

SUCCESS STORY

Bridging the Gap between Energy Engineering and Economics

University of Texas at Austin/Bangladesh University for Engineering and Technology



CII photo

Five students, Dr. Mohammad Tamim and Dr. Rahman outside of BUET's Petroleum and Mineral Resources Engineering. These full-time engineering employees and part-time students are enrolled in the Energy Economics course.

Engineering students are charting a new path for their careers and faculty members are refueling dialogue on tackling energy issues in Bangladesh. This is because of new curriculum on economics and petroleum developed in partnership by the University of Texas at Austin and the Bangladesh University for Engineering and Technology (BUET).

The partnership, which is managed by Higher Education for Development and funded by USAID, led to a new Energy Economics course, the first of its kind, at the department. The course helped students connect engineering and economics by challenging them to consider economic aspects in their technical work. Now in its third cycle, the course has received much positive feedback, as working students note they have opportunities to suggest ideas in their workplace based on course activities, which include keeping abreast of the latest market costs of petroleum. "I always try to develop myself as an economist even though I am not an economist," said Md. Moniruzzaman, student and senior assistant secretary at the Energy and Mineral Resources Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources.

The partnership also allowed BUET's Dr. Mohammad Tamim to attend a New Era four-month conference, which propelled his understanding and exposure to energy economics. This understanding, along with advice from U.S. partner Gürcan Gulen, then helped Tamim directly impact Bangladesh national policy on renewable energy when he served as interim Minister of Energy in Bangladesh before rejoining BUET. Tamim noted the collaboration "shifted me, helped me switch from an engineer to a policy-maker."

Tamim and his U.S. colleagues also developed innovative ways to teach BUET students. For example, working with the Bangladesh Energy Reporters Forum, partners held workshops to engage 25 Bangladesh journalists in energy-related issues, including ways to improve the sector's future.

Dr. Ijaz Hossain, who also attended a New Era training, said it deepened his knowledge of his home country's energy issues. In addition to new perspectives and materials obtained, Hossain was able to produce two papers about energy issues in Bangladesh. "I am teaching from a more informed and knowledgeable position on the same subjects," he said. Hossain now hopes to provide a future course specifically on the issue of value chains.

Dr. Ijaz Hossain published papers on conditions in his country because the New Era four-month course.



HED photo