Targeting Methods in the Graduation Approach

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Key Considerations for Targeting

Extreme poor populations face multidimensional social, economic, political, and cultural barriers, in addition to a low income. They are often chronically food insecure, geographically isolated and excluded from the community, vulnerable to health and natural shocks, disconnected from mainstream social protection services and traditional development programs, with low access to markets.

In order to address these complex barriers, the targeting method in a Graduation program must involve a rigorous process that captures eligible households and minimizes errors by preventing households with greater means from being selected. Additional effort is needed to identify households where there are disabilities, girls are disadvantaged, and women face additional barriers such as limited bargaining and decision-making power and vulnerability to gender-based violence.

Designing a targeting mechanism for the Graduation approach involves the following steps: (1) identifying eligibility criteria based on an appropriate combination of national poverty data, secondary data, community knowledge, and surveys administered by program staff; (2) setting up a mechanism to select households that meet the criteria; (3) establishing a validation mechanism to ensure criteria was met; and (4) establishing a grievance response mechanism to ensure that the selection process is transparent and community members have a way to dispute targeting errors. An effective targeting method incorporates the following best practices:

- **Gender lens** that ensures that eligibility criteria take into account the barriers to gender equity.

- **Engage the community** at the outset and secure buy-in, since targeting is often the first point of entry in a community. This involves promoting a clear understanding of the objectives of the program and the target population. In participatory targeting methods, the selection process relies on community knowledge to identify the most vulnerable households.

- **Engaging local leadership** is critical for acceptance of the program but it needs to be carefully handled to avoid elite capture within the selection process.

- **Limiting exclusion of marginalized groups** that are hard to reach by applying appropriate targeting methods like snowballing techniques.

Graduation staff conduct a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) in Bangladesh, and a targeting verification survey in the Philippines.

Targeting Methods in Graduation Programs

Common targeting methods in Graduation programs include use of national registries if they are available and up-to-date, participatory rural appraisal (e.g. social mapping and community wealth ranking), or administration of poverty score cards (e.g. proxy means test). It is strongly recommended that all methods are supplemented by a brief targeting verification survey to minimize errors.[1] The most commonly used targeting methods in Graduation programs are summarized in the table below and are often used in combination with each other.

National Registry	Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)	Proxy Means Test (PMT)
Advantages • Allows integration with government programs, which facilitates future scale-up • Additional verification through a survey provides opportunities to update the national registry on a more regular basis	*Advantages* • Reflects local knowledge of poverty • Greater community satisfaction and transparency • Limits the number of households that need to be surveyed for verification	*Advantages* • Reduces errors by using easily observable information • Easy to administer as standard indicators are used for households
Disadvantages • Possibility of exclusion errors due to national registry not being updated • Possibility of exclusion errors if the registry coverage is limited and excludes marginalized communities	*Disadvantages* • Difficult to distinguish between households in areas with pervasive poverty • Local elites may influence the participatory process, which can be partially mitigated by a verification survey	*Disadvantages* • Likelihood of exclusion errors due to inability to capture vulnerabilities that are not observable • Does not engage community or secure buy-in

Targeting Methods in BRAC UPGI Graduation Programs

BRAC Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative (UPGI), which aims to expand the reach and impact of Graduation through advocacy and technical assistance to governments, multilateral agencies, and NGOs, adopts various combinations of targeting methods in its technical assistance engagements. In all countries, a multi-step process is used to reduce inclusion and exclusion errors. The first step is geographic targeting (based on national data, consultations with local partners, and transect walks) to identify implementation sites with high incidence and depth of extreme poverty. This is followed by steps to select eligible households. Below are four different targeting methods used in government-led programs in Kenya, Lesotho, India, and the Philippines:

- **Kenya:** The PROFIT Financial Graduation program, funded by IFAD in partnership with the National Treasury, adopted a participatory rural appraisal which included social mapping of households and community wealth ranking. The program staff administered surveys to households that ranked the poorest to verify their level of poverty. Characteristics of the selected households include chronic food insecurity, lack of productive assets, vulnerability to climate shocks, geographic isolation, poor housing conditions, and limited access to water and sanitation.

- **Philippines:** The Graduation pilot, implemented by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) with support from BRAC, targeted the most vulnerable beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) Conditional Cash Transfer, based on the household's poverty classification in the national database, Listahanan.[2] The program staff further administered verification surveys and community verification techniques with the local LGU and community councils to ensure that the shortlisted participants were sufficiently eligible for program participation. Characteristics of the selected households include income poverty near the food poverty line, irregular

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[1] A targeting verification survey typically includes questions on income, ownership of productive assets, ability to be economically active, absence of male earners, prevalence of disability or child labor, physical structure of home, etc.

[2] Listahanan uses proxy means test to classify households.

seasonal income from working on plantations, indebtedness to predatory lenders, dependence on haciendas or landed estates, low access to electricity, poor housing conditions, and lack of previous participation in government livelihoods programs.

- **Lesotho:** BRAC UPGI designed a Graduation program for the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) to be integrated within the Government of Lesotho's social protection system, and worked closely with UNICEF, the World Bank, and the EU. Per the targeting design, households had to (1) satisfy the cut-off thresholds for the Child Grant Program eligibility and be in the last two NISSA categories of ultra-poor and very poor, and (2) meet one additional vulnerability criteria, which included households headed by women, single parents, youth, chronically ill or with children between 0-5 years. A small percentage of households would be further verified, and the list of selected participants are to be shared with Community Councils and Chiefs of participating villages for their awareness.

- **India:** In partnership with BRAC UPGI, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the State Government of Tamil Nadu are integrating Graduation in the Urban Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable Housing for Urban Poor program (UIRSHUP), which relocates and rehabilitates households living in extremely vulnerable and high-risk urban areas. While the households to be relocated are pre-selected based on ADB's criteria, the program design recommends segmentation according to specific needs and levels of vulnerability, including those who are considered "most economically ready". Households deemed "least ready" include those with temporary housing, elderly or female-headed households, earning income through daily wage labor, with high interest debt from moneylenders, and a lack of technical skills for livelihoods.

	Government of Kenya	Government of the Philippines	Government of Lesotho	State Government of Tamil Nadu, India
Targeting Methods	• PRA (including social mapping and community wealth ranking) • Verification survey	• Use of national database (*Listahanan*) to target beneficiaries of existing conditional cash transfer program • Verification surveys and community verification techniques	• Criteria matching existing government program categories (cut-off thresholds for the Child Grant Program and one additional vulnerability criteria) • Verification of households	• Pre-selection based off ADB criteria • Further segmentation based on vulnerability needs

In 2002, BRAC pioneered the Ultra-Poor Graduation approach in Bangladesh, the first holistic intervention to help people lift themselves from extreme poverty, after recognizing that existing poverty alleviation programs were not reaching the poorest people. Building on the success of the scaled program in Bangladesh, the Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative (UPGI) is an initiative of BRAC committed to supporting the expansion and implementation of the Graduation approach. Graduation applies a holistic approach to meet participants' unique needs, providing them with a livelihood, skills training, financial services, and mentorship and coaching on social and health issues. BRAC UPGI is committed to scaling the Graduation approach through programming and policies, and partnering with national governments, peer organizations, civil society actors, and donors to achieve the long-term benefits demonstrated by Graduation and lift millions more from extreme poverty.

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