

The United Nations Global Compact

*Local Network Presentation
BANGLADESH*

By: Ms. Shahamin S. Zaman, CEO, The CSR Centre
21st -23rd October 2008, Bonn, Germany

About the Focal Point

- *Mission: The CSR Centre was established in September, 2007 with a mission to establish Corporate Social Responsibility as a key strategy for corporate excellence in Bangladesh to maximize stakeholders' benefit*
- *Vision: To become the principle source of information, resources and advisory services on CSR in Bangladesh*

The Local Network

- Number of member companies: 34
- Initiated in March, 2002 through the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute

Bangladeshi Companies part of the UNGC

- ACI
- Agrani Bank
- Apex Adelchi Footwear
- Arab Bangladesh Bank
- BCAS
- Bangladesh Employers Federation
- Bangladesh Enterprise Institute
- Women's Chamber of Commerce
- BASIC Bank
- BDCOM Limited
- Bengal Fine Ceramics
- Bording Vista Limited
- BRAC University
- CARE Bangladesh
- Centre for Policy Dialogue
- Dhaka Bank Limited
- Dutch Bangla Bank Limited
- Finlay International Limited
- GMG Airlines
- Green Delta Insurance
- IBCS-Primax Software
- Incepta Pharmaceuticals
- IDLC
- IUBAT
- Kay and Que Bangladesh
- Mercantile Bank Limited
- Rahimafrooz Batteries
- Scholastica Private Limited
- Singer Bangladesh
- Social Investment Bank
- Ibne Sina Pharmaceuticals
- Changemaker
- Square Pharmaceuticals
- Glossy Corporation Limited

The CSR Centre and the Global Compact

- The Global Compact has been championed in Bangladesh by the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute since 2002
- The signing of an MoU in September, 2008 saw the CSR Centre come on board
- The Centre, in conjunction with BEI, organized the very first meeting aimed at establishing a formalized local network for UNGC members in Bangladesh on the 27th of September, 2008

Outcomes from the Meeting

- January 2009 was set as a tentative date for the launch of a formal Bangladeshi network
- A need was recognized to significantly increase the number of UNGC participants in Bangladesh
- A lack of awareness of the nuances behind the 10 principles needs to be addressed, even amongst participants
- Training on appropriate methods for the COPs to be compiled was called for (Such as the GRI)
- A need for involving more government institutions in general and State-Owned-Enterprises in particular was also expressed

The Centre's Vision for the UNGC in Bangladesh

- The CSR Centre, alongside BEI, will work diligently over the coming months to promote the UNGC in Bangladesh
- It aims to do this first of all by engaging multiple stakeholders in regular dialogue and discussion aimed at raising awareness of the issues underlying the Compact
- At the heart of all these efforts will always lie the organization, management and expansion of a cohesive, effective local network

The CSR Centre/BEI nexus as a Platform for Learning

- The BEI/CSR Centre partnership can draw on certain synergies to act as an effective focal point for the envisaged formal network
- BEI especially, and the CSR Centre have a strong foothold in the corporate as well as non-corporate sector in Bangladesh in terms of prestige and influence
- Being primarily a research organization, BEI has the requisite resources to unearth best practices under each principle of the Compact
- While BEI can provide expertise, and even external auditing services to UNGC members, the Centre can facilitate such knowledge-sharing sessions which will lend Bangladeshi organizations the requisite exposure to good corporate citizenship
- There is a need for such sessions especially in light of the fact that the 10 Principles governing the Compact lend themselves to very broad interpretations, often to its detriment

How the Centre can Promote and Facilitate projects

- The CSR Centre, backed by some of the most respected organizations in Bangladesh on its Board of Trustees, has access to the networking necessary to mobilize large-scale, concerted movements in the Bangladeshi corporate sector
- BEI can play an important role in this by providing the expertise in devising such projects that uphold the principles of the Compact
- Although the Centre is not associated as much with the informal economy in Bangladesh, it recognizes that most violations of the UNGC principles take place in that sector
- With this in mind, the CSR Centre and BEI will both look to engage more with the informal economy through greater involvement in the big corporate houses' supply chains, and those providing ancillary services from outside the formal economy

The Need for Awards and Recognition Schemes

- The Centre believes recognition of good corporate citizenship is very important in order for sustained good corporate behaviour
- Thus, the Centre envisions its own annual rewards scheme for organizations that demonstrate socially responsible practices
- Apart from acting as an incentive, such a scheme will allow Bangladeshi companies to compare and share their experiences within a local context
- This will also help to develop public awareness of the issues underlying the Compact, and ultimately, act to bring about national level changes by lending it lasting exposure
- BEI, with its technical expertise, can help in developing appropriate criteria for the rewards scheme

Conclusion

The CSR Centre recognizes that there is scope to respond to the concerns outlined in the UN Global Compact at a national level in Bangladesh. Yet to initiate this process in a dynamic manner, institutions and bodies such as BEI and CSR Centre together with other national level stakeholders need to drive the UNGC objectives forward through a proactive process.