

A Public Private Partnership (PPP) through inclusive marketing that supports women empowerment and conservation of Bangladesh

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Natural disasters, climate change, poverty, subsistence are all in one basket for many rural areas of Bangladesh. Rural women have the most vulnerable and disadvantaged situation. Families living in the coastal areas are chasing their survival every day to bring subsistence to their family. With an average of 4 to 6 children, and in an area where there is work for men only half the year, it is women who must ensure the survival of the family. On the other hand men are involved with fishing and day labor. It is being observed that almost half of the year male partners are spending their time in the river with a very challenging time. Geographically (see the map) river areas are remote and disaster-prone and with weak infrastructure. The river area of the country has very low attraction for the private sector to include these people as part of their business. Most people depend upon a number of environmental services and in return are active in the protection of the environment. It is important that people in these locations have greater opportunities for income generation to increase their resilience to climate change, as well as provide them the means to participate in the conservation of the forests and wetlands which provide important sources of both income and food.



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Winrock International, under their United States Agency for International Development (USAID)- funded Climate Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) project, works with PPP approaches to more equitably engage natural resource dependent people in market opportunities. The most important challenge is to engage the poorest people,



particularly women, in markets with the private sector since these women have very limited resources and knowledge to enable them to take advantage of market opportunities themselves. Women, due to the social constraints, have limited opportunities to work outside the home. People in these location are taking life risks every day for survival that CREL is working. Traditionally, producing handicrafts (mostly Nakshi Katha) with the local community and demand in domestic markets is low, and there is little opportunity to sell overseas. Producing handicrafts became a burden for the poor as they failed to successfully sell their products. Procuring high quality materials (needed if export oriented) is another important challenge, as the beneficiaries do not have the capital and access to procure materials. Winrock explores opportunities to work with a buyer who can ensure market access and high quality raw materials for handicraft products.

This is an inclusive marketing approach that brings the most effective producer to private companies and makes a difference for both business and society. Women and their families are the workforce that helps companies globally positioned their product and unique feature as tools of marketing. See the links:

<http://www.pebblechild.com/kahiniwalla-visit-coxs-bazar/>

and <http://www.pebblechild.com/bernadette-visited-coxs-bazar/>

From January to June 2014, Winrock negotiated a common purpose of partnership with Hathay Bunano-Pebblechild brand (HB-PC). In September 2014 CREL successfully

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facilitated the partnership for 1000 women with HB-PC brand. HB is a social enterprise that produces high quality export oriented soft toys for children and are exporting 6600 outlets in 33 countries. <http://www.pebblechild.com/organic-growth-in-rural-centres/>.



Image: Austin from Kahiniwalla with the artisans in Cox's Bazar

quality toys for the private company.

Women get a fair price for their products based on production. HB-PC provides all necessary inputs (yarn, kushi kata, stuffing etc.) needed for producing the toys. The toys are collected and sent to Dhaka by Hathay Bunano for final processing, finishing and packing before exporting to their international markets. In this way, rural women gain critical business skills and become a part of the supply chain resulting in increased income of at least 2,000 taka/month.

CREL and HB-PC have a common purpose providing two months of training for women to gain skills to make toys using Kushi-kata. Women come to the training center in their village every day for two hours of training for two months following a tried and tested syllabus developed by Hathay Bunano. Immediately after the completion of the training, the women are able to produce high



In the last six months (January to June 2015) women earned 700,000 taka that will increase by efficiency over the time. Prior to this, the average income of 1,000 women was around 1,000,000 taka per year collecting wood from the forests. But out of this income there are ransoms, fees for entering the forest, pirate's fees and high life risks



associated with the work. It has been observed that actual income after these expenses, remains 30% to 40% only, and as such, many women resort to the high interest loans from micro finance institutions (MFIs) to sustain. On the other hand, with the Hathay Bunano private sector partnership, these communities are able to build their own supervisor and expand the production group and work year-round along with performing their family work. At the time of writing this paper, there were 1,200 women being trained. This PPP is a risk-free settled income source with dignity which enables women to change their lives, support their families and reduce the pressure on their partner to get into the high risk activity of depleting natural resources. With this initiative, people are motivated and willing to replace the natural extraction activity with home-based economic activity that actually directly supports conservation and changing the life of the future generations.

This sustainable partnership between the private sector and communities facilitated by an NGO like Winrock International, within a program that aims to improve ecosystem and environment protection, provides a clear example for many private sector actors on how women can be empowered both economically and socially, resulting in improved food security and support of conservation efforts. Women have become change agents that demonstrate an example of how they change their life, their family and their life partner. To the diversified wide-spread community they demonstrate that "They Can Change, They Can Do" but Winrock and its partners are obligated to provide the scope to spotlight the success of the women. See <http://www.pebblechild.com/starting-production-work-coxs-bazar/>.

Pebblechild (an organization that facilitates handmade, fairtrade toys and gifts for babies and children, made by craftswomen in Bangladesh) learned many social issues and curves of business to work with subsistence groups in the most climate-vulnerable location. See Pebblechild at: <http://www.pebblechild.com/>.

"This is partnership, this is business and this is inspiration"

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