



Heather Canon
Vice President, Capacity Building, ELEVATE

Keeping open lines of communication with workers is critical during COVID-19

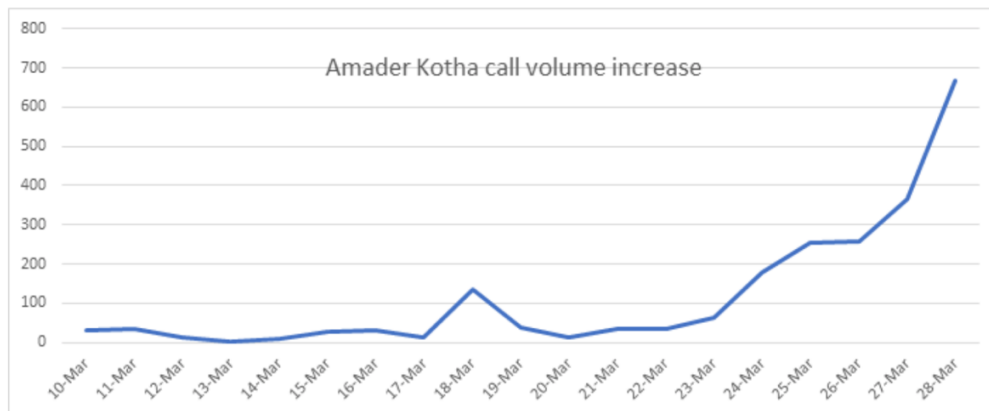
In this time of global pandemic, vulnerable populations such as minimum-wage workers are at great risk. In the United States, California’s roughly 400,000 agricultural workers are deemed essential, but often without proper safety measures or guaranteed benefits. For migrant workers in India, the world’s biggest lockdown has forced migrants to walk hundreds of miles home.

In Bangladesh, the Amader Kotha Worker Helpline, which provides workers with a mechanism to report and resolve safety and other concerns in the ready-made garment sector, has witnessed a dramatic spike in concerned calls from factory workers in the last 3 weeks.

The Amader Kotha Helpline was first established in July 2014 and is operated partnership with Clear Voice, Phulki, and Laborlink by ELEVATE.

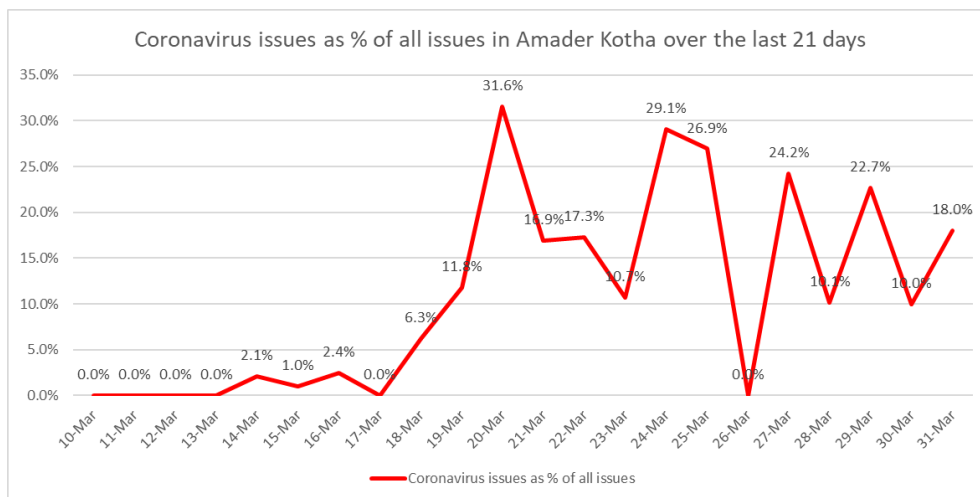
This is what workers in Bangladesh are reporting

The Amader Kotha Helpline’s call traffic has increased four-fold during the last three weeks. Workers are calling about a range of issues, including health and safety, coronavirus, and wages and factory closures. For the helpline, this is about as many issues in a week than we typically receive in a month.



Source: Amader Kotha (2020). [Amader Kotha Helpline](#)

Calls about the virus represent a substantial percentage of the overall calls as shown in the table. Apart from 26 March, which was a holiday, daily calls related to coronavirus range from 10% to 31% of all issue calls. This trend can be expected to continue as the virus spreads.



Source: Amader Kotha (2020). [Amader Kotha Helpline](#)

We anticipate an increase in concerns about the status of jobs and wages and other compensation as factory layoffs and closings increase.

Workers are understandably concerned about their safety and their future, as well as their families and communities in this time of unprecedented need. Keeping open lines of communication with workers is critical. Just as companies supported workers in the wake of the Rana Plaza factory collapse, the Helpline stands ready to coordinate emergency response for factory workers.