



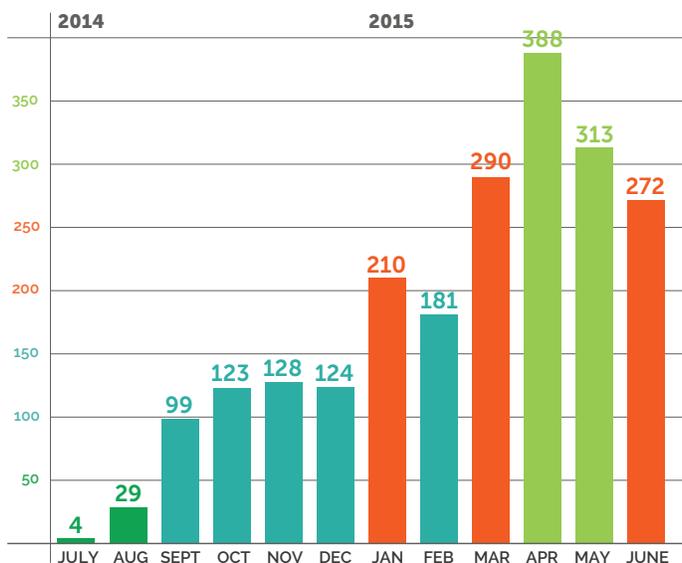
## SECOND QUARTER 2015: HIGHLIGHTS

### News, analysis, and case studies

Our new quarterly newsletter format brings Helpline news, analysis and brief case studies to Helpline stakeholders and serves as a tool for anticipating and responding to safety and other factory issues.

Helpline Headlines (see sidebar: page 1) offers updates from the Amader Kotha Helpline project team to bring clarity to major developments. Second Quarter 2015 Findings (see page 2) provides an in-depth analysis of calls received. A Closer Look – Urgent Safety Issues Caused by Earthquake in Nepal (see page 5) examines how the Helpline was used during that natural disaster and is followed by other case studies of safety issues. Refined Call Categories to Drive Accountability and Reporting (see page 4) outlines new protocols for call categories based on learnings during the pilot period. Finally, more information about Amader Kotha project partners is found on page 6.

### SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES REPORTED TO HELPLINE



Only issues that occurred in Alliance factories are shown.

## HELPLINE HEADLINES

**Toll free number goes “live”.** In a major improvement in the Helpline service for workers, a majority of the Bangladesh telecoms companies, including Airtel, Banglalink, CityCell, GP and Robi, now recognize the toll free Amader Kotha number nationwide. Workers who use these mobile phone providers may now call without incurring any airtime costs. Workers may continue to dial the previously distributed number as well and after placing their initial call, Helpline Officers will call them back in order to reduce costs to workers. Achieving this milestone was a successful team effort between Helpline project partners, the Alliance staff, government agencies and the participating telecoms.

**Overnight service improved.** Calls from workers to the Helpline are received at all hours of the night and day. To professionalize the Helpline service during the overnight hours, Helpline officers are now stationed at the Alliance office 24-hours a day. In this way, the Helpline is able to capture call data in ‘real time’ and deliver a more consistent and reliable service to workers who take these late night or early morning opportunities to report critical concerns.

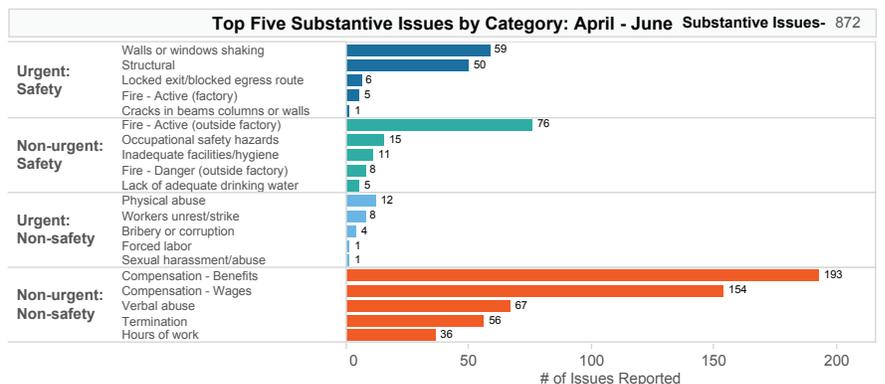
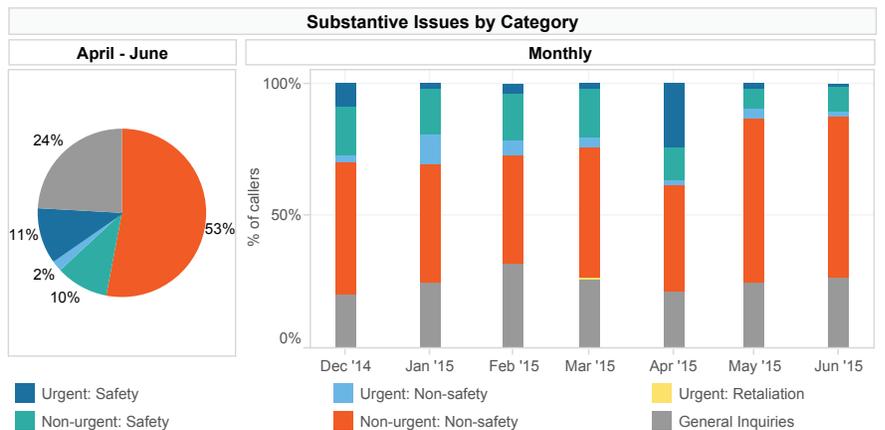
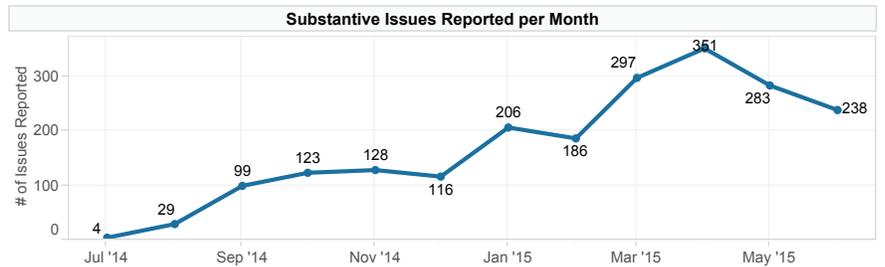
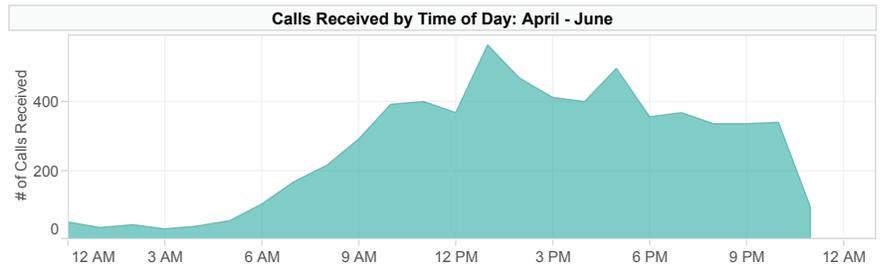
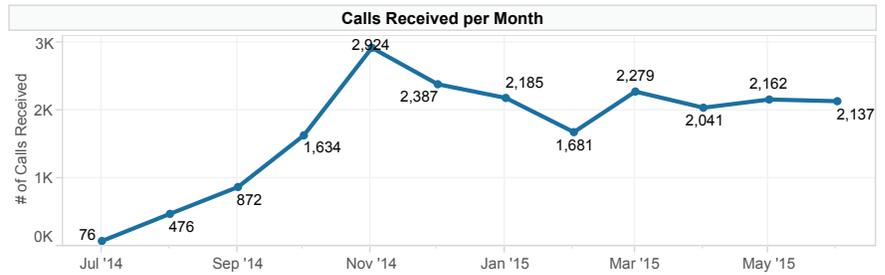
**Refined call categories and protocols.** Helpline call categories have been modified with clear direction for all parties regarding information dissemination and roles for investigation, remediation and verification. For more information on the result of this collaborative process, see Refined Protocols on page 4.



# SECOND QUARTER 2015 FINDINGS

## KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- **6,340 calls were placed to Amader Kotha this quarter from April through June**, for a total of 20,854 calls received to date.
- **The majority of calls this quarter were received during daytime hours, with a peak around 1pm of 566 calls.** This is largely due to workers calling during and immediately after training to test the Helpline, and also to the urgency of issues related to the earthquake in Nepal.
- **270 safety issues were reported to Amader Kotha this quarter**, of which 144 were urgent and 126 were non-urgent. The most common urgent safety issues reported this quarter were related to shaking walls or windows and structural concerns due to the earthquake. For Alliance factories, all structural concerns required an assessment by the Alliance technical/engineering team in order to be resolved. The other most prevalent safety issue, though non-urgent, was fire outside of factories. For such concerns, Helpline Officers inform the local fire brigade, follow up with the caller to ensure resolution, and inform Alliance management.
- **872 substantive issues were shared with the Helpline from workers at Alliance factories this quarter.** The most commonly-reported issues were related to compensation, non-factory fires and verbal abuse.
- **General inquiries comprised 24% of issues this quarter**, disregarding missed or test calls. The majority of these calls were Helpline inquires and factory policy inquiries.

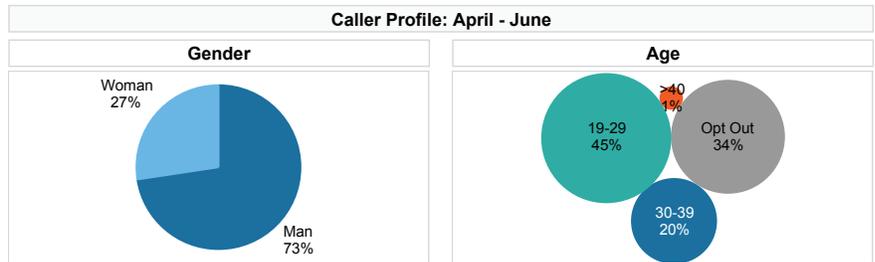
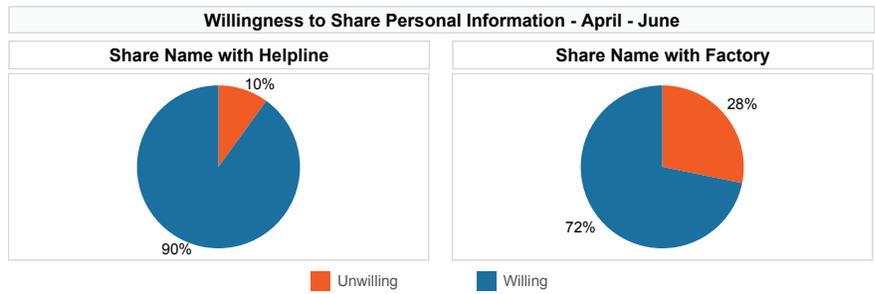
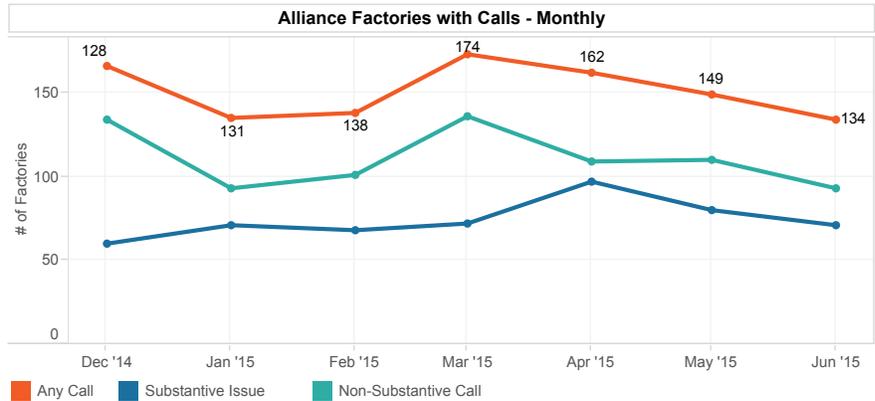


## KEY FINDINGS CONTINUED:

- 90% of workers who called to report a substantive issue this quarter were comfortable sharing their name with the Helpline, but only 72% would allow their name to be shared with the factory.
- From December 2014 through June 2015, among Alliance factories where the Helpline has been launched, 183 (61%) employed workers who called with any issues, while 128 (43%) employed workers who called with substantive issues.
- Workers from 97 non-Alliance factories called the Helpline this quarter. Many called to inquire about how the Helpline works, but more than 1/3 called with substantive urgent and non-urgent concerns.
- 97% of urgent issues reported this quarter were resolved and closed by the end of June. Remaining pending cases are from June and are on-track to be resolved soon.

**NOTE:** 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.

Total number of calls may reflect multiple calls about the same issue.



### Progress to Date

Total Calls	Substantive Issues	Helpline Launched Factories
# inbound: 20,854	Alliance factories: 2,060	# workers: 642,112
# outbound: 15,714	Non-Alliance factories: 206	# factories: 300

**Notes:**

- Graphs do not include calls from "General Inquiry", "False", or "No category" issue categories, except graphs on calls received and calls by time of day and where otherwise stated.
- Calls have been received from non-Alliance factories. For example, calls were received from 97 factories not listed as Alliance factories in Q2. These calls are included in the call volume and call time and factories with calls graphs above, but not included in the issue or caller profile visualizations.
- Percentage of Alliance factories with calls is based on an average total number of Alliance factories from 2015 of 654.
- Substantive issues per month graph may not match historical newsletters due to changes in issue categorization over time.
- # of workers and # of factories where the Helpline has been launched are based on information provided by the Alliance.

# Learning through Experience: Case Studies

Case studies highlight the day-to-day experiences of Amader Kotha Helpline Officers who are receiving calls from workers and capturing key action steps taken through to the final resolution of the worker's concerns. The two case studies described below occurred between April 1 and June 30, 2015.

## Case Study: Safety first

Safety issues are of paramount importance for the Amader Kotha Helpline. Take the case of a factory worker who called to report a blocked egress route in a warehouse. The worker, a Quality Inspector, noticed that fabric was being stored under workstations and alongside the path of the egress route. In an emergency it would be difficult to exit the warehouse. The worker proposed to perform quality inspections outside the warehouse, but management refused the request.

After Helpline staff determined the nature of the call, the Alliance staff and the factory management were notified. The factory management committed to an investigation and to resolving the issue. The worker was then briefed by a Helpline Officer.

Some days later, a Helpline Officer called the worker to check on the status of the poorly stored fabric and learned that the situation remained the same. The Alliance was informed again. Concerned, the Alliance called management again right away. Several interventions later the situation had still not changed and a more senior factory manager was contacted. Finally, the general manager of the factory visited the warehouse to observe the situation for himself. He instructed the warehouse manager to resolve the safety problem once and for all and the problem has not been reported again.

Repeated vigilance on the part of the Helpline and the Alliance staff and the attention of the factory general manager resulted in the safety concern being successfully resolved.

## Case Study: Structural concerns

Concerns of workers are always important and must be taken seriously even when they may not be validated in the end. Take the case of a worker who anonymously reported that there was a crack in the wall on the 4th floor of a factory building.

After reporting the concern about a crack to the Helpline, the worker hung up without leaving her name. After an unsuccessful attempt to call her back to get further details, Helpline staff responded by calling other workers in the same area of the factory using lists of worker phone numbers that had been collected during the worker Helpline orientation. The other workers reported that there was indeed a visible crack in the wall but that management had assured them that the crack did not pose a structural risk to the building. After informing the Alliance staff, an Alliance technical team visited the factory to determine the validity of the claim. The Alliance team concluded that the crack was not on a load bearing structure and posed no risk of harm.

## Refined Call Categories to Drive Accountability and Reporting

Drawing from learnings from the Helpline pilot project in 2014, the Helpline call categories have been modified and clear direction for all parties has been established regarding information dissemination and roles for investigating, remediating and verifying concerns reported by workers. The revision process was a collaborative effort among the Helpline, the Alliance staff and the Alliance Worker Helpline Working Group. Revised call categories are as follows:

**Urgent Safety Issues:** Reports of worker concerns that involve injury or potential imminent harm within a factory. These issues are restricted to those related to building and/or fire safety such as active fires in the factory; fire danger in the factory; locked factory exits or blocked egress routes; cracks in beams, columns or walls; unattended or bare electric wires; sparking or short circuits; and walls or windows shaking.

**Non-Urgent Safety Issues:** Reports of safety-related worker concerns that either (1) do not present an immediate risk of injury / harm, or (2) are located outside of a factory (and therefore outside of the scope of the Alliance). In the case of worker concerns outside factories, these issues are addressed immediately, but are referred to the appropriate authorities. These issues include active fire (outside factory), fire danger (outside factory), corrosion in steel, occupational safety hazards, and inadequate health-related facilities / hygiene.

**Urgent Non-Safety Issues:** Reports of worker concerns that require immediate attention but are not directly related to building and fire safety. There are three categories of urgent non-safety issues.

- **Category A:** Egregious non-safety labor issues such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, use of bonded, indentured or prison labor, child labor, wages delayed more than a month or restriction of movement.
- **Category B:** Serious non-safety issues such as physical harassment, sexual harassment, withholding documents, fights, strikes, serious work stoppages, and violations of freedom of association.
- **Category C:** Retaliation or Integrity issues such as potential violations of the Alliance's ethical or transparency policies or impeding workers' access to the Helpline. This category also includes reports of bribery or corruption, unauthorized subcontracting and retaliation or threats of retaliation for use of the Helpline.

**Non-Urgent Non-Safety Issues:** Reports related to the employment relationship such as compensation, demotion, discrimination, food/water served at factory, hours of work, termination and verbal abuse.

For more information about these call categories, how information is disseminated, or roles for investigating, remediating and verifying concerns reported by workers, contact us at: [workerhelpline@afbws.org](mailto:workerhelpline@afbws.org).



## A CLOSER LOOK: URGENT SAFETY ISSUES CAUSED BY EARTHQUAKE IN NEPAL

When the powerful Gorkha earthquake rocked Nepal on April 25th, its impact was immediately felt in Bangladesh some 400 miles away and the Amader Kotha Helpline began to ring. In fact, between April 25th and May 12th, when the last significant aftershock was felt, a total of 83 urgent calls were received from workers in 54 factories. While ~85% of calls came from workers in Alliance factories, ~15% of calls were received from non-Alliance factory workers - proving the widespread value of the Helpline.

During the earthquake and aftershocks the Helpline received a surge of calls from workers reporting urgent safety issues, including building cracks or other structural deformities (55 instances), blocked exit routes or restrictions on egress (3 instances), and shaking of walls/windows (68 instances). Many callers expressed concern about multiple issues.

Even if the earthquake did not necessarily cause structural deformities or exit path blockages, it served to make workers more aware of their surroundings. In all cases, the Helpline's highest priority was to make sure that the workers sought safety and that the Alliance and factory management were promptly informed.

In the majority of cases where structural deformities were reported, Alliance technical teams assessed the factories. In cases where continued safe operation of the factories was in question, the factories were referred to the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE). Where impediments to egress were reported, Alliance non-technical teams visited the factories, reminding management of their obligation not to inhibit exiting workers during natural disasters or other incidents. Where blocked exit routes were reported, factories were informed that they must clear pathways. Finally, where calls came from workers in factories not associated with the Alliance, the Alliance referred reported safety concerns to the Accord or the DIFE for follow up.

Ultimately, the Helpline contributed to identifying urgent safety concerns during this difficult and stressful time in Bangladesh. Data collected through the Helpline allowed factory managers and Alliance Members to receive timely information, contributing to safe factory work environments.

## CHRONOLOGY HIGHLIGHTS:

### EARTHQUAKE-RELATED CALLS AND RESPONSES

#### 25th April 2015

The first call was received at 12:33 p.m. while the earthquake was still underway. Factory buildings were shaking and affected workers were attempting to exit buildings. Within the hour, 10 calls were received from nine Alliance factories and by the end of the day, 32 calls had been received from 26 factories. Eighteen callers reported that they noticed cracks in factory buildings. Thirteen callers reported their buildings were shaking. One caller reported that an egress route was blocked. One of these factories was referred to DIFE after an assessment by the Alliance engineering team.

#### 26th April 2015

High call volume continued. Thirty calls were received with a 10-hour period from workers in 23 factories. Eighteen workers reported cracks in factory buildings and 12 workers experienced shaking buildings. Two of these factories were referred to DIFE after an assessment by the Alliance engineering team.

#### 27th April 2015

Seventeen calls were received within a 12-hour period from 12 different factories. Sixteen workers reported cracks and one worker reported a shaking building. All Alliance factories were later visited and assessed by either the Alliance technical or non-technical team, depending on the expertise required, and found to be safe.

#### 29th April 2015

A worker reported cracks in a factory building. On May 6th an Alliance technical team visited the factory and found that the factory building was safe.

#### 30th April 2015

The Helpline team received a call from a worker who reported a crack in a factory building. The Alliance later reported that no significant crack was found in any load bearing part of the building and factory management was advised to communicate the good news to workers.

#### 12th May 2015

The effect of a significant earthquake was again felt in Bangladesh. Two workers from different factories reported urgent safety concerns which were immediately related to the Alliance and factory management for assessment.

In total, three factories were referred to DIFE for review; all of the others were deemed to be safe.

## 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.

কিভাবে হেল্পলাইনে যোগাযোগ করবেন?

আপনার ফোনটি কল করার জন্য প্রস্তুত করুন

হেল্পলাইন নাম্বার ডায়াল করুন

আপনার কথা আমাদের জানান। আপনার পরিচয় গোপন থাকবে।

ফোন করুন  
[hotline number]

নিরাপদ কর্ম পরিবেশ আপনার আমার লক্ষ্য  
(Safe working environment is our goal)

আমাদের কথা  
ALLIANCE  
WORKER HELPLINE

নিরাপদ কর্ম পরিবেশ  
আপনার আমার লক্ষ্য  
(Safe working environment is our goal)

ফোন করুন  
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ফোন করুন  
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Clear Voice  
Hotline Service

Phulki

Good World  
Solutions

Information about Amader Kotha is publicized in factories