

BRAC Poultry Rearing Farms

A BRAC Social Enterprise

A pioneering venture contributing to the development of the poultry industry in Bangladesh

In the late 1970s, BRAC identified poultry rearing as a source of income for the landless, particularly the destitute women.

In the early 1980s BRAC partnered in a participatory action research programme aimed at increasing the productivity of small flocks of hens in village conditions and to develop a replicable smallholder model, which contributed in the development of the BRAC Poultry Rearing Farms that exist today.

In 1978, BRAC and the Department of Livestock Services (DLS) started a poultry project in Manikganj sub-district, an area with an unusually high proportion of landless people, located to the west of Dhaka. The sector was identified as having significant developmental potential because: it was already established in rural areas; only low levels of skill and capital were required; there was potential for high returns on investment; eggs and meat could lead to improved nutrition; it was a woman's activity that could be done alongside other tasks and was culturally acceptable; women would be able to retain ownership and control of the production process and the outputs arising.

As a first step, 400 women were offered training in improved household chicken rearing techniques. At the same time, a modest HYV cock replacement programme was initiated in an attempt to encourage cross-breeding with local hens and improve the genetic stock. A small poultry farm was set up at BRAC's then newly established Training and Resource Centre (TARC, now BRAC Learning Centre or BLC) from which the cocks were supplied. A poultry



Photo credit: BRAC

Broiler parent chicken at BRAC Poultry Rearing Centre in Magura

specialist was duly appointed, and a target set of establishing 10-20 BRAC members as chicken rearers, each of whom would have at least one HYV cock and 10 hens, in all of the 200 villages in which it was operating. From 1981 a new approach began, with more accomplished rearers establishing specialist units where 300 female chicks would be confined and raised to the age of eight weeks, before being sold on to ordinary or key rearers, shortly before they were ready to start producing eggs.

Loans were made available to purchase the chicks and to construct and equip the rearing units. At the same time, smaller loans were advanced to key rearers to create more spacious, well ventilated housing for laying birds. Financial support was accompanied by training in improved rearing techniques, housing systems, improved feeding methods and primary disease prevention, provided in collaboration with local staff of the Department

of Livestock. After five years of development in Manikganj, BRAC felt ready to start replicating the basic model in 32 sub-districts.

BRAC Poultry Rearing Farms today

Currently the farms are supporting the poultry and chicken enterprises by rearing day-old chicks into full-grown chickens. In Bangladesh there are about 34 private poultry hatcheries (including BRAC's five) and eight government hatcheries. About one million women are involved in small-scale poultry production under BRAC's poultry programme.

At a glance

Capacity:

1.75 million birds per year

Number of sheds:

14

Number of employees:

80 (60 female, 20 male)