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ESPRIT CASE STUDY ON WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

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1 INTRODUCTION

Among the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Gender Equality (Goal #5) is particularly relevant to the apparel industry, since clothing factories are well known for employing a largely female workforce. Merely employing women, however, is not enough. Women workers must also receive the same opportunities as their male co-workers to learn, thrive, and advance on the job. Esprit was curious to understand the exact distribution of women in the workforce in the factories that make our products, and in particular to confirm the percentage of women in management positions.

In January and February 2018, Esprit surveyed our supplier factories in Bangladesh and India to analyze the gender distribution of the workforce in order to see the percentages of women employed at various levels of the factories. We also gathered information from Ukraine for comparison outside the region. We chose Ukraine for comparison because, although there are problems in factories there, women are more prominent in management than in other countries. We intend to extend the work to other regions where we manufacture, but decided to limit the initial work to a manageable group of countries.

2 METHODOLOGY

Surveys were sent to 35 factories in Bangladesh, 26 factories in India, and 6 factories in Ukraine. Factory management was asked to provide information on the number of workers and their gender in 4 levels of factory management: Top Management, Middle Management, Production Supervisors, and Line Workers. We then compared the gender distribution at each level of management with the factories' overall gender distribution for all employees.

Given the variation among factories, we decided to separate them further by type of production in order better to see where women are most prevalent, and most underrepresented, in management and supervisory positions.

There are a number of issues that the survey did not cover. The fact that sewing apparel in many countries is considered "women's work," clearly indicates social inequality, as does the segregation of genders among jobs within the factories, with women generally operating sewing machines and men performing other tasks. In a few regions, women are absent from the workforce altogether and even the sewing machine operators are men. All of these issues speak directly to the status of women in their societies, and are worthy of serious consideration.

For the purpose of this study, however, Esprit focused our analysis on women working within the factory, and their presence or absence in management roles. We limited the scope in this way simply because we are in a position to impact the numbers of women in management positons, but much less capable of making a difference in overall social patterns of employment. Change will come eventually outside the factory walls, but for the moment it is important to make a difference where we can exercise influence inside the factory, and to work toward larger goals in the future.

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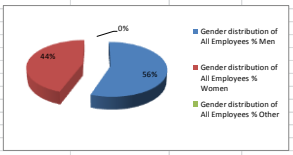
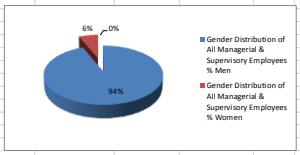
3 RESULTS

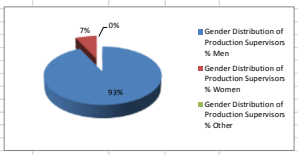
BANGLADESH ALL FACTORIES (35 Factories)

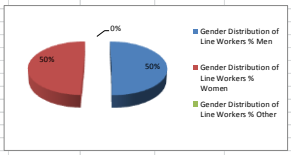
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid & Supervisory)	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
146654	17380	479	2	0	481	5259	283	0	5542	10563	794	0	11357	65134	64140	0	129274

Gender distribution of All Employees			Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees			Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors			Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other
56%	44%	0%	94%	6%	0%	93%	7%	0%	50%	50%	0%





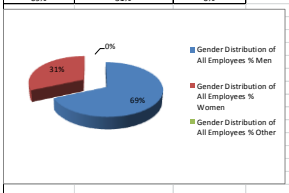


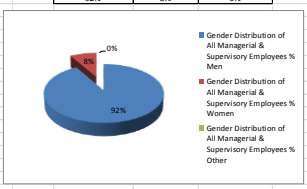


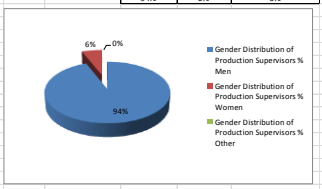
INDIA ALL FACTORIES (26 Factories)

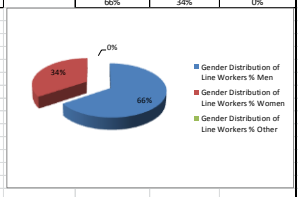
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
25335	2810	87	9	0	96	706	110	0	816	1784	114	0	1898	14788	7737	0	22525

Gender Distribution of All Employees			Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees			Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors			Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other
69%	31%	0%	92%	8%	0%	94%	6%	0%	66%	34%	0%





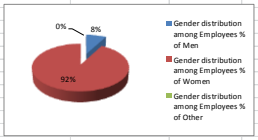


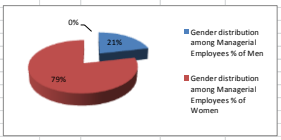


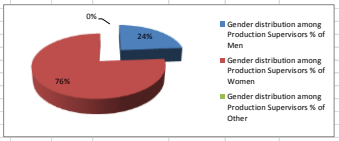
UKRAINE ALL FACTORIES (6 Factories)

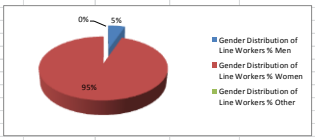
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
1155	187	4	15	0	19	11	52	0	63	25	80	0	105	51	917	0	968

Gender distribution of All Employees			Gender distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees			Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors			Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other
8%	92%	0%	21%	79%	0%	24%	76%	0%	5%	95%	0%









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BANGLADESH CUT TO PACK GARMENT- CMT (17 Factories)

OVERALL GENDER DISTRIBUTION

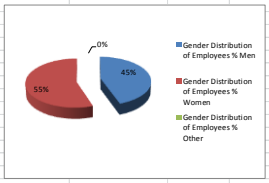
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
66160	7544	291	1	0	292	2046	95	0	2141	4762	349	0	5111	22445	36171	0	58616

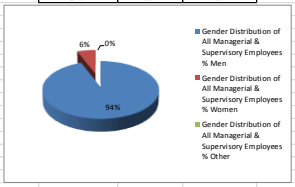
Gender Distribution of Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
45%	55%	0%

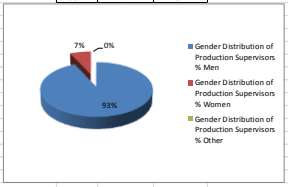
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
94%	6%	0%

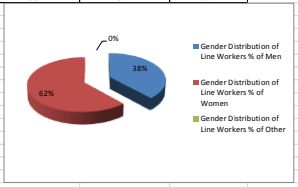
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
93%	7%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% of Men	% of Women	% of Other
38%	62%	0%









TOP PERFORMERS (5 POFs, Percentages of Female Supervisor ≥ 10%)

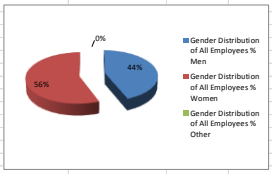
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
22499	2693	148	0	0	148	1071	61	0	1132	1232	181	0	1413	7439	12367	0	19806

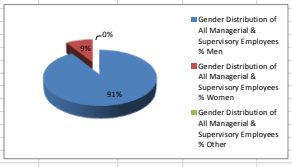
Gender Distribution of All Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
44%	56%	0%

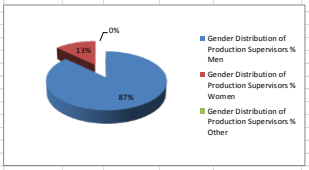
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
91%	9%	0%

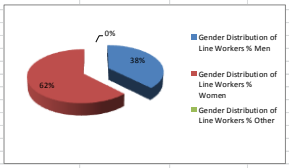
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
87%	13%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
38%	62%	0%









BOTTOM PERFORMERS (8 POFs, Percentages of Female Supervisor ≤ 5%)

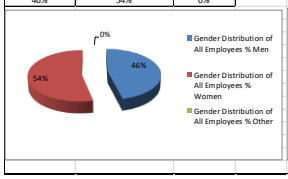
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
32180	3447	87	1	0	88	496	13	0	509	2736	114	0	2850	11594	17139	0	28733

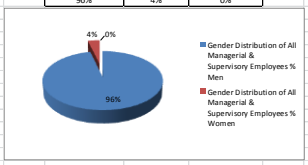
Gender Distribution of All Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
46%	54%	0%

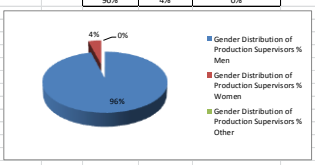
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
96%	4%	0%

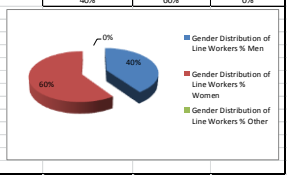
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
96%	4%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
40%	60%	0%









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BANGLADESH SWEATERS (12 Factories)

OVERALL GENDER DISTRIBUTION

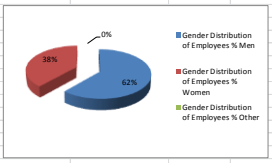
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
26673	3198	75	0	0	75	513	78	0	591	2209	323	0	2532	13608	9867	0	23475

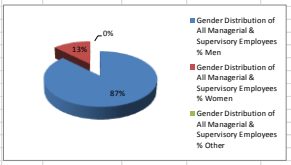
Gender Distribution of Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
62%	38%	0%

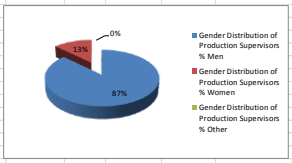
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
87%	13%	0%

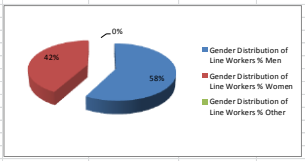
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
87%	13%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
58%	42%	0%









TOP PERFORMERS (4 Factories, Percentage of Female Supervisors ≥ 14%)

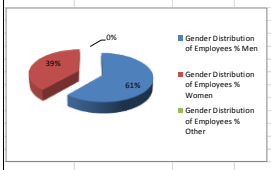
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
10637	1560	37	0	0	37	270	61	0	331	958	234	0	1192	5270	3807	0	9077

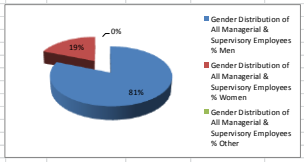
Gender Distribution of Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
61%	39%	0%

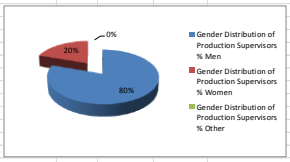
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
81%	19%	0%

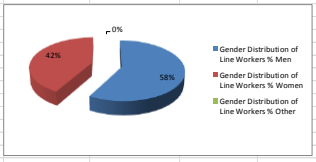
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
80%	20%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
58%	42%	0%









BOTTOM PERFORMERS (4 Factories, Percentage of Female Supervisors ≤ 7%)

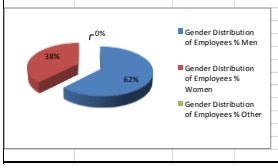
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
8325	1042	13	0	0	13	190	14	0	204	791	34	0	825	4195	3088	0	7283

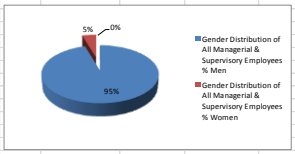
Gender Distribution of Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
62%	38%	0%

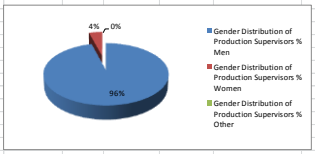
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
95%	5%	0%

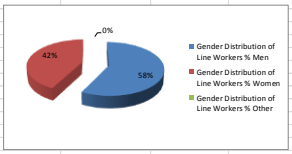
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
96%	4%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
58%	42%	0%









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BANGLADESH COMPOSITE KNITTING (6 Factories)

OVERALL GENDER DISTRIBUTION

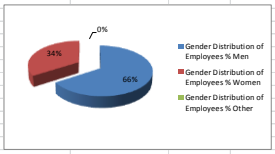
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
53821	6638	113	1	0	114	2700	110	0	2810	3592	122	0	3714	29081	18102	0	47183

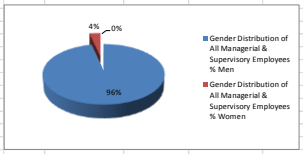
Gender Distribution of Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
66%	34%	0%

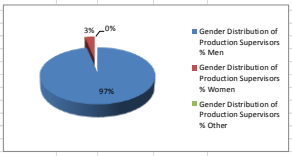
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
96%	4%	0%

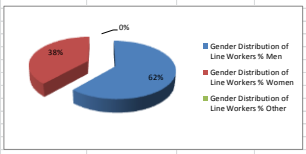
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
97%	3%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
62%	38%	0%









TOP PERFORMER (1 Factory, Percentage of Female Supervisors = 12%)

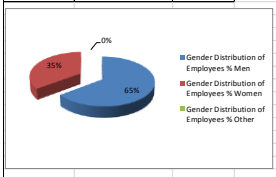
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
5819	902	17	1	0	18	325	23	0	348	473	63	0	536	2950	1967	0	4917

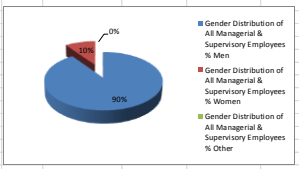
Gender Distribution of Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
65%	35%	0%

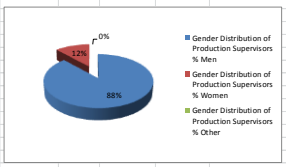
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
90%	10%	0%

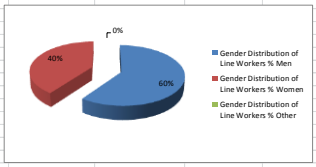
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
88%	12%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
60%	40%	0%









BOTTOM PERFORMERS (5 Factories, Percentags of Female Supervisors ≤ 4%)

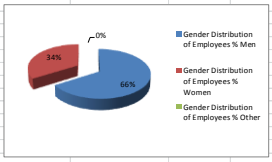
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
48002	5736	96	0	0	96	2375	87	0	2462	3119	59	0	3178	26131	16135	0	42266

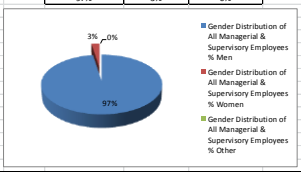
Gender Distribution of Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
66%	34%	0%

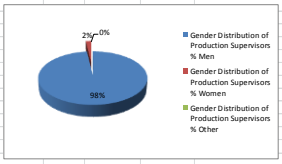
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
97%	3%	0%

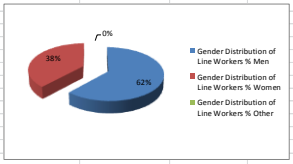
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
98%	2%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
62%	38%	0%









ESPRIT

INDIA CUT TO PACK GARMENT (14 Factories)

OVERALL GENDER DISTRIBUTION

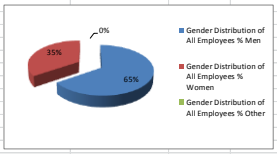
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
20122	2036	62	4	0	66	453	61	0	514	1356	100	0	1456	11303	6783	0	18086

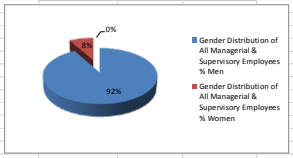
Gender Distribution of All Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
65%	35%	0%

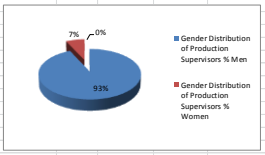
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
92%	8%	0%

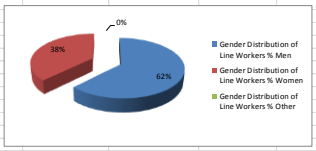
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
93%	7%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
62%	38%	0%









TOP PERFORMERS (4 Factories, Percentage of Female Supervisors ≥ 14%)

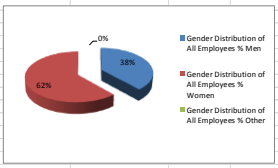
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
4541	404	18	0	0	18	126	9	0	135	204	47	0	251	1396	2741	0	4137

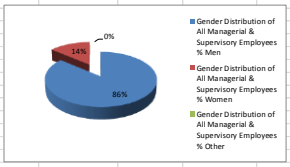
Gender Distribution of All Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
38%	62%	0%

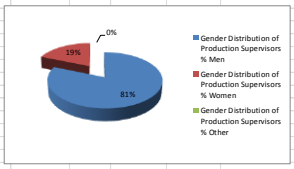
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
86%	14%	0%

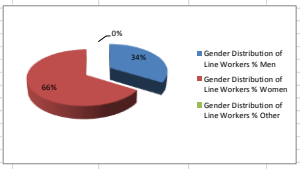
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
81%	19%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
34%	66%	0%









BOTTOM PERFORMERS (5 Factories, Percentage of Female Supervisors ≤ 4%)

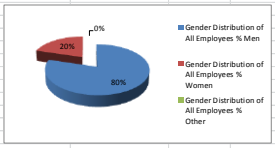
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
7581	746	32	2	0	34	110	5	0	115	581	16	0	597	5320	1515	0	6835

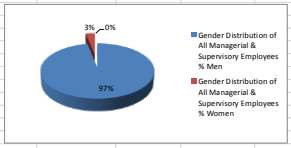
Gender Distribution of All Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
80%	20%	0%

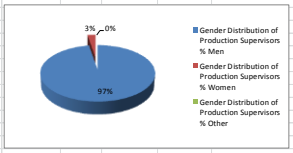
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
97%	3%	0%

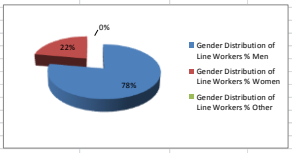
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
97%	3%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
78%	22%	0%









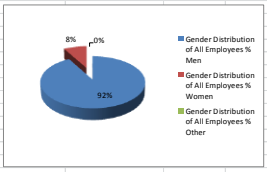
ESPRIT

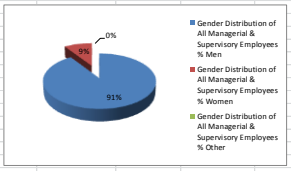
INDIA ACCESSORIES & SHOES (8 Factories)

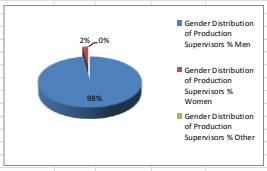
OVERALL GENDER DISTRIBUTION

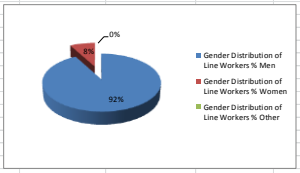
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
3316	486	17	3	0	20	189	37	0	226	235	5	0	240	2606	224	0	2830

Gender Distribution of All Employees			Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees			Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors			Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other
92%	8%	0%	91%	9%	0%	98%	2%	0%	92%	8%	0%





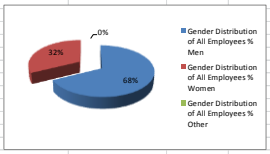


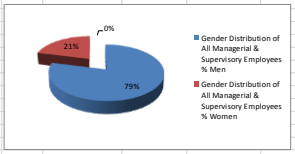


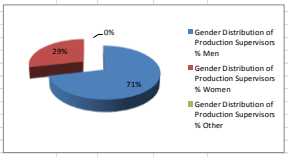
TOP PERFORMERS (1 Factory, Percentage of Female Supervisors = 29%)

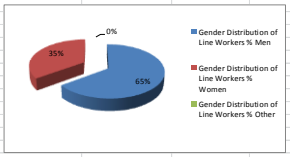
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
189	38	1	0	0	1	24	6	0	30	5	2	0	7	98	53	0	151

Gender Distribution of All Employees			Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees			Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors			Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other
68%	32%	0%	79%	21%	0%	71%	29%	0%	65%	35%	0%





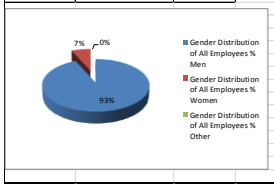


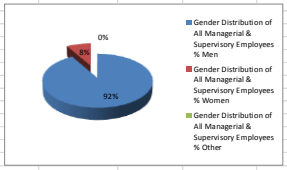


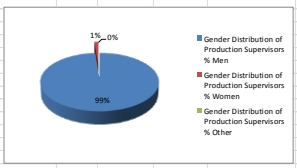
BOTTOM PERFORMERS (7 Factories, Percentage of Female Supervisors ≤4%)

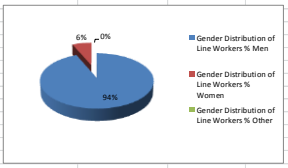
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
3127	448	16	3	0	19	165	31	0	196	230	3	0	233	2508	171	0	2679

Gender Distribution of All Employees			Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees			Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors			Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other	% Men	% Women	% Other
93%	7%	0%	92%	8%	0%	99%	1%	0%	94%	6%	0%









ESPRIT

INDIA LEATHER GARMENTS (4 Factories)

OVERALL GENDER DISTRIBUTION

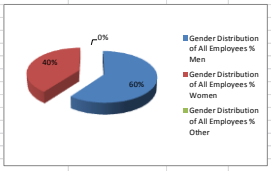
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
1897	288	8	2	0	10	64	12	0	76	193	9	0	202	879	730	0	1609

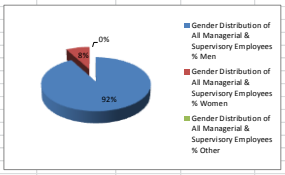
Gender Distribution of All Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
60%	40%	0%

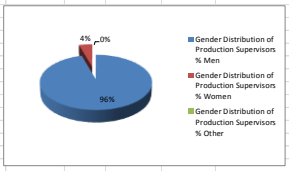
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
92%	8%	0%

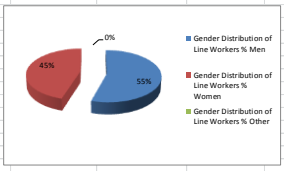
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
96%	4%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
55%	45%	0%









TOP PERFORMERS (1 Factory, Percentage of Female Supervisors = 17%)

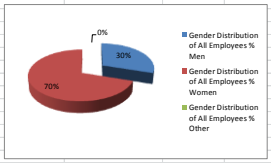
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
340	33	1	0	0	1	5	4	0	9	19	4	0	23	77	230	0	307

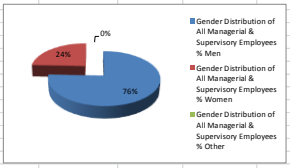
Gender Distribution of All Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
30%	70%	0%

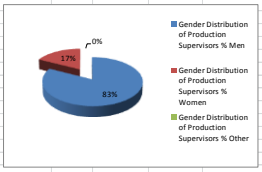
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
76%	24%	0%

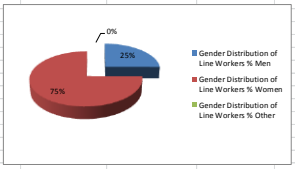
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
83%	17%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
25%	75%	0%









BOTTOM PERFORMERS (3 Factories, Percentage of Female Supervisors ≤5%)

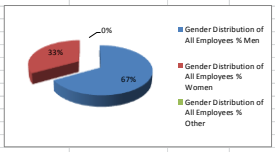
Total Employees	Managerial Employees (Top, Mid &	Top Management				Middle Management				Supervisory				Line Workers			
		Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total	Men	Women	Other	Total
1557	255	7	2	0	9	59	8	0	67	174	5	0	179	802	500	0	1302

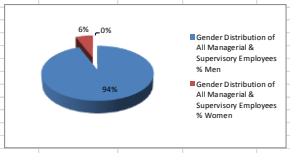
Gender Distribution of All Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
67%	33%	0%

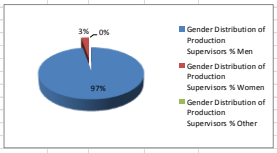
Gender Distribution of All Managerial & Supervisory Employees		
% Men	% Women	% Other
94%	6%	0%

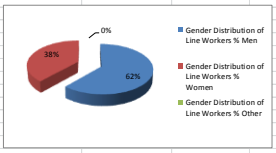
Gender Distribution of Production Supervisors		
% Men	% Women	% Other
97%	3%	0%

Gender Distribution of Line Workers		
% Men	% Women	% Other
62%	38%	0%









4 CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

Ideally, the percentage of women at each level of management should be roughly equivalent to their prevalence in the workforce. In fact, men were overrepresented in every level of management. The findings were largely as expected, but having hard numbers allows us to understand the magnitude of the problem, and to set concrete goals for improvement. Still, the factories varied significantly in how many female managers they had, meaning that improvements are probably possible within a reasonably short period of time.

As we looked at the numbers, we noticed more men in the workforce than expected. Statistics stating that the overwhelming majority of apparel factory workers are women are often heard, but we found this situation not actually to be the case. In cut & sew factories, there are many more women than men, but at lower tiers of the supply chain where there are fewer sewing machines and more industrial processes, the gender distribution quickly reverses. Overall, we found women to make up 44% of Esprit supplier factory employees in Bangladesh, 36% of factory employees in India, and 92% of employees in Ukraine, where all Esprit factories are cut & sew. The figures for Bangladesh and India in cut & sew factories are 55% and 58% respectively. Women are obviously an important part of the apparel supply chain workforce in all of these countries, but plenty of men work in the industry, as well.

Even though the total percentage of female workers in our factories was not as high as expected, when the numbers were broken down according to job level, women were still found to be underrepresented above entry level. For Bangladesh overall, women comprise 44% of the total workforce, but only 7% of line supervisors. India is little better, with 40% of the workforce, but only 8% of the line supervisors, being women. Ukraine does much better, yet with only 8% of the workforce being male, 24% of line supervisors are still men.

There are a number of reasons that we are focused on the percentage of women as line supervisors. Line supervisors tend to be workers who started on the production line, but gained experience and skills to move up. Seeing women at this level indicates that they are able to come into the factory as inexperienced workers and work up to a better job over time, i.e., that women are being given opportunity to advance to higher paying jobs. Line supervisors are also important because there are many of them in any given factory. As a result, they have intense contact with the larger workforce, and therefore play a significant role in the factory's overall atmosphere and whether it is a decent place to work. In particular, certain forms of harassment are far more likely to be reported by women to women than to men, which means that female supervisors are a prerequisite for certain problems even to be reported, much less addressed. Finally, many female sewing machine operators means that there is a large number of women developing the technical skills they need to move into supervisory roles, which implies potential to make fast, concrete improvement in areas where women are underrepresented.

As stated above, Esprit wants to use our findings to make concrete improvements within a reasonable period of time. We are currently in the process of discussing our findings with each factory in India and Bangladesh, and are asking them to formulate a plan to increase the number of female line supervisors by the end of 2018. We are also asking them to develop plans to make the percentage of female line supervisors match the percentage of female workers in the factory overall by the end of 2020. Setting numerical goals for improvement is deceptively simple. These goals may appear to be just a matter of numbers and hiring practices, but they actually imply that factories develop training programs that do not already exist in order to prepare women who are already technically skilled with the communication, supervisory, and conflict resolution skills needed to manage people effectively. In other words, if factories wish to promote women into supervisory positions, they need to make sure that they are preparing their female line workers to assume that role. This implies a larger effort than simply selecting women to fill positions as they become vacant.

In coming months we intend to expand the survey to additional countries, and to develop a program to bring the presence of women in supervisory positions into line with their prevalence in the workforce overall. The goal is to have the percentage of female line supervisors roughly match their percentage in the workforce overall by the end of 2020.

Increasing the number of female line supervisors in our supplier factories will not, by itself, bring about gender equality. Still, it is a small, useful change that we can actually make happen. Beyond assuring fair treatment for women, we expect that increasing the numbers of women in supervisory roles will create additional positive results for the factories, as well.