

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What is the Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative?

The Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative (UPGI) is an initiative of BRAC, a leading development organization dedicated to empowering people living in poverty. The goal of UPGI is to build on the incredible success of BRAC's Graduation program in Bangladesh, which has helped more than 2 million households lift themselves from extreme poverty, and effectively implement and scale the Graduation approach to create a pathway out of extreme poverty for millions more. The Graduation approach is a development intervention designed by BRAC to meet the complex and interconnected needs of individuals and families who live in a precarious state of extreme poverty so severe that traditional development interventions fail to reach them. BRAC UPGI is committed to creating effective solutions that leverage the available resources and existing programming to achieve the long-term benefits demonstrated by Graduation. BRAC UPGI is partnering with governments, as well as multilateral institutions, NGOs, and civil society, in countries with the greatest potential for scale and impact.

What is the core idea?

BRAC's Audacious idea is to scale our proven intervention through government adoption in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, accelerating the rate of change and lifting 4.6 million households - over 21 million people - out of extreme poverty over the next six years. The solution to reaching millions more people living in extreme poverty and creating change at the systems level is clear: Governments must take the helm and be equipped to scale up and sustain the [Graduation approach](#).

Graduation has been found to be one of the most effective ways to break the poverty trap and combines a sequenced and time bound (18 to 36 months) set of interventions customized to local context. It comes down to a set of four core "pillars" for success, suitable for diverse contexts: (1) meeting basic needs; (2) income generation (3) finance and savings; and (4) social empowerment.

Each 'pillar' complements, enables and amplifies each other's outcomes, leading to powerful and durable change that continues after households have graduated from the program. This package of direct services is a low-cost investment for sustainably lifting households out of extreme poverty.

How will we do it?

BRAC will employ two key strategies that are critical to both influencing and strengthening government action to institute large-scale systems change: Working in selected geographies to support government adoption, and helping to shape the global dialogue to influence action in these geographies and beyond.

BRAC will develop a combination of the activities based on the best pathway in each target geography context: (1) government relationship building; (2) technical assistance to governments (3) implementation partner capacity-building (4) piloting Graduation; and (5) community mobilization.

What will be the impact?

Impacts on Graduation households typically include: increased assets (38-70%); increased incomes (30-40%); diversified sources of income; increased consumption (5-10%); savings (150%+); increased food security; increased access to healthcare and good hygiene practices; and increases in a range of social indicators,

including school attendance for children, attendance of social events and confidence. Additionally, “graduated” households will be embedded in government social safety net systems, linked to public services such as schools and hospitals, and economically active within their markets.

At the country-level, this will translate into increasing the number of households “graduated” and government progress toward sustainably adopting a high-quality Graduation program at scale embedded with government programs.

Why are we so focused on “systems-level change?”

Systems-level change is required to accelerate progress and achieve scale. Governments must be equipped to integrate and sustainably scale Graduation in their own systems. They already have billions of dollars allocated to poverty programs, yet these programs are not effectively addressing the multidimensional needs of the extreme poor. Integrating Graduation can change that by making sure existing programs are better targeted, implemented, and coordinated, to have a transformative impact on the poorest households they were put in place to serve.

How do we know the approach works?

With a remarkable track record of long-lasting change in households, cost-effectiveness, and a unique ability to reach the extreme poor, Graduation has taken off. The Graduation approach has been rigorously evaluated in multiple geographies, attesting to Graduation’s ability to adapt across varying contexts. Since then over [100 Graduation programs around the world in over 50 countries](#) and diverse contexts (e.g. rural, urban, refugee, fragile) have changed the lives of a total 14 million households. Rigorous evaluations have taken place in multiple geographies, attesting to Graduation’s ability to adapt across varying contexts.

Are there any risks involved?

Yes. Our strategy relies on many factors that are not directly under BRAC’s control. However, we have learned how to mitigate and adapt to the following risks after nearly two decades of Graduation programming around the world: (1) inability to secure a working arrangement with a government; (2) political turnover and administration change; (3) programming at scale may compromise household-level impacts; and (4) projected future global challenges and economic downturns may exacerbate extreme poverty.

How will we evaluate and improve?

Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation will be built into each level of government and local programming. This will ensure that data and learning from the households are fed to country-level project management, which can support and advise on local adjustments and iterations. Relevant cross-country learnings are then elevated to global project management, to inform continuous improvements in the overall program and share with all geographies. Beyond program evaluation, a focus will be put on learning and knowledge dissemination. We will generate informative learning through research and engage a vibrant community of global stakeholders to help shape the dialogue and influence the adoption and scaling of Graduation in target geographies and beyond.

What is The Audacious Project?

Housed at TED, and supported by The Bridgespan Group, the project is a unique partnership between some of the most respected organizations in philanthropy and the public. Launched in 2018, The Audacious Project attempts to address a major frustration faced by the world’s change-makers. Without access to venture capital or stock markets, social entrepreneurs have to pitch donors one-by-one, often a deeply inefficient process for all involved. The Project aims to: (1) encourage the world’s greatest change-agents to dream bigger than ever before (2) shape their best ideas into viable multi-year plans and (3) present those ideas in a compelling way to potential supporters.

Who are the funders?

Financial commitments come from both the public and a pool of well-resourced donors. A list of our philanthropic partners who have provided resources, can be found on the [About](#) page.
