

# GRADUATION PILLARS

## How BRAC developed a four-pronged Graduation approach

### One approach, multiple models

BRAC's flagship Ultra-Poor Graduation programme in Bangladesh (formerly known as Targeting the Ultra-Poor (TUP)), has evolved over more than 16 years. In this time, BRAC continued to adapt the Graduation approach to meet the changing needs of people living in ultra poverty and destitution around the world. Poverty is not homogeneous, and while Graduation continues to holistically address the social, economic, and financial barriers faced by the poorest people, each program must be tailored and refined to address challenges specific to diverse contexts and populations.

In addition to its UPG programme, BRAC also has directly implemented Graduation programs in South Sudan, Uganda, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. It provides technical assistance to others, adapting the approach in Egypt, Kenya, and the Philippines, among others.

BRAC's experience adapting to changing circumstances in Bangladesh, and implementing Graduation in other contexts across three continents, has deepened its programmatic knowledge. This has resulted in an increasing focus on **an approach built for adaptation** as the most effective way to expand Graduation globally and operate it at scale. To effectively support poor households to escape the multi-dimensional factors that contribute to their poverty, **Graduation must be contextualized**, rather than replicated, to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people.

### Pillar-based Adaptation

BRAC's early Graduation work focused on delivering a set of components or services (e.g. mentoring, business training, food stipends, etc.) adapted to the ultra-poor in Bangladesh. As the organization iterated on its approach and refined the programme, it realized there are four core pillars that underlie these components. Designing Graduation in accordance with these pillars ensures practitioners can effectively adapt it in different contexts. For example, in Bangladesh, a female participant may need to be given a cow to launch her milk business. In Kenya, a participant could

jump-start her grocery store if given access to savings groups. Both of these services enable participants to develop their livelihoods, but different offerings are required based on their context. High quality Graduation programs must consist of holistic services that follow these four pillars.

### BRAC's four pillars of Graduation

**Social protection:** Consists of preventive, protective, and promotive services that meet the basic needs of households while they are participating in the program. Services might include a cash transfer or food supplies, access to health services, water sanitation and hygiene support, and access to high quality education for their children.

**Livelihoods promotion:** Ensures that participants can kick-start an income-generating enterprise or job. Services might include training and asset transfers to start a small business, vocational education, apprenticeships, or resources to gain wage employment.

**Financial inclusion:** Enables participants to directly access convenient, formal or informal savings facilities and financial services in order for them to financially plan and save. It can also include education or financial literacy training to build their financial capability.

**Social empowerment:** Helps participants increase their confidence and integrate into their communities. Services might include regular mentorship and life-skills training as well as linkages to community associations to improve participants' well-being, enable self-sufficiency, and strengthen social and economic inclusion with the community.

When adapting Graduation using these pillars, BRAC can adjust the program's components, sequence, and duration according to the specific context. The resulting program is grounded in these principles, core to successfully uplifting the most marginalized people. This approach also emphasizes anchoring programs to the existing government social protection ecosystem so participants have a link to vital social services

that can help mitigate economic shocks. This also guarantees the Graduation program is fully localized, sustainable, and cost-effective—essential features to enable scale-up.

### Adaptation and programmatic differences

BRAC works closely with governments, multilateral institutions, and NGOs to adapt, implement, and scale the Graduation approach using these four pillars.

BRAC believes that high-quality Graduation programs should be contextualized to the local environment and local systems. This includes adaptation to specific, targeted vulnerable groups, changing poverty contexts, job markets, and the capacities and structures of implementing institutions. Graduation programs should also be designed, delivered, and iterated upon in consultation with participants and partners to understand their perspectives, challenges, and goals. By basing Graduation programs on analyses of target population capabilities and vulnerabilities, they are uniquely tailored to participants. BRAC's Graduation

approach is human-centric in nature. It incorporates cross-cutting themes including gender, youth, climate change, and environmental impacts. BRAC Graduation programs in each country are unique and evolving.

The table below provides examples of how Graduation programs may vary across the four pillars, while being adapted to a population's needs and local context.

### An approach for all programmatic stages

The pillars serve as a framework not only for program design but as a mechanism for assessing implementation effectiveness. Through this lens, BRAC can iterate programs to secure the best combination of services for maximum impact and cost-effectiveness. Indeed, high quality implementation of Graduation—properly adapted through contextualization and constant iteration—generates the most sustainable long-term outcomes for the world's most vulnerable populations. It provides a critical big push on an upward economic trajectory from poverty.

	Social Protection	Livelihoods Promotion	Financial Inclusion	Social Empowerment
Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthcare linkages</li> <li>Linkages to Government social protection services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farm and off-farm asset and enterprise package (17 options in total)</li> <li>Group business training delivered twice monthly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Matched savings scheme</li> <li>Financial literacy training</li> <li>Linkage to BRAC microfinance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular coaching and mentoring via group and individual visits</li> <li>Village Social Solidarity Committee participation</li> </ul>
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conditional cash transfer</li> <li>Rice subsidy allowance</li> <li>Healthcare referrals &amp; guidance; National health insurance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group and individual asset transfers for productive assets</li> <li>Group technical training</li> <li>Enterprise visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Savings support through linkages to formal and informal savings mechanisms</li> <li>Financial education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bi-weekly group coaching on life and technical skills</li> <li>Linkage to community groups and cooperatives</li> </ul>
Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subsidized enrollment in National Hospital Insurance Fund</li> <li>Consumption stipend</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asset or cash transfer for income generating activity</li> <li>Individual and group business models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Village Savings and Loan Association</li> <li>Financial literacy training</li> <li>Linkages to financial institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular group or individual bi-weekly coaching</li> </ul>

#### About Ultra Poor Graduation

Through its Graduation programs, BRAC targets the poorest people in a community, known as the ultra-poor, and uses a holistic, time-bound approach to help them improve their health, learn financial skills, and start a profitable business. To date, BRAC has 'graduated' more than 1.9 million households out of ultra-poverty, with more than 95 percent of participants continuing on a positive economic trajectory five years after the program ends. BRAC's approach has gained widespread recognition and adaptations have taken root worldwide. The organization currently runs pilot projects in more than five countries.