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GENDER EMPOWERMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY IN THE GARMENT SECTOR

Researchers: Chris Woodruff and Rocco Macchiavello
Partner organisation: the Ministry of Commerce, Bangladesh

IN BRIEF

» Females workers make up 80% of garment sector workers but less than 10% of managers

» This project examines whether training can help increase the proportion of female supervisors

» In management simulation exercises, the female trainees outperform the male trainees

» Mr. Hedayetullah Al Mamoon, Senior Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, who chaired the event, welcomed with enthusiasm the study and asked for a follow-up project to build on the findings

Garment production accounts for 80 percent of Bangladesh's exports and 13 percent of its GDP. Within the garment sector, females make up 80 percent of workers but less than 10 percent of managers.

This project studied the imbalance between the proportion of female workers and female managers by implementing a program in 60 large garment factories to train sewing machine operators to be line supervisors, the first line of management. The majority of the participating factories had no female supervisors when the project started. Though evidence from surveys and management exercises suggests the female trainees are as or more effective than the male trainees, promotion rates for the female trainees (55%) are significantly lower than promotion rates for male trainees (85%).

Initial analysis finds no significant differences between the performance of male and female trainees, through there is some indication that females reduce absenteeism and increase efficiency slightly, while males have relatively lower rates of quality defects.

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