



## Impact of the Ultra Poor Graduation Programme in Uganda



### Intervention

Uganda has made great strides in reducing poverty in recent years; yet, almost a quarter of the population still lives below the national poverty line. Three-fourths of the population lacks sanitation and potential avenues for meaningful livelihoods.

To facilitate the sustainable livelihoods for the ultra-poor, BRAC applied an integrated approach including productive asset transfer, health support and mentoring on business and life-skills. The kick-start of the *Ultra Poor Graduation* (UPG) Programme was in 2002 in Bangladesh where it reached 1.8 million households. Proving impactful for up to six years post-intervention, it was replicated and scaled up in more than 40 countries worldwide. With the support of Cartier Philanthropy, BRAC Uganda implemented the UPG Programme between 2017 and 2019 to serve 1,650 ultra-poor 18 to 35 in Luwero and Masindi districts.

*Livelihood support* offered the poor to select two assets worth up to \$250. They also received basic business and life-skills training and support by BRAC franchised entrepreneurs. Monthly *consumption support* of UGX 50,000 was paid biweekly for up to 8 months or until they generated a consistent income. *Hands-on coaching* with bi-monthly home visits served to reinforce lessons learned and share success stories. *Savings and financial access provisions* mobilised youth to saving groups while the *social-integration component* promoted their livelihoods through Village poverty reduction committees with local leadership and stakeholders. *Health services* subsidised the BRAC Health programme to offer referrals to local hospitals for cases that community health promoters could not address.



### Research

*The Ultra Poor Graduation Programme: Endline Report* (Olobo, Sulaiman and Salam, 2019, Kampala: [BRAC IERC](#))



### Method

A *difference-in-differences* (DID) method was applied to estimate the impact of the programme on food security, production and hygiene of the ultra-poor households. The study enrolled 2,081 households in Bombo, Bweyale, Kigumba, Ziobwe and Wobulenzi BRAC branch areas into treatment (1,216) and comparison arms. The participating youth were compared with youth from the same geographical regions that were eligible but not enrolled in the programme.



▼ **2.8**  
points HFIAS  
score

▼ **16**  
pp severely  
food-  
insecure  
households

▲ **17**  
pp engagement  
in two IGAs

▲ **79**  
kg maize  
production

▲ **1**  
animal sales a  
year

▲ **33**  
pp households'  
savings

▲ **19**  
pp households  
adopting 5 of 9  
wash practices

The UPG programme significantly impacted household's food security - about 46% reported that they did not lack any food in the previous month which was up from 21% at baseline. Altogether, this improved their household food insecurity access scale (HFIAS) score by **2.8 points** (from 11.9 to 9.1 on a 0-27-points-scale). The number of households with severe food insecurity dropped by **16 percentage points (pp)**, upgrading households to mildly and moderately food insecure by 7 pp and 9 pp respectively.

Training in crops and animal management with free startup inputs significantly boosted households' agricultural production which gave a push to their sellings. Within two years, one-quarter (24%) of households were engaged in two income-generating activities (IGAs) and impacted by an increase of 17 pp in the number of youth engaged in IGAs. Their net maize production increased throughout the programme by 79 kg, beans by 14 kg and sweet potatoes by 16 kg as opposed to the comparison group. Since these households even experienced surplus production, they were able to increase their maize and beans sales by 13 pp and 10 pp respectively in a season. Animal production and sales grew in a similar manner - the subsequent impact was an increase of about 3 chicken in intervention households and sale of 0.74 chickens more than the comparison households. Goat and pig stocks increased by one to two animals on average, thus increasing sales by nearly one additional animal per year.

Engaging youth in saving groups on the community level along with business and financial training encouraged them to save additional income generated through selling of agricultural products. Their **savings** increased by UGX 47,000 from baseline to endline and were impacted by a **33 pp increase**.

The programme's health component notably improved personal and household hygiene by promoting best practices at the doorstep. An impactful **19 pp** more households adopted at least **5 out of 9 wash practices** which increased their wash adoption score by 0.88 points on a nine-point scale compared to the non-intervention households over the period of the programme. This was mainly result of a dramatic increase in the number of households that had access to water from a piped source - from 33% at baseline to 73% at endline. The number of households which used dust bin pits rather than other means of waste disposal similarly increased.

## ➤ Way Forward

This intervention confirmed that the integrated approach of the UPG programme is impactful for behaviours shaping and improving the life quality of the ultra-poor, thus suggesting the persistence of short to medium-term effects. From an evaluation standpoint, designing the intervention in a way to capture the frequent transitions of households could shed light on the impact of each programme component. Tracking households beyond the intervention timeline could, on the other hand, illustrate the extent to which the households managed to stay above the poverty line or overcome the poverty trap in the long run.