

Staff

Nusrat Jahan
Research Coordinator

Mohammad Ashraful Haque
Country Director, Bangladesh

Timeline

2:45pm - 8pm

Date

December 28, 2017



Evidence Dialogue on SME Development in Bangladesh

Co-hosted by the Access to Information (a2i) Program of the Prime Minister's Office and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), a U.S.-based research and policy organization



The SME sector has the potential to be a driving force of economic growth and employment creation in Bangladesh; however, a host of market and firm-level challenges are holding back this sector from achieving its full potential. For decades, the Government of Bangladesh and other sector advocates have worked on various initiatives to help small businesses grow, yet large-scale and transformational growth has been an elusive target.

IPA believes that effective SME development research could make a lasting and significant contribution to economic development and poverty alleviation. In response, IPA's SME Program brings together policymakers and researchers to evaluate innovative solutions to the most binding constraints to SME growth and entrepreneurship. IPA has conducted over 80 studies across the world on many aspects related to SME development, firm productivity and entrepreneurship. In Bangladesh, these projects include rigorous evaluations of consulting services, training programs, and interventions aimed at improving entrepreneurs' well-being.

On the other hand, developing "Skills for Employment"—a strategy to achieve the Vision 2021 and transform Bangladesh into a middle-income country—is a crucial responsibility of a2i. Within Skills for Employment, a2i has started several skills development, apprenticeship and training programs targeting different segments of the population. Building an inclusive financial ecosystem is another area of focus for a2i, an important pre-condition for equitable economic development.

This Dialogue is the first in a series of collaborations between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to generate and use evidence for promoting SME growth in Bangladesh. At this Dialogue:

- IPA and affiliated researchers will share key findings from global and local studies in **Human Capital** and **Skills** and **Access to Finance**, two key challenge areas for the SME sector in Bangladesh.
- Policymakers, practitioners and experts will share their views and experience on these issues and related challenges facing SMEs in Bangladesh.
- Panelists and participants will debate the path forward towards more and better evidence on SME programs for development and growth in Bangladesh.

We hope these engagements will jumpstart new collaborations in this space, to co-create rigorous evidence on SME development and to empower leaders locally to generate and incorporate this knowledge into their decision-making. IPA's aim is to create a culture of evidence-based decision-making in Bangladesh and globally.

Evidence Dialogue on SME Development in Bangladesh

Co-hosted by the Access to Information (a2i) Program of the Prime Minister's Office and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)

Synopsis

The SME sector has the potential to be a driving force of economic growth and employment creation in Bangladesh; however, a host of market and firm-level challenges are holding back this sector from achieving its full potential. For decades, the Government of Bangladesh and other sector advocates have worked on various initiatives to help small businesses grow; yet large-scale and transformational growth has been an elusive target.

IPA believes that effective SME development research could make a lasting and significant contribution to economic development and poverty alleviation. In response, IPA's SME Program brings together policymakers and researchers to evaluate innovative solutions to the most binding constraints to SME growth and entrepreneurship. IPA has conducted over 80 studies across the world on many aspects related to SME development, firm productivity, and entrepreneurship. In Bangladesh, these projects include rigorous evaluations of consulting services, training programs, and interventions aimed at improving entrepreneurs' well-being.

On the other hand, developing 'Skills for Employment'—a strategy to achieve the Vision 2021 and transform Bangladesh into a middle-income country—is a crucial responsibility of a2i. Within Skills for Employment, a2i has started several skills development, apprenticeship, and training programs targeting different segments of the population. Building an inclusive financial ecosystem is another area of focus for a2i, an important pre-condition for equitable economic development.

We hope these engagements will jumpstart new collaborations in this space, to co-create rigorous evidence on SME development and to empower leaders locally to generate and incorporate this knowledge into their decision-making. IPA's aim is to create a culture of evidence-based decision-making in Bangladesh and globally. At this Dialogue:

- IPA and affiliated researchers shared key learnings from global and local studies in Human Capital and Skills and Access to Finance, two key challenge areas for the SME sector in Bangladesh.
- Policymakers, practitioners, and experts exchanged their views and experience on these issues and related challenges facing SMEs in Bangladesh.
- Panelists and participants debated the path forward towards more and better evidence on SME programs for development and growth in Bangladesh.

Presentations

Overview of the SME Sector and Existing Evidence

- Overview of existing evidence in SME development and entrepreneurship | *Mr. Imran Matin, Chief Research and Policy Officer, IPA*
- Speech on SME sector in Bangladesh: opportunities and challenges | *Mr. Md. Shafiqul Islam, Managing Director, SME Foundation*

Human Capital and Skills

- Presentation of research findings on human capital and skills development in the RMG sector in Bangladesh | *Dr. Atonu Rabbani, Associate Professor, University of Dhaka*
- Discussion on experience with human capital and skills development | *Mr. Shotadal Islam, Manager, HR & Ethical Trades, Echotex Limited*
- Presentation of research findings on stress management program for female SME owners in Bangladesh | *Ms. Paula Lopez-Pena, PhD candidate, Warwick University*
- Discussion on the importance of women entrepreneurs' psychological well-being | *Ms. Selima Ahmed, President, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI)*

Access to Finance

- Presentation of global research findings on access to finance for SMEs | *Ms. Nusrat Jahan, Research Coordinator, IPA*
- Discussion on the challenges and opportunities in access to finance for the SMEs in Bangladesh | *Mr. Syed Abdul Momen, Head of SME Banking, BRAC Bank*

Address

The Westin Dhaka Hotel, Main Gulshan Avenue, Plot-01, Road 45, Gulshan-2, Dhaka 1212

City

Dhaka

Country

Bangladesh