

MEDIA CONTACT

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BRAC International Signs MoU with the Government of Bihar to Launch First Government-Led Urban Graduation Program in Asia

PATNA, INDIA – [BRAC International](#) recently signed a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) with the Government of Bihar’s Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS) to launch *Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana Shahari* (SJY Urban), the first government-led urban Graduation programme in Asia. This programme was inspired by the existing rural programme, [Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana](#), locally known as SJY, the largest government-led Graduation programme in the world which has reached over 150,000 households as of early 2023 and is still expanding.

SJY Urban intends to provide a time-bound series of multifaceted interventions to enable participating households to develop food security, social inclusion, and sustainable economic livelihoods, and create a sustainable pathway out of urban poverty. Besides one programme in Ethiopia, this is the first government-led urban Graduation programme globally.

In July 2023, the [Government of Bihar’s Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society](#) (BRLPS) and BRAC convened an [inaugural workshop](#) in preparation for launching the Urban Poor Graduation Project, in collaboration with the [Departments of Urban Development and Housing, Labour Resources, Social Welfare, Women and Child Development Corporation](#). The workshop brought together government representatives and experts with diverse sectoral expertise to reflect on existing solutions for urban poverty and share key insights that could help inform the design and delivery of the Urban Poor Graduation Project. The workshop also brought together practitioners and leveraged knowledge from Graduation-based programmes outside Bihar and India.

“We have already reached 150,000 households through SJY as of early this year,” said Rahul Kumar, CEO of JEEViKA. “We are hopeful and committed to reaching more households through SJY Shahari and tailoring the program to meet challenges specific to urban poverty.”

The workshop included discussions on how lessons from rural poverty alleviation programs can transfer to urban settings, unlocking women’s potential in urban areas, lessons from

[BRAC's urban Graduation programme in Bangladesh](#), and livelihoods and skills development for an urban setting.

“Urban poverty is complex and inadequately addressed,” said Shweta S Banerjee, Country Lead - India, BRAC International. “SJY Shahari is a unique project in the many challenges it has accepted including supporting project participants during extreme heat waves. BRAC is excited and committed to serving as a thought partner to the Government of Bihar as we take the time to test, learn, relearn, and deploy the project design.”

The project will leverage community institutions in urban areas to focus on:

- Links to entitlements to support basic income security and immediate needs, such as food consumption support, crisis relief, and access to health, child care, and education;
- Livelihoods promotion consisting of an asset transfer, skills training, or cash transfer to manage the asset or access to employment opportunities;
- Financial inclusion to ensure direct access to convenient, formal, or informal financial services, accompanied by financial literacy training;
- Social empowerment

All four components will be facilitated through in-person coaching with life-skills support that builds confidence and resilience.

“Urban livelihoods continue to present unique challenges where research and solutions are more limited in comparison to rural settings. We laud the Government of Bihar for taking the lead and look forward to working with them and our other partners to support inclusive urban development and sustainable livelihoods for those living in extreme poverty,” said Greg Chen, Managing Director of [BRAC Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative](#).

BRAC International is serving as a thought partner to the Government of Bihar for the project development and also building a consortium of partners to support the government in its implementation. [Project Concern International](#) (PCI) is taking on management responsibilities and will also host thematic workshops across departments and with civil society experts to support inclusive learning and dialogue. [Mobile Creches](#) will create a community cadre of child care providers who will support maternal and child health. They have a fifty-year-old history of providing child care support, maternal and nutritional health, and WASH training, to urban women in the slums of Delhi, Mumbai, and Pune. [Quicksand](#) will support the learning process to consolidate the design through ethnographic methods, prototyping, and other design elements. These learnings will help inform the project about the fabric of each respective urban community and provide a feedback loop once roll out starts.

In addition to serving the participants of the Urban Poor Graduation Project, The Government of Bihar and BRAC International hope that the lessons and insights from the programme can be translated and applied to different contexts in both India and globally to put more people living in urban poverty on a sustainable pathway out of extreme poverty.

About BRAC International

BRAC International is a leading nonprofit organisation with a mission to empower people and communities in situations of poverty, illiteracy, disease, and social injustice. Our approach is grounded in the conviction that people living in vulnerable situations can be agents of change if they are empowered with the tools, skills, and hope they need to change their lives. BRAC was founded in Bangladesh 50 years ago and has since expanded internationally to apply our expertise, evidence, and learning from approaches like Graduation in 16 additional countries, touching the lives of over 100 million people. To date, BRAC International has supported the expansion of Graduation through direct implementation, technical assistance, and advisory services in 16 countries, including Afghanistan, Egypt, Guinea, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia.

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