



CASE STUDY

## Field Buzz

Deploying mobile technology to manage last-mile distribution and operations in Bangladesh



### FOUNDING YEAR

2015

### GEOGRAPHY

Bangladesh

### FOUNDING TEAM

Alexis Rawlinson | Co-Founder, Sales and Growth Strategy

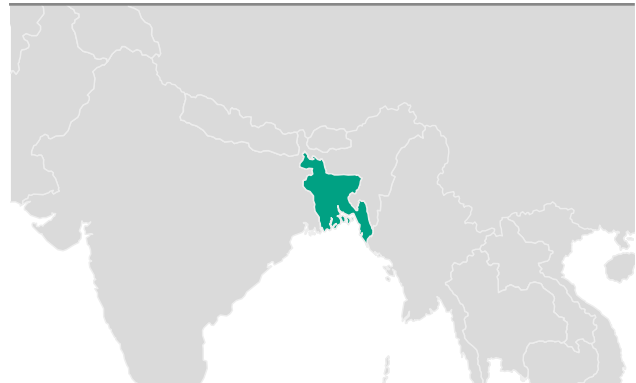
Habib Ullah Bahar | Co-Founder, Products and Engineering

### TWEET PITCH

Field Buzz helps businesses manage last-mile distribution transparently and effectively through mobile technology.

### WEBSITE

<https://field.buzz/>



Traditional small-scale retail stores (*mudir doka*) dominate the retail sector in Bangladesh. The vast majority of Bangladeshis regularly buy groceries from these traditional small shops<sup>6</sup> and almost two million people work as microentrepreneurs in the sector, each serving roughly 100 customers a day.<sup>7</sup> However, these stores are extremely inefficient and often operate informally with little or no transparency.

Meanwhile, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) distribution companies find it arduous to track and manage their geographically dispersed sales networks that serve these small shops. A lack of electronic tracking records creates several challenges in the value chain around placing orders, delivery, cash collection and inventory management. These systemic issues make it almost impossible for retail microentrepreneurs to grow their businesses.

Field Buzz deploys mobile technology to help FMCG distribution companies manage their remote and

dispersed operations all the way to these small shops. With the Field Buzz software on their mobile phones, field agents from FMCG companies (such as sales agents and delivery persons) electronically record all orders, deliveries, payments and credit transactions with traditional retailers, saving time and effort compared to paper-based records. This information is then sent to their managers and warehouses in real time via mobile internet.

Field Buzz's transparent and efficient system helps FMCG distribution companies better serve their retail networks in the 'last mile'. This process of digitisation also has benefits for small traditional retailers, such as more reliable service from their distributors and less risk of running out of stock. The digital profiles and track records that Field Buzz software provides also helps to strengthen their reputation and trustworthiness, which can ultimately help them obtain credit terms and price discounts and grow their business.

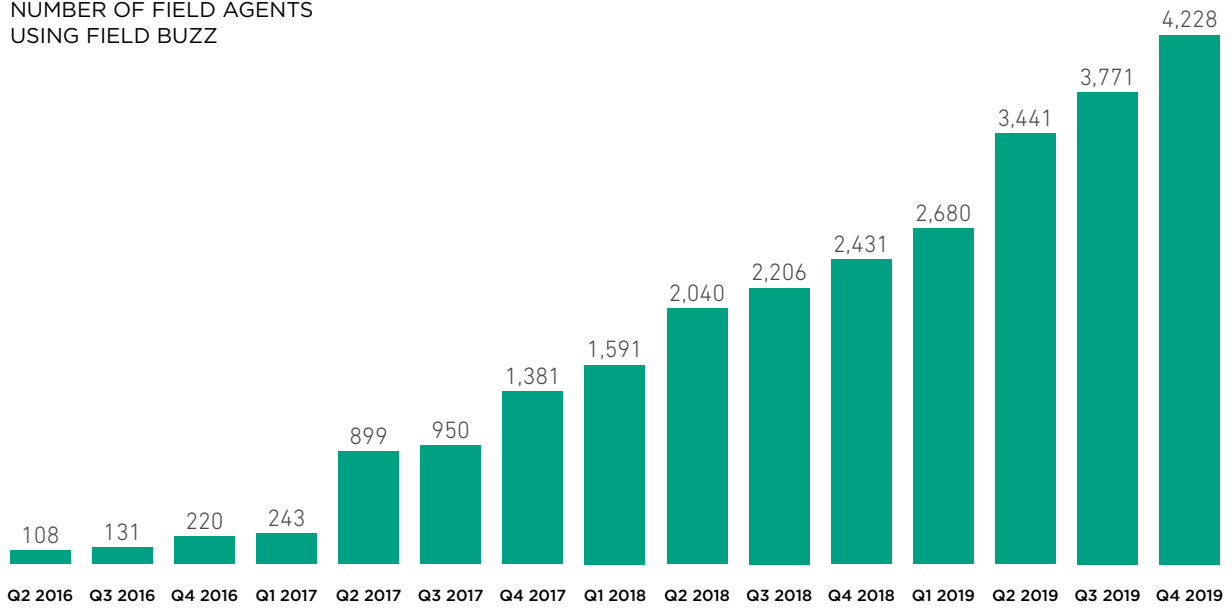
6. BCG (2015), Bangladesh: The Surging Consumer Market Nobody Saw Coming.

7. UNCDF (2019), Landscape Assessment of Retail Micro-Merchants in Bangladesh.



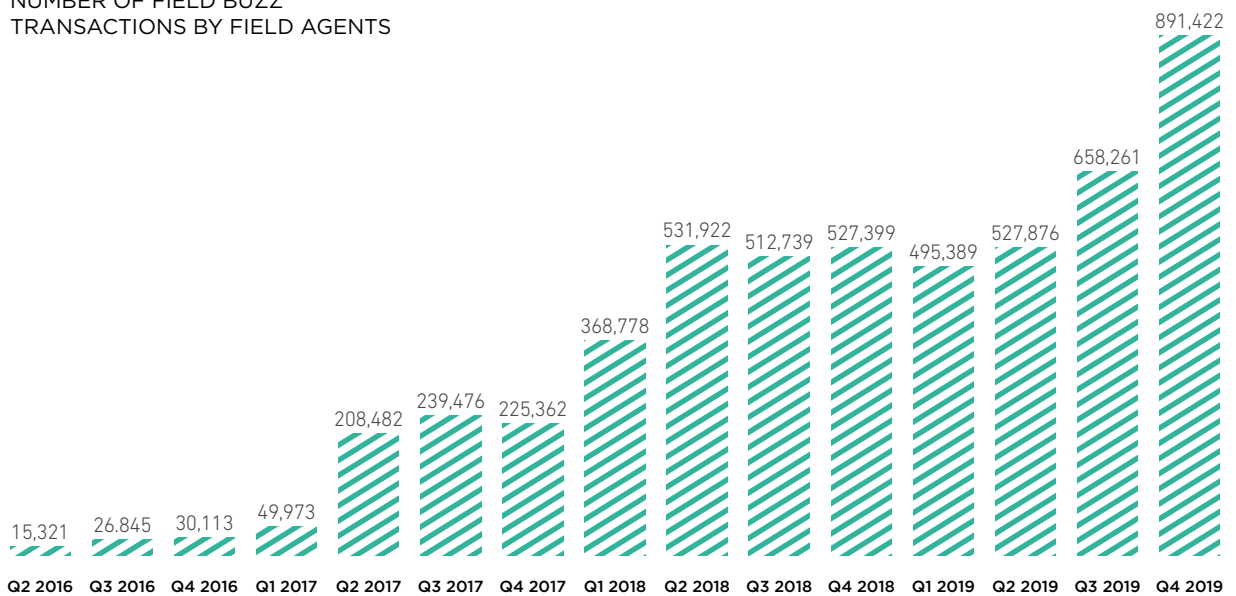
**FIELD BUZZ**

NUMBER OF FIELD AGENTS  
USING FIELD BUZZ



**FIELD BUZZ**

NUMBER OF FIELD BUZZ  
TRANSACTIONS BY FIELD AGENTS





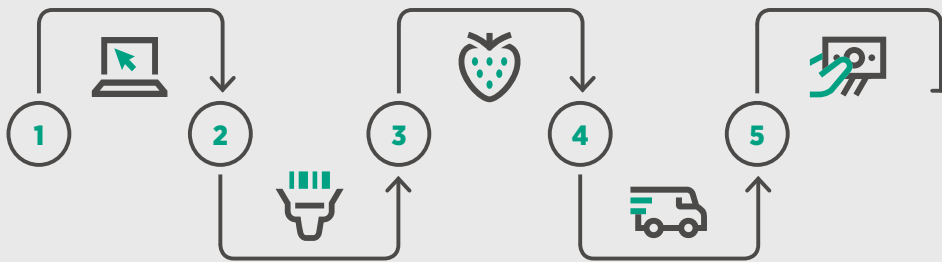
# How the service works

The Field Buzz platform allows distributors and their sales agents to track orders and deliveries and make payments using a mobile app. Field Buzz provides each product distributor with a web interface to enable real-time order management and delivery tracking.

The field agent is registered by their company management<sup>8</sup> on the **Field Buzz** "Mission Control" web interface. The field agent logs in to the multilingual<sup>9</sup> mobile app using a unique username and password.

The field agent takes an order from the shop owner or assistant by clicking on the appropriate product icons displayed in the app.<sup>11</sup> The order is recorded and synced to the field agent's company warehouse where the order is processed.

The app prompts the sales agent to take a cash payment (in cash or mobile money) from the shop, which is then recorded in the app.<sup>12</sup> The payment and order delivery is validated by scanning the shop's QR code, receiving an electronic signature or taking a photograph.



Upon arrival at each shop, the field agent scans the QR code to open the shop's profile in the Field Buzz app.<sup>10</sup>

After the pending delivery order is uploaded to the app and the order is filled, the sales agent delivers the products to the shops and marks the order "Completed" on the app.

## FIELD BUZZ FIELD AGENT USING THE APP

The distribution manager can register and login to Mission Control once the company administrator sets up the manager's profile on the Mission Control web interface.



All registered shop profiles, as well as historical and real-time transactions, appear in the Mission Control database.



The manager can update the pricing, products, users, shops and routes available on the platform.



The manager can click on the dashboard showing relevant sales and organisational data and charts.



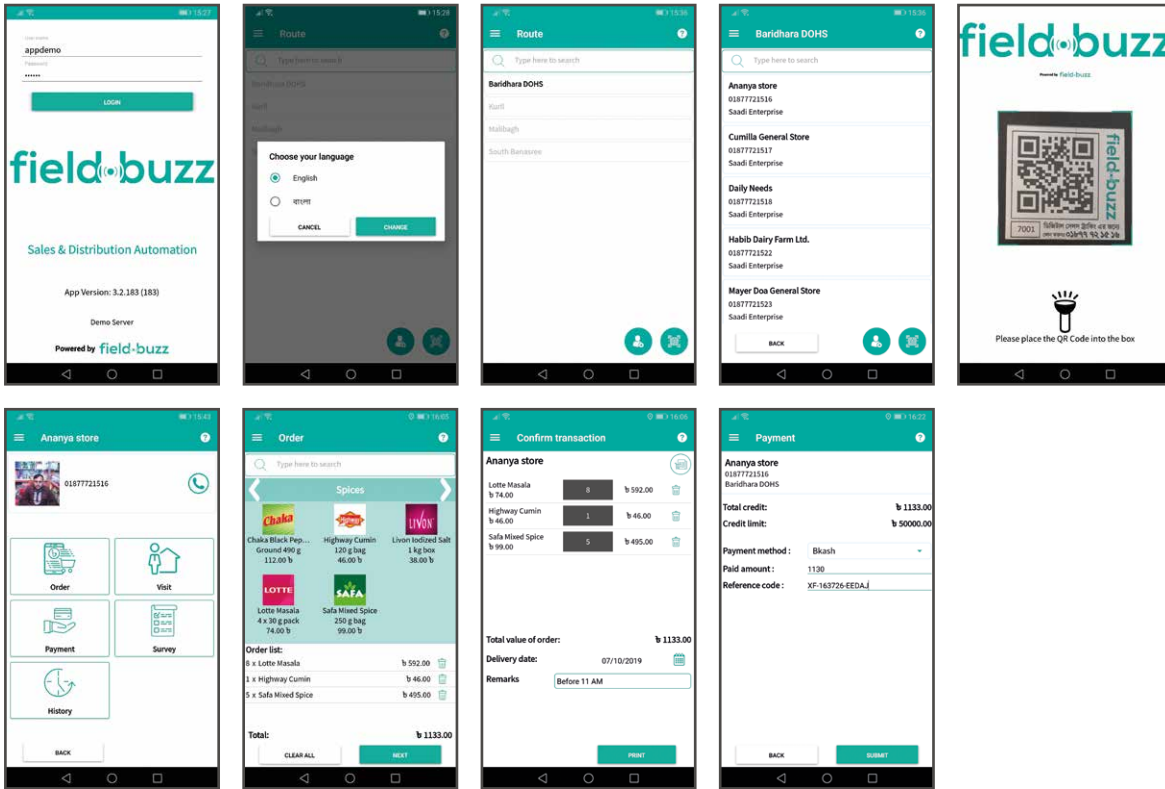
The manager can zoom in on embedded maps to see individual shop and transaction locations, and can filter transactions by a certain date range or other relevant criteria, such as routes or sales agents activities.

## FIELD BUZZ DISTRIBUTION MANAGERS USING THE WEB INTERFACE

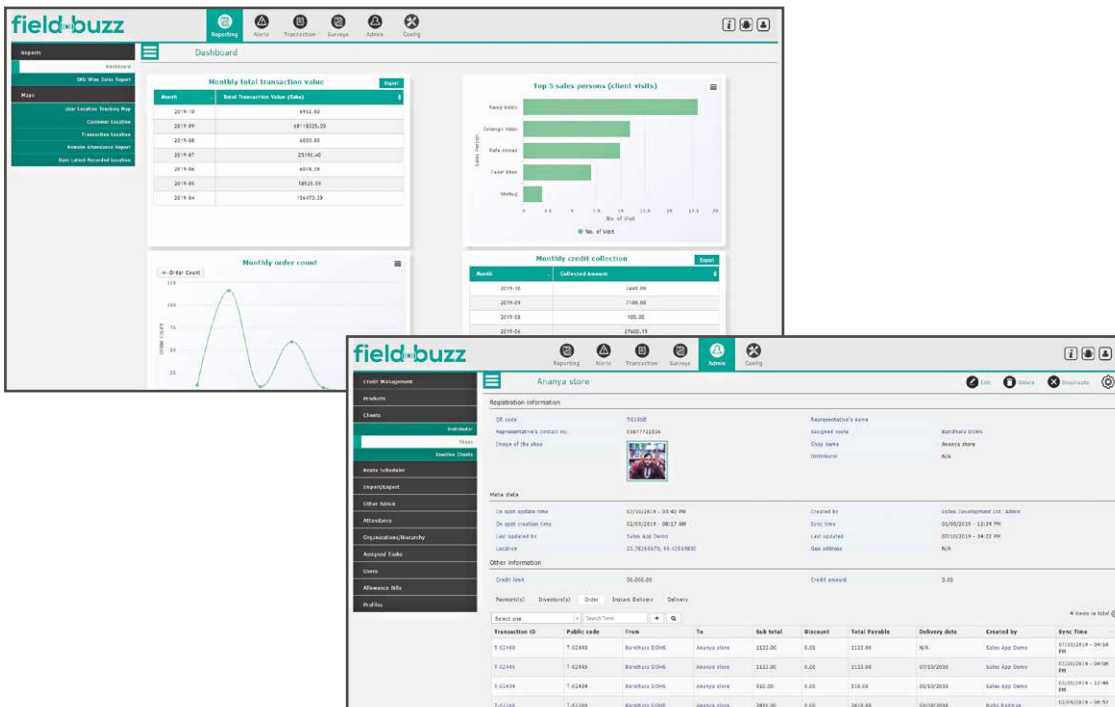
8. This could be the IT administrator, CEO, or other staff, depending on the company.  
 9. Users in Bangladesh have the choice between Bangla and English. French, Spanish, Burmese, Arabic, Dari (Persian), Swahili, Luganda and Amharic interfaces are also available.  
 10. If the QR code is missing, the sales agent can browse through the list of shops on that route and click on the relevant shop, or search for the shop by name or telephone number.  
 11. The sales agent can add +1 item to the order list, but holding down on the icon allows them to manually enter a larger number (e.g. "20" instead of clicking it 20 times).  
 12. Payments are often made in cash, but increasingly payments are being made with mobile money.



FIELD BUZZ FIELD AGENT USING THE APP



FIELD BUZZ DISTRIBUTION MANAGERS USING THE WEB INTERFACE





## Working with mobile operators

In August 2019, Field Buzz was selected as a launch partner of the Grameenphone Cloud Store, a software-as-a-service (SaaS) marketplace for business customers run by Grameenphone. The Cloud Store enables large and small businesses to rapidly adopt cloud-based, mobile-first digital solutions at a lower cost and with greater flexibility than traditional enterprise software. Field Buzz's

smartphone-based software provides much-needed solutions for a range of Grameenphone business customers with field-based activities. Through the partnership, Grameenphone sales agents sell and invoice Field Buzz licences to Cloud Store business customers. Field Buzz engineers configure and roll out the solution to these customers and provide ongoing hosting and technical support services.



*In July 2019, Field Buzz was one of Grameenphone Cloud Store's launching partners. Field Buzz's modular and configurable smartphone-based software provides much-needed solutions for a wide range of Grameenphone business customers with field-based activities, making Field Buzz an ideal partner for Grameenphone. Field Buzz is designed in a flexible way and caters to a broad range of companies as it addresses the need of both large and small enterprises. From the beginning, Field Buzz successfully captured potential customers from the FMCG sectors. We are glad to see its development of smart solutions for digitalization in Bangladesh and pleased to have them as a partner of Grameenphone Cloud Store.*

**Mohammad Zakaria Haider, Product Manager,  
Cloud Store, Grameenphone**



## Changing lives



By enabling more transparent, efficient and productive distribution chains, Field Buzz software ensures that underserved households in low-income communities can access essential goods and services at more competitive prices. This, in turn, increases productivity, competitiveness and growth in the retail sector.



The spread of smartphone-based software into last-mile settings helps to bridge the digital divide. With more than 4,000 field agents, 420,000 micro-merchants and smallholder farmers, and 4.9 million transactions in Bangladesh since the launch of the software in 2015, Field Buzz is unlocking many new opportunities for low-income individuals and micro-enterprises who were previously marginalised in economic value chains.



At least three million people in Bangladesh are employed in traditional and inclusive distribution channels. Field Buzz software helps provide better income opportunities for individuals, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and microenterprises serving the 150,000 last-mile shops registered in the Field Buzz database.

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*Through the Field Buzz app I now have real-time sales reports on my mobile, so I can easily find out where the problems are and react really quickly to find resolutions. Also I use the data to make strategic decisions. For example, on weekly targets for my sales officers or on changing the routes that they should travel every day. Previously with paper records, it was really hard to know why sales went down.*



**Sanjay Das Gupta, Area Sales Supervisor for an FMCG distributor**

*All of my sales tasks can be done really quickly on the Field Buzz app. I have to scan the QR code to identify the shop, then I count the stock in the shop, replace any expired products and make a new sale. Before the Field Buzz app, I recorded all my sales tasks on paper, which took a lot longer.*



**Mohammad Emran Hasan Emon, Sales Officer for an FMCG distributor**

*With the Field Buzz app, any sales officer from the company who visits me knows immediately what products I should order again, because they can see my past orders in the app. It's now easy for them to extend offers and credit terms because the app shows my good performance. Even though the credit is only for a couple of days, it really helps me and I can order more from the sales officer as a result.*



**Aminul Islam, microretailer in Bogra, Bangladesh**

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## Working with the GSMA Ecosystem Accelerator

Field Buzz received a grant from the GSMA Ecosystem Accelerator Innovation Fund in February 2018 to develop a more standardised version of their last-mile distribution mobile solution for SMEs with dispersed sales and delivery agents in rural areas of Bangladesh.

With the support of the GSMA Ecosystem Accelerator programme, Field Buzz has developed an app to provide strategic, up-to-date data on products for

sales agents and distributors to help them manage stock accurately and efficiently. Field Buzz shifted their business model from a project-based solution (usually large one-off payments from a handful of customers) to a SaaS solution (recurring revenue from larger customer base), which can be distributed via online marketplaces like Grameenphone's B2B marketplace, Grameenphone Cloud Store. Field Buzz reached an additional 40,682 users during the grant period.