

Bangladesh's female workforce diminishing, data shows

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DHAKA – New data collected by the team behind BRAC University's Mapped in Bangladesh (MiB) platform shows that the proportion of women in the country's ready-made garment (RMG) sector is diminishing, reportedly due to a rise in automation, wage hikes and the marital status of factory staff.

“Our research indicates that women have accounted for 65 per cent of the garment sector's workforce in the last few years, but it has dropped to 58.3 per cent now,” Syed Hasibuddin Hussain, project manager of MiB, told reporters at a hotel in the country's capital.

The MiB platform, which [went live in the summer](https://2020073026451/materials-production-news/bangladeshi-platform-tipped-to-transform-transparency.html) ([/2020073026451/materials-production-news/bangladeshi-platform-tipped-to-transform-transparency.html](https://2020073026451/materials-production-news/bangladeshi-platform-tipped-to-transform-transparency.html)) after years spent collecting data on the country's textile suppliers, pools information on factories in key industrial clusters, including Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj and Chattogram, and sub-categorises them based on different aspects of their business such as the certifications they've attained, the brands they supply to and their particular manufacturing specialisms.

With this digital overview, brands can utilise the platform to easily identify potential partner suppliers based on their criteria.

Though the team at BRAC holds ambitions of on-boarding further textile suppliers within the country – in order to provide a truly representative picture of the country's RMG sector – this aspect of its work has been placed on pause due to restrictions on movement in Bangladesh.

Subsequently, it started a series of rapid surveys amongst the thousands of suppliers it currently works with, which has to date assessed how COVID-19 impacted their businesses, and whether they pivoted to produce personal protective equipment in the most quiet periods of the coronavirus saga.

Its latest survey has now cast doubt over the job security of female workers in the sector, with findings that the country's workforce and proportion of women is diminishing.

Project manager Hussain says employment in the sector has fallen steadily over recent years, but only now are they seeing the huge impact it's had on employment.

Whilst COVID-19 has undoubtedly wreaked havoc on the lives of RMG workers, it's a rise in automation, more complex production processes, wage hikes and the marital status' of women that it's believed has caused this dip.

