



SEED Initiative

promoting entrepreneurship for sustainable development

Founding Partners



GENDER EQUALITY WINNER 2014

JITA generates income opportunities for poor women through an innovative and commercially viable rural distribution network, while providing product access for communities. Initially run as a financially sustainable CARE Bangladesh project, JITA now is a reincorporated social enterprise empowering around 8,000 women.



JITA Social Business Bangladesh Ltd., Bangladesh

BUSINESS MODEL

JITA's business model has been developed to create income opportunities for rural women from low socio-economic backgrounds. The women, called Aparajitas – meaning “women who never accept defeat” –, are recruited to work in door-to-door sales. Their product basket ranges food and sanitary items and household devices, often unavailable in rural communities.

Aparajitas, the foundation of JITA's supply-chain, earn income through sales commissions. They obtain the products from JITA hubs, the local distribution businesses developed by JITA, which source from different partner companies.

ENTERPRISE FAST FACTS

Location	Dhaka
Year founded	2011
Sector	Micro-enterprise development
Product/Service	A distribution network for women empowerment

Social impacts:

- Creating employment for Aparajitas, whose families also benefit through the increased access to food, medical treatment, and education that can result from an income.
- Increasing community-level access to a wider range of products like solar lamps and health foods.

Environmental impacts:


- Running an awareness campaign to highlight the benefits of environmentally friendly technologies like solar lighting and clean cook stoves.
- Helping 30,000 households to move from kerosene to solar lamps, thereby reducing carbon emissions.

Economic impacts:

- Aparajitas, who previous to working for JITA had no income, earn approximately USD 30 per month.
- Providing sustainable incomes for up to 75 staff at JITA's partner hubs.
- Providing access to a wide, affordable range of products for rural communities.

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” Unlike corporate-managed bottom of the pyramid schemes, JITA plays a key role in the identification of potential women, training them in sales, accounting, and business negotiations.

Scaling up activities:

- Increase by 20 % the number of Aparajitas hired and trained, thus reaching the target of 12,000 women empowered through an income-earning opportunity.
- Reach seven million customers across Bangladesh.
- Continue market expansion to include several new districts, encompassing all but three of the country's 64 districts.
- Work with distribution partners to introduce new, environmentally friendly products like clean cook stoves.



” In a kind of ripple effect, improvements for Aparajitas start with increased financial security, then move to emphasising savings and investments in children's education, health, nutrition, and hygiene.



Photo Credit @ Hafiz

Partnership

● **JITA Social Business Bangladesh Ltd.** was incorporated as a for-profit social enterprise in 2011. Prior to this the company was developed as a project called the Rural Sales Programme, run by the non-profit organisation CARE Bangladesh from 2005–2011.

● **Unilever Bangladesh** is one of the distribution channel partners of JITA. Unilever contributes through a win-win scenario where JITA reaches consumers through its wide networks, while Unilever gets an extended rural market for its products. Commission and Service fees collected from Unilever is a major revenue source for JITA.

● **Oxford University** works in a three-year partnership with JITA to conduct ongoing consumer impact assessments. The partnership is allowing JITA to create an innovative impact framework as well as an improved product and access strategy.



The 2014 SEED Gender Equality Awards are supported by UN Women, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; and UNIDO, which promotes and accelerates inclusive and sustainable industrial development. Additional support is from the international law firm, Hogan Lovells.

About the SEED Initiative

The SEED Initiative identifies and supports promising small scale social and environmental entrepreneurs around the globe, entrepreneurs who while working towards a greener economy also tackle poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion. SEED provides these entrepreneurs with know-how and networks, taking the lessons learnt at local level up to decision-makers to promote evidence-based policy making. For more information please write to info@seedinit.org or visit:

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