

## TACKLING EXTREME POVERTY

### *Evidence from the Field*

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> of December, 2015

**Location:** The Shaw Library, London School of Economics

#### **Abstract**

As the first of the newly adopted United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, eradicating extreme poverty constitutes a major challenge for governments and organisation across the globe entering the post-2015 era. Despite progress over the last few decades, a large proportion of the world's population still remain in extreme poverty. These people, who are majority women, often lack both the necessary skills and capital to lift themselves out of poverty. Simultaneously, policies designed to address the necessities of the ultra-poor often fall short of reaching the people most in need. Any attempt to alleviate extreme poverty on a large scale must therefore consider a process that incentivises increases in both assets and skills for those in ultra-poverty over a long time horizon.

Through a ground breaking approach created by BRAC, a global international organisation, significant steps has already been taken towards financial inclusion and livelihood development targeting the ultra-poor. By addressing both the lack of assets and skills, this piece of social innovation seeks to develop possibilities for basic entrepreneurship for the ultra-poor, ultimately aiming to graduate them out of extreme poverty. Since its launch in Bangladesh in 2002, the approach has been replicated by NGOs and governments in numerous countries around Africa, South Asia and Latin America and has graduated hundreds of thousands of families out of extreme poverty. With the possibility for scaling up and reaching more of the world's ultra-poor, the approach has the potential to successfully fulfil the new sustainable development goal.

This conference serves to discuss and evaluate graduation approaches, looking at both short and long term effects of this type of policy intervention. In cooperation with leading economists the conference will present data on the effect of the programme so far and seek to unpack the mechanisms of the programme's success. The conference will debate the opportunities and risks of scaling up the programme and analyse the concerns moving forward seeking to answer questions like: What are the long term effects? What type of transfers work best – assets or cash? How important is the hands-on training and coaching component? How can this approach be integrated into national social protection schemes? And is the approach cost effective when compared with other approaches to addressing extreme poverty?

#### **Expected outcomes**

By analysing new research findings and sharing best practises, the event seeks to evaluate the effect and the up-take of programmes targeting the world's ultra-poor. Through integrating robust research into the design and implementation of social protection programmes, the conference hopes to increase the impact of approaches to alleviate poverty. Ultimately, the conference aim is to inform policies that could help in tackling extreme poverty and enable countries to meet and exceed the new sustainable development goal.

## **Proposed draft agenda**

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8.30-9.00	<i>Registration and coffee</i>	
9.00-9.15	<b>Welcome session</b> <i>Words of welcome</i>	<i>Speakers</i> The International Growth Centre - <b>Jonathan Leape</b> (Executive Director)
9.15-9.30	<b>Opening remarks</b> Eliminating extreme poverty and the SDGs: the value of targeting the world's poorest population	DFID - <b>Richard Montgomery</b> (Head of Western Asia)
9.30-9.45	<b>Introduction</b> BRAC and the graduation approach: how the programmes work to tackle extreme poverty	BRAC - <b>Mushtaque Chowdhury</b> (Vice-chairperson)
9.45-10.15	<b>Evaluating programmes targeting the ultra-poor</b> Results from randomized control trials on the effect of graduation programmes.	<i>Presenter:</i> <b>Robin Burgess</b> (professor, LSE)
10.15-10.30	<i>Tea and coffee</i>	
10.30-11.45	<b>The effect of cash versus assets</b> Comparing assets versus cash transfers in social protection schemes	<i>Academic presenter:</i> <b>Imran Rasul</b> (Professor, UCL)  <i>Chair:</i> <b>Marvi Memon</b> (Minister of State, Pakistan, and Chairperson BISP)  <i>Panel discussion:</i> <b>Qazi Issa</b> (CEO, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund) <b>Yves Mourey</b> (President and Founder, Fundacion Capital) <b>Albert Musisi</b> (Commissioner, Ministry of Finance, Uganda)
11.45-12.00	<i>Tea and coffee</i>	
12.00-13.15	<b>Unbundling skills and assets</b> Assessing the role of training and investing in human capital	<i>Academic presenter:</i> <b>Abhijit Banerjee</b> (Professor, MIT)  <i>Chair:</i> <b>Santhosh Mathew</b> (Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, India)  <i>Panel discussion:</i> <b>Kathleen Colson</b> (Founder, BOMA) <b>Gabriel Fernandez</b> (National Coordinator for social protection, Ministry of Planning, Liberia) <b>Steven Werlin</b> (Fonkoze)

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13.15-13.45 *Lunch*

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13.45-15.00 **Graduation in a longer perspective**  
Presentation and discussion about new data of the long term effects of the ultra-poor programme in Bangladesh, 7 years after the intervention.

*Academic presenter:*  
**Oriana Bandiera** (Professor, LSE)  
**Esther Duflo** (Professor, MIT)

*Chair:* **Joel Budd** (Social Policy Editor, The Economist)

*Panel discussion:*  
**Imran Matin** (Programmes Director, Save the Children)  
**Chantal Buard** (Head of Digital, Amplifier strategies)  
**Mudit Cheyo** (Assistant Director for Poverty Eradication, Ministry of Finance, Tanzania)  
**Kate McKee** (Senior Advisor, CGAP)

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15.00-15.30 *Tea and Coffee (and move of venue)*

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15.30-17.00 **The challenge of scale**  
Debating the need for locating the programmes within the larger government agenda, the potentials for implementing the approach on a national level and the risks of scaling up.

*Chair:* **Anne Hastings** (Manager, Microfinance Working Group)

*Panel discussion:*  
**Ron Ajengo** (Financial Controller, National Treasury, Kenya)  
**Harshani Dharmadasa** (BRAC)  
**Pranab Jyoti Nath** (Odisha Livelihood Mission)  
**Jaya Sakar** (Trickle UP)  
**Alix Zwane** (Global Innovation Fund)

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17.00-17.15 **Closing remarks**

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**Dr Muhammad Musa** (Executive Director, BRAC)

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17.15-18.15 *Drinks reception*

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18.30-20.00 **LSE Public Lecture**  
(by special invitation only or through applying for tickets at LSE website)

*Venue:*  
*Sheik Zayed  
Theatre, LSE*

*Key note speaker*  
- Sir Fazle Abed

*Chair*  
- Robin Burgess  
*Panellists*  
- Esther Duflo  
- Oriana Bandiera  
- Anna Minj

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