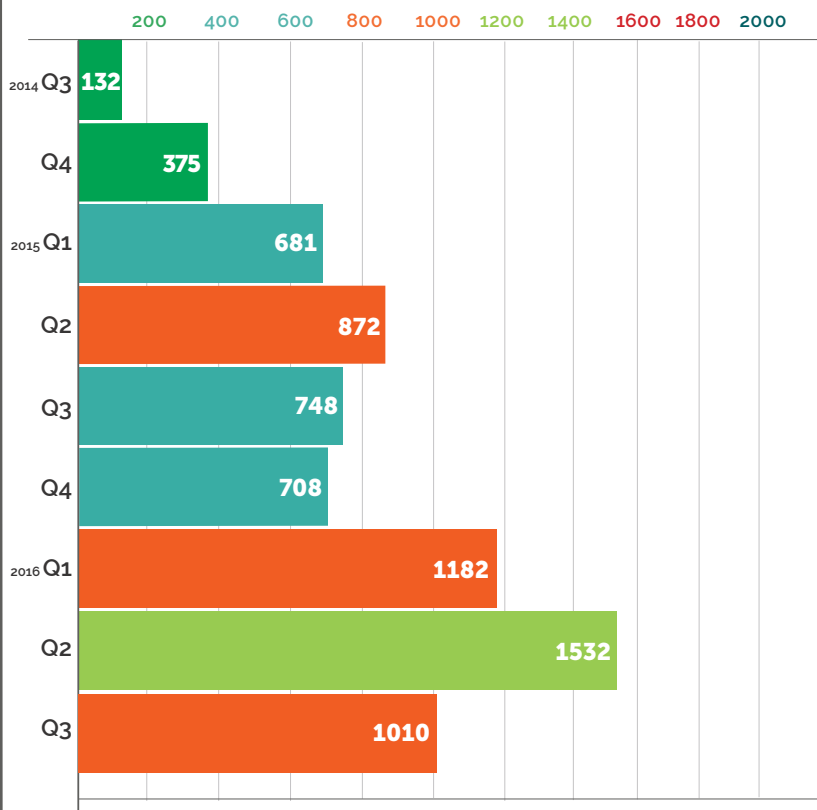


## ★ Q3 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

The Amader Kotha Helpline was available to 1,045,670 workers in 806 factories by the end of the third quarter of 2016. 1,010 substantive issues were shared with the Helpline from workers at Alliance factories during this period, of which 176 were related to safety. Workers continued to have access to a toll-free number that is available nationwide.

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) surveys continued to be deployed to determine worker satisfaction. Worker satisfaction rates remain high.

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



Only issues that occurred in Alliance factories are shown.

## HELPLINE HEADLINES: WHAT MAKES AMADER KOTHA WORK?

**Editor's Note:** In recent editions of *Our Voice*, brands, workers and factory owners have explained ways the Amader Kotha Helpline is useful to them. In this edition, Doug Cahn, Clear Voice founder and Amader Kotha project manager, reflects on the role of the Helpline.

Helplines are not new or unique in Bangladesh today. In fact, with the dramatic increase in mobile phone usage in recent years, call-in numbers can be seen posted in storefronts or on billboards across the country where they are increasingly used as tools by business, government, and civil society to identify problems, provide customer service and connect people with needed services. So what distinguishes the Amader Kotha Helpline as a unique and valued service?

First, we must acknowledge the primacy of the Helpline's mission - to identify critical safety issues that if not remediated could lead to significant harm to people and/or property. None of us dare imagine the consequences of another factory disaster. Workers are on the frontlines for identifying and reporting potential safety or other problems. Any initiative to increase the likelihood of identifying critical factory problems has inherent value.

Since the Amader Kotha Helpline was established we have learned that each of the major stakeholder groups see different, yet complementary, benefits of the service.

*continued on page 2*

## HELPLINE HEADLINES

*continued from front page*

*At the end of the day, Amader Kotha is more than just a toll-free number that workers can call. It is a well-rehearsed series of clearly communicated process steps that enable the reporting of safety and other concerns of workers so that the proper stakeholders can validate and resolve problems in factories.*

For factory workers, the Helpline provides a critical communication channel when safety or other issues are observed and when management is not immediately available or is viewed as unsympathetic.

For factory managers, the Helpline identifies small problems before they become a threat to their workforce, their property and/or their business relationships. It can point to areas that need improvement in worker - management communications.

For brands and retailers, the Helpline identifies factories that may require additional support in order to improve relations between workers and managers, drawing from the many helpful initiatives and capacity building programs that are available in Bangladesh today. It can offer an additional level of comfort that compliance is being managed in the factory.

At the core of the Helpline's success are three distinct features: awareness, accessibility and accountability. Together, these features create the trust necessary for workers to feel comfortable to use it, for managers to be motivated to respond to the information provided, and for brands and retailers to have confidence that problems are being identified and addressed. Without these features, there would be no trust, no calls, no issues identified, and no issues resolved through the Helpline.

### Key Helpline Features: The Three "A's"

**Awareness.** Our goal is that every worker receives the Helpline card and for all workers to know how to call and what to expect when they do. We do this with in-factory training sessions in collaboration with Alliance safety teams and our own training staff. We distribute Helpline cards that are sized to fit on lanyards carrying factory ID cards. We provide posters and other visible material for posting in the factories. We give factory managers public address announcements to play periodically and ask for reports on frequency of use. When awareness levels of workers are low, we prioritize the factory for additional training.

**Accessibility.** The Helpline is toll-free nationwide and available 24/7. Helpline officers are trained to be sensitive to labor conditions, to record information accurately and completely and to always follow-up with workers as information about their concern becomes available.

**Accountability.** Protocols require timely reporting, recording of responses from managers, and validation of reports wherever possible. The Alliance makes site inspections in urgent safety cases and buyers are notified if need be. Workers are always informed about progress on resolving their issue or concern. We use Interactive Voice Response (IVR) surveys to capture the rates of satisfaction of workers and to learn worker attitudes that can improve Helpline operations.

At the end of the day, Amader Kotha is more than just a toll-free number that workers can call. It is a well-rehearsed series of clearly communicated process steps that enable the reporting of safety and other concerns of workers so that the proper stakeholders can validate and resolve problems in factories.

When we think about what distinguishes the Amader Kotha Helpline from the growing number of helplines and hotlines available in Bangladesh today, it is appropriate to reflect on these key features that have resulted in our successes to date. 🎯



## Structural integrity

During a factory construction project, a 3rd floor sewing operator called to report that several vertical beams had been cut and the building was shaking. After a review of the situation by professional Alliance staff, the factory ceased the construction work and will begin again only when proper precautions for structural integrity are in place.

## Physical abuse

A worker was slapped twice on her face by the line leader. After the incident, the worker reported the issue to the administrative officer who asked the line leader to apologize. No apology was forthcoming and so the worker called the Helpline. Subsequently, the line leader received a 7-day suspension and is now being watched closely to make sure the inappropriate behavior does not reoccur.

## Fire danger

Sparks were reported coming from an electrical circuit on the 3rd floor of a factory by one of the factory operators. When workers attempted to ring the fire alarm, it did not work. A similar event occurred a short time later the same morning. After these incidents were reported to Amader Kotha, the Alliance investigated and identified a number of improper cable joints. Management reported that the alarm did not work because they were repairing the alarm system at that time. At the request of the Alliance, management was advised to allow workers to leave the building until the cause of the sparks was resolved and the malfunctioning fire alarm was fixed. Calls to workers in the building confirmed that the problems had been resolved. 🛠️



Left: Workers are requested to leave production room until this malfunctioning fire alarm is repaired.

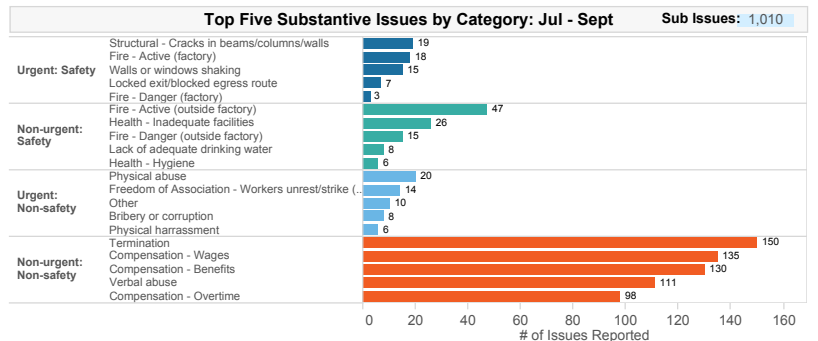
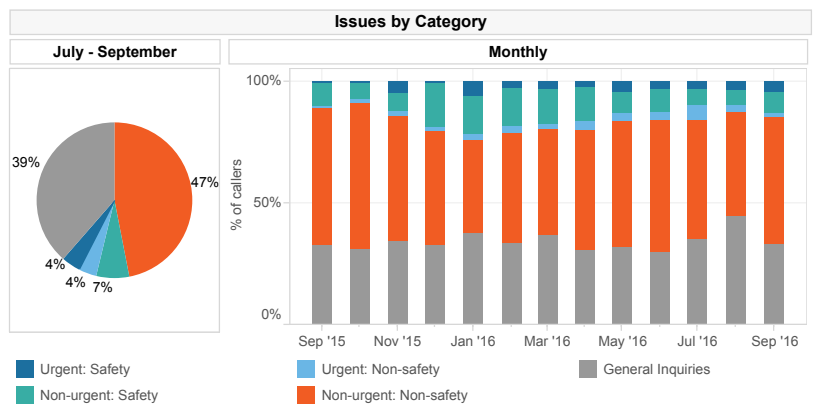
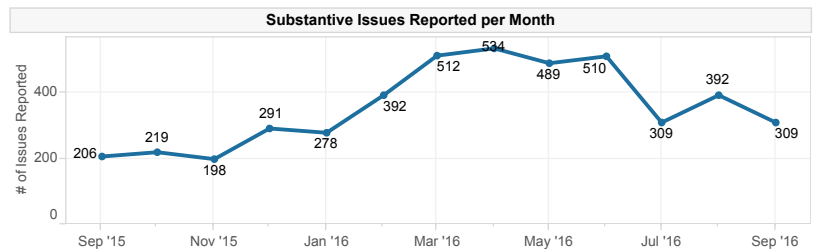
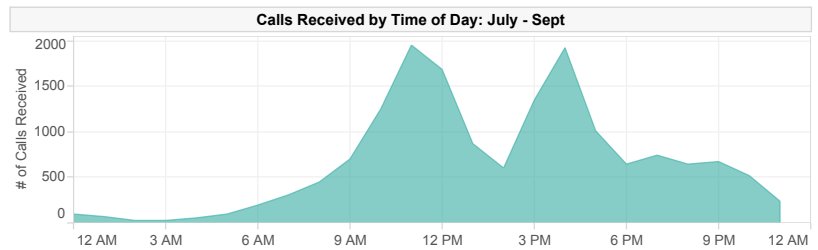
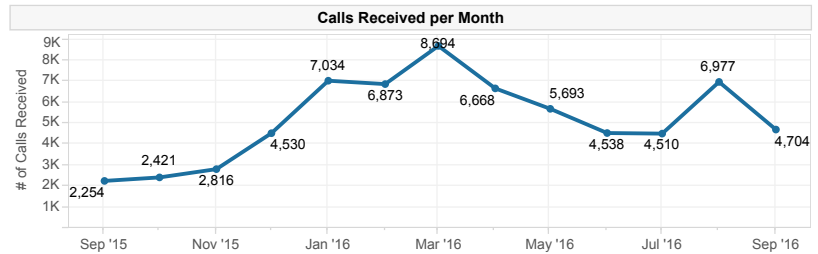
Right: Factory staff review training information—including Helpline material—during break at safety committee training held at the Alliance office in Dhaka.



# THIRD QUARTER 2016 FINDINGS

## KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- **13,817 calls were placed to Amader Kotha this quarter from July through September**, for a total of 90,594 calls received to date.
- **The peak call times this quarter were around 11am and 4pm**, consistent with previous quarters and reflecting test call volume due to Helpline (refresher) trainings.
- **176 safety issues were reported to Amader Kotha this quarter**, of which 64 were urgent and 112 were non-urgent. Among safety issues reported by workers, those most frequently mentioned were fires (both inside and outside of factories); inadequate factory facilities; and cracks in factory beams, columns, or walls.
- **General inquiries comprised 39% of issues this quarter**, disregarding missed or test calls. The majority of these inquiries pertained to labor law and Helpline support capabilities.
- **1,010 substantive issues were shared with the Helpline from workers at Alliance factories this quarter**. The most commonly-reported issues were related to compensation, termination, and verbal abuse.





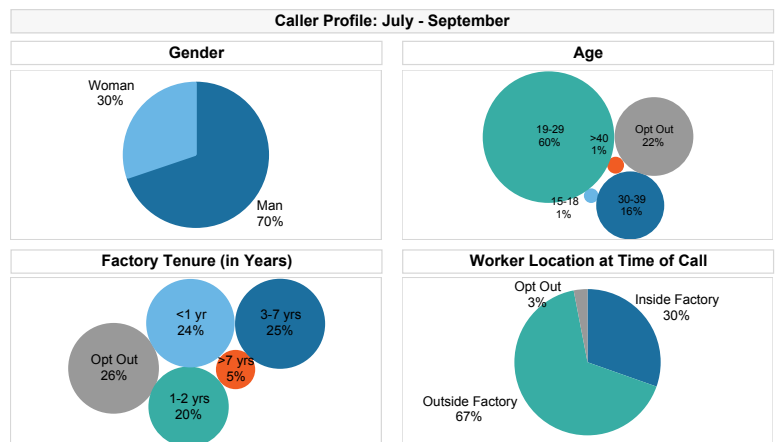
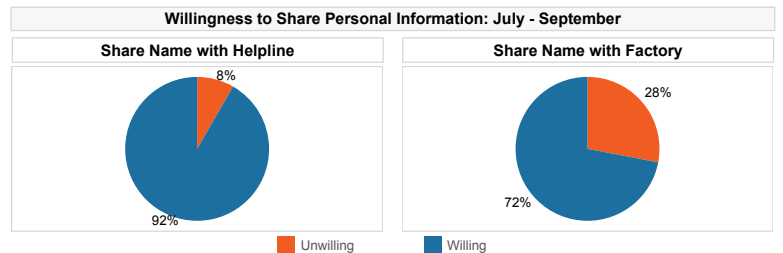
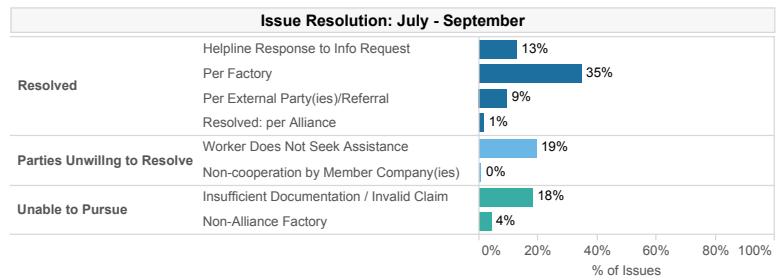
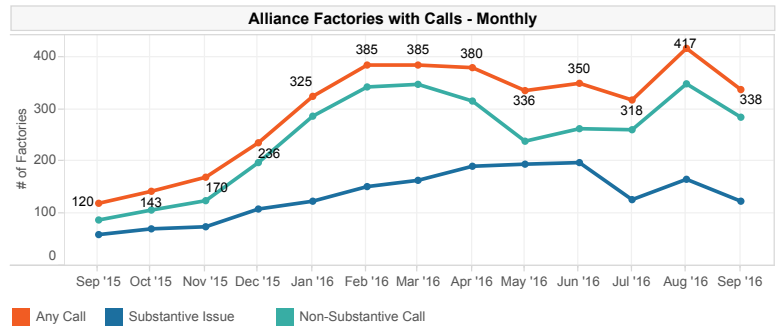
# THIRD QUARTER 2016 FINDINGS

## KEY FINDINGS CONTINUED:

- Nearly 60% of substantive issues reported by workers this quarter were resolved. The remainder were unable to be resolved due to workers not seeking resolution assistance or to the Helpline and/or Alliance not being able to pursue issues further.
- 92% 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.
- Of the 806 Alliance factories that have received training on the Helpline, workers from 513 factories (64%) placed calls to the Helpline between July and September 2016. Workers from 268 Helpline-launched factories (33%) reported substantive issues this quarter.
- Workers from 132 non-Alliance factories called the Helpline this quarter. Most calls pertained to compensation and termination.
- 95% of the safety issues reported this quarter from workers at Alliance factories were resolved and closed by the end of September. All remaining unresolved issues are in the process of being closed 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.



#### Progress to Date (from July 2014 onward)

Total Calls	Substantive Issues	Helpline Launched Factories
# inbound: 92,968	Alliance factories: 7,242	# workers: 1,045,670
# outbound: 47,570	Non-Alliance factories: 836	# factories: 806

**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 132 factories not listed as Alliance factories in Q3. 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.  
 • 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.



## 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—Laborlink—has reached more than 800,000 workers. Each partner brings years of experience building innovative, best-in-class labor compliance programs in supply chains.

আমাদের কথা  
ALLIANCE  
WORKER HELPLINE

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

ফোন করুন  
[hotline number here]

কিভাবে হেল্পলাইনে যোগাযোগ করবেন?

আপনার ফোনটি কল করার জন্যে প্রস্তুত করুন

হেল্পলাইন নাম্বার ডায়াল করুন

আপনার কথা আমাদের জানান। আপনার পরিচয় গোপন থাকবে।

ফোন করুন...  
[hotline number here]

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

Information about Amader Kotha is publicized in factories