



Global Report
2013

VISION

A WORLD FREE FROM ALL
FORMS OF **EXPLOITATION**
AND **DISCRIMINATION**
WHERE EVERYONE HAS THE
OPPORTUNITY TO **REALISE**
THEIR POTENTIAL

MISSION

OUR MISSION IS TO
EMPOWER PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES
IN SITUATIONS OF POVERTY, ILLITERACY,
DISEASE AND SOCIAL INJUSTICE.
OUR INTERVENTIONS AIM TO **ACHIEVE**
LARGE SCALE, POSITIVE CHANGES
THROUGH ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL PROGRAMMES THAT ENABLE
WOMEN AND MEN TO **REALISE**
THEIR POTENTIAL

VALUES

INTEGRITY
INNOVATION
INCLUSIVENESS
EFFECTIVENESS

CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT

In 2013, the World Bank announced 2030 as the target date to eradicate extreme poverty. I believe we are indeed at a historic moment, in the sense that for the first time, we can reasonably imagine such a goal being reached in the not-too-distant future. To be sure, the task will be difficult, likely more so than the extraordinary gains seen in recent decades. But I believe the elimination of the worst forms of human poverty is an achievable goal.

Within my own lifetime, and especially since I founded BRAC as a small relief effort in Bangladesh in 1972, we have achieved so much, often seemingly against the odds. It has been said that Bangladesh's rapid improvements in quality of life, especially in public health, are historically unprecedented. Largely due, I believe, to the empowerment of women and girls, we saw gains that were all the more remarkable, because they did not correspond with massive outlays in spending.

We managed to do much with very little, in other words. I agree with what Amartya Sen wrote in *The Lancet* in December 2013: "It might not be good manners for Bangladesh to start lecturing the world on what to do, so soon after jumping out of the basket to which it had been relegated, but the country's experience has important lessons for other developing countries across the world."

It is important to remain humble in the face of the extraordinary challenges we still face. It is true that since 1990, the maternal

mortality rate in Bangladesh has fallen dramatically, from about 500 deaths per 100,000 live births – comparable to what we see today in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa – to about 150, in line with the UN's Millennium Development Goal. Poverty rates have halved, meanwhile, and we have achieved gender parity in primary education. In partnership with others, we are sharing our experiences and building upon the lessons learned.

Yet Bangladesh is still, for the most part, extremely poor. We still have one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. About 41 per cent of children are stunted, and despite progress in other development indicators, we are still one of the 36 countries in the world with the highest rate of malnutrition. In 2013, we witnessed the horrific results of criminal negligence in Bangladesh's textile industry, when the Rana Plaza building collapsed, killing 1,134 people.

Despite the pride we can take in bringing maternal mortality down to 150 per 100,000, in Sri Lanka that rate is just 35, and in Norway it is three. I look forward to the day when Bangladesh and other countries where we work can achieve such outcomes.

In this Global Report, our first at BRAC, you will see a picture of the work of the entire BRAC family, working in 12 developing countries in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Despite the diversity



of our backgrounds, what holds us together is a conviction that poverty can be defeated with an approach that puts power in the hands of the poor themselves, especially women. We focus on metrics, rather than anecdotes and platitudes, always learning and mindful of our failures.

I believe that if we, as human beings, continue to innovate and follow such a path, scaling up what works – and fixing, or discarding, what does not – we will indeed reach the goal of eradicating poverty. I hope you will join us on that journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Fazle Hasan'.

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, KCMG
Founder and Chairperson
May 2014

The story of BRAC

Formerly Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, BRAC started from humble beginnings and has scaled up to become the world's largest nongovernmental organization, measured by employees (120,000 as of 2013) and those reached (an estimated 135 million). It began in 1972 as a group of like-minded individuals led by Fazle Hasan Abed, a young Bangladeshi accountant who sought to help refugees following his country's Liberation War. Abed and his early collaborators quickly realized that a limited relief operation would not solve the problems they confronted of deeply entrenched poverty, illiteracy and exploitation. Doing so would require a sustained approach that empowered poor people to be in charge of their own paths out of poverty.

The foundation was laid prior to Bangladesh's independence. In 1970, the Bhola cyclone struck what was then East Pakistan. With a death toll of at least 500,000, it still ranks as the deadliest natural disaster of modern times. Together with a few local and foreign friends, Abed, then an accountant at Shell Oil, set up a relief operation to meet the desperate needs of cyclone survivors – supplying essentials such as blankets, clothing, housing and agricultural assistance. By 1971, the nation's troubles were compounded further by the liberation war. Abed escaped to London, where he raised money for war victims and lobbied for Bangladesh's independence.

When it was born in late 1971, Bangladesh lay in ruins. Abed returned to a new country that ranked as the second poorest on Earth. He immediately set to work, establishing a small operation in Sulla, near Sylhet, in the north-east of the country.

The experience of dealing with the aftermath of the Bhola cyclone, with the sight of thousands of bodies washing ashore and entire villages destroyed, had already powerfully affected Abed and his colleagues. Their work in Sulla deepened their understanding of entrenched poverty and its complex causes. The experience offered an opportunity for deeper insights into the lives of those living in extreme distress – and, crucially, about their capacity to overcome it.

Abed initially thought he would return to his corporate life. But the “committee” became his life's work, led by a metrics-based approach with continual monitoring and learning. Abed was determined to root out the systemic causes of poverty. “The struggle for liberation has brought about a new climate, a new awareness, and a desire for change,” Abed wrote in one of his earlier funding proposals. He saw corrupt rural systems of political and economic control that exploited poor people's vulnerabilities while denying them the ability to realise their potential.

For the country to thrive, BRAC would need to untangle the complex web of exclusions that prevented the poor, despite their hardest efforts, from succeeding. With a focus on cost-effective solutions that could be scaled

up, it would replace this web of exclusions with a widening circle of opportunity that included education, healthcare, microfinance, community empowerment and legal and human rights. The empowerment of women and girls became a key objective, both as an end unto itself and as a means to end poverty.

Starting in 2002, with its first international operations in Afghanistan, BRAC's national vision has gone global. That vision sees a world transformed: a world in which the empowerment of the poor, women and girls especially, catalyses change on a massive scale.

Across the developing world, there is excitement about the BRAC approach and its ability to mobilise communities in diverse settings, whether through direct implementation of programmes by BRAC or by others. It is a signal that actors from the global South can bring themselves and each other out of poverty.

We are confident that using similar approaches to the empowerment women and girls, the poor can become actors in history and shapers of their own destiny.



BRAC's impact



BRAC's core interventions focused on women and girls' empowerment, including microfinance, education, health and agriculture, shown to have been a positive impact using rigorous analysis, including randomised control trials.

Women's empowerment

Overwhelming evidence shows participation in BRAC programmes, including microfinance, reduces women's economic dependence on their husbands and male relatives. According to a 2001 paper published in the Journal of International Women's Studies, women participating in BRAC programmes in Bangladesh "reported that they now have an independent source of income. They no longer need to rely solely on their husbands for the purchase of personal and household items. Women have also reported an improvement in their relationships with their husbands, primarily because they provide them with capital for investment purposes." (1)

Empowerment of adolescent girls

In Uganda, researchers from institutions including the London School of Economics, University College London and the World Bank, have recorded a significant decline in risky behaviours among participants in BRAC's adolescent empowerment programme, membership in which exceeds 300,000 worldwide. The study found BRAC's adolescent empowerment programme raises levels of self-employment, leads to greater self-reported condom use, and results in 26 per cent fewer incidents of pregnancy. Examining the same variables, the study also found a spill-over effect on nonparticipants living in the same village as girls in the programme. Perhaps most remarkably, it recorded an 83 per cent reduction in reports of forced sex among participants. (2)

BRAC has been called one of the earliest examples of a "learning organisation," having established an independent Research and Evaluation Division in 1975.

Targeting the ultra poor

Studies have demonstrated the impact of BRAC's programme targeting the ultra poor, in which more than 1.4 million households have participated. This programme is designed for those trapped in ultra-poverty, for whom microfinance is not an option. According to a 2010 study, among participants who entered the two-year programme in 2002, 98.4 per cent of households satisfied at least six out of 10 indicators of graduating from ultra-poverty (including having three to four income sources, two meals a day, a kitchen garden, a solid roof, a sanitary latrine and school-going children), even four years after the programme ended. A 2013 randomised control trial showed self-employment, self-reported happiness and livestock ownership all continued to rise in relation to a control group, long after the period of direct intervention. (3)

Education

BRAC schools have educated nearly 10 million children. In Bangladesh, BRAC has allowed a generation to grow up with opportunities that would have been unimaginable in previous decades. According to a July 2011 study, "BRAC schools, in spite of their meagre facilities, performed better in terms of internal efficiency – dropout and repetition rates being lower and completion rates higher than other types of school. This is mainly because of intensive monitoring of teachers, better teacher input and the teaching process suited to the children from poor families." (4)

Health

BRAC's health programme, with its 104,070 self-employed community health workers, is widely believed by global health experts to have played a major role in halving the country's infant mortality rates. Between 1980 and 1990, BRAC's oral rehydration programme reached 14 million of Bangladesh's 19 million households, with government surveys showing 70 per cent of families in Bangladesh using oral rehydration solution. A 2011 study of BRAC's urban maternal health programme showed a reduction in delays associated with emergency care for life-threatening complications. For the period of 2007 to 2010, in areas where the urban maternal health programme operates, monitoring of progress showed a reduction in home delivery from 86 per cent to 25 per cent, with the maternal mortality ratio in urban intervention areas decreasing to 141 per 100,000 live births, compared with the national rate of 194 – and below the Millennium Development Goal of 143. (5)

Agriculture

BRAC has recorded remarkable results in changing conditions for smallholder and tenant farmers in seven countries, training more than 600,000 farmers. BRAC's Research and Evaluation Unit for Africa, based in Kampala, studied Ugandan farmers' retention of training after one year, finding that 68% of farmers reached retained new knowledge on planting methods and that 75% used improved seeds versus 48% in a control sample. (6)

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BRAC ACROSS

USA

Initiated: 2007

An independent charity to raise profile and funds for BRAC globally

UK

Initiated: 2006

An independent charity to raise profile and funds for BRAC globally

SIERRA LEONE

Initiated: 2008

Programme Focus:
MF, EHC, Ag, P&L, HRLE, ELA and FSN

Population reached:
1.1 million

SOUTH SUDAN

Initiated: 2006

Programme Focus:
MF, Ag, BEP, AGI, EHC, MLP, NP, YLP and TUP

Population reached:
1.3 million



HAITI

Initiated: 2010

Programme Focus:
BLBC

NETHERLANDS

Initiated: 2009

BRAC International registered as a charity (Stichting)



LIBERIA

Initiated: 2008

Programme Focus:
MF, SEP, Ag, P&L and EHC

Population reached:
0.56 million

UGANDA

Initiated: 2006

Programme Focus:
MF, SEP, BEP, SP, EHC, Ag, P&L, ELA and KI

Population reached:
4.2 million

TANZANIA

Initiated: 2006

Programme Focus:
MF, SEP, Ag, P&L, BEP and ELA

Population reached:
1.27 million

AFSP - Agriculture and Food Security Programme Ag - Agriculture Programme AGI - Adolescent Girls Initiative ARCs - Adolescent Reading Centres
DECC - Disaster, Environment and Climate Change EHC - Essential Health Care ELA - Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents FSN - Food Security and Nutrition
HRLS - Human Rights and Legal Aid Services IDP - Integrated Development Programme KI - Karamoja Initiative
P&L - Poultry and Livestock RS - Road Safety SEP - Small Enterprise Programme SP - Scholarship Programme

THE WORLD

AFGHANISTAN

Initiated: 2002

Programme Focus:
MF, SEP, BEP, ARCs, EHC, CDP,
NSP and TUP

Population reached:
4.72 million

PAKISTAN

Initiated: 2007

Programme Focus:
MF, SEP, BEP, TUP, EHC and
Ag

Population reached:
2.54 million

MYANMAR

Initiated: 2013

Programme Focus:
MF



SRI LANKA

Initiated: 2005

Programme Focus:
MF

Population reached:
0.72 million

PHILIPPINES

Initiated: 2012

Programme Focus:
BEP

Population reached:
39,960 learners



BANGLADESH

Initiated: 1972

Programme Focus:
MF, BEP, HNPP, TUP, IDP, WASH, HRLS, CEP, AFSP, DECC, GJD, RS, MGP
and Enterprises

Population reached:
120 million

Financial tools for better lives

Micro-loans, savings, training, and market development allows women to raise productivity and get fairer prices for their work

4.6 million
borrowers

USD 11.6 billion
cumulative disbursement



Early on, BRAC found the best way to disrupt systems of exploitation and end rural poverty was through women, giving them tools to lift themselves out of poverty. BRAC's microfinance programme is a critical component of our holistic approach to supporting livelihoods. It encompasses not only the small-scale loans that enable and encourage entrepreneurship, but also education around savings, and the economic networks that let small-scale enterprises perform better. For example, distribution systems for products such as milk and textiles allow microfinance users to get fairer prices for their work.

Over the last four decades, we have grown to become one of the world's largest providers of financial services to the poor, providing tools millions can use for the betterment of their lives. BRAC's microfinance programme brings its collateral-free credit and savings services to the doorsteps of the landless poor, marginal farmers and small entrepreneurs through village organisations (VO) made up of about 20 to 30 women from the local community. These VOs serve as a platform to come together, share information and raise awareness on issues concerning their daily lives. Our innovative, client-focused and sustainable approach ensures borrowers have a robust support system that raises awareness on health, social and legal issues while strengthening the enterprises they invest in, reducing vulnerability to market failures by giving them access to quality supplies, training and marketing support.

Over the last four decades, BRAC has grown to become one of the world's largest providers of financial services for women rising from poverty

2013 HIGHLIGHTS:



A lifeline out of ultra poverty

A groundbreaking programme of tailored interventions helps the poorest of the poor gain a foothold on the economic ladder

9 million

women received subsistence allowance

417,697

women have received assets from BRAC

BRAC creates opportunities at scale for those living in poverty, using tools that include microfinance, education, healthcare, legal rights and women's empowerment. But it has found that these interventions often fail to reach the ultra poor, those at the very bottom of the poverty scale. After decades of trial and error, starting in 2002 BRAC began deploying a set of carefully sequenced measures tailored to the unique set of challenges faced by the ultra poor. These involve proper targeting of those most in need, weekly stipends, healthcare support, training and "hand-holding" to help recipients make the most of producing assets – such as goats, chickens and seeds – provided by BRAC.

The results have been astounding. Using intensive training and support deployed over 24 months, the ultra poor can "graduate" from ultra poverty. Research from BRAC's Research and Evaluation Division has shown more than 92 per cent of participants leave a rigorously defined category of ultra poverty. Importantly, they sustain their success even four years later, long after they stop receiving direct support. Most go on to become microfinance clients.

Moreover, thanks to the participation of others in the community, including local elites, and the establishment of village poverty reduction committees, those who were once completely marginalised are now part of the social fabric of village life. One participant in Mymensingh, Bangladesh, told an interviewer, "People invite me to their houses, because they see that things have changed for me."

The graduation approach has expanded beyond Bangladesh with remarkable success, with pilots using BRAC methodologies in eight countries under the auspices of Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) and the Ford Foundation. In line with the World Bank's goal of eradicating poverty by 2030, BRAC is now advising others in using this approach to ending the worst forms of poverty.

Participants leave a rigorously defined category of ultra poverty. Importantly, they sustain their success even four years later, long after they stop receiving direct support

2013 HIGHLIGHTS:



In Bangladesh, BRAC's ultra poor programme launched a programme targeting street children, bringing them off the streets into safe centres for education, savings and empowerment

In 2013, BRAC released the briefing note, "An end in sight for ultra-poverty: Scaling up BRAC's graduation model for the poorest". The note was presented at the "Reaching the Poorest" Global Learning Event in Paris in February 2014. The note laid out our plans for taking the graduation approach worldwide



Leading a health revolution

Frontline health workers and reproductive rights have transformed Bangladesh. They can do the same elsewhere

104,070

community health promoters:

7.5 million

women have received ante-natal care

BRAC's innovative healthcare delivery model uses community health workers to create a bridge between formal healthcare systems and underserved villages and slums. By combining preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative health services, we serve disadvantaged, socially excluded and hard-to-reach populations. BRAC's health programmes aim to improve reproductive, maternal, neonatal, and child health and nutritional status; reduce vulnerability to communicable diseases; combat non-communicable diseases; and enhance the quality of life.

In Bangladesh, BRAC pioneered the concept of using community health promoters – women trained by BRAC, but not employed by BRAC – to widen access to health services among poor populations. We have since extended this approach to six other countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan and four of the five African countries in which we operate.

In 2013, the international medical journal *The Lancet* published a series of reports on Bangladesh, highlighting the country's remarkable progress in improving public health outcomes. This includes a massive drop in maternal mortality (800 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to only 194 in 2011) and a corresponding drop in infant mortality (133 deaths before the age of one per 1,000 live births in 1980 to 33 in 2013). BRAC is proud to have played a part in such staggering progress, which *The Lancet* calls "one of the great mysteries of global health." We attribute this success to empowerment of women. Maternal health, for instance, is not only about access to antenatal care and obstetric care, but also family planning and an enhanced understanding of reproductive rights.

Bangladesh has achieved a revolution in family planning and reproductive rights. Contraceptive usage rates soared from 12.7 per cent in 1980 to 61.2 per cent in 2011. We are confident that in places like sub-Saharan Africa, where contraceptive use is still at low levels, women can lead their own reproductive revolution if they are given the tools and opportunities to do so. This includes knowledge of and access to contraception, economic empowerment, and education and life skills training for adolescent girls.

Bangladesh
saw
reproductive
revolution, with
contraceptive
usage rates
rising from 13
per cent in
1980 to 61.2
per cent in
2011

2013 HIGHLIGHTS:



In November, BRAC received a financial award that will allow it to pilot an adaptation of Manoshi, its Bangladesh urban maternal health programme, in the slums of Freetown, Sierra Leone.

As published on Sex and survival: reducing fertility rates among adolescent girls in *The Guardian*, Uganda, we pioneered the development and training of adolescent health promoters, adolescent girls who deliver health care goods and services to their peers.



In Bangladesh, together with James P Grant School of Public Health, part of BRAC University, the health, nutrition and population programme is developing health insurance products to cater to underprivileged people



Enabling the next generation

Safe spaces for adolescent girls, job training and youth-oriented financial services are helping young people realise their full potential

10,328

adolescent clubs worldwide

312,145

members, including

220,424

in Bangladesh (24 per cent boys)

The “**youth bulge**” facing most developing countries is a demographic window of opportunity. BRAC believes the key to sustained development is investing in young people and enabling them to become the driving force for the future. A quarter of the world's population, or 1.8 billion people, is between the ages of 10 and 24, with 83 per cent living in developing countries. With 44 percent of its population under the age of 15 in 2006, sub-Saharan Africa is the youngest region of the world. The South Asian youth population is also expected to grow in the coming decades.

Given that the odds are often stacked against young girls, our key priority is girls' empowerment. While addressing the diverse needs of young people across different contexts, our youth interventions tend to have a three pronged approach: creating clubs (“safe spaces”) in communities for adolescents, especially girls, to socialise and learn valuable life skills that help them in transition into adulthood; equipping young boys and girls with employable skills through vocational training and apprenticeship to assist in their transition from school to work; and providing access to finances for young people, enabling them to start or grow small businesses. We use this approach in youth programmes in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

These programmes have seen remarkable results. The girls' club programme known as Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) is a key strategy for empowering girls and advancing reproductive health and rights in sub-Saharan Africa. In Uganda, a randomised control trial has recorded remarkable results with that programme, including a 29 per cent drop in early pregnancy, self-reported condom usage up 50 per cent among sexually active members, and reports of forced sex down 83 per cent.

Given that the odds are often stacked against young girls, our key priority is girls' empowerment

2013 HIGHLIGHTS:

ELA and similar club programmes reached over 300,000 young people across the globe, including a substantial boys component in Bangladesh

In Uganda, we piloted a programme that trains adolescent girls to becoming self-employed health workers; entered into profit sharing agreements with young contract farmers; and deepened our intervention with a second generation version of ELA, including assistance for highly vulnerable youth with asset transfers

We expanded ELA into Sierra Leone with plans to do the same in Liberia in 2014

In Tanzania, we introduced pre-primary education centres within our adolescent clubs, as well as tutoring and in-school study groups

Our second Global Learning Meeting convened in Uganda in April 2013, with representatives of all 11 BRAC countries and external partners gathered to understand evidence, share knowledge, and develop strategies for innovation and scaling of effective adolescent and youth programming



Second chance at schooling

A low-cost, scalable schooling model has made BRAC the world's largest private, secular education provider

44,033
schools

1.3 million
students enrolled

10.2 million
students graduated

1.2 million
members of community libraries

BRAC believes that generational cycles of poverty can be broken by making quality education accessible to the poor and by ensuring that classroom learning is relevant to lives of children from the poorest backgrounds. By teaching children to think for themselves, we can inculcate an enterprising mindset, one of the greatest assets for lifting oneself from poverty.

The world is still far from achieving the goal of universal primary education, called for in the United Nations' 2015 Millennium Development Goals. An estimated 57 million children were still out of school in 2011, according to the UN. The situation is worst in sub-Saharan Africa, where about 22 per cent of the primary school age population is still not enrolled. Of those out of school, 54 per cent are girls and half are in conflict affected countries, according to a 2014 Unesco report. Quality is a major issue: Even among those attending school, youth illiteracy is widespread. About 175 million students in poorer countries – or about one-quarter of the youth population – cannot read all or part of a sentence.

Targeting those who would otherwise be left behind by formal education systems, BRAC schools are designed to fill these gaps, addressing educational needs from early childhood to adolescence. We do so largely by training local women to be community schoolteachers, using a low-cost, scalable model based in rented and borrowed one-room schoolhouses. Because girls' education is one of the greatest catalysts for large-scale societal change, our classrooms are always at least 60 per cent girls. We provide schooling for especially hard-to-reach populations, often using innovative methods like boat schools for riverine communities in Bangladesh.

A three-pronged approach provides pre-primary, primary and secondary educational services. As of 2013, BRAC primary and pre-primary schools are operating in Bangladesh (where nearly 1.2 million students are currently enrolled), Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Tanzania and South Sudan. For secondary education, we support government schools with teacher training, libraries and computer aided learning. We also provide scholarships and other support to students who are academically talented yet economically marginalised, particularly in Bangladesh and Uganda.

As of 2013,
BRAC primary
and pre-
primary
schools are
operating in
Bangladesh
Afghanistan,
Pakistan, the
Philippines,
Tanzania and
South Sudan

2013 HIGHLIGHTS:



Our education programme in Afghanistan expanded significantly, from 19,000 students in December 2012 to more than 71,000 in September 2013

In Tanzania, we launched early childhood education centers run by adolescent girls clubs.



With the support of Educate a Child, an initiative of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar, BRAC expanded its boat schools programme, serving children living on the flood plains of remote parts of Bangladesh. As of September 2013, BRAC Bangladesh operated 357 boat schools, with plans for 500 by 2014.

In Uganda, we began recruiting for the second annual batch of The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program at BRAC, which aims to put 5,000 students from disadvantaged backgrounds into the country's top secondary schools by 2021

Plans are in place to open BRAC schools in Sierra Leone and Tanzania in 2014.



Scalable business models for farming

BRAC's agriculture and food security programmes develop entrepreneurs and enterprises across the value chain

33,781
model farmers

8,379
community agriculture and livestock promoters

12,534
metric tonnes of seeds distributed

96.62 million
poultry vaccinations provided

Lack of food security is one of the most pressing challenges in the world. Operating in Bangladesh and five countries in sub-Saharan Africa, BRAC's agriculture programmes work with governments to achieve and sustain food security. We build systems of production and distribution, offering quality seeds at fair prices, while conducting research to develop better varieties and practices for the agricultural sector. We promote the use of efficient farming techniques and environmentally sustainable practices, in many cases by offering credit support to poor farmers. Using an approach that touches multiple points on the value chain – often with social enterprises, such as BRAC Dairy, the second largest dairy in Bangladesh – we are developing markets, encouraging entrepreneurship and helping countries become self-sufficient in food production.

In our African countries, we have introduced business models for self-employment that can be scaled up and replicated. To solve the problem of delivery, we have created a micro-franchised distribution network, with agriculture promoters, livestock promoters, milk collectors and artificial inseminators trained to run their own businesses on an entrepreneurial basis. Community model farmers, meanwhile, spread awareness of good farming practices among their neighbours.

Raising productivity levels often involves changing subsistence agriculture to more commercial farming that generates greater income and creates more jobs, especially in rural areas, to ensure food security for the poor. Through training and access to information on crop production, credit services through our microfinance programme, and affordable inputs – such as disease resistant seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and vaccines – BRAC is helping farmers, especially women, improve their productivity.

On a self-employed basis, agriculture promoters deliver vital goods and services to help their neighbors raise productivity

2013 HIGHLIGHTS:

BRAC seed farm was established in Nakaseke in 2009 to supply quality seed to farmers. In 2011 BRAC Uganda created the BRAC Uganda Social Businesses Enterprise, Ltd (BUSBE). This year our agriculture extension programme and the social enterprise distributed 126.3 tonnes seeds of maize, rice, beans and vegetables.

BRAC Liberia launched a poultry hatchery and feed mill project in Buchanan, Liberia. The project will directly benefit 300 farmers.

A project called livelihood enhancement through agricultural development (LEAD) project began in Tanzania. The four-year long project, running with the support of UK government aid agency, will work directly with 52,400 poultry farmers and 52,400 maize farmers, helping them to improve income through access to quality farming inputs and developing markets for their produce.



Translating awareness into action

BRAC's community-based social and legal empowerment schemes are educating the poor and raising their voices to end exploitative systems

3.8 million

human rights and legal education participants

208,660

legal complaints received

13,645

Polli Shomaj (citizen action groups)

701,059

Polli Shomaj members

173,057

popular theatre shows staged

Community empowerment is an important part of BRAC's holistic approach to eradicating poverty and includes a robust legal empowerment programme in Bangladesh, where organising the poor to build their social networks has played a crucial role in ending rural systems of exploitation. Outside Bangladesh, we are gradually moving into social empowerment, building on established economic empowerment and youth development schemes. We are currently piloting a legal empowerment programme in Sierra Leone.

In Bangladesh, by organizing women on a local level into citizen action groups called Polli Shomaj, BRAC's community empowerment programme mobilises communities to translate awareness into action. These groups give women the tools they need to resist exploitation, play an active role in public life and claim their entitlements. They strengthen rural communities by amplifying the voices of the poor, while creating a platform for rural civil society and local government to work together. The programme addresses violence against women using interactive communication tools such as popular theatre and community radio.

BRAC's human rights and legal aid services (HRLS) programme is dedicated to protecting and promoting the human rights of the poor and marginalised through legal empowerment. It creates an enabling environment for vulnerable and excluded communities to seek justice through formal and informal systems. Advocating a rights-based approach to human development, HRLS is the largest NGO-led legal aid initiative in the world. In Bangladesh, 6,000 "barefoot lawyers" are trained to deploy basic legal services to hard-to-reach areas and populations. These services include legal aid training, dispute resolution and workshops to sensitise local community leaders to human rights issues. Millions of women have graduated from BRAC's legal literacy courses.

Citizen action groups strengthen communities by creating a platform for rural civil society and local government to work together

2013 HIGHLIGHTS:



Community Radio Pollikonho, an initiative of BRAC's community empowerment programme, was awarded first position in a Bangladesh Family Planning Media Award as well as the Meena Media Award, a Unicef award, for promoting child rights.

BRAC received the World Justice Project Rule of Law Award at the fourth World Justice Forum in The Hague, Netherlands, recognizing its efforts to promote legal empowerment of the poor as a means to end poverty



Facing the future with pride



Shonavan's story shows how even the poorest women can seize control of their lives and rise from the clutches of ultra poverty

Poverty is not a purely economic phenomenon. When Shonavan talks about her participation in BRAC's programme targeting the ultra poor (TUP), the first thing she tells you about isn't the two cows she received. It isn't the weekly stipend she received to give her breathing room as she learned to care for the livestock, while still being able to feed her children. Nor does she talk about the livelihood training or the income from the cows.

Instead, she points to her proudest possession: a battery-powered television. Shonavan is now one of the few people in her village who owns an electrical appliance. For her, it is a symbol of aspirations, hope, and being oriented towards the future. Before joining the TUP or "graduation" programme, which graduates people out of extreme poverty, she was too caught up in the daily struggle to survive to imagine her life could be different.

Shonavan was among the ranks of the ultra poor, mired in material and emotional hardship and too poor to benefit from most other development interventions, including microfinance. She barely scraped by working as a domestic helper. In 2002, BRAC identified her as ultra poor and encouraged her to join the TUP programme as part of the first batch of participants.

Shonavan learned to tend her cows and received weekly guidance and one-on-one training from a BRAC programme organiser who taught her about sanitation, personal hygiene,

nutrition, family planning and divorce rights. The local poverty reduction committee, facilitated and supported by BRAC but acting independently, provided her with tin and bamboo to improve her house. The committee encouraged her to enrol her children at school and helped with tutoring, school books and bags. It raised funds to provide her with a latrine.

When she graduated in 2004, Shonavan sold three of her new-born calves, borrowed money from the village organisation and mortgaged land to grow rice. She now owns the land, her house and four cows, and also prepares fish to sell at the village market. She is steadily reducing her loan and regularly puts aside savings. She is enthusiastic and positive about her future, eager to develop her assets further and invest in her children's education.

Shonavan recently enrolled her eldest daughter in grade four at the local primary school. "I am very happy," she says. "I now have more to offer my children. I can stay at home and work and care for them."

“This kind of business, I don’t often see women involved in it. One has to be strong and patient because it’s a male kind of job. People need to have confidence in themselves that they will manage, and approach the assignment with confidence to achieve specific targets.”

A home of one’s own



Tough as the nails in her hardware store, Winnie Namugenyi shows what girl power means. No girl runs a hardware store in Uganda; that’s a man’s job. It takes money, financial skills, guts and ambition. Girls don’t have those things. Winnie Namugenyi proves this dead wrong. At 23, she owns and manages a successful shop in Kyengera, outside the capital, Kampala, selling everything from nails and rope to wood and cement. And she’s got bigger plans.

When Winnie’s father died when she was 12, she dropped out of high school because her mother couldn’t afford to keep her there. She and her mother started making bricks for villagers to build their houses. Then she discovered BRAC’s Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) programme.

“I started to borrow money from BRAC in 2008, and I was given life skills training,” she says. “In this area there are no programmes that lend money to youth except BRAC.”

Many girls like Winnie say that life skills are a more important part of the ELA programme than loans. Girls are able to meet in safe environments, away from men, to learn about finance, to learn about business, to learn about health – and to learn from one another through peer mentorship.

This allowed Winnie to put the money BRAC lent her to good use.

“It’s important for young women to borrow,” she says, “because by the time the girl gets to maturity she will be able to understand all the dynamics of business.”

Winnie understands the dynamics. And she has the entrepreneurial mentality and the courage to succeed.

“This kind of business, I don’t often see women involved in it,” says Winnie. “One has to be strong and patient because it’s a male kind of job. People need to have confidence in themselves that they will manage, and approach the assignment with confidence to achieve specific targets.”

Spending time with other young women allows ELA members to grow this confidence and to understand they are not beholden to the men in their lives. They also share ideas, dreams and experiences and learn from one another.

“I told myself that running the store is possible,” she says. “I can learn it all and I can handle this. I need to be strong and I can do it.”

Her business now provides for her, her mother and her brothers and sisters. But her dreams keep growing as her shop thrives.

With her profits she now says she’ll buy land and build a home. “I plan to build a house I can be proud of, so that whoever passes by can say, ‘That is Winnie’s home.’”

And she already knows which shop the materials will come from. Watch the story of Winnie at winnie.brac.net.

Sharing the learning

Highlight of BRAC's Research and Evaluation Division from 2013

Bandiera et al. "Can Basic Entrepreneurship Transform the Economic Lives of the Poor?" BRAC Research and Evaluation Division, Dhaka. April 2013.

A randomised control trial of BRAC's program Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP) found that indicators such as livestock ownership, food security, self-reported happiness and self-employment among TUP participants increased over time relative to a control sample. This increase continued well beyond the period of direct intervention, suggesting that the poorest had indeed "graduated" from extreme poverty.

YEN Briefs. "Empowering girls: better impact from combined interventions." The Youth Employment Network. Issue 2, May 2013.

Using randomised control trial data from BRAC's Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents Programme in Uganda, the briefing reported that "combined interventions that simultaneously tackle economic but also social and health related challenges seem to be more effective than single-pronged interventions in improving social and economic empowerment of adolescent girls."

Nasreen H et al. "Impact of maternal depressive symptoms and infant temperament on early infant growth and motor development: Results from a population based study in Bangladesh." Journal of Affective Disorder, Vol. 146, Issue 2, March 2013.

This study provides evidence that maternal ante- and postpartum depressive symptoms predict infant growth and motor development in rural Bangladesh. It recommends integrating psychosocial components in maternal and child health interventions in order to counsel mothers with depressive symptoms.

Banu et al. "Oral administration of misoprostol reduces postpartum haemorrhage in urban slums of Bangladesh." BRAC Research and Evaluation Division, Dhaka. April 2013.

The study found that misoprostol significantly reduced incidence of primary post-partum haemorrhage in the intervention group (4.5%) compared to the control group (7.5 Per cent).

"Achievements of BRAC water, sanitation and hygiene programme towards millennium development goals and beyond." BRAC Research and Evaluation Division, Dhaka. May 2013.

A comparison of baseline (2006), midline (2009) and end line (2011) of subdistricts reached by BRAC's water, sanitation and hygiene program found that over 97 Per cent of the households across the survey area used tubewell water for drinking. Use of sanitary latrines and tubewell water for food preparation increased significantly over time.

Basak JK et al. "Climate change in Bangladesh: A historical analysis of temperature and rainfall data." BRAC Research and Evaluation Division, Dhaka. April 2013.

An assessment of climate change and variability based on analysis of historical data at meteorological stations across Bangladesh, 1976-2008.

Chowdhury, RA. "Competency assessment of students at Grade 4 in BRAC and government primary schools in South Sudan." Research and Evaluation Unit, Kampala. January 2013.

McClatchey, M. "An impact evaluation of BRAC's microfinance programme in Uganda." The Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University. April 2013.

Research and evaluation are at the core of BRAC's approach to poverty reduction. The Research and Evaluation Division (RED), a unit that operates independently of programmes, was established in 1975, just three years after BRAC's founding. In its early years, a focus on data, metrics and constant evaluation made BRAC one of the earliest examples of a "learning organisation." Since then, RED and its corresponding unit covering BRAC operations in sub-Saharan Africa, the Kampala-based Research and Evaluation Unit, has played a vital role in designing BRAC's development interventions. It provides an analytical basis for decision making, fine-tuning interventions for better performance and making development efforts evidence-based, effective and community-sensitive.

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