



Workers line up to withdraw salaries from their bank accounts.

Building financial health among garment factory workers in Bangladesh

We live in a world today where financial health is a persistent challenge for low- and moderate-income communities — a world where 1.7 billion adults don't have a bank account and where, even in the U.S., many would have trouble meeting a large emergency expense. In Bangladesh, approximately 80% of garment workers are women, the majority of whom receive their salaries in cash, have low levels of financial literacy, and lack access to formal banking services. The combination can make it difficult for workers to protect their income and save for the future.

Since 2018, MetLife Foundation and Swisscontact have been partnering with Sarathi, a financial inclusion program that works with commercial banks and garment factories to bring workers into the formal banking system. The program enables garment factory owners to pay their workers digitally, allowing workers to receive their pay more securely while reducing their transaction costs. In collaboration with local banks, Sarathi is also developing products that help workers receive their salaries straight in their bank accounts, save securely for their short- and long-term goals, gain access to credit products, and meet other needs. Through this initiative, several partnerships have been established, including those with commercial banks who have opened banking outlets and installed ATM machines in and around garment factories so that workers can make transactions in a secure and convenient manner. With hands-on financial literacy sessions, Sarathi works to raise awareness of how banking services can help workers take control of their incomes and improve their financial health.

As of 2019, MetLife Foundation and Sarathi supported workers to:

30k

garment workers

Open new bank accounts for more than 30,000 garment workers to receive more than \$26 million in salaries.

\$500k

in savings

Collectively save \$500,000 in their accounts.

318%

increase
in savings

Increase the average monthly savings per worker by 318% from \$11 (BDT 899) in 2018 to \$37 (BDT 2,997) in 2019.

In Bangladesh, \$37 covers rent for about 2.5 months or food expenses for 50 days. This average monthly savings is close to a third of their average monthly salary.

14k

participants

Attend one of the more than 200 financial and digital literacy sessions hosted by Sarathi on how to use their debit cards to withdraw cash, make payments, save, and plan for their short- and long-term goals. 14,000 workers participated.

18

factories

Start receiving their salaries through direct transfer into their bank accounts at 18 factories.