

# Higher Education and Leadership Development for Sustainable Textiles in Bangladesh (HELD)

## Background

Bangladesh is the world's second largest producer of clothing and textiles. While the industry has seen impressive growth in past decades, the country's future prosperity is closely linked to a continued sustainable development of the textile sector.

## Objective

The HELD project seeks to strengthen application-oriented competencies of future specialists and managers of the textile industry in sustainable corporate management.

## Our approach

To achieve the objective of sustainability being an integral part of business decisions, the HELD project together with the University Grants Commission (UGC) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) is working to implement sustainability curricula at Textile Universities, Colleges and Diploma Institutes. This includes capacity building for faculty members and lecturers. In parallel, training on-the-job is provided to junior executives from industry and trade unions to develop their leadership skills. The primary beneficiaries are therefore students, along with the specified target groups. The workers of the textile industry are expected to benefit as well as their working conditions will steadily improve if factory management is committed to sustainability.

Project name	Higher Education and Leadership Development for Sustainable Textiles in Bangladesh (HELD)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Commissioned value	€ 7.78 million
Project region	Bangladesh
Partner ministry	Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Implementing agency	University Grants Commission (UGC)
SDG contribution	Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12)
Duration	01.01.2021 – 31.12.2024

## Areas of intervention and activities

### 1. Higher education

In the area of higher education, the HELD project brings together the German Hof University of Applied Sciences and the Bangladesh University of Textiles (BUTEX) to design social and ecological sustainability modules for bachelor's degree programmes at BUTEX. These modules are mirrored in parallel in the curriculum of the BUTEX-affiliated Textile Colleges, widening the circle of benefitting students. In addition, the two universities are jointly developing a master's degree programme in sustainable textiles in cross-border





expertise with a focus on circularity. Besides research exchanges at international conferences, both faculty members and lecturers are engaged in methodological training on modern didactics and digital skills.

## 2. Technical and vocational education and training

In the area of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), the HELD project partners with the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) as the state regulatory authority anchored at the MoE. With the involvement of the ICON-Institute Consultancy Group, demand-driven sustainability topics are integrated into the curriculum of the Textile Diploma Institutes. To future-proof the Textile Diploma education, an industry needs assessment on green transformation, paired with a curriculum gap analysis, has been conducted and published at the Asia Garment Hub to share the findings with neighbouring countries. Expert panels with multi-stakeholder representation are set to develop new learning modules on sustainability, compliance and industrial relations. In parallel, capacity development for BTEB personnel and TVET teachers is taking place so that the updated curriculum can be taught competently and independently.

## 3. On-the-job leadership training

In the area of leadership training, the HELD project cooperates with various actors from the public and private sector: A new on-the-job course on sustainability management is being put together with the Bangladesh Institute of Management (BIM) under the Ministry of Industries (MoInd). The target group of middle managers extends beyond textiles to all industries to drive sustainability by cross-industry innovation.

Under the programme 'Inno-Lead@Work', the HELD project has brought together the Technical University Dresden (TUD) and the Centre for Innovation, Efficiency and Occupational Safety and Health (CIEOSH) of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). With this academic project, led by TUD, CIEOSH expands its training portfolio on leadership and modern work design, coupled with research on entrepreneurial resilience through innovation. The HELD project also supports the Academy of Work (AoW) of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) to equip young executives from trade unions with necessary skills to raise labour and human rights in social dialogue.

## 4. Academia-industry nexus

As a connecting element, the HELD project forms nexus platforms across the educational and industrial landscapes to elaborate academia-industry linkages for apprenticeships and employability. Special emphasis is placed on specific needs of girls and women in the education sector and female workers in the textile sector to foster women's leadership and empowerment.

## Expected results

By young talents leading into action their sustainability knowledge acquired through quality education, labour and human rights standards will improve. More innovative, socially sustainable and environment-friendly production processes and compliance with international standards align to the concept of a just and green transition of the economy. In the long run, a sustainable, decent work environment will enhance the performance and global competitiveness of Bangladesh's textile industry and the country's prosperity.

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