

A close-up portrait of a young girl with dark hair pulled back, wearing a black sari with pink and white floral patterns. She has a small nose ring and red earrings, and she is smiling slightly. The background is blurred.

Annual Highlights 2021

Urban Development Programme



50 years of
igniting
hope



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BRAC, a southern international development organisation reaching over 100 million people globally, is working to tackle multi-faceted challenges through its inclusive urban development strategy. BRAC introduced its Urban Development Programme (UDP) in 2016, with a vision to make cities and urban informal settlements safe, resilient, inclusive and sustainable.

BRAC vision

A world free from all forms of exploitation and discrimination where everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential.

BRAC 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 enables women and men to realise their potential.

UDP goal

Make Bangladesh's cities a place where all people can live and thrive.

Message from the Director

BRAC's 50 years – from Bangladesh to the world – in this historic landmark, we are highly delighted to be part of the celebration of the BRAC's golden jubilee started from 20 December 2021. We would like to extend our humble gratitude, prayers and deep respect to our visionary leader late Sir Fazle Hasan Abed. We dream of chasing one of his greatest remarks now and then, "As long as social needs exist, we will keep on working, keep on learning, and keep striving to create an equitable future for all".

Last year was the challenging year for us due to the COVID pandemic. BRAC five years' plan (2021-2025) has provided us strategic direction. Since 2021 to now on, we have been strengthening our programmatic approaches and priorities aligning with BRAC's new strategies. In 2022, we are committed to be strategically focused on ensuring gender sensibility, inclusive growth, climate resilience building and youth-centric in all aspects and interventions.

The geographical location of Bangladesh makes the country most vulnerable to the devastating threats of climate change. It results in rising poverty and displacement that affecting the rapidly growing migrants to the cities. In response to this situation, UDP has strengthened its programmatic planning and operation to pave the way for wellbeing of their lives and livelihoods.

The delta variant of COVID-19 continued to ravage lives and livelihoods of people of Bangladesh, and pushed many people back into poverty. People living in urban informal settlements felt the severity of the pandemic most. Amid the situation, UDP responded to the basic needs and socio-economic requirements caused by the pandemic.

Like before, BRAC UDP, in collaboration with 20 city authorities, has been persistently working to reduce multidimensional poverty, upgrade living condition and livelihood development. In addition, we also work through government-NGO-community partnership for attaining SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Despite the challenges of the COVID pandemic and



Dr. Md Liakath Ali

Director

Urban Development Programme, BRAC, and
Climate Change Programme, BRAC and
BRAC International



In 2022, we are committed to be strategically focused on ensuring gender sensibility, inclusive growth, climate resilience building and youth-centric in all aspects and interventions.



realising the unprecedented realities, we were able to improve the wellbeing of 1.4 million people living in urban poverty so far. During the challenges and transitions of UDP, we just kept in mind and heart, and followed our founder Sir Fazle Hasan Abed sir's remark, "We must strive to continuously find solutions to emerging and re-emerging social challenges. We must reach out to those in need".

Finally, I would like to thank to all UDP partners, BRAC management, city authorities and my colleagues for extending their consistent support and cooperation in 2021 during the pandemic.

Message from the Programme Head

By 2050, half of Bangladesh's population will be living in cities. Cities offer so many opportunities. But we need to be ready to make the most of it and work towards the vision of an equitable society and meaningful life for all irrespective of where they come from. Working to tackle urban poverty, delivering public services and providing decent work for all, and building resilient cities would be a key global and national priority area reflected in the New Urban Agenda, Sustainable Development Goal-11 (Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Development), and the Eight Five Year Plan of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

BRAC has reached its 50 this year. We are delighted to be part of this journey and rejoice in gathering momentum to square up for the many new and complex challenges to be faced in the years ahead. The world is changing, throwing a web of challenges to deal with, such as climate change and health epidemics. The last two years have been particularly taxing with COVID-19 that affected our lives and livelihoods. The urban poor, who have limited income and assets, lack access to social protection and have low capacity to absorb external shocks, were the first to bear its burnt.

BRAC's Urban Development Programme (UDP) has been working since 2016 to reduce the multidimensional poverty and distinct vulnerability faced by urban poor across 20 cities. As the COVID-19 loomed large, we adapted our operations to meet the unique challenges faced by the urban community. But it also left us to contemplate on how we need to rethink our approach to tackle the growing urban challenges while embracing inclusion, gender equality, resilience and need for investment in the future generation. In the coming years, UDP seeks to act in concert with the national and local government to this end, harnessing its experience and trust built with the local



Imamul Azam Shahi

Programme Head

Urban Development Programme, BRAC



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community and government across major cities and municipalities while embracing novelty, innovation and efficiency in how we think and design our solutions.



Executive summary

The year 2021 is marked as the transition period for BRAC Urban Development Programme (UDP). In the context of recently evolved BRAC strategy 2021–2025, the challenges thrown by the COVID-19 pandemic and truncated development fund, UDP made considerable strategic shifts in its programme priorities and consequent adjustment in the implementation modalities. This shift was reflected in its motto ‘to do more with less resources’, reduction in programme areas, and renewed focus on data-driven decision making. Despite the external and internal challenges, UDP made substantial achievements against its objectives and targets.

As the pandemic stayed on in 2021, UDP calibrated its operational modality to take in the emerging challenges and ensure timely implementation of its regular programme activities. This included rigorous activity planning and adjustment, timely and effective staff awareness, capacity development on COVID-19 protocol and embracing digital tool for activity implementation (i.e., conduction of trainings and meetings with external stakeholders using online tools). While the pandemic affected the slum infrastructure and housing improvement initiatives making it slower than usual, the team invested its time and reached its goal of a self-sustaining housing revolving fund. All of the planned activities, despite some ups and down due to pandemic, were implemented. Further, considering the needs of the vulnerable urban communities, UDP centered its sizeable resources and time on COVID-19 response.

In addition to this, partnership agreements with City Corporations and Municipalities have been renewed for next five years. All of the donor funded projects, i.e., KAAP-IsDB WASH & Health, WFP, The Coca-Cola Foundation, ARISE and ARISE Responsive Fund, were fully operational and made significant contribution in achieving

UDP objectives. There were also significant achievements in programme development, fund raising and research/ studies.

UDP initiated the process of withdrawing its activities from six cities in the latter half of the year. The process included informing the city authorities, communities and local partners on the withdrawal prior to programme closeout in December 2021 and completing programme evaluation and poverty data update process in all the cities including the closeout ones. These documentations helped and will continue helping more effective and efficient programming in the future. Taking in the experience from over six years of its operations as well as working with the city authorities and other different stakeholders and espousing the learning by doing approach to solidify its intervention, UDP redirected its focus beyond the slums and identified different components of the city systems that are crucial for sustainable change in the life and livelihoods of the people living in urban poverty.

Hence, beside community empowerment, this year more efforts were given on process improvement for better community impact on the identified components, such as – 1. Governance: Sensitizing the city authorities and other stakeholders to extend municipal and other services to slums; 2. Women empowerment and violence against women: taking measures for women empowerment and acting against violence against women; men were targeted to increase women’s economic participation and changing gender norms in the urban low-income communities; 2. Climate change: creating livelihood options and promoting climate change adaptation. It is expected that the continuation of this approach will make sustainable and equitable change in the urban development approach.

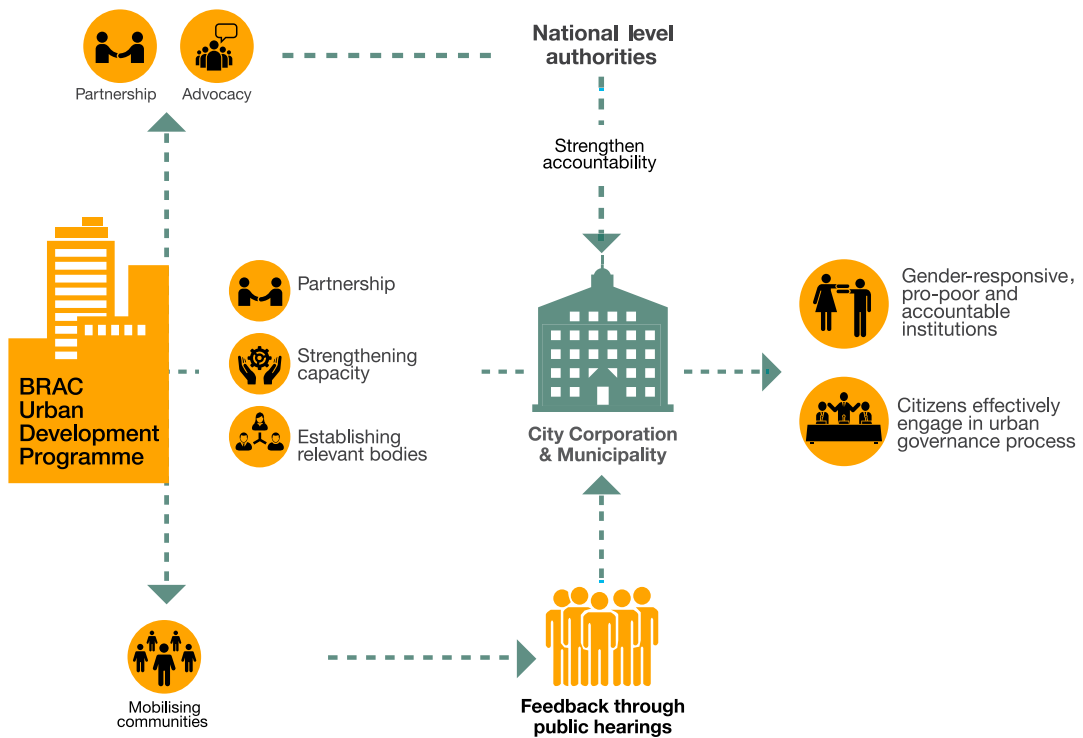
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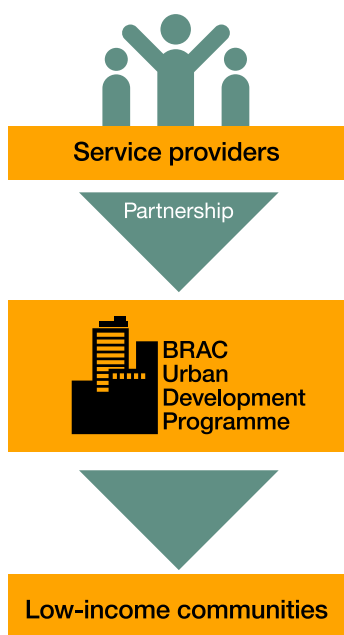


Our approach

1. Promote pro-poor governance



2. Ensure access to quality and affordable basic services



3. Foster innovation





Our priorities

**Strengthen policy advocacy
and partnerships** for
sustainable, pro-poor and
inclusive urban growth

6



**Strengthen urban
governance for
inclusive,
accountable and
pro-poor urban
management and
planning**

5



**Integrate policies and plans to
mitigate** and adapt to climate
change impacts and disasters

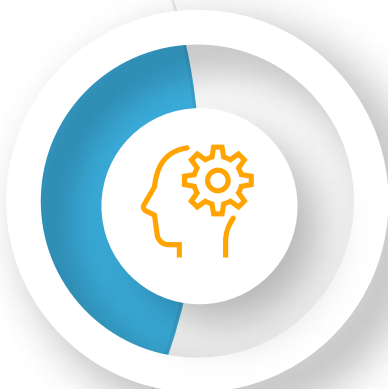
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1

**Improve access to
adequate and affordable
basic services**



2

**Improve access to
livelihoods, skills
and entrepreneurship
development**



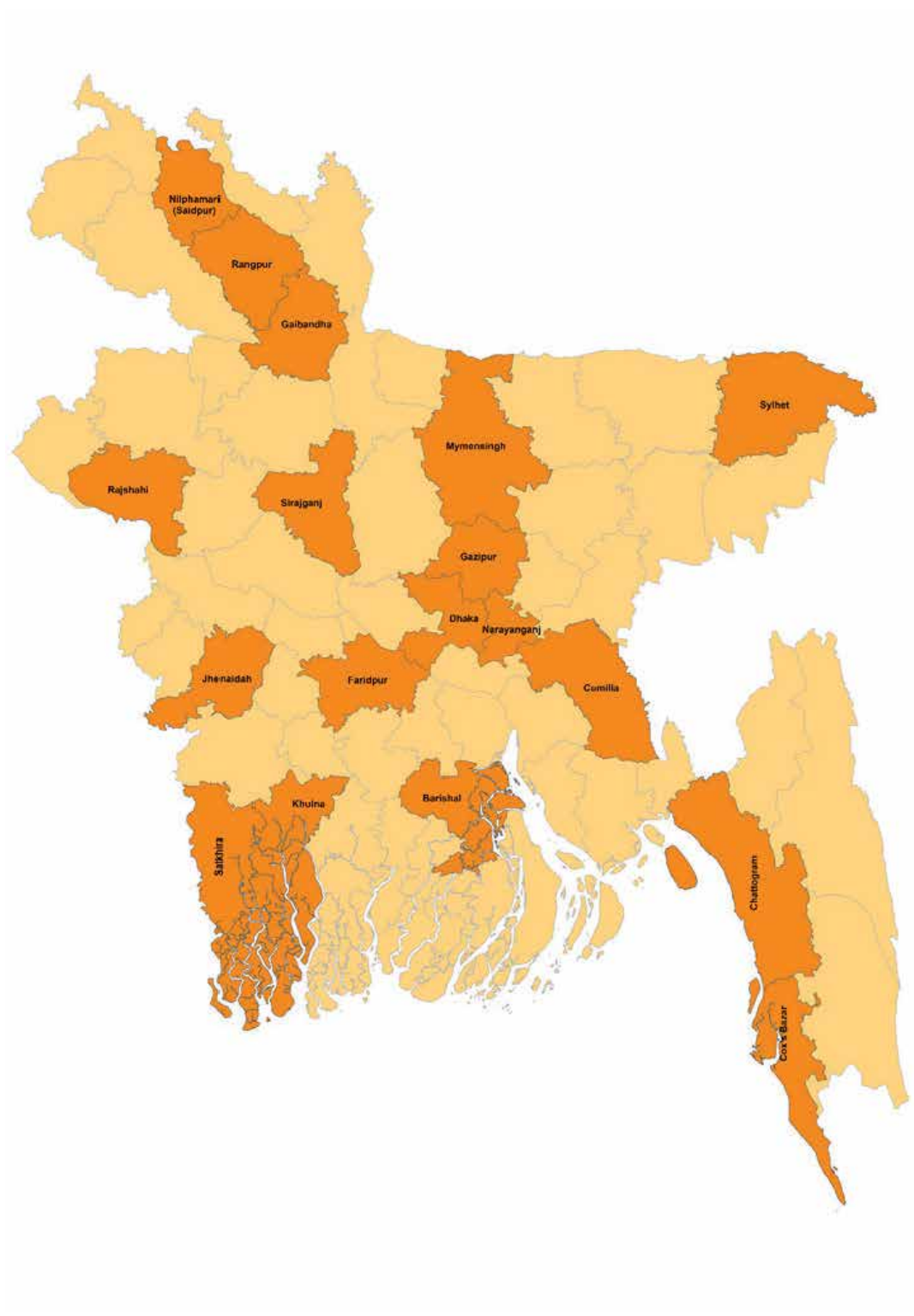
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**Increase opportunities for safe
and affordable housing, land
tenure security and living conditions
in urban informal settlements**

Annual scorecard

547,047 people reached through different services	667 RMG workers completed skills training		432 peoples' housing improved
4,632 people received livelihoods development support	6,958 children provided with education materials	520 people received government social safety net packages	62,795 households received urban agriculture support
151 community toilets and safe water points built	80 roads inside low income settlements improved	7,287 men brought into behavior change interventions on gender equality and positive masculinity	
	2,156 working age women received skills and enterprise development support	26,937 people received COVID emergency financial support	18,892 people received health services

UDP across Bangladesh in 2021





Insights from UDP information hub

As the programme has gone through the second consecutive pandemic year, experiences and learning from 2019-2020 helped in steering more effective and efficient planning for programme interventions. The EMPOWER project is completing its five years journey. There is now a need for reflection and determining the future course and strategy through contemplating the global and national agenda, and contextualising specific community needs. In this context, research and database development activities received relative importance for future urban programming through evaluating the programme impact and having a deeper understanding of the community's needs.

To focus programme priority, BRAC Urban Development Programme (UDP) has been working on two foremost initiatives, which are as follows:

- (i) Maintaining a comprehensive low-income community households (HHs) database; and
- (ii) Developing a real-time decision support system for all UDP interventions.

Urban low-income community database development

Rapid urbanisation is taking place due to the climate change impact, especially the number of climate migrants is increasing rapidly in the urban low-income communities (LIC). To minimise the knowledge and information gap about the urban informal settlement, UDP has been maintaining a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative data for last four years. Due to the COVID-19 situation, the urban informal settlements have been affected drastically. Therefore, the whole database needs to be updated considering the whole situation.

In 2021, UDP undertook extensive efforts to conduct a census in selected 400 LIC of 12 city corporations and seven municipalities areas across Bangladesh, which covered 617,768 population from 189,482 HHs. A comprehensive questionnaire was designed to be captured with urban LIC' context, and kept the data for sharing with other programmes into consideration. Face to face interview session was conducted by 300 community organizers, 50 programme organizers and 50 data enumerators with the respective household head or his/ her husband or wife.

To ensure data hygiene, the census has maintained strong data validation (e.g., using unique keys, input masks and required fields) and verification process in every step of the census. UDP regional team, as well as head office (HO) team was involved in the overall supervision, monitoring and data quality control process. A significant number of data are physically verified by the trainer, M&E officer, field coordinator, regional coordinator and HO team.

Data-driven decision-making and future scope

The census data has provided a snapshot on understanding the dynamics of the LIC, and generating insights on HHs' demographic and socioeconomic information. The socioeconomic information includes migration trend and cause, housing structure, water and sanitation, energy uses, social protection, COVID impact on informal livelihood, household waste management, financial inclusion, access to technology, capacity developments need and household income, and expenditure savings behaviours.

Insights generated from the census data are now being used in programme design and implementation, such as LIC categorisation and priority planning, participant selection for skill, service integration, capacity development, safety net support, and infrastructure development decision.

We envision this data platform will be an information hub for urban low-income communities. It will not be only for BRAC UDP, but also BRAC other programmes, GOs and NGOs can extract the information that will help for better urban planning and data-driven innovative solutions. These data can also be used to advocate different organisations for developing customised products of service and knowledge product.

Real-time programme monitoring and decision support system

A real-time data monitoring system has been used in UDP to improve operational efficiency, and make data more transparent and accessible from its operational cities and towns. The decision support system proved to be an effective tool to understand the pattern of urban poverty amidst the pandemic. During selection of participants for cash support, data hub has been used. It is not only being used in the EMPOWER project, but also in the ERMG, IsDB and others research-focused projects of UDP.

Census in a snapshot

1,85,500 households (HHs) from 19 city/ municipalities	61,5000 population surveyed from 400 low-income communities (LICs)	49% male and 51% female	3.4 avg. people in a household
40% people living in LICs have ages between 21-40	20% have an age range 0-10. 4% are older age (60+)	25% people can signature/ never attended school	Dhaka is the highest 46% female headed HHs
	10% women abandoned/ divorced/ separated/ widow	45% people are engaging income earning activities	1.3 earning member per household
2% reported disabilities among the participants	92% Muslims 7% Hindus 0.3% Christian	97% Bengali 1.3% Bihari 0.5% Bede 1.7% Others	

Economic situation at a glance

10,350 avg. income per household	10,340 avg. expenditure per household		5,500 avg. income earned by female
8,500 avg. income earned by male	1.5 times more wages earned by male than female		45% involve income generating activity
26% HHs save money in the formal institution		22% HHs to borrow loan from NGO/ microfinance	1% HHs to borrow loan from money lender
Above 29% of households in LICs taking loan for repaying others loan	24% HHs are using loan for repairing their homes	20% HH using loan for business purpose	4% HHs covered by government safety net
65% HHs have own MFS (Financial account)	30% HHs lost jobs/ business affected by COVID-19	75% HHs income affected by COVID	



61%

migrants migrate
because of poverty

Urban migration at a glance



In Gazipur, Savar
and Narayanganj,
migration trend is
recently higher

60%

HHs head work as
day labourers after
migration

7%

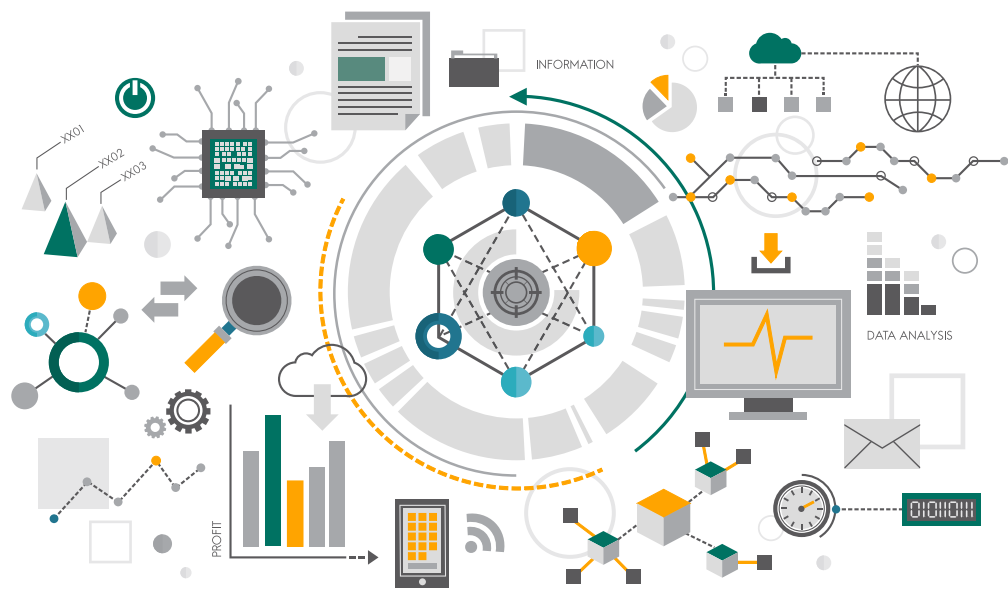
people were
migrated due to
natural disaster

12%

migrant people is
working as a
garments worker

42%

HHs head was day/
agriculture labour
before migration



Research and evaluation

Research and evaluation

Despite inconveniences caused by the COVID-19 emergency, BRAC Urban Development Programme (UDP) succeeded to complete all the planned studies. Major achievements are:



The development of business case for envisioning future investment for BRAC in the garments sector was developed by the Light Castle Partners. The study investigated the effectiveness of existing One Stop Service Centre (OSCC) model, and the market-oriented demand-supply of this very model in RMG concentrated areas. After a logical juxtaposition of given demand supply and donor landscaping, the study came up with some prospective service compositions and pricing of services to achieve the sustainability of the model.

A book has been published titled “Low-cost climate resilient urban housing – BRAC experiences” described how the housing model built up centering the community initiative over the time; also, the book meticulously investigated its own housing model in order to answer how the model is low-cost yet climate resilient from the lower income community perspective.



The impact assessment of EMPOWER project (2016-2020) was conducted by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD). This is a follow-up quasi-experimental survey carried out in 2017 on the framework of multidimensional poverty to see the changes and effectiveness of the model EMPOWER project built on. Moreover, a thorough qualitative study followed the survey to investigate and document the unique process of community led intervention and implementation. The assessment reveals the community level social and physical intervention impacted a considerable level of changes in terms of water, sanitation and access to road and drainage systems. Household level gross expenditure increased. In terms of household, food consumption also increased. Moreover, the study captured the impact of emergency responses during the lockdown.



A street vendor at his tea stall in Dhaka

Two rapid researches were carried out to gather knowledge about the **political socio-economic** and **physical disposition of street vending**. Based on these two rapid assessments, UDP has developed a model for sustainable management of public space and vendors on the streets, which has already been shared with Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC). Of late, DNCC has initiated a piloting of the model, BRAC will provide necessary technical support to carry out the piloting.

Urban poverty mapping, need and suitability analysis for future urban programming were conducted by the Light Castle Partners. The study utilised a suitability assessment framework, by which it analyzed the GAP and came up with area specific future strategies as well as general recommendations. For doing so, on top of city level empirical data, it rigorously reviewed existing national level strategies and policies.

“Study for adopting a gendered and age-sensitive lens to understand the experiences and needs of the young adolescent girls and boys in the lower income communities” by The NielsenIQ. According to the study, the majority of adolescents experienced physical violence (adolescent boys – 67.8%, adolescent girls – 65.6%, and disabled adolescents – 50.7%). The experience of emotional violence is also found to be common among adolescents. They are unaware of the laws, regulations, legal procedures, and reporting mechanism in case there is any incident of sexual harassment. The participation of adolescents (both boys and girls) in civic activities in the community and school was found very low.





Interventions for special occupation groups



Sustainable street vendor management on public space

Initiative for model development

UDP has taken initiative for sustainable street vending management model development in Dhaka North City Corporation with the aim to advocate for enactment of National Street Vending Policy. In 2021, UDP explored the ground context of the street vendor activities to determine prospective solutions. A series of consultations and meetings were arranged with different stakeholder groups like Mayor, Ward Councilors, City Officials, Street Vendors, Hawkers and Vendor Associations, Customers and Local Residents, National and International Experts to learn the socio-cultural, economic, political and physical context of street vending operations and to find out the possible way forwards. A draft working model/approach was developed to manage street vending in two pilot sites of Dhaka North. The BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) of BRAC University assisted in conducting the field study on the social and relevant aspects.

High-level consultation meeting

A high-level consultative meeting on the management of street vendors in Dhaka city was jointly organised by BRAC and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) on 29 December 2021 in the conference room of DNCC.

Objectives

- Share the ground context and draft proposition (DNCC and BRAC);
- Receive feedback and opinion from distinguished participants through discussion; and
- Build consensus among the high-level stakeholders with the leadership of honourable Mayor, DNCC.

Presentation by BRAC UDP

In the beginning of the high-level consultative meeting, the keynote presentation was made by Md. Washim Akhter, Programme Coordinator, BRAC Urban Development Programme. The very intention of the presentation and findings sharing was to pave the way for further fruitful discussion from national level experts and professional groups. Key issues from the presentation are as follows:

- In the absence of policy, a multi-stakeholder institutional arrangement (e.g. DNCC, Law enforcers, civil society organisation, private sector, and so on) will be needed to manage public space;
- Space and time management for hawking would depend on innovative technological solution (real-time data and mobile applications);
- Re-organising the walkway and street side through some innovative design solution will ensure optimum utilisation of public space;
- Design solution will also ensure the business opportunity of street vendors;
- Public health and hygiene promotion is essential; and
- Representation from respective neighbourhood in the management group has to be ensured.

Key findings from panel discussion

- Finding an in-between solution where traffic congestion will not happen and walkways will be effective. At the same time, street vendors will operate their business without making any harm to the dwellers.
- A clear strategy is a must. While we design some solution – we have to make sure proper waste management mechanism and public health issues should also be addressed.
- Identifying a technical working group and formulate the policy will be the key from now on. A call to steer an extensive study on informal sectors and recommendations of sector leads related to the past studies.
- An immediate pilot with vendors who does a green business network should be taken.
- It is essential for both the city corporations to steward towards a common goal.
- A digital survey should be conducted on number of vendors, spatial concentration, their interaction and public relations. Footpath maintenance salaries and cost can be covered with the chada amount. As there will be rules and regulations, so can be provisions for grants and capacity building trainings.



A segment of participants in the high-level consultation meeting

Remarks from the chief guest and special guest

As a Special Guest, BRAC's Executive Director Asif Saleh said, "With all the challenges faced by Dhaka, we need to reimagine the city with thousands of informal workers at the centre of it. The issue of street vending has a strong political economy involved. So, just a technical solution will not be sustainable. We will need to get a practical solution that creates a win-win proposition for all. For that to happen, it will need the involvement of all." He also added that eviction is not a strategy anymore, and we have to count the contribution of informal players of the economy. Formalisation of informal workers as well as streamline their livelihoods is a necessity.



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Honourable Mayor of DNCC Atiqul Islam in his remarks, as Chief Guest, appreciated all the participants for their active participation. He said that the contribution of this special occupational group in our city economy has to be counted. However, we just cannot ignore the nuisances caused by the street vendors in the streets of the city. He believes there is a way forward in which law enforcers, civil society, local power structure, and professional groups can contribute. He further added that innovative design solutions should consider the optimum usage of streets as well as the business opportunity. On the management aspect he also suggested a three-tier management system as follows: a) Ground accountable group, b) Technical committee, and c) Advisory committee.



The next course of action

The honourable Mayor identified a three steps way forward as the next course of action.

- Formation of a technical working group (national level experts, professionals, civil society, Govt officials); and the Town Planning department will be the focal point for that.
- A draft street vendor policy.
- Piloting the street vendor management. Probable area of intervention will be Mirpur-10, and local councillor was advised to prepare the ground for the piloting.

In addition, the overall journey of managing public space will have to lead to policy formulation. He recommended for formulation of a street vendor policy by 31st January 2022 with all relevant stakeholders, and proposal of piloting the propositions at Mirpur-10 in Dhaka.



Interventions for waste management workers

Risking lives to keep the city clean

Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, is home to 18 million people. It generates more than 10,000 tons of solid waste every day, with 120,000 people employed to gather and process it. People who work with waste face health risks and unhygienic and hazardous work environments. In addition to existing vulnerabilities due to low incomes, people often lack access to basic services such as safe drinking water, education, housing, healthcare and nutrition, and sanitation facilities. Ensuring a better environment is challenging, as there is no formal group, organisation or cooperative to negotiate their working conditions.

Bandhan project

BRAC Urban Development Programme, in partnership with the Coca-Cola Foundation, is implementing a pilot project to target the wellbeing of people working with waste in Dhaka. 3,500 people are receiving a tailored service package delivered through community service centres. This project is titled as Bandhan, which aims to develop a model for safe life and livelihood of waste management workers in Dhaka city. It also aims to improve the lifestyle of these workers and develop a knowledge hub for policy advocacy.

Partners

- Local city authority
- The Coca-Cola Foundation

Duration

January 2021 – December 2021

Locations

13 low-income informal settlements in Dhaka North and South City Corporation including Dholpur, Maniknagar, Shohidnagar, Korail Sonar Bangla, Korail T&T Satellite, Korail Boubazar, Korail Jamaibazar, Sattola East, Sattola West, Korail Beltola, Vashantek, Duaripara, and Kallyanpur.

Bandhan project so far



Project data findings

- 78% workers do not have access to safe sanitation in Dhaka;
- 88% of the workers do not have savings in any form;
- Most of these workers do not have the luxury of going to hospitals;
- 73% of them seeking primary healthcare from pharmacies;
- Most vulnerable to contracting COVID-19, with 48% of the workers and 42% of their family members having suffered symptoms;
- 46% of waste workers are women, 50% of the workers are in the 26-45 age range, while 16% are children;
- About 60% suffer from back pain, 15% from skin diseases, 16% from eye diseases, and 20% from breathing difficulties;
- Devalued and socially excluded by members of other marginalised communities living in similar conditions; and
- irregularities in the recruitment, and many of them do not even receive the full salaries that they are entitled to.



More and long-term interventions are required for the people involved in the waste management process. Sustainable change will not be possible without stronger policy advocacy and interventions to overhaul the entire waste management ecosystem, speakers at the seminar said.

The speakers also said waste workers are exposed to multiple occupational hazards, facing a greater risk of infection, injury, and death than most professions. Due to their social status and income, most waste workers live in congested places with limited access to basic services. Arranging health insurance for the workers is challenging due to size of the community, master roll employment, low or uncertain income, prevalence of drug and liquor addiction and lack of a formal association for them, they further added.

Joint efforts are imperative to address issues with their earnings, living conditions, access to basic services, social status, safety, agency and financial inclusion, speakers further said at the seminar.

The speakers addressed the issues at the “National Seminar on the Wellbeing of Waste Workers” held on 21 December 2021 at BRAC Centre in Dhaka. BRAC Urban Development Programme, in collaboration with The Coca-Cola Foundation, organised the seminar to share learning and discuss the way forwards on the wellbeing of marginalised people working with waste. The seminar highlighted the findings of the project called “Bandhan”, aimed at developing a model for safe life and livelihood of waste workers in Dhaka city. More than fifty participants from different national print and electronic media, academic institutions, NGOs, Government agencies, representatives from waste workers and The Coca-Cola Foundation participated the event.

Md Selim Reza, Chief Executive Officer, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) graced the event as the Chief Guest. Razinara Begum, Director, Department of Environment, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of Bangladesh, Dewan Abdul Mannan, Ward Councilor, Dhaka North City Corporation, Dr Tariq Bin Yousuf, Additional Chief Engineer, Dhaka North City Corporation, and Ta Duy Tung, Managing Director, Coca-Cola Bangladesh Limited, attended as special guests. Dr. Md Liakath Ali, Director, Climate Change Programme, BRAC and BRAC International and Urban Development Programme, BRAC moderated the event. Farah Sharmeen, Country Representative – Communication and Public Relations, Coca-Cola Bangladesh Ltd, Maqsud Hashem, Chief Town Planner, Dhaka North City Corporation and Uttam Kumar Saha, Strategic Lead, Urban & Energy, Practical Action also participated in an open discussion.

Saif Iqbal from BRAC Urban Development Programme presented learnings from the project. In addition to this, an experience sharing titled “Waste and Public Health: Livelihood and Safety of Waste and Sanitation Workers” was presented by Alauddin Ahmed, Project Manager of the Centre for Water Supply and Waste Management in International Training Network – Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (ITN-BUET).



“I learnt about a lot of important things, through stories, by attending the awareness sessions. I learnt that touching unknown things can make me sick. I also got to know the rules of traffic signals and zebra crossings. The stories taught me how to tell a good touch from a bad touch”.

- Bonna Akter Taslima, attendee of the children's awareness session from Kallyanpur

“I didn't have a habit of saving money before, but that has changed. During the last two months, I have been saving BDT 600 per month in an association. Hopefully, this money can help me during any crisis.”

- Ibrahim, waste management worker from Kallyanpur, who attended the adult awareness session



“I was suffering from high blood pressure for a long time. Regular check-ups and medication are costly and time-consuming, so I could not continue them. When the health camp opened here, I consulted a physician and regularly started to take medicine through them, free of cost. It was a relief.”

- Minara Begum, waste management worker from Beltola, Korail

“I always thought only big fish and meat have protein, which we could not afford. I used to feel weak and wonder why. I found out that I have anemia, due to a lack of protein, which is also available in more affordable food such as egg, pulse, small fishes and spinach. As I decide the menu, I now ensure we have these food items.”

- Laboni, waste management worker from Korail



Interventions for ready-made garments workers





Dialogue on 'Policy Framework for Health Insurance of the RMG workers in Bangladesh'

Health insurance for RMG workers requires policy support

A network consisting of the Health Economics Unit, Health Services Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; Institute of Health Economics, University of Dhaka; SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, Bangladesh, Gonoshasthaya Kendra, and BRAC UDP jointly arranged a dialogue on 'Policy Framework for Health Insurance of the RMG workers in Bangladesh' on 14 March 2021 at BRAC Centre Inn, Dhaka.

Session speakers stressed the need for affordable and reliable health insurance coverage for RMG workers as out-of-pocket money for healthcare is high in the country. Speakers recommended for sustainable and a manageable premium, increased OPD coverage within insurance packages, sensitisation of local service providers and gatekeepers and urged to prepare an operational guideline to streamline the insurance management process across the country.

Roundtable on Health Insurance

Nationwide initiative a must for cutting out of pocket healthcare cost: Experts call

Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour and Employment Ministry Md Mujibul Haque MP underscored the national initiative in collaboration with government and private entities on health insurance coverage for readymade garment workers and other wage earners.

The lawmaker called for public insurance companies to offer health insurance for low-income earners. He came up with the suggestions while addressing a virtual roundtable on 'Health Insurance for RMG Workers in Bangladesh: Designing Policy and Management Structure' on 18 August 2021.

BRAC Urban Development Programme has organised the roundtable in collaboration with Health Economics Unit (HEU) of Health and Family Welfare Ministry, Institute of Health Economics (IHE) of Dhaka University, Netherland-based development organisation SNV, and the daily Prothom Alo.

HEU Director General Dr Md Shahadat Hossain Mahamud said that the RMG sector already has a systematic and formal structure in collaboration with BGMEA, BKMEA, and Central Fund of Labour and Employment Ministry, which enables the sector to be the pioneer of institutional health insurance policy for workers' wellbeing. Other sectors' workers could be brought under health insurance in phases.

BRAC Climate Change and Urban Development Programmes' Director Dr Md Liakath Ali said the country should introduce health insurance for all wage-earners, and the RMG sector is ready to introduce it. He opined that health insurance could be scaled up if it becomes successful in the RMG sector.

Bangladesh Diabetic Association President AK Azad Khan suggested that health insurance should be tax-free. Facilitated by Prothom Alo's assistant editor Firoz Choudhury, the roundtable was also addressed by Central Fund DG Dr Selina Akter, IHE Professor Dr Syed Abdul Hamid, HEU's research director Dr Md Nurul Amin, ANM Saifuddin from BGMEA, Mohammad Hatem from BKMEA, Pragati Life Insurance chief executive officer M Jalaul Azim, Gonosastha Kendra's Dr Rejaul Huq, and Bangladesh Garments Workers' League president Sirajul Alam Rony.

In his keynote speech, Dr Syed Abdul Hamid said several NGOs have been operating various pilot projects on health insurance to support RMG workers in the country. Participation in health insurance has eased healthcare costs and increased productivity of RMG workers.

Although most of the projects' timeline is at the end, no policy or management framework has yet been developed to scale up the projects or undertaken permanent initiatives. The discussants also informed that a network involving HEU, IHE, BRAC, SNV and Ganashastha Kendro have been working for policy formulation and the establishment of the institutional infrastructure to the policy formulation levels.



ABC Radio Talkshow

Speakers underscore health insurance for all RMG workers

Out of 4 million RMG workers, approximately 80,000 workers are currently covered by health insurance under three projects. Effective initiatives must be taken to continue the health insurance projects, and to gradually scale up the other industries' workers.

The views came up at a radio talkshow hosted by Nadia Islam, producer and radio host of ABC Radio, where Dr Syed Abdul Hamid, Professor, University of Dhaka, Dr Md Nurul Amin, Research Director, Health Economics Unit of Health and Family Welfare Ministry, and Sk Mojibul Huq, Programme Manager, BRAC Urban Development Programme expressed their logic in favour of health insurance for RMG workers.

Voices from the community

"I attended a job fair for the first time in my life, but it was not a typical job fair for university graduates. This one was for people with technical skills."

I was in secondary school last year, when my college closed due to COVID-19. To reduce the financial burden, my father got me married. I wanted to work to support my new family. I took a month-long sewing machine operation course and then attended a job fair at Savar, arranged by BRAC, from where I got a job as a sewing machine operator in one of the garment factories."

2,000 people like Suchona Das have received sewing machine operation training from BRAC's one stop service centres. BRAC arranges job fairs for these graduates, where they can then meet representatives from apparel factories. 90% of graduates secure jobs through these fairs.



"I attended a job fair for the first time in my life, but it was not a typical job fair for university graduates. This one was for people with technical skills."

- Suchona Das

"I come from a big extended family - four siblings, as well as my wife and our son. When my father died, I was very young, and I inherited the responsibility of supporting the whole family. I got a job in a bakery, but the pay was irregular. I tried pulling rickshaws to earn a bit extra, but it was not enough. My wife and I moved to Dhaka looking for jobs in factories together, but neither of us were equipped with the skill or experience needed. My wife enrolled in free training on sewing machine operation provided by BRAC. After three months of training, she got a job in a factory, and we set up our home with her first salary. Inspired by her, I enrolled in the same training, and through BRAC's one stop service centre, secured a job in the same factory. My wife and I are now supporting our whole family - we recently organised the wedding of my younger sister and bought educational materials for my brother."

"My wife enrolled in free training on sewing machine operation provided by BRAC. After three months of training, she got a job in a factory, and we set up our home with her first salary. Inspired by her, I enrolled in the same training, and through BRAC's one stop service centre, secured a job in the same factory."

- Ariful Islam





Interventions for ethnic and religious minorities

Integrated WASH services

Besides EMPOWER project, Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) supported WASH project contributed significantly in improving living condition of the people, including marginalised Muslim minority people, in Mirpur, Mohammadpur and Saidpur. To support school readiness after reopening, the project constructed 05 inclusive school WASH blocks for providing access to improved water, sanitation, and handwashing facilities to the students. The project conducted student brigade training where total 40 students along with 10 selected teachers participated to play a role of catalyst for motivating other students and their community members for better hygiene practices. Apart from community sensitisation, the project also achieved the following outcomes:

46 handwashing stations constructed	35 community toilets constructed	51 bathing stations constructed	08 drainage networks and 7 large waste bins constructed
	83 unhygienic toilets renovatedand	27 water points installed to provide safe water, improved sanitation and waste management	

Interventions for ethnic and religious minorities

Integrated health services

The ERMG and IsDB supported health projects are providing quality health services for the special low-income population groups including marginalised Muslim minority people and readymade garment workers. The IsDB supported health project is continuing providing OPD service delivery at three project areas of Mirpur, Mohammadpur and Saidpur amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Three urban healthcare and diagnosis centre were attended by 15,680 outpatients and supported at least 1,116 participants for eye care since January'21. Programme organisers were deployed for raising health awareness and to establish a referral linkage between the community and tertiary level hospitals through preliminary screening.



Interventions for Ora'o communities in Rangpur

As a part of the EMPOWER project, the programme selected and worked in 30 low-income communities in Rangpur City Corporation and 12 low-income communities in Gaibandha municipality. In Rangpur, UDP mainly extended its services for the Ora'o indigenous (adibasi) communities. The Ora'o Adibasi communities' people refer to non-Bengali ethnic minorities in the northwestern belt of Bangladesh. Ora'o is known as one of the oldest adibasi (indigenous) communities in Rangpur.



Interventions for the wellbeing of Ora'o community at a glance

Activity	North Shekpara, Rangpur
Settlement improvement plan	01 Community
Footpath	952 Running Feet
Cover/open/pipe drain	850 Running Feet
Network toilet with ABR	12 Unit
ABR	02 Unit
Skill training	07 Persons
Low-cost housing support	22 Houses
Cash support (COVID-19)	250 HH (375,000 BDT)
Food support (COVID-19)	55 HH
Tree sapling and seed support	350 Units
Bridge construction and support	01 Bridges
Education service integration	200 Childrens
Livelihood support (small business)	20 Households

Voices from the community

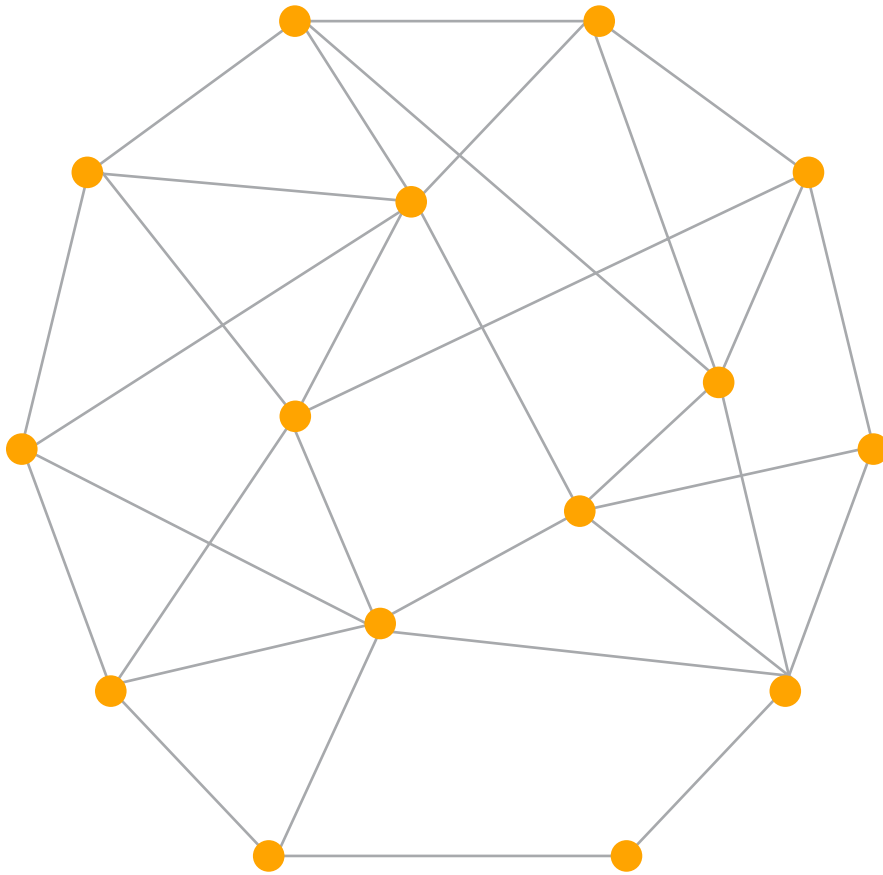
Alo and her family get recovering soon

Being the only earning member of the family, it was tough for Alo to manage health expenditures. Lack of information about accessible low-cost health care was another reason she mentioned. Alo Begum gets to know from a community health worker that she can access low-cost healthcare services at BRAC Urban Health Care and Diagnostic Center (UHC&DC), situated in her neighbourhood. Alo Begum came to BRAC UHC&DC with her daughter. Physician of UHC&DC checked up her daughter, then referred to BSMMU for advanced diagnosis. She was diagnosed with Hormonal imbalance. Considering the reports, she was suggested medicines by a Medical Officer of UHC&DC. Her daughter is recovering gradually. Her husband took treatment and provided spectacles that corrected his visionary error. Even Alo Begum was suffering from fever, so she was advised for free rapid antigen test for dengue and tested negative. Alo said, "My husband's visionary error correction provided him full confidence. Now he can work properly. I hope, economic condition of our family will be improved gradually when he gets back to work."

"My husband's visionary error correction provided him full confidence. Now he can work properly. I hope, economic condition of our family will be improved gradually when he gets back to work."

- Alo Begum, a participant lives in Genava Camp, Mohammadpur, Dhaka





I N N O V A T I O N



Anaerobic baffled reactor in Rangpur

Anaerobic baffled reactors (ABR) are special types of septic tanks that have been upgraded with a series of baffles (separating walls) along the treatment chamber. The up-flow chambers provide enhanced removal and digestion of organic matter (e.g., human waste). This mechanism treats waste water through anaerobic digestion and releases clean water to nature and kept solid wastages in secure compartments.



Social status improved through ABR

Advantages	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural treatment plant for human waste • No electrical energy is required • Low operating costs • Long service life • Low sludge production: the sludge is stabilized • Less space requirement (can be built underground) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental risk mitigation • Hygienic sanitation introduced • Protection against groundwater contamination

Temporary housing solution for the people living in insecure land

This housing typology introduces a modular system of dwelling units that accommodates the marginalized people living in insecure land. These dwellings can easily be adapted to the changing needs of its inhabitants, either to grow or to reduce. Moreover, temporal house upgrading (made of temporary and prefabricated materials) is very much cost effective and can easily be dismantled when slum dwellers are evicted or reassembled to a new location. Made of bamboo, CI sheet and recycled materials, these dwelling's modular components and panels are sufficiently light to be easily transported.



A safe, common space developed by the locals

Relir Bagan Community in Khulna City Corporation is now a safe living space for people displaced by climate change impacts. Khulna, a coastal district in Bangladesh, frequently deals with cyclones, storms, floods and water-salinity. Due to these natural disasters, people move out of their ancestral lands and need to relocate to other informal settlements, where basic amenities are inadequate.

Relir Bagan is one such community. BRAC Urban Development Programme (UDP) started working there in 2019. For an integrated and planned outcome, the community people prepared a community map themselves by identifying the design and placements for roads, tube-well points, water bodies, houses, open spaces, etc. They also prepared a Community Action Plan (CAP) to ensure effective usage of the open space for women and children. UDP provided technical support to sketch out a play zone for children during the community mapping. This play zone can be used both as a common space for women to hold their daily activities and a safe recreational garden for the children and the community people. The community people, Khulna City Corporation and BRAC together worked for developing this safe space. The community people, including women, participated as mason in building their dream community in a cost-effective way, after attending construction workshops arranged by the UDP team. Relir Bagan is now a relaxing space for the community people to take a small break from their busy lives. Multi-stakeholder engagement in developing this place has given them a new safe neighbourhood.



Multipurpose community water point in Khulna

Greenland low-income community is one of the most densely populated among the slums in Khulna city area. There are 1,649 households consist of 5913 people living in an unhealthy environment with a poor basic WASH facility. Access to safe drinking water is a real challenge in this slum. They have had only one water source which is 4 km away from their community. So, women have been suffering daily to collect water. The whole community has been trying to solve the issue for a long time.

As the population of the slum is large in number, the water point has facilitated around 240 people from 60 families. There are 10 points to collect water supplied from an overhead tank. The Water collecting zone also provides the community with some seating areas which offer socialization. Now this water collecting point has become a gathering space for children and women with a safe drinking water facility.

This tiny but essential zone of collecting water has been aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal 6 and 11.7 at the same time. The rest of the PG have also been planning to build some water collecting zones like this for them. So, the whole community is hopeful to solve their basic need of safe drinking water in the near future.





Social and economic upliftment

Upgrade living environment

The main activities undertaken to upgrade the living environment for people living in urban poverty are as follows - WASH and environmental sanitation facilities: 80 road, drainage, and footpath, 34 community toilets and 36 safe water sources (i.e., piped water supply, community water points, tube-wells and water filters) constructed for 97,610 people; and housing condition: housing condition improved for 432 people. A total of 62,795 households received awareness promotion and seeds/plants as part of urban agriculture promotion. Looking at area-wise achievement, in Khulna, one (women and children friendly) community open space was constructed, and in Satkhira, the construction of Shahid Abdur Razzak Park Public Toilet has been completed and inaugurated.



*Footpath and drainage system at low-income community in Chattogram **(before and now)***



Low-cost climate resilient housing in Khulna



Shahid Abdur Razzak park modern public toilet inaugurated in Satkhira

Livelihood support and COVID response

UDP facilitated 4,632 people against its target of urban poor including climate vulnerable people to receive skills development, and entrepreneurship and livelihoods development support. Adhering the BRAC's strategy on economic recovery, in 2021, one of UDP's overarching objective was to help the targeted urban poor recover from the pandemic shock. The programme provided financial support to 26,937 people as part of its livelihoods support and COVID emergency response initiative. A total of 2,156 working age women received skills and enterprise development training and livelihoods supports either from BRAC or from government/non-government agencies. Further, 976 women from low-income communities received leadership and community development trainings and awareness messages.



Livelihood support in Rajshahi



Badal with his livelihood business in Narayanganj

Providing basic services

The number of people living in urban poverty who received low cost and quality basic services was 547,047, nearly fourfold higher than the achievement target. This higher number is attributed to interventions around ad hoc COVID emergency response activities that was not planned when AOP targets were set. The participants' group included including COVID victims, youth, socially excluded and disabled people.

The services included – providing education materials to 6,958 children to prevent dropout and encourage to continue studies at home; facilitating 520 eligible people to receive UDP facilitated 520 eligible people in receiving government social safety net packages (lactating mother allowance, old age allowance and disable allowance); facilitating community leaders to ensure social protection services and emergency responses for 37,558 people provided by government and other organisations; and providing training to 256 adolescents and community members on health, and hygiene (including menstrual health and hygiene for adolescent and reproductive age group) and disability inclusion. As part of its efforts to change gender norms in urban low-income communities, 7,287 men were brought into behavior change interventions on gender equality and positive masculinity.



Education materials distributed amongst children at Kollyanpur



UDP Director visiting water point construction in Satkhira

Voices from the community



Shilpi Kozur now lives in a beautiful brick house

The house she lived in before had tinned walls and roof, which meant winters were spent shivering and summers were sweltering. She and her husband would spend monsoon nights placing pots in their room to collect raindrops that poured through the corrugated tin roof.

Shilpi Kozur and her husband Joyram live with their two children, Nikunjo and Joyita, in a nearly dilapidated home made of rusty tin and earth floor. The couple work as day labourers. Their combined daily income is about BDT 600, but they usually do not have any work for half of the month. Together with her neighbours, with support from BRAC and the Rangpur City Corporation, Shilpi and 36 other families from the Oraon tribe in North Shekpara, Rangpur, have built brand new modern houses for themselves.

People from the Oraon tribe are believed to be descendants of Dravid-speaking Kurukha race. The tribe is mainly animist - which means they believe that all objects, creatures and places possess spiritual value. The Oraon tribe in Bangladesh are scattered across Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions.

UDP has been working in Rangpur city since 2016, focusing on livelihood development, financial inclusion, healthcare, road, drains and WASH facilities following the settlement's improved plan. In its continuity, Community Development Organisations and the City Development Federation introduced affordable housing in the Oraon community in 2020. UDP is also implementing the cost-effective "Temporary Housing Solution" for the people who do not have tenure security.

A settlement improvement plan was prepared by the Oraon community. They consulted and collaborated with Rangpur City Corporation, and received technical support from BRAC. Together, they developed a low-cost, sustainable and climate-resilient housing model.

BRAC provided construction materials worth BDT 35,000 (USD 410) as a grant to each of the selected households. The households secured loans of BDT 50,000-85,000 (USD 587-997) from the City Development Federation, and the rest of the cost was borne from their own savings. The families worked with construction workers and masons to build their homes, which significantly reduced construction costs. Like other 36 families from the Oraon tribe, Shilpi Kozur now lives in a beautiful brick house.

Urban food assistance

BRAC and WFP, with support from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, undertook emergency food assistance support activities at urban low-income communities under Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC). The project aims at contributing to national social protection policies and strategies of Government of Bangladesh with a view to improving lives and health, and attaining the sustainable development goal 2 – Reaching zero hunger.

Based on the objectives, BRAC Urban Development Programme, in collaboration with WFP, has been transferring cash assistance to 3,263 households from the month of June 2021 in Bhasantek and Duyari para of DNCC. Each household (HH) is receiving 3,000 BDT through b-Kash transfer in every month, and 800 BDT for additional support in the same family (each participant).

The project so far

3,202 HHs (61 HHs migrated) finalised through remote and physical verification	68,376,950 BDT cash transferred	6,665,510 BDT cash back received by participants	13 project staff and 25 shops orientated on building block systems and SBCC materials
13 staff oriented on safeguarding	3,202 HHs received QR card, IEC and SBCC materials	3,261 leaflet and posters distributed participants on nutritious dense food intake	392 shops received hand rub
	1,562 soaps distributed to 19 grocery shops after every two days for handwashing		19 hand washing device installed in grocery shops



ARISE Responsive Fund

Tackling public health emergencies in informal settlements

ARISE Responsive Fund intended to make the community aware and minimise the spread of the virus through various interventions and initiatives. These activities include primary group meetings, community development organisation (CDO) meetings, health camps and campaigns, distribution of hygiene commodities, vaccine registration campaigns, and health, hygiene and covid awareness campaigns. In response to COVID-19, community organisers visited households door-to-door for distributing informative leaflets.

The project in numbers

58,000 reusable masks distributed	12 handwashing stations installed to provide hygiene support to 40,000 people	24,000 packets of soap and detergent distributed	
	1,500 people received healthcare services and medicine free of cost	700 people supported to get registered for vaccination	44,000 stickers and leaflets on awareness messages of COVID-19 distributed
380 primary group meetings conducted to improve awareness	1,562 soaps distributed to 19 grocery shops after every two days for handwashing	210 community development organisation and ward committee leaders trained	





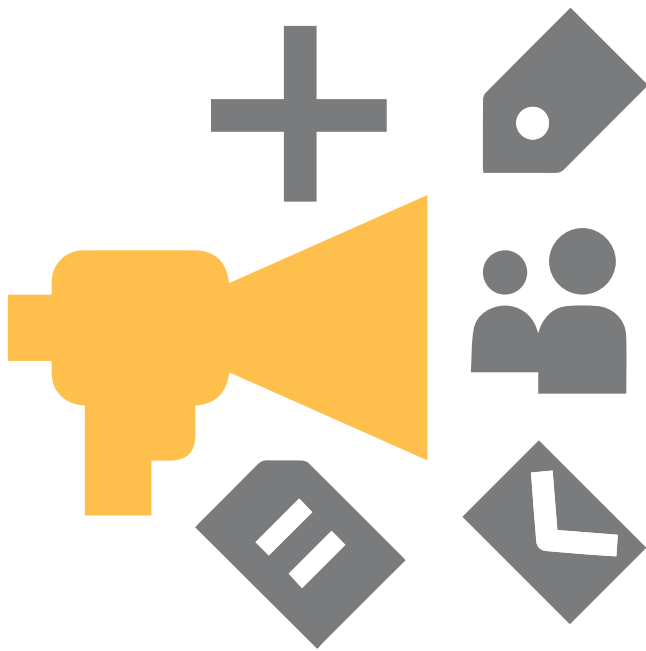
**Sensitising policy actors
and city authorities**



A total of 30 city officials from UDP cities participated in a workshop on Pro-poor Gender Responsive Disaster Management for Resilient Urban Development; more than 50 city officials and councilors from Dhaka North City Corporation participated in seminars and discussion events on sustainable Street Vendor Management and wellbeing of waste workers. UDP's urban agriculture initiative was showcased to different policy actors through a national event organised by FAO. All these activities contributed in sensitizing policy actors and city authorities towards pro-poor urban development.

The IsDB WASH project organised 11 advocacy workshops with city authorities and other stakeholders to strengthen collaboration and ensure their cooperation towards project implementation. As a part of a national-level advocacy initiative, the ERMG project jointly organised a national dialogue on “Policy Framework for Health Insurance of the RMG Workers in Bangladesh” with multi-sectoral stakeholders involving representatives from research organisations, think tanks, civil society organisations, BGMEA, Bangladesh Garments Workers Association, Bangladesh Sramik Federation, Insurance Service Providers, and the media. In continuity, a National level Round Table Dialogue on “Health Insurance for RMG Workers in Bangladesh: Designing Policy and Management Structure” was organised. Following that, supplements (Bangla and English) were published to draw the attention of GoB Officials, BGMEA, BKMEA, RMG communities, stakeholders, including international communities - buyers and donors on RMG workers health insurance and wellbeing issues, a Round Table dialogue with The ABC Radio were aired. Moreover, a Talk show on Safe workplace and health during COVID in the RMG sector was aired in Ekushey Television. Also six (6) investigation reports were published and three (3) were aired in television to highlight RMG workers wellbeing model in several national daily newspapers following a journalist visit.





Emergency response and awareness campaign



UDP's COVID response

UDP launched different awareness campaigns during COVID-19 pandemic situations, such as in cattle markets, several hotspots and communities. It distributed masks and awareness materials, and provided cash support to the most deserving households.

In numbers

26,388 HHs received cash support	2,258 HHs received food support	101,468 reusable masks distributed
62,000 surgical masks distributed in support of HNPP	467,767 people received primary healthcare service	164,802 awareness leaflets and stickers distributed
2,492 people registered for vaccination through UDP technical support	3,3427 posters and awareness boards were displayed	87 hand washing facilities installed

Dengue response

Bangladesh has observed an uptrend in dengue cases in 2021. Average 200 dengue cases are being reported every day. The dengue menace may worsen the already battered country's healthcare system. BRAC Urban Development Programme, in collaboration with Dhaka North and South city corporations and Saidpur municipality in Nilphamari, has reached 450,000 people through awareness campaigns and primary healthcare services to prevent the outbreak.

167,900 dengue awareness posters, leaflets and stickers distributed

41 awareness campaigns organised

30 capacity building workshops for CDO members arranged

83 community health workers deployed to raise awareness

48 suspected patients referred for free dengue antigen test, among them 8 were tested positive

7,000 feet of drain cleaned to facilitate normal water flow

190 litres of larvicide applied to the water bodies to control the vector

135 litres of adulticide sprayed using thermal fogging in the open spaces





Sattola fire survivors receive emergency aid



On 07 June 2021, a massive fire destroyed 500 households at the Sattala slum in Dhaka. As an emergency response, BRAC's urban development programme has provided essential packages with kitchen utensils to the 720 families affected. Additionally, 20 pregnant and lactating mothers received BDT 1,000 each in cash. The mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation, Md Atiqul Islam, and higher officials of the programme were present during the relief distribution.

On 9 June, USAID also joined the response activities and jointly with UDP distributed 2,700 kg of biscuits to the affected households. US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl R Miller, WFP Country Director Richard Ragan, Councillor of Ward 20 Md Nasir, BRAC Executive Director Asif Saleh, BRAC Director Dr Md Liakath Ali, and Associate Director Mohammed Abdus Salam were present among others.

Awareness campaign

Reducing carbon emission

In celebration of World Habitat Day 2021, UDP organised city-wide campaigns including rallies and discussions. City Corporation and Municipality Mayors and Councilors, Government officials, NGOs and community people participated in the events. The theme of 2021 was 'Accelerating urban action for a carbon-free world'. This initiative was to make people, city authorities and different agencies aware of institutional and individual efforts for reducing carbon emission.



Promoting gender equality



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