ul-Islam
Secretary
Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Secretariat
Dhaka



15 June 2013

It fills me with much delight to know that Bangladesh will be hosting the 10WPF in the lead up to the WAMM where 10 Commonwealth ministers in charges Women's Affairs will be meeting to further women's enterprise. Access to finance has proven to be a one of the factors that further women's emancipation not only in Bangladesh but also around the globe. Bangladesh's own experience, as well as that from other empirical studies, shows that facilitation of women's enterprise also reflects in the betterment of their families and their children.

The current government, with much of its leadership coming from women, both in the parliament and outside it, with key positions of the parliament and the cabinet as well as the leader of the opposition filled by women, has been steadfastly behind women's empowerment and facilitation of women's enterprise that has proven to be rewarding for the entire country. On another front Bangladesh is one of the few countries noted for improving upon maternal mortality which is only a reflection of heightened awareness and empowerment that the government actively engenders and encourages.

I have high hopes that the 10WPF, being jointly organized by the Commonwealth Foundation and BRAC, will be an exemplary success and come out with recommendations that the ministers can take back home.

Tariq-Ul-Islam



Muhammad A (Rume) Ali
Managing Director
Social Enterprises & Investments
BRAC



15 June 2013

BRAC is greatly honoured to be able to host the 10WPF in the run up to the Women's Affairs Ministerial Conference of 10th Commonwealth ministers. The main theme, women's enterprise, could not have been more pertinent and better timed. BRAC has always been a strong advocate of gender parity and women's empowerment. Many of our programmes explicitly promote women's entrepreneurship and work to create an enabling environment for women. Our 41 years of experience and much research have shown that financial emancipation of women works as a catalyst for overall empowerment. At BRAC, we have never shied away from situations whenever we have seen prospects for job creation and improving access and opportunities for the poor and disadvantaged. Our social enterprises and investments have created thousands of jobs and provided market linkages for hundreds of thousands of rural entrepreneurs.

I hope that the three day forum will initiate further dialogue and action for promoting women's entrepreneurship. The very distinguished group of guests from a varied field of expertise ranging from academia to activism, will enable us to carry this purpose beyond this forum. I believe that, through an effective exchange of our experiences and opinions, we can translate our thoughts into action. In partnership with the Commonwealth Foundation, BRAC looks forward to carrying this vision further ahead. Bangladesh is one of the few countries in the world where women hold the top key positions in politics. With the leader of the house, the opposition, and the Speaker - all being women, we already reflect a politically conducive environment for women's progress. It is time to further enhance this goal and contribute to the efforts undertaken by the government for better gender equity.

Muhammad A (Rume) Ali



Vijay Krishnarayan
Director
Commonwealth Foundation



15 June 2013

The Partners' Forum taking place in the wings of the 10th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (10WAMM) brings together civil society organizations and other non-state actors working on gender equality to discuss critical issues around the theme Women's Leadership for Enterprise. The Commonwealth Foundation is delighted that the Partners' Forum is being hosted in Bangladesh where gender equality is high on both the political and social agenda. Progress made in the field of gender equality has come largely through the efforts of civil society organisations such as BRAC - our partner in making the Partners' Forum happen. I look forward to delegates taking this opportunity to shape a stronger gender equality sector, one that is enriched by and able to draw on experiences of gender empowerment from networks and organisations in each of the Commonwealth's regions.

Vijay Krishnarayan