



Increasing financial independence through mobile money: Kallani's story

Kallani Sarker is a beneficiary of USAID's Aquaculture for Income and Nutrition (AIN) project implemented by WorldFish. In addition to being a farmer, she has also served as an elected member to the local Union Parishad. Kallani is popular in her community, and often shares lifestyle information within her community to improve people's living standards.

In mid-2015, Kallani participated in a two-day mobile money workshop organized by WorldFish with support from a grant from USAID's mSTAR project. From the training, she learned how mobile money can be used to buy airtime, pay and receive salaries, and make domestic transfers.

Kallani found the information so useful that she shared it with a fifteen member women's group that she heads. In particular, she shared how mobile money can help them to make domestic transfers without requiring a middleman anymore. She shared, for example, how she can now use her mobile wallet to send semester fees to her son and daughter who are residing in two different districts. Like many people in her community, in the past she had to pay someone BDT 200 – 300 to carry the money for her. Now she can transfer the money whenever she needs, at a much lower cost. Sharing her own experience with others, Kallani has helped over

"It is my responsibility to help my community knowing that it will benefit them" – Kallani

twenty women in her community to open mobile money accounts. She has also encouraged



Kallani checking her mobile money balance

existing users to utilize the services offered by the providers.

Recalling her first experience with mobile money, Kallani shared that she had difficulty understanding how mobile money works, even though she was comfortable using basic features on her mobile phone. However, with a little practice and support from her daughter, in addition to the knowledge she gained from attending mobile money workshops organized by WorldFish, she quickly learned how to use mobile money like a pro. In addition to receiving money from WorldFish, Kallani also receives money from her relatives. Now she proactively asks her relatives to send her money to her mobile money account, instead of handing her cash or transferring it into her bank account as they had previously done.



Moreover, she encouraged a local retail outlet owner to open a mobile money account and now pays for purchases of household products from that local store using mobile money. Since the outlet owner only has a personal mobile money account, not a merchant account, Kallani needs to pay the payment transfer fee when making purchases, a cost she is happy to pay due to the added convenience.

Kallani further shared how in the past she saved money by keeping it at home, but now she saves it in her mobile money account instead. She feels comfortable doing so, particularly since she can check her account balance any time and does not need to spend extra time counting money.

“I feel safe keeping money in my mobile money account.” – Kallani

Kallani mentioned that even though she has a bank account, she requires someone to accompany her whenever she visits the branch

since it is far from her house and she does not feel comfortable travelling alone. With her mobile money account, she no longer needs to go to bank to withdraw money.

Kallani sees mobile money as a tool for empowering community women who are excluded from the formal financial system. This is why she shares her experiences with other women. She feels that it much more difficult for women in Bangladesh to use formal banking services due to cultural and traditional barriers. She believes that women in communities like hers will benefit immensely by using mobile money, as long as they are informed about the different financial products offered by mobile financial service providers, and understand how to use them.

“I wish I had heard about mobile money earlier” – Kallani

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