



Concept Note

Economy of Tomorrow (EoT) Fellowship for University Graduates and Young Researchers

2025 Theme- *Policies for Small-scale Entrepreneurs for improving living of the Marginalized People*

1. Introduction to the Theme and Research Areas

Marginalised people belong to disadvantaged sections of the society, who lack opportunities. In their localities and environments, opportunities are often scarce. For instance, the job market in rural areas is very limited. Further, they often lack the resources needed to access the few opportunities: money, education, and social connections. Specific groups face outright discrimination, for instance Dalits/Harijan, third gender persons, sex workers, some minorities. In Bangladesh as elsewhere, the state administration is tasked with promoting development and facilitate gaining a livelihood. The government has devised support mechanisms for various sectors but also created bureaucratic procedures that may constitute challenges for citizens. The support people receive may be channelled through public institutions or may have a more personal character, being dependent on initiative of specific persons in positions of authority and patterned by personal preferences and connections.

The aim of the EoT research projects supported by FES in 2025 is to understand the challenges marginalized people experience in their economic activities and what relations they have to the state. It is about the taxes they pay or not pay, the infrastructures, public goods and services they receive in return or no do not receive, and the requirements or bureaucratic processes demanded. In particular, it is about finding out to what extent people rely on themselves, what state goods and services they use and which ones they consider particularly helpful, which burdens they perceive, and what kind of state support they propose in order to be more productive or better protected against risks.

Some key areas of state initiative may include access to finance, skill development and training, market access and support, infrastructure and technology, legal and institutional support and social enterprise and impact investing. Initiatives of the government and non-government actors, and businesses are not sufficient to improve the living of the marginalised people. In this context, the following questions can be investigated in the fellowship programme 2025.

- What benefits and challenges does state activity bring to resource-poor, small-scale entrepreneurs?

- What changes on a policy or structural level are envisaged by those concerned?

2. Marginalised group to be considered:

- A. Peasants (livestock and plant farmers)
- B. Fisher men & aquaculture/pisciculture entrepreneurs
- C. Plastic waste pickers / recyclers
- D. Rickshaw pullers

3. Participant Observation Methodology

Principles of the participant observation methodology are expected to guide the researchers. Participant observation is a qualitative research method where a researcher immerses themselves in a social setting or group to observe and participate in their activities. This allows for a deeper understanding of the group's behavior, interactions, and practices from an insider's perspective. The researcher actively participates in the group's life while simultaneously observing and documenting their experiences.

The researchers are expected to develop a comprehensive understanding of the work, techniques and approaches of their target group. The research is as much about learning from marginalized peoples how they navigate their livelihoods as it is about analysing the situations. The development of proposals to make state-citizen relations more productive should take place in participatory fashion, that is in close consultation between the researcher and the target group. While the target group contributes its own intimate understanding of their experiences, the researcher may contribute theoretical perspectives and experiences from other communities and locations s/he has discovered.

That is, the research project is as much done with people as it is done for people.

The participant observation methodology approach, however, does not exclude other quantitative and qualitative methodologies to complement it. A mixed method approach is thus most welcome.

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

Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing economies in Asia but still faces challenges when it comes to transforming its economy and uplifting disadvantaged groups. While enjoying strong growth but vulnerabilities remain high and inequality is increasing.

Against this background, FES has designed the EoT model to conduct 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.

5. About FES Bangladesh and this Fellowship

Since 2015, FES Bangladesh has been offering the Economy of Tomorrow (EoT) fellowship for university graduates and young researchers. From the beginning, FES has been engaging with university professors. They play a vital role as a part of the advisory committee throughout the fellowship process.

This fellowship programme is designed to encourage students and junior researchers to conduct research and to write a policy paper outlining concrete policy reforms for economic growth in a socially just, gender-equal, resilient and sustainable Bangladesh. The EoT Fellowship is an enabling platform for exchanging ideas on the current economic and social policy issues so that the fellows can jointly contribute to creating an inclusive and just society.

With this fellowship for students and young researchers in Bangladesh, FES Bangladesh wants to encourage the development of policy proposals and thereby enable the fellows to play a prominent role in the democratic and socially just transformation of Bangladesh.

5.1 Objective:

- To provide fellowship support to Bangladeshi students and young researchers in order to write a policy paper outlining concrete policy reforms looking at the futures of the economy of Bangladesh.
- To encourage students and young researchers to discuss the mentioned topics within the spirit of social democracy (freedom, justice and solidarity) and Just Transition.
- To provide possibilities to students and young researchers on diverse topics (this year on the importance of circular economy) and thereby develop a network of them in Bangladesh.

5.2 Eligible Candidates:

- Three categories of applicants are eligible for the Fellowship:
 - Students who already passed their Bachelor degree.
 - Students who already passed their Master's degree at recent time.
 - Early career researchers/teachers (up to three years of research experience).
- Maximum age limit of the applicants is 30.
- Bangladeshi students especially from the departments of Economics, Politics, International Relations, Sociology, Public Administration, Development Studies, Gender Studies, Environmental Studies and related subjects studied in Bangladesh or abroad.
- Early career researchers should have degrees from Bangladesh or abroad in the above subjects/disciplines.
- The students and 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 groups are encouraged to apply.

5.3 Application Process:

- Eligible candidates have to respond to the “FES EoT Fellowship Announcement” by submitting the filled-up application form within the deadline of submission. (see tentative timetable below)
- Each candidate must submit a concept note (see “description of concept note” in section 5.4).
- An “advisory committee” will be formed to assess the quality of concept note/proposal on the criteria set by FES Bangladesh.

5.4 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 the theme and guiding questions of the fellowship.
- The concept note should contain the research methodology to be used in the 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.
- Proper citation and referencing should be done to avoid any kind of plagiarism.

5.5 Advisory Committee:

- Four members Advisory Committee will be formed, consisting of two academics, PAR expert, and one staff member from FES Bangladesh.
- The Advisors will be involved throughout the whole process beginning from the selection of the Fellows to the final Seminar.
- During the process of final selection, the committee will meet.

5.6 Selection:

- All the applications along with concept notes 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 or in-person.
- The shortlisted candidates will have to give a short presentation based on the concept note/ proposal they submitted. (5-10 mins maximum)
- Final selection will be made on disciplines, quality and diversity of concepts, gender representation (male, female and gender-diverse), geographic locations of the universities (Dhaka and outside Dhaka), category of universities (public and private) and responses in the interviews.
- Applications received from people with diverse gender identities, differently-abled groups, ethnic communities and religious minorities will be treated with special consideration to promote diversity in the cohort of the fellowships.

5.7 Process:

- After selection of the fellows, their concept notes/proposals will be finalised in the first meeting plus 1-day orientation. This meeting is the first step to build a network and will allow the organisers to present the general EoT ideas and to bring students and experts of the advisory committee together. The fellows will also have the

possibility to share their project ideas with other fellows and will get first feedback from 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 3 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 for feedback/comments.
- The fellows will then have 2 weeks to incorporate the feedback and finalise their papers. The papers will be sent back to the advisory board.
- The fellows will present their studies or policy papers at a jointly organised seminar by FES Bangladesh. They will receive feedback from the audiences and then incorporate those in their final papers.
- As a part of the Seminar, the final papers will be reviewed by two independent reviewers (Academics or Researchers) who will comment in the seminar.
- Selected papers will be considered for publications. The selection will be made based on quality.

The FES Bangladesh will coordinate the whole process.

5.8 Size and Language of the Report

- The Policy Paper must be concise, vivid, and short
- The Paper must be policy-oriented and must not exceed fifteen pages.
- The Paper must have a precise argument that builds upon the EoT project.
- The Policy paper should have specific policy recommendations.
- If the awardee has already been preparing an academic dissertation on the subject (this usual size is more than 20 pages), then s/he can take findings from the dissertation to prepare a fifteen-page policy paper for the submission to FES Bangladesh.
- Each policy paper should have 3/4 bullet points on the front page to get a summary of the paper.
- The paper must be written in English.

6. Dissemination of Ideas:

- FES Bangladesh will arrange a public seminar in Dhaka, when the Fellows have finalised their Policy Papers.
- Policy makers, academics, researchers, civil society representatives especially from and for marginalised communities, students, journalists will be invited to this Seminar.
- Each candidate will prepare a Policy Brief and a Presentation under the supervision of advisors.

- 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.

7. Number of Awards:

Maximum of 5 (Five).

8. Amount of each Award:

- Maximum Tk. 120,000 (One lac twenty thousand taka only)/each (excluding VAT).
- No additional costs for printing, photocopying, field research, etc. will be borne by FES.
- FES Bangladesh will pay transport costs to attend the internal meetings, orientation and final seminars at FES Bangladesh office.

9. Payment Schedules:

- On the day of contract signing: 40%
- On the day of submitting first draft: 30%
- After acceptance of the final paper: 30%

10. Timeline (tentative):

Tasks/Assignments	Tentative Dates
Fellowship Announcement	23 Apr 2025 (Wednesday)
Deadline for the Submission of Application	14 May 2025 (Wednesday)
Shortlisting of proposals	22 May 2025 (Thursday)
Interview and initial presentation	28-29 May 2025 (Wed-Thur)
Finalisation of the Awardees	1 Jun 2025 (Sunday)
First meeting and Orientation on Concept note and signing the ToR	15 Jun 2025 (Sunday)
First Round of in-person sharing meeting between Fellows and Advisors	16 Jun to 15 Aug 2025 – 2 months (Minimum 02 in person sittings between the fellows and the advisors- one to one/group)
Send the draft version to FES Bangladesh	19 Aug 2025 (Tuesday)
Second meeting on primary findings and updates	21 Aug 2025 (Thursday)
Second Round of in-person sharing meeting between Fellows and Advisors	22 Aug to 6 Oct – 1.5 months (Minimum 03 in person sittings between the fellows and the advisors- one to one/group)
Draft submission to the Advisors and FES Bangladesh	09 Oct 2025 (Thursday)
Feedback on the Draft by the Advisors	16 Oct 2025 (Thursday)
Workshop on Presentation Skill	28 Oct 2025 (Tuesday)
Final Draft Submission by the fellows	05 Nov 2025 (Wednesday)
Final Presentation Submission	06 Nov 2025 (Thursday)
Public Seminar/Workshop in Dhaka	13 Nov 2025 (Thursday)
Final paper submission (after incorporating feedback from the external reviewers)	20 Nov 2025 (Thursday)

In the above timeline, the study period is set from 16 Jun 2025 to 20 Nov 2025. This time the Fellows will be mentored and supervised. The organizer has the privilege and authority to change the above timeline.

11. Relevant Resources:

- “Technology, Innovations and Work: Policy Options for Bangladesh”,
https://bangladesh.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf-files/220105_Technology_Innovations_and_Work_EoT_Fellows_FES_Bangladesh.pdf
- “State of the Ecosystem for Youth Entrepreneurship in Bangladesh”,
<https://www.startupbangladesh.vc/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/State-of-the-Ecosystem-for-Youth-Entrepreneurship-in-Bangladesh.pdf>
- “ICT Adoption of SMEs in Bangladesh: Present Scenario, Challenges and Way Forward”, https://bangladesh.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf-files/Edited_for_Website_Combind-SME-Training-Manual_V4A.pdf
- “Impact of Artificial Intelligence in Bangladesh’s IT sector”,
<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/bangladesch/19130.pdf>
- “Financing SMEs in Bangladesh: Lessons from German Experience”,
https://bangladesh.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf-files/211219_Policy_Paper_-_Access_to_finance_2021_SMEF.pdf
- 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>

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