The Amader Kotha Helpline was available to 937,241 workers in 692 factories by the end of the first quarter of 2016. 1,183 substantive issues were shared with the Helpline from workers at Alliance factories during this period, of which 350 were related to safety. Workers continued to have access to a toll-free number that is available nationwide.

Site visits also continued in order to assess the adequacy of Helpline implementation in factories. One-on-one interviews, focus group discussions and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) surveys were deployed and result in better information about worker and management attitudes toward the Helpline. Worker satisfaction with the Helpline remains at high levels at 83%.

As always, let us have your thoughts and suggestions. We can be reached by email at: workerhelpline@afbws.org.

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**Rashid finds worrisome cracks on bathroom wall**

Following the completion of the Alliance’s building safety assessment, Rashid observed cracks in the male bathroom of about 15–20 feet in length between the roof and the joint wall. Most of the required retrofitting and strengthening of the factory’s support structures had already been completed. Rashid was concerned that the cracks he found posed a risk.

“When I went to the factory building, I was nervous because I felt there might be some safety problem,” said Rashid.

After receiving the call from Rashid, Helpline officers immediately notified Alliance staff who then contacted the factory right away.

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*continued on page 5*
KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- 22,601 calls were placed to Amader Kotha this quarter from January through March, for a total of 59,878 calls received to date.
- Peak call times this quarter were 11am and 4pm, a continued trend from last quarter reflecting call volume due to Helpline trainings.
- 350 safety issues were reported to Amader Kotha this quarter, of which 73 were urgent and 277 were non-urgent. Among factory-related safety issues, active fires and inadequate facilities were the most frequently reported by workers.
- General inquiries comprised 36% of issues this quarter, disregarding missed or test calls. The majority of these calls pertained to factory policy and Helpline support capabilities.
- 1,183 substantive issues were shared with the Helpline from workers at Alliance factories this quarter. The most commonly-reported issues were related to non-factory fires, compensation, and verbal abuse.
KEY FINDINGS CONTINUED:

- 63% of issues reported by workers were resolved this quarter, disregarding missed or test calls. 37% were unable to be resolved due to workers not seeking resolution assistance or the Helpline and/or Alliance not being able to pursue issues further.

- 94% of workers who called to report a substantive issue this quarter were comfortable sharing their name with the Helpline, but only 68% would allow their name to be shared with the factory.

- Of the 692 Alliance factories that have received training on the Helpline, workers from 465 factories (67%) placed calls to the Helpline between January and March 2016. Workers from 250 Helpline-launched factories (36%) reported substantive issues this quarter.

- Workers from 138 non-Alliance factories called the Helpline this quarter. Most calls pertained to compensation and factory policy inquiries.

- More than 90% of the urgent issues reported this quarter were resolved and closed by the end of March. The remaining unresolved urgent (as well as non-urgent) issues are being followed-up on in accordance with Alliance protocol.

NOTES:
Detailed call data is provided to the Alliance for distribution to Alliance member companies after factories have had the opportunity to verify and respond to information provided by workers.
IVR SURVEY OF WORKER SATISFACTION WITH HELPLINE

MARCH UPDATE

The Helpline project team has now been able to assess nine months’ worth of data from the Helpline Satisfaction survey administered to workers. This monthly, anonymous, interactive voice response (IVR) survey gauges the user experience of workers who call the Amader Kotha Helpline with substantive issues or inquiries. Survey responses from the past nine months have resulted in the following highlights:

- 541 Helpline Satisfaction surveys have been collected from workers over the past nine months
- We consistently see a ~20% response rate among workers who receive the automated survey via their mobile phones

Positive Worker Feedback for Helpline

- Survey respondents continue to have an overall positive view of the Helpline
  - More than 8 out of 10 workers are satisfied with their Helpline experience, and more than 9 out of 10 would use the Helpline again in the future and/or recommend it to colleagues
- Worker satisfaction with their Helpline experience is a major driver of referral to other workers
  - 88% of those satisfied with their Helpline experience are "very likely" to recommend the Helpline, while only 51% of unsatisfied users say the same
- Ease of Helpline use continues to be the strongest driver of user satisfaction
  - Other potential influencers in terms of user experience include ‘promptness of connection to Helpline Representative’ and ‘comfort discussing issue(s) with Helpline Representative;’ however, these factors do not correlate with overall user satisfaction as strongly as ‘ease of Helpline use.’

Worker Satisfaction vs. Ease of Helpline Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Neither easy nor difficult</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfied</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to responding to calls, assessments in factories were a major part of Helpline team activities in the first three months of 2016. In these photos, workers are being asked to express their views about the Helpline and to demonstrate their knowledge of how to use it.
WHO ARE WE?

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 200,000 workers. Each partner brings years of experience building innovative, best-in-class labor compliance programs in supply chains.

Engineers confirmed that the cracks were not dangerous. At the request of the Alliance, this news was communicated to all workers in the factory over the public address system.

Rashid had never called the Helpline before. He was motivated to call because he wasn’t so sure he would get a quick response using internal channels. He observes that factory management is very responsive these days, putting workers more at ease.

Nasir and Dina find blocked aisles and a congested stairwell

Nasir was routinely surrounded by fabric spools, blocking easy egress for himself and the other 3 workers in the ground floor warehouse. Dina, a sewing operator in a different factory, had a similar experience. She found that fabric was stored in the stairwell on the 4th floor, making it difficult to pass.

“If any incident occurred in the factory,” remarked Nasir, “it will be difficult for us to leave the place quickly. We could do our work outside of the building but management makes us work inside where the fabrics rolls are everywhere.”

Nasir and Dina expressed a similar view—their management responded well after the call to the Helpline and the Alliance staff intervened. In both cases, the fabric was removed. Nasir’s warehouse floor and Dina’s stairwell have remained clear for easy egress.

Iqbal reports “FIRE!”

At 11:30 in the morning, fire broke out in the 1st floor washing division of a factory outside Dhaka. The Helpline received notice almost immediately from Iqbal who was working nearby.

“I was unable to find the number for the fire brigade, but I had the Helpline number,” explained Iqbal. “Now we are conducting monthly fire drills in the factory and management is taking fire prevention very seriously.”

As it turned out in this case, the fire brigade had already been notified. But the added assurance of being able to reach the Helpline to make sure the fire authorities were on their way provided an extra layer of protection and comfort to Iqbal. No one was hurt and there was no significant damage to the factory.

Whether it is concern about cracks in the wall, blocked aisles or not having easy access to the number for the fire brigade, workers continue to report that the Helpline provides an important safeguard for their wellbeing.