



**BetterWork**  
Bangladesh

BROCHURE

# Gender Equality and Returns-GEAR

Towards women leadership development and higher productivity



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## ► What is GEAR?

Gender Equality and Returns (GEAR) is a joint initiative of the IFC and ILO and delivered as part of Better Work's training and advisory services. GEAR aims to promote career-progression opportunities for women working in the ready-made garment (RMG) factories through capacity building on soft skills and technical skills so that they can progress into supervisory roles, contribute to increased line-level productivity, and develop leadership capabilities for leading and managing workforce. GEAR creates an enabling environment

### Better Work Bangladesh (BWB)

Better Work is a global flagship programme is being implemented in RMG and textiles industry aiming at improving working conditions, productivity and quality in global supply chains. BWB has been working with more than 300 factories in Bangladesh.

by increasing factory management's understanding of how to select, promote, support, and retain female talent. GEAR helps enterprises to improve working conditions for women, including promoting equal opportunities, enhancing women's leadership capabilities, social and economic empowerment and, decision-making abilities both at household and enterprise level.

## ► Why GEAR for the RMG industry?

GEAR is a strong business case for promoting gender equal leadership and management in RMG factories. IFC research shows that women supervisors' line efficiency is 5% higher (IFC 2018) and female supervisors trained by Better Work achieved a 22% increase in productivity on their lines ([Better Work 2016](#)).

In the RMG industry of Bangladesh, approximately 73% of the sewing line workers are female while 92% of supervisors and managers are male (RMGPP 2015). Although women make up the majority of the workforce, there is substantial gender imbalance in supervisory and management positions in the industry. There are many factors driving this gender imbalance in the RMG sector in Bangladesh:

- **Attitudes on women and men in leadership roles:** There is an expectation and belief that men are more capable of taking on leadership and management responsibilities compared with women—this belief is not only held by factory management, but also female workers. GEAR study shows that promoting more women will slowly start changing attitudes among both male and female line operators, as long as they are women with the right attitude.



- ▶ **Lower level of self-confidence and self-efficacy among women:** Research show that female sewing operators typically have lower levels of confidence in their ability to do the job than male operators being considered for promotion (Macchiavello et al, 2017).
- ▶ **Access to training and skills-building opportunities:** Female workers have less access to training opportunities compared to male workers. For instance, male workers are prioritized in receiving trainings to learn new machine operations. Oftentimes, factories do not have concrete management plans to promote equal access to upskilling opportunities (CARE Bangladesh).
- ▶ **Managing family and longer working hours** deter women from taking on leadership positions in the workplace, especially in cases where they do not have family support or encouragement (IFC 2018).

### ▶ Key activities of GEAR

GEAR provides both classroom training for female operators and on-the-job training as trainee supervisors. GEAR offers a **10-day training programme** for female operators, which consists of:

- ▶ **Four-day soft skills training** includes topics on building confidence and self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, stress management, meditation and gratitude, management and leadership skills, communications skills, how to be an effective supervisor, influencing abilities, dealing with poor performance, positive attitudes and integrity and problem-solving techniques.
- ▶ **Six-day technical skills training** on supervising production line process, solving bottlenecks, line-balancing, pre-and post-cutting activities, process measurement and size chart, efficiency calculation, method study, work-study, types of needles, machines and motor types, types of pressure foot, defects and root cause analysis, quality control and assurance.

Trainees then spend **six to eight weeks in on-the-job training** working on a production line as a trainee supervisor alongside an experienced supervisor. In addition to training services, GEAR offers **advisory sessions** such as nominee diagnosis test, on-boarding and team building sessions with factory management to create enabling environment for women particularly for selected trainees so that they can apply management and leadership capabilities and technical skills. The respective Enterprise Advisors work closely with the GEAR advisory committee and trainees during the advisory visits. They help in the consultation process of management to select, promote and support female talents at the enterprise level.



### Primary target group and selection criteria

- ▶ Female sewing machine operator with minimum class 8 education.
- ▶ At least two years of experience in the garments industry.
- ▶ Must be grade 3 (senior operator) or grade 4 (operator).
- ▶ Have the willingness to become a supervisor.
- ▶ Should have a supportive family.

### ▶ Current status of GEAR implementation

Pilot phase (2016-17)	Scale up (April 2019 to present)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 28 garment factories</li> <li>▶ 144 trained</li> <li>▶ 58 female workers promoted to supervisory positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 44 garment factories</li> <li>▶ 274 trained</li> <li>▶ 201 female workers promoted to supervisory positions</li> </ul>

### ▶ Results

Rise in income	Line leadership	Women leadership	Factory benefits
39% average increase in wages after being promoted as supervisors	A GEAR-trained supervisor manages on an average of 30 operators in a production line	Percentage of female supervisors in 28 GEAR-affiliated factories increased from 5% to 12%	5% increase in factory efficiency due to trained female supervisors. Female supervisors shown relatively calm and quite in listening and giving instructions to operators

**Download** the full report: *Assessing how IFC's Work-Progression & Productivity Toolkit helps female workers achieve promotion and boost productivity in Bangladesh's readymade garment factories.*





## ► How does GEAR enroll factories?

GEAR enrolls factories (garment and knit) through brand partnership and/or voluntary basis. Currently, GEAR enrolls factories located in Dhaka, Savar, Gazipur, Narayanganj and Chattogram. GEAR also consider to enroll factories located in Export Processing Zones based on the request of brand partners. The registration fees is USD2500 for a factory for enrolling up to 10 trainees.

## ► Contact information

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