

Applying BRAC Learning to Youth Economic and Social Inclusion



The global youth labor force aged 15-24 will increase by 41.8 million people by 2030, largely driven by trends in Africa.¹ Seeing as the majority of working youth (69%) in Africa are currently in poverty (some even in extreme poverty), there is a clear need to capacitate youth with income-generating skills and assets.² Social and economic inclusion program providers, especially governments, should consider this trend in design. Without clear economic opportunities, there is less incentive for young people, particularly girls, to invest in education and training. This increases the likelihood of early marriage and pregnancy, which creates a cycle of economic and social disempowerment in adolescence that carries into adulthood.

Social and economic inclusion programs can act as a prime vessel to connect youth with economic opportunities. Skills development programs are particularly proven to put youth on a pathway out of poverty. In the Graduation Approach (one of the most rigorously tested and proven social and economic inclusion approaches), for example, skills development elements are incorporated in program design to train participants on how to profit from income-generating assets and strategically save resulting income. In a recent youth-inclusive Graduation program in Kenya, for example, participants saw substantial increases in savings, skills, and general happiness resulting from program interventions, which included technical and business skills development through individual and group mentorship.

	Ultra-Poor Graduation	Empowerment & Livelihood for Adolescents	Skills Development Program
Definition	BRAC's Graduation Approach is a comprehensive, time-bound, integrated and sequenced set of interventions that enable extreme and ultra-poor households to achieve socio-economic resilience, in order to progress along a pathway out of extreme poverty.	BRAC's highly successful ELA model offers safe spaces based programming with community mentors, in three key areas - education, economic empowerment and social empowerment to support adolescent girls and young women ages 10-22 in successful transitions to adulthood and employment.	Skills Development Programme operates with a vision to promote inclusive markets for disadvantaged people to be empowered and realize their potential.
Aims	Graduation is crucial to achieving SDG 1: eradicating poverty in all its forms by 2030. By becoming the only successful scaled implementer of the Graduation Approach in the world and reaching over 2 million households in 10+ countries, BRAC empowers the extreme poor to attain sustainable livelihoods with dignity.	The objective of the ELA Programme is to empower adolescents and build their capacities so that they can lead a life of dignity and self-reliance, and become active agents of social change in their own families and communities.	SDP connects people with market-based resources, such as technical training and apprenticeship, to grow their skills and livelihood. The program aims to build employable skills of market-value and promote employment in decent work. 95% of SDP participants are employed after graduation and see their income increase eightfold. ³
Reach	+2 million HH to date	+200,000 girls	84,581 people to date (30,247 are youth)
Countries	+10 countries across Asia & Africa	Uganda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Liberia, Tanzania, Nepal	Bangladesh and Nepal

1 International Labor Organization. (2017). Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a better working future. Retrieved from International Labor Organization website: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_598669.pdf

2 Ibid

3 BRAC. (2017). Skills Training for Advancing Resources. Retrieved from the BRAC website: <http://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/STAR-2017.pdf>



What is Graduation?

Also referred to as cash plus, productive inclusion, economic inclusion, or poverty graduation, the internationally recognized Ultra-Poor Graduation approach is a sequenced, time-bound and multi-dimensional set of interventions designed to place households on an upward trajectory out of extreme poverty and into sustainable livelihoods, building household resilience in the process. Pioneered by BRAC in 2002, it is a rigorously proven and scalable strategy that can be adapted to meet local challenges and opportunities. BRAC prioritizes such adaptation and scale by founding all global Graduation programs on the following core pillars: social protection, livelihoods promotion, financial inclusion and social empowerment. Working together, these interdependent interventions 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.

Since 2002, BRAC has scaled Graduation in Bangladesh and globally, graduating more than 2 million households while constantly evolving the methodology and interventions to the changing poverty landscape. Such experience adapting to changing circumstances in Bangladesh, and implementing Graduation in other contexts across three continents, has deepened its programmatic knowledge. Recognizing this, BRAC established the Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative in 2014 to deliver technical assistance and capacity building support to agents of scale on how to adapt and implement Graduation and other holistic economic inclusion and social protection strategies, while applying the same standards of rigor from its flagship program in Bangladesh. Some of the UPGI's most innovative adaptations to-date include youth-inclusion in Uganda and Kenya, conflict-resilience in South Sudan and disability-inclusion in Uganda.

What is ELA?

Barriers to youth empowerment leave young people, especially adolescent girls, more vulnerable to poverty, exploitation, and gender-based violence. While access to education is expanding, quality of learning is lagging behind, and youth face limited job prospects. BRAC's youth empowerment program takes a three-pillared approach to this complex and multidimensional challenge, integrating education, economic empowerment, and social empowerment. In isolation, these interventions have limited impact, but together, the holistic approach creates new linkages that maximize impact. Our signature model under the youth empowerment program, Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescent model, better known as ELA, has operated in sub-Saharan Africa since 2006 and has also expanded to BRAC countries in Asia.

ELA was adapted from BRAC's successful adolescent youth program in Bangladesh which has reached hundreds of thousands of youth. ELA has been rigorously tested with RCTs and proven to be successful in increasing income generating activities for young women, supporting young women in continuing school even in conflict or crisis situations and decreasing marriage and teen pregnancy. Our evidence proves that a multifaceted intervention designed to empower girls economically and socially can lead to significant improvements in a number of areas.

What is Skills Development Program?

Skills development programs aim to capacitate participants (often youth and/or women) with skills of economic value to grow their livelihood and income. BRAC's Skills Development Programme (SDP) in particular operates with a vision to promote inclusive markets for disadvantaged people, including youth, to be empowered and realize their potential.



BRAC is a leader in skills development, having established world-renowned programs such as Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR) and Promoting Incubation Support to Enterprises (PROMISE). STAR, for example, is a large-scale successful on-the-job apprenticeship model that delivers practical and demand-driven skills in the shortest time-frame possible.⁴ It leverages technical, vocational and soft training, as well as social inclusion interventions and market-based job opportunities, to accomplish this.⁵ As of 2019, STAR alone has capacitated some 29,856 youth with skills, resulting in over 95% of participants finding employment after program completion and seeing their income increase eight-fold.⁶ SDP has a number of other projects alongside STAR, all of which provide similar skills for decent work prioritizing women and disadvantaged youth, including persons with disabilities, transgender people and other minorities.⁷

Lessons learned

Through rigorous monitoring and evaluation, each of these programs has unearthed distinct and important lessons surrounding the inclusion of youth in economic and social inclusion programs.

Ultra-Poor Graduation

An evaluation of UPGI's Youth Graduation Pilot in Uganda surfaced a number of key lessons for successful youth Graduation programs. Some of the most universally applicable include:

- Tailoring life skills training and social and health messaging to male and female youth separately
- Considering male youth preferences in market assessments and livelihood selection
- Leveraging local community leaders to positively influence youth participants
- Including skills-based vocational training as livelihood options
- Reinforcing life skills messaging through technology, such as text messages

Empowerment & Livelihood for Adolescents

BRAC's ELA programme has been evaluated in

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

6 BRAC. (2019). STAR Toolkit: Introducing a successful apprenticeship programme. Retrieved from BRAC website:

<http://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019-3-19-STAR-Toolkit-External.pdf>

7 Ibid



multiple countries throughout the past decade, and has recurrently seen positive outcomes in numerous indicators of success. Gleaning from these, some of the most crucial components to program successes include:

- Increasing the likelihood of adolescent girls having savings, by leveraging informal institutions such as rotating savings and credit schemes⁸
- Leveraging social learning by influencing participants to talk about business and finance with their friends from their informal savings group⁹
- Incorporating vocational training components, such as financial skill courses, to affect a positive impact on girls' self-reported entrepreneurial skills¹⁰
- Establishing an ELA club in a community to result positive outcomes on health-seeking behavior, such as increasing HIV awareness and family planning practices¹¹

Skills Development Program

A 2018 RCT evaluation of BRAC's Skills Development Program found the following indicators of program success:

- Apprenticeship, including on-the-job training,

8 Buehren, Niklas et al. (2017). Evaluation of an Adolescent Development Program for Girls in Tanzania (Report no. 7961). Retrieved from the World Bank: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/245071486474542369/pdf/WPS7961.pdf>

9 Ibid

10 Bandiera, Oriana et al. (2012). Empowering Adolescent Girls: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Uganda. Retrieved from the London School of Economics and Political Science website:

<http://econ.lse.ac.uk/staff/rburgess/wp/ELA.pdf>

11 Ibid

is crucial to positively impacting youth employment and earnings¹²

- Female youth are especially benefited by the program in terms of wage and self-employment¹³
- The program results in increased participant capital, as evidenced by increased ownership of personal cell phones, dresses, and shoes, as well as self-reported welfare and psychological well-being¹⁴

Bottom line, the underlying principle to these featured lessons is the importance of **multidisciplinary** and **tailored** interventions. Such principles have been proven to be the keys to identifying and meeting the needs of the world's most disadvantaged youth.

How can they all be combined?

Recognizing the importance of multidisciplinary and tailored interventions, the following program design represents the synthesized capacity among Graduation, ELA and SDP to deliver solutions to disadvantaged youth through social and economic inclusion.

Program Design	
Social protection	For households: Households will be linked to existing government programs including cash transfers for women and children and public works programs, in the absence of which a consumption stipend would be offered.
Livelihoods promotion	For females or head of household: Appropriate assets would be transferred to the households, with enterprise and business development training provided to the female head of household. The ELA peer group platform could be leveraged for group based livelihoods, which was tried in Uganda with South Sudanese adolescent girls, with mixed results. ¹⁵
Financial inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For both: Financial literacy is already provided to adolescent girls in ELA groups; in addition, female head of households will receive financial literacy training and access to savings and loans in savings groups or VLSAs • Based on a rigorous market assessment, an apprenticeship model and job placement pipeline should be designed and implemented to facilitate participant transition from the program to employment • A youth skills and preferences assessment should be conducted to match participants with technical, vocational and soft skills training opportunities that are viable and of interest • After the program, participants could be linked to microfinance or other formal financial inclusion mechanisms.
Social empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For both: The traditional one on one coaching model will be substituted by the peer trainer led model with life skills training provided to adolescent girls in the ELA groups, while female head of households will receive life skills training in the savings groups • Adolescent girls in the age group of 10-14 years will be a part of the ELA groups. In the ELA program, interventions for this age group focus on getting them back to school. Time commitment: 8 days/month

¹² Das, Narayan. (2018). Skills Development Working Paper (Report no. 4)

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ BRAC International. (2019). Livelihood and Empowerment among South-Sudanese Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement in Uganda : Endline Evaluation Report.