

German-Bangladesh Higher Education Network for Sustainable Textiles

The situation

The textile and garment sector of Bangladesh with about four million workers is the second largest manufacturer and exporter of apparels in the world. The sector is of vital importance for the economic and social development of Bangladesh. It accounts for more than 80 per cent of all export earnings. Although the industry has been growing tremendously, further growth and sustainable development together with improved working conditions remain a challenge due to the skill gap of the mid-level managers in the industry.

The Government of Bangladesh has highlighted the need for skilled mid-level managers in the National Education Policy 2010 of Bangladesh as well as the 7th Five-Year Plan. According to these strategies, skilled mid-level managers are a prerequisite for robust and sustainable economic growth in the country's most important manufacturing sector. The higher education institutions of Bangladesh are crucial for the education of mid-level managers and hence, for the improvement of precarious working conditions in the industry. Linking higher education with the demand-oriented skills framework of the industry and establishing international university partnerships in order to keep up with latest research on international social and environmental standards are recognized as the two essential elements for improving the quality of higher education. However, the development of effective mechanisms for cooperation with businesses and international universities is still a challenge for higher education institutions of Bangladesh. At the moment, universities do not offer training opportunities tailored to the specific needs of the textile and garment industry and lack international university partnerships and peer to peer learning opportunities. Therefore, the potential of university-industry cooperation and collaboration between universities remains largely unused.

Our objective

The German-Bangladesh Higher Education Network for Sustainable Textiles (HEST) aims to improve the capacities of public and private universities and to narrow down the skill gap of the mid-level managers in line with the requirements of the industry and responsible corporate management practices.

Our approach

To achieve the objective, the project follows a holistic approach of three levels of interventions in close cooperation with the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Project title	German-Bangladesh Higher Education Network for Sustainable Textiles (HEST)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Line Ministry	Ministry of Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Implementing Agency	University Grants Commission (UGC)
Co-operation Partner	German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)
Overall term	June 2017-November 2019



Students will graduate with improved knowledge of sustainability in the textile industry

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When managers apply newly learnt skills, social and environmental standards in factories improve

1. Improving the quality of study programmes

The German and Bangladeshi universities will work together to improve the quality of the study programmes at selected Bangladeshi universities by embedding social and environmental aspects into the curricula and integrating practice-oriented teaching methods.

2. Boosting applied research

In cooperation with the industry, the university partnerships are working jointly to intensify applied research in response to the needs of the textile and garment sector.

3. Developing capacity of mid-level managers

Last but not the least, the project aims to improve the capacity of mid-level managers in the textile and garment sector with regards to social and environmental standards. Based on a systematic analysis of the needs in the textile and garment enterprises, the project will support universities to develop training modules on responsible corporate management for mid-level managers at factory level.

Complementary to these main activities, the HEST project will support exchange forums between the universities and the private sector to make recommendations for demand-driven tertiary education in the textile and garment sector.

Our results

The project established an innovative network, in which German and Bangladeshi universities participate actively.

For the curricula revision and the applied research a call for university partnerships was published by the DAAD in July 2017. A matchmaking event took place with participants from German and Bangladeshi universities and other project partners to facilitate dialogue for potential partnerships and jointly developed project proposals. In December 2017, three partnerships were selected by an independent selection committee of university professors from Germany and Bangladesh. The three university partnerships started collaborating from January 2018 in cooperation with the DAAD:

1. Chemnitz University of Technology, BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology, and University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh
2. Dresden University of Technology, Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, and Notre Dame University Bangladesh
3. University of Stuttgart, Hof University of Applied Sciences, Bangladesh University of Textiles, North South University, Asian University for Women, and Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology

In August 2018, a new partnership has been established to improve the capacity of mid-level managers between the University of Kassel and the University of Dhaka.

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