Business associations – including chambers of commerce and trade associations – contribute to economic growth, development, peace, and prosperity. They play a key role in building inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystems and can bolster the ability of firms of all sizes to grow and create jobs. Through associations, the private sector can voice legitimate needs while engaging in a transparent policy reform process.

Voluntary, membership-based associations are microcosms of the democratic process, bringing entrepreneurs together to strengthen market economies. In order to be successful, they need strong internal governance, membership development, financial sustainability, and advocacy skills.

The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) builds the capacity of associations as the independent voice of the business community. CIPE helps associations advocate for a more competitive economic environment. In countries around the world, CIPE and its local partners are proving that with an informed and participatory approach, business associations can elevate public-private dialogue and facilitate economic growth.

**BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS PROGRAMS AT CIPE**

Through its programs and international partnerships, CIPE acts to boost the capacity of business associations in these areas:

- **Strengthen business associations** through building sound governance and accountability to members.
- **Promote best practices** in association management through executive education, technical assistance, case studies, and toolkits.
- **Facilitate public-private dialogue** by uniting the business community around common issues and policy proposals.
- **Provide program models** such as the National Business Agenda to assist business associations in creating grassroots-driven campaigns that promote democratic and economic reforms.
- **Educate businesses and policymakers** on the importance of participatory policymaking.

The second Vice President of Afghanistan Abdul Karim Khalili addresses participants at the CIPE-sponsored National Business Agenda launch event in Kabul in March 2011.
**IMPROVING ASSOCIATION GOVERNANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS**

CIPE built the capacity of the **Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI)** to empower small-scale women entrepreneurs. With CIPE’s assistance, BWCCI:

- Strengthened women's participation in the private sector.
- Increased access to capital for women-owned small businesses.

**Pakistan**: CIPE worked with chambers of commerce to reform the **Trade Organizations Ordinance**, which governs the formation and structure of Pakistani chambers. The reforms:

- Eliminated inactive chambers, improved governance, and enhanced accountability to members.
- Made it possible for women to form their own chambers and opened the door for women to serve on chamber boards.

Together with the World Chambers Federation and other stakeholders, CIPE developed **Governance Principles for Business Associations and Chambers of Commerce**.

- Developed set of governance principles as a reference point for chambers and associations globally.
- Launched at the 7th World Chambers Congress in Mexico.
- Used by chambers and associations in Egypt, Ukraine, and other countries.

**ENHANCING PUBLIC-PRIVATE DIALOGUE ON REFORM**

**Afghanistan**: With CIPE’s support and guidance, business associations launched the **National Business Agenda (NBA)**. Based on NBA recommendations, officials have drafted new banking laws, improved electricity supply and infrastructure, and made the carpet industry more competitive.

**Russia**: Supporting efforts to reform unclear and contradictory laws, CIPE helped organize regional private sector coalitions in the fight against corruption. **Twenty-four regional coalitions** were formed, comprising over 230 business associations and representing over 20,000 firms.

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The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) strengthens democracy around the globe through private enterprise and market-oriented reform. CIPE is one of the four core institutes of the National Endowment for Democracy and an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Since 1983, CIPE has worked with business leaders, policymakers, and journalists to build the civic institutions vital to a democratic society. CIPE’s key program areas include anti-corruption, advocacy, business associations, corporate governance, democratic governance, access to information, the informal sector and property rights, and women and youth.

For more information, please contact CIPE at communications@cipe.org.

**Related CIPE program resources can be found online at** www.cipe.org/topic/business-association-development