

# GRADUATION OVERVIEW

## What is Graduation?

The Graduation approach is a multifaceted set of interventions designed to address the complex nature of extreme poverty. These interventions are adapted to the local context and generally include connecting participants to social protection to meet their basic needs, providing training and assets for income generation, financial literacy and savings support, and social empowerment through community engagement and life skills training - all facilitated through in person coaching. The Graduation approach empowers participants to develop sustainable livelihoods that set them on a path of upward economic mobility. They also become better integrated into society, develop social connections, improve their self-esteem, and establish active roles in their communities.

## The Key Elements of Graduation

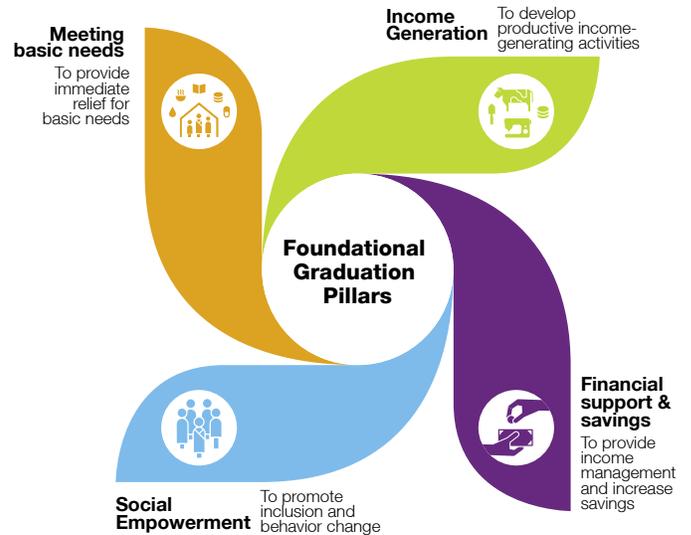
Over time, as BRAC has continued to refine our Graduation approach, we have identified four key elements, regardless of geographic and community context, that are fundamental to successfully implementing Graduation:

**Meeting basic needs:** Many people experiencing extreme poverty lack the necessities to survive. At BRAC, we ensure that program participants are protected by a safety net for the duration of the program through resources such as a cash transfer or basic food supplies, as well as access to health services.

**Income generation:** We enable participants to earn an income long-term by providing them training to find a formal job or a productive asset to start a microbusiness.

**Financial support and savings:** We support participants in directly accessing convenient formal or informal savings facilities and financial services so they can plan for the future, save, and borrow responsibly. This also includes basic numeracy education, financial literacy training, and participation in saving groups.

**Social empowerment:** We empower participants to increase their confidence, integrate into their community, and develop a range of life skills. This is often delivered through coaching, mentorship, or peer-to-peer learning.



Working together, these interdependent elements lead to strong outcomes at the household level including increased or improved assets, food security, savings, financial inclusion, health outcomes, social integration, and productive skills.

## Impact and Evidence

Graduation is an evidence-based, scalable intervention proven to break the poverty trap. A rigorous randomized control trial conducted by the London School of Economics showed 95 percent of participants ‘graduated’ out of extreme poverty with significant benefits persisting 7 years after the program ended. These included a 37 percent increase in savings, 9 percent increase in consumption, and a 200 percent increase in household assets and access to land for livelihoods. So far, BRAC’s Graduation approach has impacted over 2.1 million Bangladeshi households—totaling over 9 million people.

The Graduation approach has gained worldwide recognition for its holistic treatment of poverty and has been replicated and adapted by stakeholders across the globe. The approach has been rigorously tested and researched by third-party validators, including the London School of Economics, Innovations for Poverty Action, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and it has been proven effective across contexts long term. There are now more than 100 programs in nearly 50 countries implemented by NGOs, governments and multilateral institutions.

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.

## Adaptation

The design of complementary interventions for Graduation should include the following key steps outlined below:

1. **Analysis of the specific needs and barriers** that participants (according to poverty level, gender etc.) face in each context, and the opportunities to create synergies towards productive inclusion.
2. **Consistent targeting** between the interventions informed by the core Graduation pillars so that the poorest and other vulnerable groups are not excluded.
3. **In-depth market analysis and market linkages** to identify suitable livelihood options for participants and provide direct access to producers.
4. **Determining the capacity of front-line staff to deliver intensive mentorship and support to participants.** This deepens program impacts by improving participant’s psychosocial resilience and confidence to continue on an upward trajectory.
5. **Embedding Graduation programs within a comprehensive national policy framework and other systems-based approaches** that aim for pro-poor growth.

## BRAC’s International Graduation Programs

BRAC is implementing Graduation programs worldwide as part of its broader goal to end extreme poverty. We are working to scale globally and reach millions more living in extreme poverty. But we cannot do it alone. This is beyond the means and capacity of a single organization—no matter how ambitious or innovative. BRAC’s Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative provides technical assistance, advisory services, and advocacy on the Graduation Approach to governments, NGOs, and multilateral institutions on how to implement quality Graduation programs worldwide. The Initiative supports implementers to reach the poorest and most marginalized communities across the globe.

