TRIBUTE TO SIR FAZLE HASAN ABED, OUR DEAR ABED BHAII

Abed Bhai taught us that no problem is insurmountable. He lived his life with the conviction that every person in the world deserved the opportunity to realise their potential. His ability to dream big spurred innovations that will continue to influence individuals and organisations around the world for generations to come.
ABED BHAJ’S PRINCIPLES

OUR SOUTHERN APPROACH

Because we are from the Global South, we understand very well how to operate in a resource–constrained setting. Our innovations are frugal, and focus on leveraging community capital.

PUT WOMEN AT THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING WE DO

Achieving gender equality is one of our top commitments, and we are doing this within BRAC, as well as in the communities where we work and beyond. Women and girls are the worst affected by poverty but are also the most powerful drivers of recovery.

OUR LANGUAGE

BRAC’s way of speaking and writing reflect the way we work, and our fundamental belief that inequality is human-made. It can be unmade. We give respect and value everyone equally.

A LEARNING ORGANISATION

Our Founder always encouraged BRAC staff to view failure as an opportunity to improve the services we provide. A key part of BRAC is its willingness to adapt, its constant innovation, and its willingness to learn from its own mistakes.
THE VALUES ABED BHAI SET OUT FOR US

**INTEGRITY**
We approach our work with honesty and transparency.

**INNOVATION**
We innovate and iterate to improve our impact.

**INCLUSION**
We foster inclusion to reach those who need it most.

**EFFECTIVENESS**
We strive for effectiveness to better serve people in poverty.
With this insightful thought, Sir Fazle Abed took BRAC global by venturing into Afghanistan in 2002 as its first international operation. BRAC International (BI), an organisation of and for the people of the Global South, now works in 10 countries across Africa and Asia with programmatic interventions in healthcare, education, youth empowerment, agriculture, emergency preparedness and response, and inclusive access to financial support and savings. Abed Bhai’s grounded, empathising and human-centric approach towards development has enabled BI to successfully adapt its unique integrated programmes across different geographic and socioeconomic contexts.

“Small is beautiful, but scale is necessary.”
Abed Bhai’s personal touch, empathetic approach, and vision can be seen across BI programmes’ approach and design. For example, our early childhood development, education, and youth empowerment programmes reflect this ideology and discourage rote learning, and encourage children and adolescents to think on their own through BRAC’s flagship models of Play Labs and Youth Empowerment Clubs.

“Children should have their childhood — not just discipline, discipline, discipline, and study, study, study. My parents were all for me to have an enjoyable childhood.”
Abed Bhai often spoke of women living in poverty as the best managers he had ever seen; despite having little income or assets, women could feed the family, look after the children and run their households. Abed Bhai invested heavily in women and girls through education, health, income generation and microfinance opportunities, community development, and social mobilisation. BRAC’s approach of working directly with women and communities to develop solutions and of adopting programmes constantly to make them more responsive gave new meaning to women’s empowerment.

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The passion of my lifetime has been to work with people living in poverty and to see them, with the right resources and opportunities, transform into agents of change in their own lives, families and communities.

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ABED Bhai’s Thoughts on Gender Equality

Abed Bhai tried to highlight how men and women are both victims of patriarchy. And both genders’ involvement is crucial in challenging this systematic oppression. Even though he was unsure at the time if he’ll ever breathe in a world where there’s gender equity, but he made sure that one of the major commitments of BRAC is to work towards achieving equality in marginalised communities worldwide. Abed Bhai said “At BRAC, we will continue to fight against anything that stands in the way of women’s development, holds women back, deprives them of their rights and damages their self-esteem or self-respect. By showing zero tolerance towards any incident of harassment of women, we will preserve the dignity of women everywhere”.

CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE
Mr. Abed gave up a job as a senior executive at a multinational company to start BRAC after he saw his native land, Bangladesh, devastated by war.
Abed Bhai, who was born in Bangladesh in 1936, studied accountancy in London and became a cost management accountant in 1962. The 1970 storm and the 1971 Liberation War in Bangladesh profoundly changed the course of his life while he was working as a senior corporate officer at Pakistan Shell. He quit his work and relocated to London, where he was instrumental in the founding of Action Bangladesh and HELP Bangladesh, both of which supported the Liberation War. You may read the rest of his biography here: