



WOMEN'S MINI- INDUSTRIAL PARKS AFGHANISTAN

CONCEPT PAPER

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AWCCI PRESIDENT STATEMENT

At present, Afghanistan faces a critical juncture in its economic development; it can continue as the regional under-performer in manufacturing with huge volumes of imports of processed goods, or the private sector can push through the current difficulties improve Afghanistan's industrial capacity.

The Afghan Government and its international supporters have recognized the importance of industrial parks in achieving these ends, with such parks built in every major city of Afghanistan. While these parks have paved the way for Afghanistan's future industrialization, they are ill-suited to the needs Afghan businesswomen.

Following an assessment of the needs of its members, the AWCCI has developed a concept for 'mini' industrial parks to host small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) owned by Afghan women. These parks would be designed from top to bottom with the requirements of small and medium-sized Afghan women-owned businesses in mind. This includes taking every step possible to help these SMEs become operational as fast as possible, while providing key support services that keep operational costs low through the incorporation of 'green' technologies throughout the park.

The AWCCI also realizes that the launch of industrial business ventures requires one key element in especially short supply for Afghan woman: startup capital. As such, the AWCCI will be working closely with the Afghan Government to arrange the sale of park land to Afghan women at highly subsidized prices, thereby giving Afghan woman the collateral they need to qualify for commercial and credit-backed loans.

Afghan woman have the potential to make enormous contributions to the Afghan economy, both in terms of supplying high-quality products to domestic consumers that substitute for imports, while also producing and exporting unique Afghan products abroad. With current conditions as they are, with the limited resources that Afghan businesswomen have at their disposal, they will never reach their potential. We hope that these industrial parks will be the key to help Afghan women move from cottage industries like handicrafts production to the owners of industrial operations.



MANIZHA WAFEQ
PRESIDENT, AWCCI

INTRODUCTION

PARTICIPANTS OF THE AWCCI FACT-FINDING MISSION TOUR A BUSINESS PRODUCING ITEMS FROM JUTE (AN ORGANIC FABRIC), AT THE ALEAP WOMEN'S INDUSTRIAL PARK IN HYDERABAD, INDIA



This Concept Paper will provide a basic overview of the considerations involved in establishing women's industrial parks in Afghanistan. The purpose of this paper is not to answer all questions related to how the park would be constructed and the costs involved; such a technical document would have to be produced by qualified engineers.

Instead, this paper will look at the following areas:

- Primary planning considerations
- Contractual relationship between Afghan Government, AWCCI, and resident businesses
- Green Systems
- Key benefits for resident businesses

As of the date of the drafting of this Concept Paper (13 September 2018), information had been gathered via desk research, a very limited survey of AWCCI members (45 participants), along with a fact-finding mission to the ALEAP Industrial Estate in Hyderabad, India, from 8-10 August 2018. The estate is run by the Association

of Lady Entrepreneurs of India, a prominent business association founded in Andhra Pradesh that now operates throughout India. The Association still retains its original acronym, ALEAP (for the Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of Andhra Pradesh), and will be referred to as ALEAP for the duration of this concept paper.

The trip was funded through the generous support of UNWOMEN, with the delegation including officials from the Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI), Afghan businesswomen, a representative from the Office of the First Lady of Afghanistan, and a research consultant.

Following additional research and consultations with potential partners and stakeholders, this document will be further refined and presented in a polished layout, for review by any and all interested parties.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Afghanistan's economic development is critical for the nation to achieve peace and prosperity for its people. The Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries (AWCCI) was established with the belief that all Afghans – both men and women – must contribute to this economic development and provide employment opportunities to the nation's youth.

To this end, AWCCI has conducted advanced pre-planning for the establishment of women's industrial parks in Afghanistan's major cities. Compared to existing industrial parks in Afghanistan, these parks will be smaller (focusing on accommodating just 20-30 businesses in each), and closer to the centers of each city. The women's parks will also be more focused on hosting small and medium-sized enterprises that produce minimal industrial waste and noise pollution.

The expected outcomes of each women's industrial park are listed below:

- Bring more small and medium-sized businesses into the formal economy, thereby increasing Afghan Government tax revenue
- Support businesses that produce, on average, 10 employment opportunities each (and therefore 200-300 jobs per park)
- Increase the number of Afghan women who are legal landowners
- Increase the number of Afghan businesses contributing to import substitution (i.e. reducing Afghanistan's negative trade balance)

PRIMARY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS



Problems and Solutions

While this concept document drew considerable inspiration from the industrial estates run by the Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of India, developing similar parks in Afghanistan will not be as simple as ‘copy and paste’.

The below-listed items represent the primary differences between the Indian and Afghan markets that have impacted our planning decisions:

- **Land Ownership:** In India the system of land registration is more developed, allowing the Indian Government to sell land directly to ALEAP for their industrial parks, at highly subsidized rates, without causing land disputes.
- **Access to Capital:** The lending environment in India is much more liquid than Afghanistan, with commercial banks more likely to provide loans to new businesses even without collateral.
- **Market Size:** India’s population exceeds 1 billion persons, containing a number of mega cities housing almost as many people as Afghanistan’s entire population. The result is that there is a great deal of room for new entrants to market. Producers can also gain production savings through economies of scale, and thereby sell products in bulk quantities, at very competitive prices.
- **Security:** The issue of “security” is often cited by

WOMEN WORKING AT A BUSINESS INCUBATION AND TRAINING CENTER, AT THE ALEAP INDUSTRIAL PARK

Afghan businessmen and women as a reason to delay investments. In reality, the use of the word “security” by investors is often a catch-all term that includes concerns about low consumer spending and the general sluggishness of the economy. Indian investors, on the other hand, enjoy a climate of physical security, along with a hot economy where consumer confidence is high.

- **Transportation:** Major cities in India have readily accessible, low-cost public transportation, in the form of train and bus lines. In Afghanistan, lower income workers in Afghan cities must rely on shared taxis and mini buses to get from place to place. This makes many industrial areas on the fringes of Afghan cities very difficult – if not impossible – to access for low-income workers (and especially female workers).
- **Power:** Major Indian cities have the benefit of continuous electricity supply for both residential and industrial use. In Afghanistan, rolling blackouts are routinely used in cities when power supply is insufficient to meet all demand.

For each of these issues, this concept document will propose solutions to help alleviate the challenges that female Afghan investors face. These solutions are listed below, in highly abbreviated form. More details will be provided throughout this document.

Problem 1: Government sales of land in Afghanistan is highly controversial.

Solution: AWCCI will engage in a public-private partnership (PPP) with the Afghan Government to develop the women’s mini-industrial parks. In this relationship, AWCCI itself will not take ownership of plots of land, but rather will facilitate the sale of highly subsidized plots of land directly from the Government to women-owned businesses. A percentage of the total size of the park (5-10%) will be allocated to AWCCI to administer the park’s operations and implement other programs (e.g. business incubation programs).

Problem 2: Afghan businesswomen have limited access to capital for startup expenses.

Solution: The AWCCI industrial parks in Afghanistan will take every possible step to lower the cost of entry for Afghan women-owned businesses interested in establishing industrial-level operations. The primary means by which this will be accomplished is through the highly-subsidized sale of land, paid in three installments, that can then be used as collateral to apply for commercial loans. AWCCI will also work with lending institutions to advocate for the approval of credit-backed loans for resident businesses, with AWCCI assisting in the development of a viable business plan.

Problem 3: Afghan investment climate is poor, as a result of the small size of consumer market, low consumer confidence, threats of violence from armed insurgent groups and organized criminal networks, and political instability.

Solution: There is no way that AWCCI or any organization can erase the various negative factors involved in investing in Afghanistan. What this industrial park can accomplish, though, is making investment conditions more favorable by other means. This could include the provision of low-cost solar power, special income tax breaks and import tariff breaks for businesses making investments at the industrial park, and a wide range of amenities to make investment at the park attractive and hassle-free (e.g. marketing support, financing support, high-speed internet, staff daycare, and other amenities available to resident businesses).

Problem 4: Current industrial parks in Afghanistan are located on the fringes of cities, or completely outside city limits, thereby making transportation difficult for both owners and workers.

Solution: AWCCI will work with the Afghan Government to identify available land that would be suitable for small-scale ‘mini’ industrial parks, well within city limits and accessible using existing low-cost transportation networks. If/when the park reaches a certain threshold for resident businesses and their staff, the park can consider the development of a shuttle service with worker pick-up and drop-off at key transportation hubs.

Problem 5: Intermittent power from local grids creates costly stoppages in operations for industrial enterprises.

Solution: As a critical element of AWCCI’s park infrastructure, a small-scale solar power plant will be constructed to augment ‘city power’ received through the local power grid. The solar plant can also be made more effective with the use of industrial batteries to store solar power while Government-supplied power is available.

‘Traditional’ vs. ‘Comprehensive’ Industrial Parks: Pros and Cons

A ‘traditional’ (for lack of a better term) industrial park is one in which the park’s designers prepare all necessary park infrastructure (e.g. power supply, water management systems, internal roads, etc.), while the park’s resident businesses purchase plots of land and are responsible for the construction of their own production facilities. This is the most common means by which industrial parks are planned.

In contrast, a ‘comprehensive’ industrial park would be one in which the park’s designers retain ownership of the land, while also assuming responsibility for all construction operations on the site. This would include the construction of the actual business production facilities themselves, by designing highly customizable industrial spaces that could be used for a range of small-scale manufacturing operations.

For this concept document, we will look at the pros and cons of both the ‘traditional’ and ‘comprehensive’ park development process and draw a conclusion as to which type best fits the needs of AWCCI and its constituency.

‘Traditional’ Industrial Park: Businesses are responsible for construction of their own facilities on their plots

Pros:

- Less up-front costs of development for AWCCI
- Resident businesses can develop their own facilities to exactly fit their needs
- Resident businesses purchasing plots will be able to apply for loans using land as collateral

Cons:

- More up-front costs for resident businesses
- Longer period of time to fill plots with resident businesses (due to higher startup costs and time required for construction)
- Less control of 'green' features of building design (e.g. solar panels on rooftops, use of natural lighting, and natural air cooling/warming design features to reduce power consumption)
- If resident business fails, then additional time and capital must be allocated to dismantle and clear out the exiting business' facility (thereby creating a barrier to exit)
- Comprehensive Industrial Park: AWCCI retains ownership of plots and constructs standardized manufacturing facilities on each plot

Pros:

- AWCCI can invest in 'green' features of buildings to save power for residents in the long-term
- Overall cost-per-building will be lower, by achieving economies of scale in the construction process
- Park will be more accessible to businesses with lower amounts of startup capital, since buildings will already be constructed by AWCCI
- If business fails, easier to clear out space and rent to another business
- Cons:
- Much higher up-front costs of construction for AWCCI
- Limitations for resident businesses to customize the plots to fit their needs

Comprehensive Industrial Park: AWCCI retains ownership of plots and constructs standardized manufacturing facilities on each plot

Pros:

- AWCCI can invest in 'green' features of buildings to save power for residents in the long-term
- Overall cost-per-building will be lower, by achieving economies of scale in the construction process
- Park will be more accessible to businesses with lower amounts of startup capital, since buildings will already be constructed by AWCCI
- If business fails, easier to clear out space and rent to another business

Cons:

- Much higher up-front costs of construction for AWCCI
- Limitations for resident businesses to customize the plots to fit their needs



WORKERS ASSEMBLING SOLAR PANELS AT THE ALEAP INDUSTRIAL PARK. SEVERAL SOLAR PRODUCT MANUFACTURERS ARE BASED IN THE CAMP, CREATING A SMALL SOLAR SECTOR CLUSTER.

Best Fit for AWCCI

The 'best fit' for AWCCI's industrial parks may be to take a flexible approach, with AWCCI developing some plots of land itself, while allocating the majority of plots for sale to investors. As part of the public-private partnership with the Afghan Government, the Government would retain ownership of the rental plots, with AWCCI overseeing construction of standardized micro and small industrial facilities.

Through a flexible approach to the park's development, the AWCCI can satisfy the widest range of Afghan women-owned businesses in its constituency. Micro and small enterprises will be able to begin operations with very limited startup capital, while medium and large enterprises will be able to purchase plots and develop facilities that best fit their operational needs.

CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT, AWCCI, AND RESIDENT BUSINESSES

A critical component of the planning process for women's industrial parks in Afghanistan is the legal relationship between all parties. At the center of any industrial park endeavor is the land on which the park will be constructed. At the industrial parks operated by ALEAP in India, the ownership of the land is clear; the Indian government sells the land to ALEAP, at a highly subsidized rate, and ALEAP then sells plots to its female business owner members, passing along the savings.

AWCCI would not be able to take this exact route to establish its parks, as it simply does not have the available capital to make the initial purchase or land. Furthermore, it is not a part of AWCCI's mandate to acquire and sell land on behalf of women business owners. Such activities could be part of AWCCI's activities in the future, but at present a public-private partnership with the Afghan Government is the most practical means to begin establishing women's mini-industrial parks in Afghanistan.

Public-Private Partnership with the Afghan Government

Current laws related to industrial parks in Afghanistan detail three different ownership structures. They are as follows:

Privately-owned parks

- Government-owned parks
- Parks established as public-private partnerships (PPP)

In the case of AWCCI mini-industrial parks, the PPP structure is the most appropriate fit. In this model, the Afghan Government would retain full control over the sale of land, while allowing the AWCCI to develop the park's infrastructure, administrative facilities, a solar power plant, and some industrial workspaces for micro and small businesses. The agreement would also allow space to be allocated for the construction of common facilities for recreation, meetings, and small-scale events, as well as incubation facilities for promising startups.

Following an application process involving a committee of representatives from both the Afghan Government and the AWCCI, plots of land would be sold directly to women-owned businesses that passed certain criteria.

While women-owned businesses would have legal ownership of the land, this ownership would have considerable strings attached. Agreements would have to include language that prevented land speculation, by requiring businesses to build facilities on their plots



AN AWCCI OFFICIAL GATHERING INFORMATION FROM A SOLAR PANEL ASSEMBLY WORKER, AT THE ALEAP INDUSTRIAL PARK

within a certain period of time (i.e. within 12 months of the sale) and preventing re-sale of plots at higher prices to secure a quick profit. Of course, any re-sale of land would have to be approved by the Afghan Government/ AWCCI committee, with the buyer also being a women-owned business.

GREEN SYSTEMS

Incorporating ‘green’ (i.e. environmentally sustainable) systems in the AWCCI’s mini-industrial parks is not simply a ploy to appear trendy. Considering Afghanistan’s continued struggles with reliable and affordable power, along with the lowering of underground water tables in Kabul and other major urban centers in Afghanistan, it is imperative that green systems be incorporated into the planning of the park from the onset.

These green systems include, but are not limited to:

Harnessing of Solar Energy

Solar energy can be harnessed using photovoltaic solar panels in the following areas:

- Dedicated on-site solar energy plant: It is critical for the park to include a strong solar energy production capacity. As the situation

currently stands, Government-supplied power is insufficient to meet the needs of industrial producers, and solar power will be necessary to reduce overall production costs as well as reduce stoppages in production due to power outages.

- Solar car park: Parking facilities should be constructed with solar panels that both provide shade to vehicles and provide power to park systems. A solar car park may be able to produce sufficient output to charge battery-powered shuttles to take resident staff and visitors to different areas of the park.
- Solar rooftops and solar walls: By taking charge of all park construction, including the construction of business facilities, AWCCI can incorporate solar features into each building, include solar paneling on rooftops and solar walls. Solar walls are a design feature which allows buildings to obtain solar heating in winter while ventilating out hot air during summer.
- Solar LED lighting: It is not expected that the industrial park will be operational during night time hours, but for security purposes the facility should be well-lit. Solar-power LED lights for all roads and walkways will accomplish this goal, with no consumption of power from the Government power grid.
- Solar water pumps: Water pumps used to extract groundwater for resident/management use and drip irrigation for green spaces can be powered through solar systems.

As a part of the advanced stage of planning for the mini-industrial parks, AWCCI officials will initiate discussions with the Afghan state power utility, Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), to discuss ways in which any surplus power from a solar power plant can be sold to the state. This would not only provide revenue to the park to help cover operating expenses, it would also help reduce (in a small way) the import of costly energy from Afghanistan’s neighbors.

Advanced Water Management

Water management and technologies will become increasingly important in the years ahead. To date, Afghan residents of Kabul and other major urban centers have been largely immune from crises involving water shortages. This blessing of abundant water will not likely continue in the near and intermediate future. With this in mind, it is important for AWCCI’s industrial park to incorporate advanced water management features to conserve available water.

Water management features for the industrial park will include the following items:

- Rainwater collection: Facilities should be constructed to adequately store rainwater for use in the park’s green spaces.
- Waste water treatment: Grey water produced through bathroom facilities, laundry facilities, and light industrial use can be treated and re-used at the park for irrigation of green spaces.
- Drip irrigation: If planned from the onset, drip irrigation systems can be built into site construction, to ensure that green spaces are able to benefit from continuous drip irrigation without excessive water consumption.

During the advanced design phase for each park, AWCCI officials will consult with the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) and National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) to assess what additional best practices can be incorporated into the park design to ensure long-term water sustainability.

Green Spine

A “green spine” is a design feature in residential, commercial, or industrial spaces in which a contiguous section of available space is dedicated to the planting of trees, grasses, and other types of greenery. Having a dedicated green spine extending throughout the industrial park has several benefits:

- Improving the quality of life for resident’s staff, in terms of provision of shade, outdoor recreational spaces, and clean air
- Assist in collection of rainwater and reducing risk of flooding during heavy rains

It should be noted that green spaces can also be developed under solar paneling, thereby creating shaded outdoor spaces with a power-generation component.

AWCCI TOUR MEMBERS WALKING PAST THE POWER SUB-STATION AT THE ALEAP INDUSTRIAL PARK. POWER IS A CRITICAL INPUT FOR ALL OF THE PARK’S RESIDENT BUSINESSES.





PHOTO, LEFT: WOMEN PERFORM THE FINAL STEP IN BOX PRODUCTION, AT THE ALEAP INDUSTRIAL PARK

ATTRACTING RESIDENT BUSINESSES

In work developing other industrial parks in Afghanistan, there has been an assumption that the parks would immediately attract the attention of existing businesses and eager new investors. This has often not been the case. In some cases, industrial parks built in Afghanistan have sat embarrassingly idle, with few interested residents.

For a women's industrial park, the risk of low occupancy is even greater, as there are fewer Afghan women with the requisite capital and interest in investing in industrial-scale production. For that reason, the benefits to women-owned businesses of moving into an AWCCI women's mini-industrial park must be clear and overwhelming.

The benefits that AWCCI has identified for industrial park fall into six categories, listed below:

Support Obtaining Financing

By giving Afghan businesswomen an opportunity to purchase land at very low cost, they will be able to obtain the collateral they need to apply for commercial loans. Furthermore, AWCCI will engage in the following activities to increase the likelihood of successful loan applications:

- Seek out opportunities for credit-backed loans
- Work with commercial banks to develop special loan packages to finance purchases of production equipment and provide working

capital. Based on the situation of each loan applicant, repayment periods and terms would be structured to maximize the likelihood of a 'win-win' for both lender and borrower.

- Provide support developing business plans

Reduction of Startup Costs

AWCCI industrial parks will reduce startup costs in the following ways:

- No up-front costs involved in purchasing backup power hardware (i.e. industrial generators)

Reduction in Operational Costs

AWCCI industrial parks will reduce operational costs through the following means:

- Affordable solar power in the event of electricity blackouts
- Internet services for the park purchased in bulk, allowing for high-speed internet at relatively low cost.
- Lower costs of transportation for workers, through a shuttle system to pick-up and drop-off workers in various areas of the city.
- Administrative support services, to include support in tax filings and annual tax clearance
- Logistics support services, in terms of providing consulting on procurement of heavy machinery

Creating Clusters: Strength in Numbers

Cultivating clusters within an industrial park is a means by which SMEs are able to achieve greater competitiveness than their smaller size would otherwise allow. Businesses can work together jointly to make bulk

purchases of raw material, pitch complimentary services to a client together, or procure services from each other.

It should also be noted that the existence of clusters also provides a secondary benefit in addition to collaboration: rivalry. Businesses in the same sector operating in close proximity to each other can closely watch their competitors, and ideally engage in a 'race to the top' to improve the quality of their products in relation to their neighbor. When one company adopts a new technology or process to improve quality, the sense of rivalry will lead to other companies within the cluster to attempt to match the improvement or even go one step further.

The collaborative relationships within a cluster generally take two forms, detailed below:

Collaboration Within a Sector

When two or more businesses within a sector are co-located in the same industrial park, the following opportunities become available:

- Opportunity to achieve cost-savings by purchasing production equipment in bulk
- Opportunity to achieve cost-savings by purchasing raw materials in bulk
- Opportunity to fulfill larger orders by selling finished products in bulk
- Opportunity to conduct joint sector advocacy to Afghan Government institutions
- Opportunity to attract buyers who wish to 'shop around' and view products and prices from a number of suppliers

Collaboration Between Sectors

Industrial producers inevitably require a variety of support services to get their products to the market. These services include (but are not limited to):

- Marketing support
- Packaging support
- Financial accounting support
- Consultancy support
- Infrastructure support (e.g. sale of rooftop solar systems)

Business Training and Incubation

Within each mini-industrial park, AWCCI plans to construct facilities for the purpose of conducting business training and incubating micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

Trainings sessions would be held to help resident businesses avoid many common pitfalls for SMEs in Afghanistan, with courses in the following areas:

- Tax compliance
- Near-term, medium-term, and long-term business planning
- Marketing

The AWCCI also hopes to engage in micro business incubation at the industrial parks. Incubation programs would provide micro businesses the opportunity to have a small production space at their disposal, work with AWCCI mentors to develop a business plan and refine a product, and 'test the waters' to see if there is adequate market demand to scale-up production.

If the AWCCI is convinced that the product has market potential, it can provide further coaching and support to the business to apply for a loan and set up a full-scale production facility.

Providing Amenities for Businesses

Amenities at the AWCCI industrial park will include the following:

- Worker shuttle service
- High-speed internet
- Visitor center
- Daycare center
- First aid center
- Grocery store
- Administrative support
- Logistics support
- Marketing support

Many small-scale services that may become potentially profitable as the camp expands, like catering services and laundry services, can be undertaken by women entrepreneurs renting space at the park.

Advocacy to Afghan Government

AWCCI will advocate for the following incentives from the Afghan Government for resident businesses:

- 3-4 year exemption on the Basic Revenue Tax
- 3-4 year exemption for rental tax
- Ensuring that women-owned businesses (including those residents of the park) are achieving the 5% target set out by the National Procurement Authority
- Advocating for tariff-free imports of raw materials for residents of the park

IMPLEMENTATION

PARTICIPANTS OF THE AWCCI FACT-FINDING MISSION TOUR A CLOTHING MANUFACTURING FACILITY



In June 2018, the AWCCI began renovating existing hanger spaces in the Bagrami industrial area in Kart-e-Now, Kabul, in order to accommodate women-owned businesses. The AWCCI had negotiated with Amlak, a Government agency within the Ministry of Finance, to identify the plot and submit a bid to secure it. After promoting the opportunity through its network of women-owned businesses, AWCCI was able to attract the interest of five women business owners who were interested in shifting their operations to the new site. Finally, AWCCI was supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the area of funding renovations to the site's facilities and basic infrastructure.

This was not an industrial park in the traditional sense (there were no individual plots sold to resident businesses), but it did give the AWCCI an idea of some of the challenges involved in developing industrial parks. While five women-owned businesses accepted the

invitation to move their operations to the property, many others expressed reservations about the long commute for themselves and their workers to get to a site at the eastern edge of the city.

This first trial industrial space for women-owned business – expected to go online in November 2018 – is part of a larger implementation plan that would involve 14 women's mini-industrial parks built in Afghanistan's major commercial hubs over the next five years.

The below table provides a timeline for construction and completion of parks in each city:

In 2019, the AWCCI hopes to conduct a needs assessment in other provincial capitals to determine if there is sufficient demand to build additional mini-industrial parks outside of the five urban centers.

CITY	2019	2020	2021
KABUL	CONSTRUCTION	LAUNCH	
HERAT		CONSTRUCTION	LAUNCH
JALALABAD		CONSTRUCTION	LAUNCH
KANDAHAR		CONSTRUCTION	LAUNCH



ABOUT THE AWCCI

Since 2002, many non-profit organizations have started working for Afghan women's empowerment and rights. Almost all focused their activities and advocacy work on women's political, social, and cultural participation and rights. None were focused on the topic of women's economic participation or businesswomen's advocacy.

A group of Afghan businesswomen recognized this need and the lack of an advocacy platform to further their interests, so they collaborated and established Leading Entrepreneurs for Afghanistan's Development (LEAD). LEAD was established in 2013 and officially launched on 22 January 2014. It was registered with the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries as a Businesswomen's Union. LEAD presented a proposal to the High Economic Council, chaired by the President Ashraf Ghani, to change the name to the Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI). LEAD's transition to become the AWCCI was approved by the High Economic Council of the Afghan Government on 12 March 2017.



THE AWCCI DELEGATION AT THE ALEAP INDUSTRIAL PARK.

