

Graduation and Climate Resilience

Extreme poverty and climate change are intrinsically linked: As climate change worsens, it compounds systemic inequalities and exacerbates issues of poverty, food insecurity, and injustice. BRAC UPGI works with governments and other partners to help lift people out of extreme poverty with climate resilient livelihoods and support.

Climate change disproportionately impacts the Global South and disproportionately harms the poorest and most vulnerable populations around the world. A safe and just economic system requires a ceiling and a floor—guaranteed social protection that ensures people’s basic needs are met and respect for the boundaries of our planet.

Addressing Climate Change-related Poverty

As part of a collective effort to combat the impacts of climate change, BRAC is mainstreaming a climate resilience lens into all future development activities and strategic planning.

In 2012, BRAC’s flagship Ultra Poor Graduation Programme in Bangladesh (UPG) introduced the Addressing Climate Change-related Destitution (ACCD) strategy to help the poorest people with severe climate vulnerability in southern Bangladesh lift themselves from the poverty trap while building climate resilient livelihoods. This strategy mitigates the short-term impacts of flooding by providing participants with critical information on health and livestock management in post-flood situations and emergency funds for livestock, while helping participants develop climate-resilient livelihoods in the long-term.

After implementation of the ACCD strategy from 2012–2015, UPG mainstreamed these interventions to build climate resilience across the majority of districts in Bangladesh classified as climate vulnerable.

Climate Resilience through Graduation

Built into the Graduation approach are responses to present and future threats to livelihoods and food supply based on local climate vulnerabilities. By supporting income diversification, improved food security, coach support on livelihood management and coping with climate shocks, and access to financial services, Graduation strengthens participants’ resilience to climate and other major shocks.

BRAC UPGI calls on governments and nongovernmental actors alike to work together to create sustainable policies and programs to help protect those living in extreme poverty from the risks of climate change. By building climate adaptation into social protection programs and targeting the most vulnerable groups, these efforts can help households build resilience and adaptability to future shocks.

In Haiti, BRAC assisted Fonkoze in implementing the Chemin Lavi Miyo (CLM) graduation program. Two-thirds of participants sustained progress or made further gains even four years after the program, despite the devastating impacts of two major hurricanes that wiped out livestock and harvests the year before evaluation.

Through the Punjab Asset Transfer program, BRAC Pakistan worked with the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund to implement Graduation in an area of Balochistan impacted by severe floods. Evidence from the end-line data showed that participants made gains just one year after program completion. Despite the shock of flooding, results showed little or no decline in their consumption, household assets, and food security.

BRAC UPGI partners with governments in order to integrate Graduation into existing social protection schemes to improve participants’ climate resilience and build more sustainable livelihoods.



BRAC staff assisting in digging a well after severe flooding in the Gaibandha District of Bangladesh (BRAC 2019)

Building Climate Resilience in Kenya

Between 2016 and 2019, BRAC UPGI partnered with IFAD and the Government of Kenya on a climate-adaptive Graduation program in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) of Kitui and Samburu counties, with the aim to strengthen the resilience of women, youth, and their households to climate shocks. At the start of the program, only 30 percent of respondents in one site and 17 percent in the second had savings. By the end of the program, all participants had savings, with an average increase of \$151 USD per participant. In addition, over 80 percent of households had at least two income sources, creating further economic resilience against future shocks.

The target population included pastoralists who were reliant on livestock and faced significant shocks due to recurring droughts. The program focused on income diversification and savings accumulation to minimize the risk of losing livelihoods and to build resilience.

“**We now live in a proper brick house with two rooms. I also plan on buying land in our village back home. I want to rebuild the home we lost to the river.”**

— Nurjahan, participant in BRAC's Ultra-Poor Graduation Programme in Bangladesh



Current Climate-related Projects

Our work to better meet the multidimensional needs of people experiencing extreme poverty evolves. In 2021, BRAC Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative began its partnership with the Government of Tunisia and IFAD to develop a climate-adaptive Graduation program that is enabling participants to support themselves even in the face of environmental shocks. As part of a collective effort to combat the impacts of climate change through all of its programming, BRAC is mainstreaming a climate resilience lens into all future activities and strategic planning.

Policies and programs must build from the commitment to the agency - and understanding of long-term needs and vulnerabilities - of people in extreme poverty. If we do this, we will fight poverty as it is, multifaceted and interconnected with the challenges facing both people and planet.



In the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) region of Kitui, Loise, a participant of the PROFIT Financial Graduation pilot in Kenya depends on a water pump to ensure her crops survive the harsh summer months.



BRAC field officers speak with a woman affected by flooding in Bogura District of Bangladesh (BRAC 2019).

