



Final Concept Note
Economy of Tomorrow (EoT) Fellowship for University Students and Young Researchers

2021 Theme: Women and the Future of Informal Sector in Bangladesh

1. Introduction of the Organizers and Aim of the Fellowship

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is a non-profit German foundation and has more than hundred countries. The focus of the work of FES in Asia is the promotion of a democratic and a socially just socioeconomic development path. The Bangladesh office of FES was launched in 2014. Among many partners of FES Bangladesh, University of Dhaka (DU) is one.

DU and FES Bangladesh have jointly been implementing activities since 2014 on the reforms of higher education, leadership development, capacity development of youths, futures of tolerance among the youths, fellowships on the futures of higher education Bangladesh foreign policy, women and work and so on. One of the key activities is the EoT Fellowships for the young students and researchers.

FES traditionally has been putting a special focus on the role of young people in strengthening democracy and ensuring an equitable sustainable development. FES believes the ideas of young people as future leaders in different strata of society are particularly valuable. Young people in Bangladesh make up the majority of the population. Behind this numerical advantage lies the potential to influence the political direction and support socioeconomic development. Against this background FES wants to support a more active role of the youth and thus the next generation of young leaders.

With its fellowship for young students and young researchers in Bangladesh, DU and FES want to encourage young learners to develop policy proposals and thereby play a prominent role in the democratic and socially just transformation of Bangladesh. The fellowship has been in place since 2015, resulting in a group of 15 alumni.

2. What is the Economy of Tomorrow (EoT):

Enjoying strong growth but also exposing high vulnerabilities toward crises, Asian countries are the global economic powerhouses. Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing economies in Asia which nevertheless will face challenges when it comes to transforming its economy to avoid the country from running into the “middle income trap” in the future.

Against this background, FES has designed research cum dialogue between reform-minded economists/political scientists/etc. and young thinkers in Bangladesh in order to discuss new and innovative ways of economic development, which can be taken into consideration for dynamic growth, social balancing, ecological sustainability and gender equality of the country.

2.1 Theme and Research Areas of the Fellowship:

The theme of 2021 is *Women and the Future of Informal Sector in Bangladesh*. Bangladesh has made significant progress in women’s rights in recent years. It is currently the top performer in ensuring gender equality in South Asia and among the top five countries in the world in ensuring political empowerment of women. Then also it is evident that most working women (more than 90 per cent) work in the informal sector. Agriculture continues to be the largest sector of employment for women, but in recent years there has been a steady increase in female employment in the industrial, service

and manufacturing sectors. In the era of “emerging Bangladesh”, “middle-income country”, “developing country” or “demographic dividend,” roles and participation of women is quite indispensable for shaping up the economy of tomorrow.

Not only women, but also men are mostly employed in informal sector. Informal sector workers are represented an estimated 89% of all workers in 2010. The COVID-induced economic crisis has resulted in a sharp decline in the growth of the economy (from 8.2 per cent in 2018-19 to 5.24 per cent in 2019-20 – according to government figures) and the loss of millions of jobs. The sectors most severely affected include manufacturing, construction, transport and services. The urban informal economy has been hit very hard – both during and after the period of shutdown. It is estimated that nearly 11 million jobs (counting both formal and informal sectors) were lost during the period of shutdown (April-May, 2020). The urban informal economy is estimated to have lost 1.08 million jobs, which is 6.78 per cent of its pre-COVID workforce. Women are being disproportionately affected by the COVID-related health crisis as well as the resulting economic and labour market crises. This is because their shares are higher in the sectors that are facing higher risk (e.g. manufacturing, non-crop agriculture, and household service) and in the urban informal economy which also has been affected more severely. Women are also having to bear a disproportionate burden while working from home. Thus, this year FES and its partner are inviting potential candidates to think the above issues and context and outline a short concept note to address them. On the way, the following titles may be helpful to your thoughts and ideas, but do not keep yourself limited to them.

1. Women and decent work in the informal sector: policies and options
2. Automation in the informal sector: are men replacing women?
3. Education, employment and the informal sector: gaps and expectation
4. Women’s voice and rights in informal sector: past and present
5. Diversity in the informal sectors and its future: actors, technologies and financing
6. The impact of the platform-economy on the informal sector: a gendered analysis
7. Women in the informal economy beyond borders: what can be learned from regional and global developments and movements?
8. LDC Graduation and the informal sector: what changes for women?

3. The EoT Fellowship

3.1 Objective:

- To provide fellowship support to young Bangladeshi students and young researchers in order to write a policy paper outlining concrete policy reforms looking at the political economy of Bangladesh, taking the EoT manifesto and its ideas as a foundation for their suggestions.
- To encourage students and young researchers to discuss the mentioned topics (Models, Discourses and Coalitions) within the spirit of social democracy.
- To provide possibilities to students and young researchers on socio-economic and ecological topics and thereby develop a network of them in Bangladesh.

3.2 Eligible Candidates:

- Three categories of applicants are eligible for the Fellowship:
 - Students who already passed in Bachelor
 - Students who already passed in Masters
 - Early career researchers/teachers (up to three years)
- Maximum age limit of the applicants is 30.
- Students especially from the departments of Economics, Politics, International Relations, Sociology, Public Administration, Development Studies, Gender Studies from both Public and Private Universities in Bangladesh.
- Young researchers should also have degrees from the above subjects.

- The students/young researchers must be in Bangladesh during their Fellowship
- Applications along with concept note/short proposal submitted by an individual or a group of individuals will be accepted for further review. Both the individual and group are encouraged to apply.

3.3 Circulation of the Fellowship Announcement

- A rigorous strategy to disseminate the EoT Fellowship circular/announcement will be developed.
- Other than the support of the Partner/DU for this specific Fellowship, all other FES Bangladesh's Partners like CPD, SME Foundation, BIGD etc. will be engaged to widely circulate the news of the fellowship.
- Through using social media (e.g. FES Bangladesh's Facebook Page), this Fellowship will also be circulated.
- Major public and private universities will be asked for publishing this Fellowship news on their notice boards.

3.4 Application Process:

- Eligible candidates have to respond to the "DU-FES EoT Fellowship Announcement" by submitting the filled-up application format within the deadline of submission. (see tentative timetable below)
- Each candidate must submit a concept note (see "description of concept note" in section 3.6).
- An "advisory committee" will be formed to assess the quality of proposal on the criteria set by DU and FES Bangladesh and select the maximum five best proposals. Therefore, the advisory board will meet.

3.5 Description of Concept Note:

- The concept note has to be concise, short and a well-written document and should not be more than 3 pages.
- The concept note should have precise argument in line with theme of the fellowship as well as the "EoT Topic for 2021".
- The concept note should contain the research method to be used for this study.
- The concept note should be computer-composed in A4 page, font size 12 in Calibri or Arial. 1.5 lines space.
- The concept note should include a time line.
- The concept note should be in English

3.6 Advisory Committee:

- Three members Advisory Committee will be formed, consisting of two academics from the University of Dhaka, one staff member from FES Bangladesh.
- The Advisors will be involved throughout the whole process beginning from the selection of the Fellows to the participation in the final Seminar.
- The committee will meet for the final selection and during the process for reconciliation.

3.7 Selection:

- All the applications along with proposals submitted within the deadline will be reviewed by the Advisors.
- A shortlist of the candidates will be made after first primary review by the advisors.
- The shortlisted candidates will be asked to take part in an interview. The interview may take place online.
- Final selection will be made on quality and diversity of proposals, gender representation (male and female), geographic locations of the universities (Dhaka and outside Dhaka), category of universities (public and private) and response in the interviews.

3.8 Process:

- After selection of the Fellows, the concept note will be finalized in the first meeting plus 2-day orientation. This meeting is the first step to build a network and will allow us to present the general

EoT ideas, to bring students and experts of the advisory committee together. Students will also have the possibility to share their project ideas with other students and will get first feedback by the advisors. And the orientation will focus on:

- To develop the research questions and methodology in line with the overall objective of the Fellowship
- To guide the Fellows on how to write policy papers
- The Awardees will submit their progress reports in a short form on monthly basis to FES Bangladesh.
- The fellows can share their progress of the studies in the second meeting and will receive feedback from Advisors.
- After almost 4 months, the Fellows will hand in their drafts to the Advisors and FES Bangladesh.
- The drafts submitted by the Fellows will be reviewed by the Advisors who will provide feedback/comment.
- The Fellows will then have 2 weeks to incorporate the feedback and finalize their papers. The papers will be sent back to the advisory board.
- The fellows will present their studies at a jointly organized seminar by FES and the University of Dhaka. The Advisors will attend the final seminar to get feedback from the audiences so that they can guide once more to finalize the report and also to explain/defend their Fellows a bit more during the seminar. As a part of the Seminar, the final papers will also be reviewed by independent reviewers who commented on the papers in the seminar.
- Selected good papers will be considered for publications.

The FES Bangladesh will coordinate the whole process.

3.9 Size and Language of the Report

- The Policy Paper must be concise, vivid, and short
- The Paper will be policy-oriented and will not exceed more than ten pages.
- The Paper must have a precise argument that builds upon the EoT project
- If the awardee has already been preparing an academic dissertation on the subject (this usual size is more than 30 pages), then s/he can summarize to ten pages for the submission to FES Bangladesh.
- Each policy paper has key points of 3/4 bullet points on the front page.
- The paper must be written in English.

4. Dissemination of Ideas:

- FES Bangladesh will arrange a public seminar in Dhaka, when the Fellows have finalized their Policy Papers.
- Policy makers, academics, researchers, civil society, students, journalists will be invited to this Seminar.
- Each candidate will prepare a Policy Brief and a Presentation under the supervision of advisors of DU-FES Bangladesh.
- They will share their ideas with the policy makers and others, respond to the questions from the audiences, and receive feedback for any further improvements of the study.
- The research reports/findings may be used in different ways of FES communication nationally and internationally.

5. Number of Awards:

Maximum of 5 (Five).

6. Amount of each Award:

- Maximum Tk. 100,000 (One lac taka only)/each (excluding VAT & Tax).
- No additional costs for printing, photocopying, field research, etc. will be borne by DU-FES.

- FES Bangladesh will pay travel costs to attend the internal meetings, orientation and final seminars

7. Payment Schedules:

- Contract signing: 50%
- Final report submission: 50%

8. Timeline (tentative):

Tasks/Assignments	Tentative Dates
Fellowship Announcement	1 March 2021
Deadline for the Submission of Application	31 March 2021
Finalization of the Awardees	15 April 2021
First meeting and Orientation on Concept note and signing the ToR	25-26 April 2021
Second meeting on findings and reporting in Dhaka	17 June 2021
Draft submission to the Advisors and FES Bangladesh	15 August 2021
Feedback on the Draft by the Advisors	31 August 2021
Study Period and Mentoring	27 April – 15 September 2021
Final Report and Presentation Submission	15 September 2021
Public Seminar/Workshop in Dhaka	30 September 2021

9. Relevant Resources:

- Khatun, Fahmida and Syed Yusuf Saadat (2018), “The Ignored Generation: Exploring the Dynamics of Youth Employment in Bangladesh,” Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka. <http://www.fes-bangladesh.org/files/daten/Publications/The-Ignored-Generation-Exploring-the-dynamics-of-youth-employment-in-Bangladesh.pdf>
- ILO (2019), “Breaking gender barriers in the World of Work.” https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms_655158.pdf (accessed on 1 October 2019)
- ILO (2015), “National Skills Development System in Bangladesh 2015.” https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms_445255.pdf (accessed on 1 October 2019)
- Islam, Rizwanul and Rushidan I Rahman (2020), “The Impact of Covid-induced Economic Crisis on Employment and Labour Market in Bangladesh: Analysis with Particular Focus on Informality and Gender Dimensions.” Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Dhaka. http://www.fes-bangladesh.org/files/daten/contents/Front%20page%20news/Test%2018%20July%202020/Paper%20on%20employment%20and%20labour%20market%20in%20pandemic_Rizwanul%20&%20Rushidan_2020.pdf.
- Rahman, Mustafizur, Towfiqul Islam Khan, Muhammad Al Amin (2014), “The Economy of Tomorrow How to Produce Socially Just, Sustainable and Green Dynamic Growth for a Good Society Case Study of Bangladesh.” FES Bangladesh. Dhaka. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/bangladesch/10814.pdf> (accessed on 1 October 2019)
- Saxer, Marc (2013), “The Economy of Tomorrow How to Produce Socially Just, Resilient, and Green Dynamic Growth for a Good Society.” FES Germany. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/thailand/10000.pdf>

10. Contact Points:

- Shadhan Kumar Das, Programme Coordinator, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Bangladesh. Cell phone: 01714-092811, Email: shadhankumar.das@fesbd.org, Web: www.fes-bangladesh.org