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, though there is some indication that females reduce absenteeism and increase efficiency slightly, while males have relatively lower rates of quality defects.