

SATHI

(CASE STUDY 2)

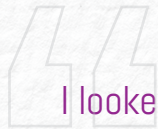


Sathi network

THE PATHFINDER FOR RAHELA KHATOON

Rahela Khatoon is a 47 year old female entrepreneur from the capital Dhaka district. She has seen many ups and downs throughout her career. She completed her Master's in Islamic History and started her career as a sub-editor in a media organization in 2000. As it shuts down soon after, she started looking for other earning sources. In 2003, she started a clothing business. This business proved profitable, and she opened an outlet in Mirpur. After the birth of her second child in 2015, Rahela had to shut down her outlet as she had to look after her children.

Moreover, Rahela struggled to continue business operations due to a lack of human resources and problems caused by the landlord. However, a progressive woman like her soon felt frustrated as she was idle at home. She desperately started to look for opportunities through which she could earn and contribute to the family.



I looked everywhere but could not find a proper direction and satisfaction. The Sathi network emerged as a pathfinder for me. It helped me find my goal and accelerate toward it. I feel proud and happy to be a part of the Sathi network.

—RAHELA KHATOON



THE JOURNEY

Rahela heard about digital centres through an acquaintance and worked there as an apprentice for some years. In 2018, she got the Bank Asia agentship through Aspire to Innovate's (a2i) support. The Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme of the Cabinet Division and ICT Division is supported by UNDP Bangladesh and is the government's flagship innovation & digital transformation policy think-tank. Besides agent banking services, Rahela also provides other services, such as bill payments, government stipend distribution, NID application, and passport application. Initially, she struggled to get sufficient customers and business at the digital centre and could barely earn a monthly average of only BDT 10,000 (~USD 91). In 2020, she moved out of the digital centre and rented an outlet in a busy marketplace. She started to get more customers and deposits from the locality through referrals from her friends, relatives, and acquaintances. However, the business revenue was not enough to meet her needs as she also had to look after her ailing mother and sister besides her family.

A TURNING POINT

In 2022, Rahela became a member of the Sathi network. It was the turning point of her career. As she attended the training programs of the Sathi project, she learned how to operate and expand her business and generate more revenue. She also learned how to manage accounts, build customer relationships, reach out to new customers, resolve customer complaints and feedback, and operate business more efficiently. Through Sathi network's support, she organized many campaigns and conducted other marketing activities, which helped her reach a larger customer base. The ratio of her female customers increased to 70% which was 30% before joining the Sathi network. Rahela realized the market demand and started providing mobile financial services (MFS) to her clients. She now holds the agency of Upay and Rocket, for which she also acknowledges a2i's support. Rahela Khatoon recognizes all the support and assistance that she has received from a2i through becoming a member of the Sathi network.

HOW IS RAHELA TODAY?

Rahela's husband left his low-salaried job and started supporting in her business operations after foreseeing better prospects in agent banking. After she became a member of the Sathi network, she could earn an average monthly income of BDT 30,000 (~USD 273) to BDT 40,000 (~USD 364) through her agent point. She now has a working capital of BDT 500,000 (~USD 4,545), which was roughly around BDT 100,000 (~USD 909) as she started her business in 2018. Rahela conducts a minimum average of 40 banking transactions and 20 MFS transactions daily. She earns an average monthly commission of more than BDT 20,000 (~USD 182) from her agent banking business and more than BDT 10,000 (~USD 91) through her MFS business.

Rahela believes that as a female entrepreneur and a Sathi network member, she can serve many unbanked and underbanked populations in her locality. More than 60% of her customers are women. She also feels that women's participation in financial activities has increased due to her presence. She observes that the number of female-owned accounts and financial transactions by women have increased. Rahela believes women feel comfortable and trust female agents more, over male agents. She says,



“If a girl can become self-reliant, she can make her family prosperous, her society prosperous, and then her country can prosper”

As a successful entrepreneur, Rahela does not halt; instead, she seeks continuous development and improvement. She feels she has many competitors in her locality, which causes her to lose many potential customers. She now seeks the support of the Sathi network and a2i to help her work with other MFS companies through which she can expand the market and maximize customer coverage.

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