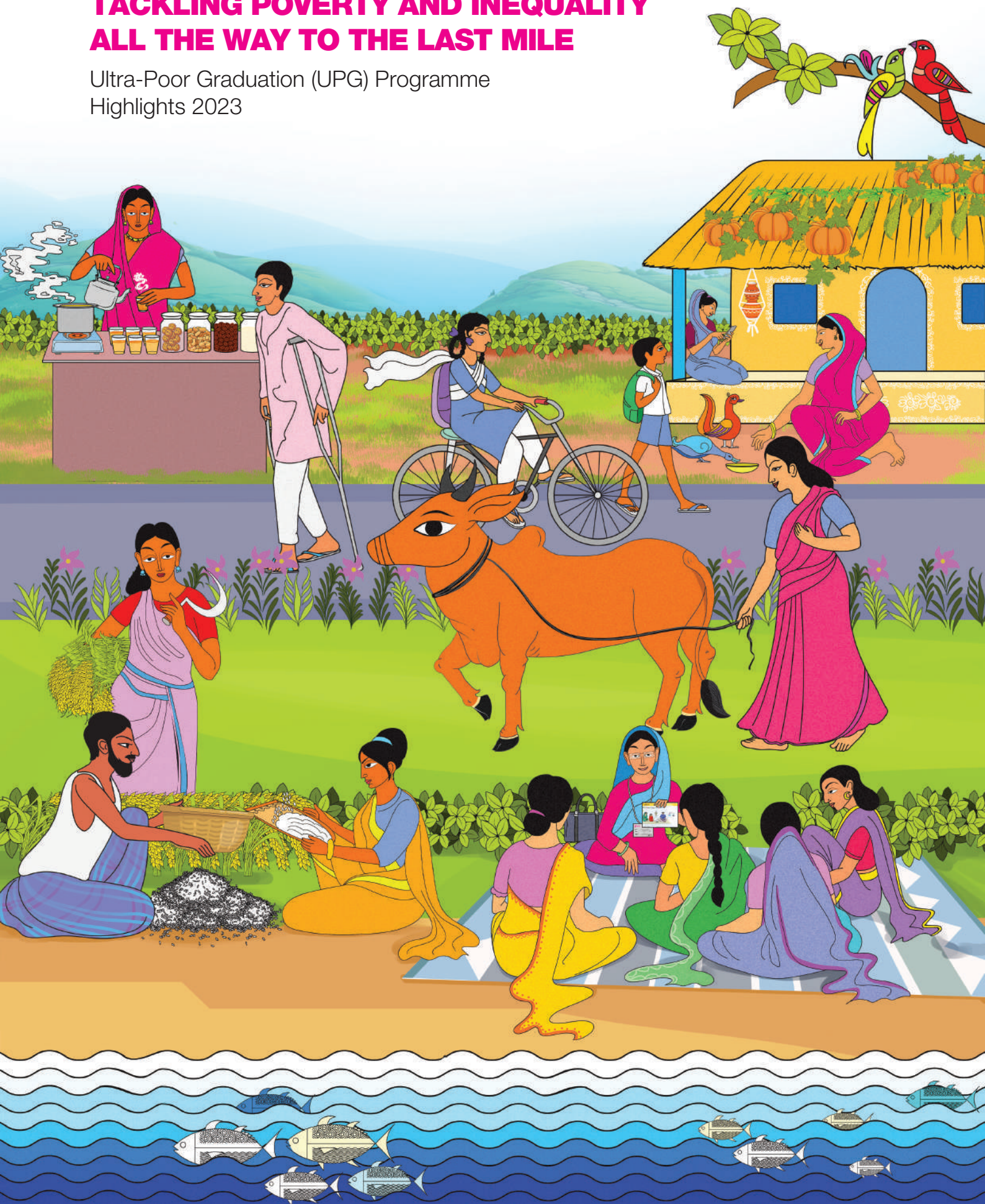




TACKLING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY ALL THE WAY TO THE LAST MILE

Ultra-Poor Graduation (UPG) Programme
Highlights 2023



WHEN PEOPLE REALISE THEY CAN CHANGE THEIR OWN LIVES, IT IS AS IF A LIGHT GETS SWITCHED ON

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed KCMG
Founder, BRAC



About **BRAC**

BRAC is an international development organisation founded in Bangladesh in 1972. It partners with over 100 million people living with inequality and poverty to create opportunities to realise human potential. BRAC is known for its community-led, holistic approach and for delivering long-term impact at scale.



About **Graduation approach**

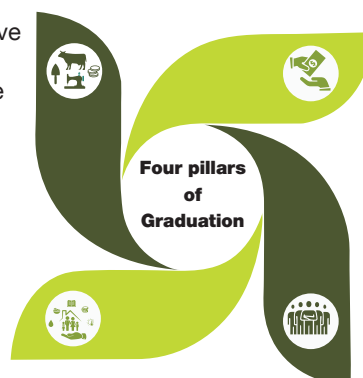
Graduation approach is a holistic, climate-sensitive, context-specific, and time-bound & sequenced set of interventions, that aims to enable extremely poor households to progress along a pathway to a sustainable livelihood, reduced inequality and socioeconomic resilience. It is based on four pillars.

Livelihoods Promotion

To develop productive income-generating activities and linkage with the market

Social Protection

To link with immediate and long-term government and other services



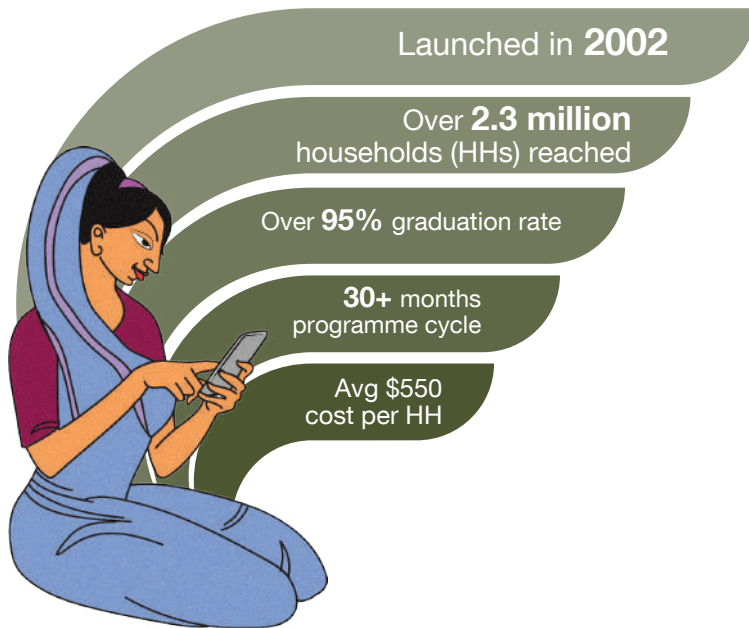
Financial Inclusion

To provide coaching on income management, savings and digital transactions

Social Empowerment

To promote inclusion, behavioural change and life skills improvement

About **UPG Programme**



BRAC pioneered the Graduation approach by launching the Ultra-Poor Graduation Programme in 2002, which was formerly known as “Targeting the Ultra-Poor (TUP).” The programme addresses multidimensional poverty, addressing context-specific and people-specific challenges. It has interventions in rural and urban settings that are climate-adaptive and targeted for populations with diversified needs and vulnerabilities, such as persons with disabilities, indigenous communities, and host communities living in a humanitarian context. The programme works to sustainably lift ultra-poor households from poverty while keeping women at the centre of economic activities.

Key elements of the **UPG programme**



Key highlights

97% of the total enrolled participants of the 2022 cohort in rural areas graduated from extreme poverty



60,580 participants have three income sources



61,584 children are going to school



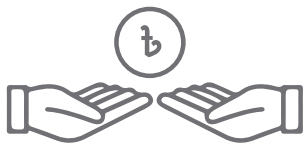
60,789 participating households are using sanitary latrines



61,575 participants and their family members have received government or other services



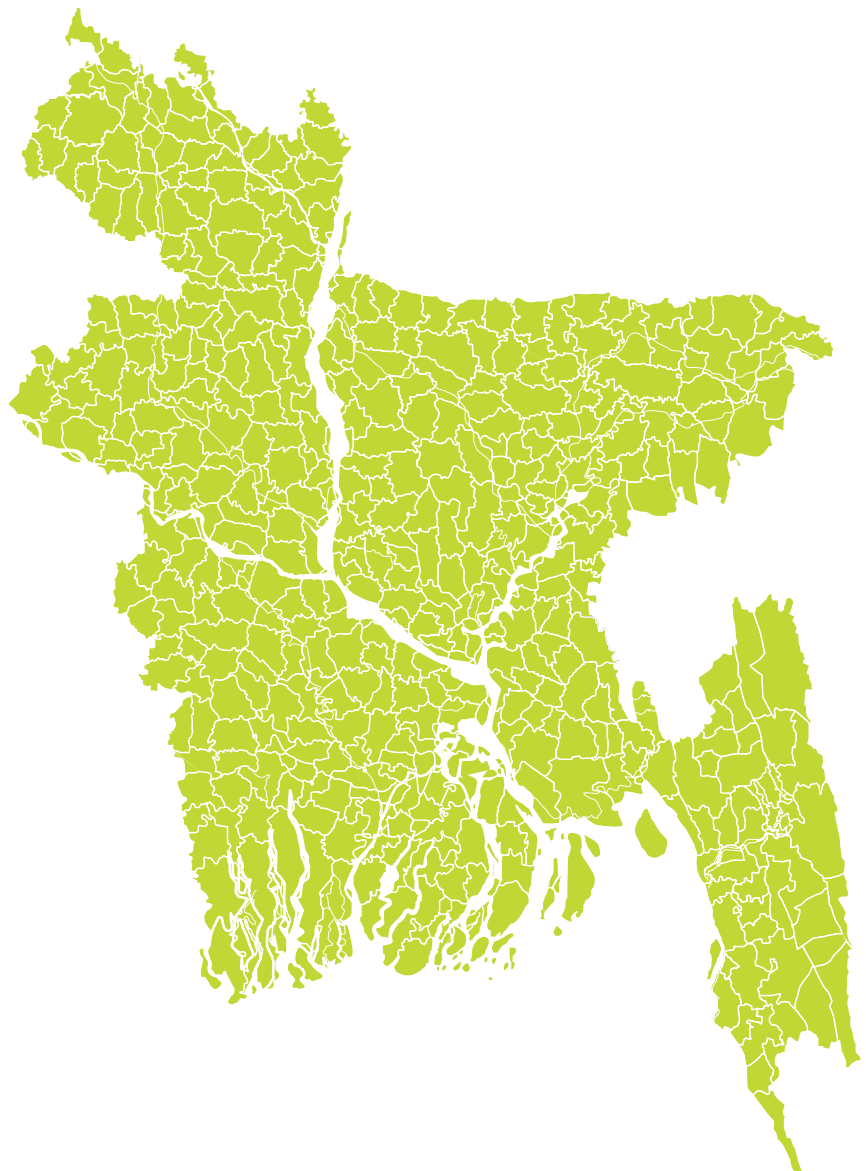
61,531 participants lent or borrowed cash/kind/goods from others



100% participants were referred to BRAC Microfinance to access loan and savings facilities, and 42% of them received loans successfully

69,242 participants were enrolled for the 2023 cohort in 38 districts

- ▶ Rural intervention
32 districts
- ▶ Urban intervention
13 city corporations/municipalities
- ▶ Disability Inclusive Ultra-Poor Graduation (DIUPG) Programme
16 districts
- ▶ Host community intervention in humanitarian context
1 district
- ▶ Indigenous community intervention in the drought-prone Barind Tract
4 districts





Market linkage interventions scaled up in **33 districts** effectively linking the participants with the market, providing market literacy and bringing multiple stakeholders together



2,003 women participants chose **non-stereotyped** livelihood options, such as shopkeeping, selling products in carts, fish selling in the market, vaccination of poultry and livestock, etc at the rural context



1,687 Village Social Solidarity Committees established and supported ultra-poor participants' access to social protection and government services



69% of the participants connected to various Social Safety Net Programmes received services



About **17% of DIUPG participants** are connected with a unique ID called the Suborno Card. This card ensures eligibility of other rights available to persons with disabilities



1,05,775 men and boys received awareness on gender equality and women empowerment, and partnering in household chores



Local level advocacy strengthened in **4 districts** further bolstering the efforts of connecting the participants with local government services



Jointly introduced a life and health insurance product with Pragati Life Insurance Ltd for ultra-poor households in **5 districts**

Contribution to **multiple goals of SDG 2030**



Contributed to a 2% reduction in Bangladesh's extreme poverty rate. With graduation, the programme participants experience a higher level of empowerment due to their exposure to important life skills, knowledge of social issues and market linkages in addition to increased income.



Contributed through diversification of livelihood options, enterprise training, access to finance and savings and skills enhancement of the UPG participants in general and participants' children in the urban context.



Expanded urban programme operations to peri-urban locations to reach different under-supported groups of vulnerable people.



Ensured sustainable income of the participants by contributing to their empowerment, promoting social and economic inclusion and conducting policy advocacy to influence stakeholders to jointly address poverty and inequality to achieve inclusive growth.



Formally incorporated climate-adaptive and climate-resilient practices in the programme interventions and developed a strategy for clustered programming based on climate vulnerabilities of different regions in Bangladesh.

Leaving No One Behind: **Assisting Bangladesh government's goal of inclusive growth and a skills-based economy**

1

Started working with the indigenous population in the Barind Tract, the most drought-prone and water-scarce region in Bangladesh

2

Scaled up Disability Inclusive Ultra-Poor Graduation (DIUPG) programme across 16 districts

3

Embedded skills for the children of the urban ultra-poor households

4

Customised interventions for the host communities in Cox's Bazar affected by the Rohingya influx

Stories from **the ground**

Resilient transformation: From saline-prone land to harvest



In Mojgurkhali village of Debhata, in the coastal Satkhira district, Ratna Mridha defied conventional wisdom, turning saline-affected soil, barren for 50 years, into a thriving rice field. She joined the UPG programme in 2022 as a participant.

Facing scepticism, she persisted with support from UPG programme and consultation from the Upazila Agriculture Officer. Despite setbacks, Ratna overcame challenges, successfully growing 'BRRI Dhan-47', a salt-tolerant variety. Others in her community were inspired and followed in her footsteps. Salt-tolerant rice cultivation in such remote areas not only has the potential to offset the impacts of climate change (ie, saline intrusion, food insecurity, etc) but also reduce harmful livelihood practices like shrimp farming and create climate-adaptive livelihood options.

Nurturing dreams: The resilience of Pujarani Sardar



Pujarani Sardar's journey began in Machmail village, Rajshahi district, amidst poverty. Born into an indigenous family and married at 16, her hopes for happiness were dashed by her husband's meager income and the harsh impacts of climate change in the Barind Tract. Despite Puiarani's attempts to find work, she faced discrimination due to her indigenous identity. Yet, her determination never wavered. Joining the UPG programme in 2023 reignited her spirit. With access to a loan, she ventured into climate-smart agriculture and goat rearing. Through training, she learned market negotiation skills, ensuring fair prices for her produce.

Pujarani now confidently navigates local markets and maintains government contacts for referral support, guidance and extension services. The proceeds from her potato harvest have improved her family's income and enabled her to diversify her.

The story of Hima Apa overcoming obstacles



Expansion of Monwara's business: Through knowledge and networks of market systems



Rahama Akhter is on the side of the people as a female member



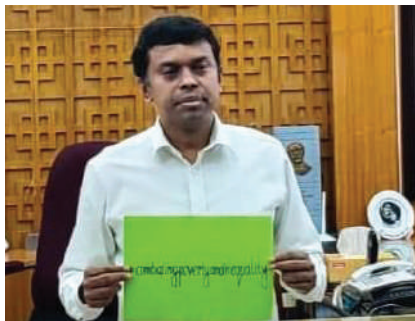
Collaboration with **external stakeholders**

Campaign

Social media campaign centering the **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2023** reached 2.7 million people, including a hashtag campaign that secured pledges from government officials, development partners and other influential civil society members.



Sheikh Md. Moniruzzaman
Director General (Grade-I)
NGO Affairs Bureau,
Prime Minister's Office



Kazi Mahbubul Alam
Deputy Commissioner and
District Magistrate, Gopalganj



Taslina Nurjahan Rubi
Councillor
Chittagong City Corporation



Anisul Hoque
Managing Editor
Prothom Alo



Mohammad Mohasin
Founder and Captain
Bangladesh Wheelchair Cricket Team

Events

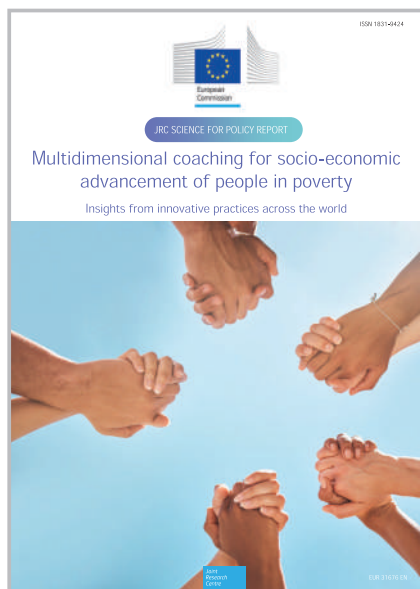


BRAC, Save the Children, UNDP and World Vision jointly organised the **'Technical Workshop on Graduation Approach: Lessons from Bangladesh'**. The workshop highlighted the importance of context-specific Graduation programme interventions to address the changing poverty dynamics, which gained significant attention of policymakers and other organisations.



'Strengthening Livelihood for Ultra-Poor Population in Humanitarian Context: Learning Sharing Event' was organised. Government officials, development partners and other stakeholders agreed on the importance of linking ultra-poor women with local markets and discussed the roles of stakeholders in ensuring it.

Report



A year-long engagement with the European Union resulted in the production of the EU's policy brief, **'Multidimensional coaching for socio-economic advancement of people in poverty.'** Hands-on coaching is one of the threads in the larger set of actions of the Graduation approach. It stands as

a vital catalyst for the sustainability of the socioeconomic advancement of the extremely poor population with multidimensional needs and vulnerabilities

Immersion visits to UPG programme



Development professionals from Gerando Falcões, a renowned Brazilian NGO, and the Secretary of State for Social Development of Brazil gained an in-depth understanding of the UPG programme interventions



Policymakers and government officials from the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), a flagship programme of the Indian government, acquired insights into the UPG programme interventions through their participation in an immersion visit

These visits contributed to building collaborative relationships on knowledge and learning exchange with both global counterparts.



Key challenges and learnings

1

In the context of rapidly changing poverty and inequality in Bangladesh, 'being relevant' was the key challenge. Regular monitoring of the situation in the context of climate change and economic growth is important.

2

Programmatic adaptation continued for each of the interventions with a realisation that the success rate of graduation is clearly associated with context-specific targeting and designing, and both must be in tandem.

3

Enhancing programme capacity and managing the sudden large shocks is vital. It is essential to have in-built shock absorption capacity. For instance, there was a sudden outbreak of Lump Skin Disease (LSD) in cattle that affected over 90% of UPG participants who owned cattle. This led to significant cattle deaths, impacting asset growth. To address this, the programme swiftly implemented measures such as providing vaccines, closely monitoring cattle health, and educating participants about LSD.

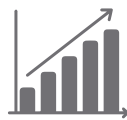
Way forward



The UPG Programme will reinforce its endeavour to address both existing extreme poverty and rising inequality through climate-based geographical clustering and cluster-wise customised programmatic design at both household and community levels.



As multidimensional poverty has increased in urban areas, the UPG programme will scale into new urban areas in the next two years.



Based on the learning from the ongoing DIUPG 2023 cohort in 16 districts, the programme will scale up and mainstream DIUPG intervention by 2025 to both rural and urban settings of all regions where the programme will be working.



Relationships with policy stakeholders and local level government stakeholders will be strengthened to embed the 'Graduation approach' and effective targeting methodology into national programming and social protection schemes through partnership and collaboration.

How the Graduation approach is adapting to a changing climate



How can we identify pockets of poverty early on?





For any queries related to BRAC's Ultra-Poor Graduation work in Bangladesh
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