



# NEWSLETTER

CONSULTING ENGINEERS ASSOCIATES 2005 LTD.

## Building Engineering Capacity for Sustainable Economic Development



Engineering underpins every aspect of modern development, shaping the systems that allow societies to function and grow. From roads and hospitals to water, energy, and communication networks, engineering solutions form the backbone of economic progress and public well-being. However, a nation's ability to develop sustainably depends not only on the presence of infrastructure, but on its capacity to train, support, and retain competent engineers. Investing in technical expertise, continuous professional development, and strong institutional frameworks ensures that infrastructure is not only built, but designed, maintained, and managed to meet long-term social, environmental, and economic needs.

### What Engineering Capacity Building Means

Engineering capacity building focuses on strengthening education, training, mentorship, and access to meaningful professional opportunities. Together, these elements enable countries to design, manage, and maintain their own development using local expertise.

Strong engineering capability is essential for sustainable economic growth, global competitiveness, and national self-reliance.

### The Caribbean Context

The Caribbean has a strong academic foundation, with institutions like UWI producing highly capable engineers for decades. Despite this, the local engineering consultancy industry remains underdeveloped due to limited mentorship, weak institutional support, and the absence of comprehensive state policy to protect and grow the profession.

As a result, engineering expertise is often underutilized, and the profession remains largely invisible to the public, despite its central role in national development.

## Why Local Engineering Capability Matters

A strong indigenous engineering sector leads to:

- Better use of resources, ensuring value for money
- Long-term sustainability of national infrastructure
- Greater economic independence, reducing reliance on foreign expertise

The decline of once-thriving local engineering firms highlights deeper structural issues that threaten professional growth and national development.



## Key Barriers to Engineering Capacity Development

- Limited recognition of consulting engineering as a strategic industry
- Outdated legislation and weak enforcement of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Lack of mandatory technology and knowledge transfer from foreign firms
- Reduced involvement of engineers in planning and design stages
- Bureaucratic delays, politicization, and inefficient procurement models
- Unfavorable contract conditions, delayed payments, and excessive requirements

## How This Affects You

- Students & young professionals: clearer pathways for training, mentorship, and career growth
- Local engineering firms: stronger policy support and fairer access to public projects
- Clients and the public: higher-quality, more sustainable infrastructure
- The nation: reduced dependence on foreign expertise and stronger long-term capacity



## The Way Forward

To reverse this trend and unlock the potential of local expertise, a strategic and collaborative approach is required. The following initiatives are critical:

- State Recognition and Support – Local Ministries of Works and Engineering Boards such as (BOETT), must champion the regulated, structured growth of the profession.
- Professional Certification in Procurement – Under the Office of the Procurement Regulator (OPR), Board-Registered/Licensed Engineers should be a supplementary qualifier for participation in state projects.
- Active Role of State Agencies – Entities such as UDeCOTT and NIDCO should help identify skill gaps, promote mentorship, and support professional development across the sector.
- Internships and Mentorships – All major state contracts should include provisions for student internships and graduate engineer training.
- Strengthening Local Firms – Policies must encourage the growth of local consulting practices, enabling them to compete regionally and internationally.

## CEAL'S Call To Action

CEAL remains committed to advancing sustainable development by strengthening local engineering and technical capacity. We encourage policymakers, industry stakeholders, educators, and young professionals to work collaboratively to support mentorship, professional development, and policies that empower local expertise.



Building national resilience starts with investing in our people. Through informed dialogue, strategic partnerships, and purposeful action, we can ensure that engineering capacity becomes a cornerstone of sustainable economic growth in the Caribbean.

Sustainable development requires more than physical infrastructure, it requires engineering strength. Investing in local engineering capacity is an investment in national resilience, innovation, and long-term economic independence.