Call Volume Continues to Grow

The Helpline received over 800 calls in September, a 83% increase in call volume from August. Amader Kotha is now available to more than 85,000 workers across 29 factories.

Phulki Executive Director Explains Amader Kotha at Washington, D.C. Forum

Suraiya Haque, Phulki executive director and Amader Kotha project partner, spoke at a forum in Washington in September to review progress of the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety. Ms. Haque explained that the Helpline is now routinely receiving calls from workers about a variety of safety and non-safety issues, despite the fact that helplines are quite new to Bangladesh. Former U.S. Senators Mitchell and Snowe of the independent

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**KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:**

- Over 85,000 workers at 29 Alliance factories now have access to Amader Kotha. In addition, workers from factories where Amader Kotha has yet to be introduced are also hearing about the service. Accordingly, callers from 80+ factories placed calls to the Helpline in September.

- The Helpline received 872 calls this month, 84% of which were general inquiries. Most of these came from workers curious to test the Helpline; others were requests for information on factory policies.

- The majority of workers placed their calls while outside the factory, with call volume peaking around 4:00 pm (54%). Another 27% of callers chose not to disclose their calling location.

- In total, 99 issues were reported to the Helpline in September. The most common issue raised was compensation. Many of these issues were related to payment and the Eid holiday. Others dealt with partial payment, overtime and post-employment compensation. See the following page for more details.

- 18 urgent issues were captured by the Helpline in September, ranging from active fires to blocked/locked exits at factories. In each case, the Helpline team and Alliance worked diligently to address and resolve these incidents, thereby ensuring workers’ safety.

- Several callers reported abuse (verbal and physical) from their line supervisors, stemming from mistakes made by workers on the factory floor. Helpline representatives informed factory management of these incidents and continue to follow-up with callers to ensure resolution.

- Calls related to age, gender and disability discrimination were made to the Helpline in September. Communication channels between workers and factory management were created by Amader Kotha in all cases to achieve win-win outcomes.

Please see the adjacent visualizations for further information on Helpline usage.
A CLOSER LOOK: Worker Compensation

Every month, we will take a closer look at a specific issue or interesting trend gleaned from workers’ discussions with Amader Kotha. This month: worker compensation.

A total of 29 compensation-related issues were reported to Amader Kotha in September. These issues fall into four broad categories, including:

EID HOLIDAY. Workers expressed several concerns associated with the Eid religious holiday. Callers complained that either their factory did not provide an Eid bonus and/or that the Eid bonus structure was inconsistent across workers. Other workers reported only partial payment of their September paycheck prior to the holiday, but preferred full payment before Eid.

OVER-TIME. Some callers reported either unpaid or partial payment for overtime work they had completed in September.

TERMINATION. Several workers felt they did not receive proper compensation following termination or resignation from their positions.

BENEFITS. Workers called the Helpline with concerns about accessing their Provident Fund social insurance and family death benefits.

Amader Kotha and the Alliance are working with factory management to substantiate and resolve all worker issues received by the Helpline. In one case, informal talks held between the Helpline/Alliance, factory management and workers helped to resolve a walk-out at a factory.

Bi-Partisan Policy Center and Alliance Board Chair Tauscher acknowledged the positive role that the Helpline was playing in their remarks.

Coming soon: A webinar to learn more about Amader Kotha will be held on October 29th. Look for details soon.

Sewing worker places Amader Kotha Helpline card in pouch with factory ID for easy access.
Amader Kotha, or “Our Voice” in Bangla, is a unique collaboration among three project partners—Clear Voice, a project of The Cahn Group that operates hotlines and builds effective grievance mechanisms in supply chains; Phulki, a respected civil society organization working to improve the lives of workers and their families in Bangladesh; and Good World Solutions (GWS), a non-profit organization whose flagship tool—Labor Link—has reached over 100,000 workers. Each partner brings years of experience building innovative, best-in-class labor compliance programs in supply chains.

A fire occurred at a home nearby a factory, threatening not only the community but the factory itself. The authorities were notified immediately after Helpline representatives learned of the situation. Fortunately, the factory management and nearby community worked together and the fire was under control before the fire brigade arrived. No one was injured.

A worker called to say that neither he nor his co-workers had received full payment of wages last March. Later that same day, Helpline representatives received word that workers who had received less than the full amount received their back pay.

Many concerns reported by workers in September related to Eid bonuses, reflecting the national debate about the timeliness and adequacy of Eid religious holiday related payments. In some cases, workers were able to influence the outcome of management responses to these issues. We hope you too will find these voices from workers, along with the rest of the information in this newsletter, informative.

-Amader Kotha Helpline Project Team