

ULTRA-POOR GRADUATION PROGRAMME, BANGLADESH

The Ultra-Poor Graduation (UPG) programme in Bangladesh, formerly known as Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP) programme, is recognised worldwide as the pioneer of the Graduation approach and acclaimed for its innovative and holistic solution to ultra-poverty.

BRAC's Graduation approach is a comprehensive, time-bound, integrated and sequenced set of interventions that aims to enable households living in ultra-poverty to achieve key milestones towards sustainable livelihoods and socioeconomic resilience, in order to progress along a pathway out of extreme poverty.

Since it began in 2002, the programme has served over 2.1 million ultra-poor households in Bangladesh as of December, 2020. The programme addresses poverty multi-dimensionally, mitigating context-specific and people-specific challenges. As a result, targeted interventions account for contexts such as climate change and urban poverty, as well as for people living with disabilities, people from indigenous communities and the host community of Cox's Bazar who faced economic vulnerability after the influx of the Rohingya community in the region. It is also implementing a special project for the 'new poor' who fell below the poverty line due to earning losses during COVID-19 pandemic.

Grounded on the principles of the four pillars of the Graduation approach - livelihoods promotion, financial inclusion, social protection, and social empowerment - the 24 month UPG programme consists of eight key elements:

Targeting - Meticulous targeting using poverty maps and village level participatory rural appraisals that includes wealth ranking to identify the most vulnerable members of that community.

Enterprise development training - Enterprise-related training on livestock, agriculture or non-farm activities as preferred by participants.

Asset transfer and interest free loan - A high value asset package or capital to start small businesses through grants and interest free loans.

Hands-on coaching - Ensuring livelihoods growth, enhancing participants' decision-making skills, confidence building, future planning and raising awareness on relevant health and social issues.

Savings - Participants savings are matched by the programme to promote savings behaviour, enhance financial security and resilience, and enable future investments.

Healthcare services - Participants receive preventative care guidance and healthcare related awareness by programme staff, for herself and her family. They are provided treatment through linkages with local healthcare providers and financial assistance.

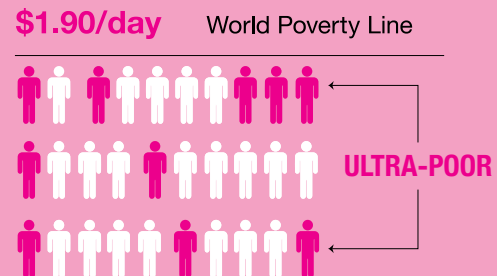
Community mobilisation - Social integration of participants in the community by forming a committee comprising of key members of the village. It creates an enabling environment for participants in the form of social protection, helps to protect their assets, facilitates access to government services, and offers support in times of need.

Graduation - Households living in ultra-poverty graduate from the programme by achieving economic and social advancement measured by pre-determined Graduation criteria over the course of 24 months of the programme cycle.

WHO ARE THE ULTRA-POOR?

Nearly 700 million people around the world live in extreme poverty.

Though the extreme poor live on less than \$1.90 per day, the ultra-poor are the lowest earners and most vulnerable subset of this population.



- None or insignificant amount of assets
- Chronically food insecure
- Most vulnerable to health shocks and natural disasters
- Live in geographically isolated, hard-to-reach areas
- Lack community acceptance, confidence and support systems
- Lack access to financial services
- Disproportionately female-headed households, often in communities with restrictive social norms
- Disconnected from mainstream government services
- Underserved by markets and unaffected by economic policies



Programme strategies

Recognising the heterogeneity among people living in ultra-poverty and their varying access to productive resources, participants of the UPG programme are segmented into three categories:

Group 1

Group 1 participants are selected by the programme based on the prerequisites that they are aged above 50 years old, earn less than USD 1.90 per day and are not a member of any microfinance institution or NGO.

The Group 1 intervention mainly focuses on facilitating participants access to government social safety net programmes. In addition, participants aged over 50 to 62 years old are provided with small assets or business through a full grant approach, and tailored enterprise development training, hands on coaching and matched savings. They also receive community mobilisation and healthcare services. The programme cycle for Group 1 participants is 16 months.

Group 2 and 3

Group 2 and 3 participants are selected by the programme based on the prerequisites that they are aged between 18 - 50 years old, earn less than USD 1.90 per day and are not a member of any microfinance institution or NGO.

In addition to the prerequisites, if any of the two criteria are fulfilled, then a household will be included in either Group 2 or Group 3

SELECTION CRITERIA

GROUP 2

Female household member is already engaged or required to work due to extreme poverty



GROUP 3

Household is dependent on irregular income

Household owns maximum 10 decimals of land including homestead



Household owns maximum 30 decimals of land including homestead

Household owns maximum BDT 5,000 (USD 59) worth productive assets



Household owns maximum BDT 10,000 (USD 118) worth productive assets

INTERVENTIONS

Supported through 24 months programme cycle



Asset transfer and interest free loans



Enterprise development training



Hands-on coaching



Matched savings



Healthcare services



Community mobilisation