



A typical footwear operation in Bangladesh.

CREDIT: LANDMARK FOOTWEAR

BANGLADESH SEEKS TO IMPROVE PRODUCTION

Mohammad Aminul Islam

The footwear industry in Bangladesh is hopeful of a bright future, but it currently suffers from low productivity.

Export-oriented footwear manufacturers are on the rise all over Asia, in countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka. But the production capacity of small- and medium-sized producers in those countries is too low and, as a result, they often struggle in the export market.

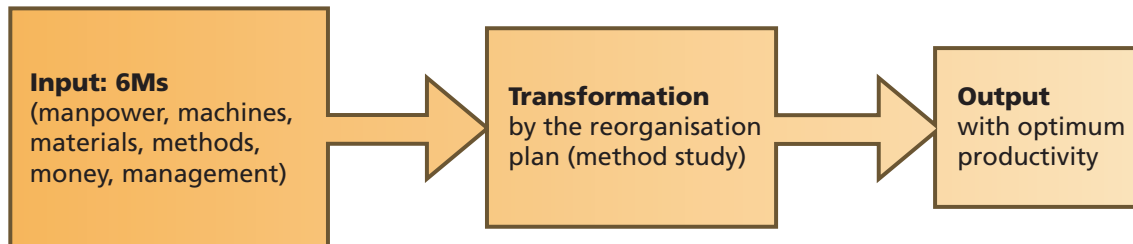
But a low-capacity production set-up can be converted into a high-capacity resource if it has the right people, materials, machines, money, methods and management. There is a scientific way of looking at this; you can set up an

input system and turn it into plans for a conversion process.

As a result of low productivity, companies in Bangladesh and elsewhere are missing big orders, and the orders they are able to win and fulfil are of lesser quantity. There is inefficient handling by the operators, inefficient transportation of finished or part-finished products, inefficient routing of products, raw material arriving late and unskilled manpower.

A footwear manufacturer in this situation will be able to improve and meet its targets if it is able to adopt a reorganisation plan in which the input system is transformed into efficient and useful products. The reorganisation procedure would look like Figure 1.

Figure 1: Reorganisation procedure



In this method, a series of concrete proposals make up the reorganisation plan. The proposals are that the operation should have a specific factory lay-out, with a warehouse, a cutting section, a stitching section, and a section for lasting, finishing and packing. They also include proposals for training, for materials handling and for transportation.

Say a factory in Bangladesh with 240 operators produces only 850 pairs a day. In this example, the operation is making men's and women's shoes in a factory of around 4,000 square-metres. It is a pre-fabricated steel structure with fully covered heat insulation.

The machines available in this factory are a post-bed double-needle machine, a post-bed single-needle machine, a flat-bed sewing machine, a cylinder-bed binding machine, a travelling-head cutting machine, and ones for automatic splitting, vamp crimping, attaching thermo-adhesive, cement drying, shaping back parts, heel lasting, toe lasting and a cooling machine.

One of the problems is that there are too many people doing too many different things to have high levels of production and good quality shoes. The table below gives an outline of what this sort of operation would look like.

By putting in correctly the proposals for change outlined above, you can increase this output to more than 1,500 pairs a day, that's 6.25 pairs a day or more for each operator and an increase in productivity of 78.6%.

This is the sort of step footwear manufacturers in Bangladesh must put in place to be able to compete in today's global market.

Mohammad Aminul Islam is a marketing and development executive at Landmark Footwear in Dhaka.



OPERATION TABLE

Task	Particulars	Working hours/daily	Daily production	Operators	Pairs/Operation
1.	Cutting Uppers	16	850	6	142
2.	Cutting Sole+ Lining+Component	16	850	6	142
3.	Preparation of nrs. (1+2)	16	850	33	26
4.	Stitching (2 lines)	08	850	130	7
5.	Lasting	08	850	65	13
6.	Finishing & Packing	10	850	—	

Total direct people = 240