



The Graduation Approach Simplified





Acknowledgement

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The HoRN network focuses on building resilience in areas of recurrent crisis in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) across the Horn of Africa countries, based on the resilience focus countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. The objective of the HoRN is to strengthen regional and cross border collaboration and improve evidence-based learning.



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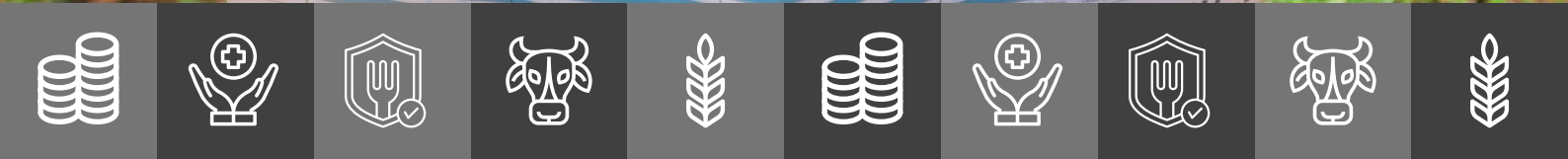
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INTRODUCTION

This Guide provides basic information on the Graduation Approach drawn from the experiences and lessons learned by implementing partners from the Horn of Africa and especially Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia where the approach has been deployed extensively in diverse contexts. It is a starting point for USAID staff who want to know more about the approach as they engage with design teams, partners, and the rest of the Mission. It is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive but is intended to introduce the key concepts underlying the graduation approach as it applies to USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and a resource document for designers of activities with graduation approach.

A youth takes a light moment as he reads his planned goals on his graduation map. Photo:AVSI Uganda



CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE GRADUATION APPROACH

What is the Graduation Approach?

- A sequenced and time-bound set of interventions that help people living in extreme poverty build resilience and engage in sustainable livelihoods.
- An innovative approach that uses a comprehensive set of sequenced and time-bound interventions to guide extremely poor households step-by-step from poverty to sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance.

Background

The Graduation Approach (GA) gained prominence in 2002 through pioneering work by BRAC in Bangladesh. In its classical form, the graduation approach integrates five blocks of interventions referred to as the 5-core components: consumption support, savings, asset transfer, livelihood skills building, and life skills coaching. The components are time-bound and carefully sequenced to yield desired outcomes in the target households.

In the context of USAID/BHA in the Horn of Africa, the classical Graduation Approach has been carefully adapted and integrated into the Resilient Food Security Activities (RFSA) resulting in 6 key components: consumption support, savings and financial inclusion, livelihood selection and asset transfer, livelihood skills training and support, linkages and referrals, and life skills coaching and mentoring. The graduation approach seeks to equip participants with tools, livelihoods, and self-confidence to sustain themselves for the long term.¹ Using a structured and rigorous programming regime, the approach creates livelihood opportunities, increases incomes and savings, reduces food insecurity and vulnerabilities, and builds the resilience of extremely poor families enabling them to start the transition to self-reliance and upward economic mobility. A typical graduation cycle spans approximately 18-36 months.

Targeting and Selecting Participants: The graduation program targets extremely poor families (the ultra-poor) that 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, and with low access to markets². These families are difficult to identify and reach. They could be staying in remote, climate-affected environments, fragile and conflict-prone areas, displaced population camps or settlements, or even informal settlements and slums in urban areas. To reach them, graduation programs must adopt rigorous processes that capture eligible households, minimize errors and prevent households with greater means from being selected. A graduation program starts by developing its own targeting/selection criteria supported by the target community. The targeting/selection criteria must align with the program's mission and goals. The targeting/selection criteria adopted by RFSA amplified food security and nutrition parameters to align with the goal and mission of the Activities.³

¹ Montesquiou et al. (2018, Spring). *From Extreme Poverty to Sustainable Livelihoods: A Technical Guide to the Graduation Approach 2nd Edition*.

² BRAC. *Targeting Methods in the Graduation Approach*

³ Nawiri, G2R, Nuyok targeting/selection criteria sought HHs with malnourished CU5, pregnant and lactating women etc.



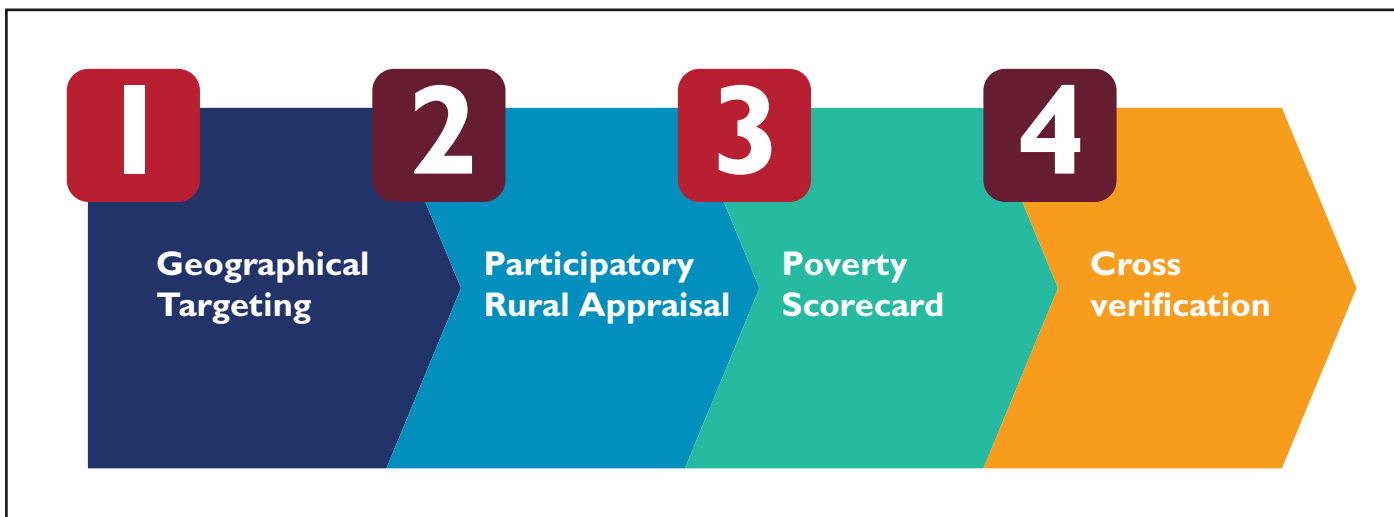


Figure 1: The Four-step Targeting Strategy used by Many implementers.

The graduation program then employs a 4-step targeting process that involves geographical targeting, community input on wealth ranking, poverty scorecard, and cross-verification. Through this 4-step process, the graduation program not only identifies and enrolls the deserving ultra-poor households but also gains the goodwill and support of the community.

Graduation programs can also use national registries where available and updated to target poor households.

How Participants Graduate: Upon enrolment, each deserving household is provided with interventions based on the 6-core components in a carefully sequenced and time-bound order that ensures critical capacities, assets, and proper attitudes are progressively built within the household, transforming it step by step from extreme poverty, food insecurity and despair to self-reliance and hope. The graduation program uses a robust client monitoring system to rigorously track changes within each household against set indicators and milestones that demonstrate progress towards the program’s graduation criteria defined at program inception. On attaining the set milestones for graduation, the household is deemed ready to graduate, and preparations for its graduation begin. Criteria that indicate households are ready to graduate are context-specific. But they usually include measures of nutrition, stable and diversified incomes, increased assets, better access to healthcare and education, and improved self-confidence. It is important to note that graduation is not synonymous with a fixed threshold past which households are suddenly resilient to the pressures of poverty⁴. Participants of graduation programs are the most vulnerable of the poor and can still backslide if persistent shocks inhibit their trajectory. The continued success of graduated households is greatly aided by the presence of support services that reinforce a household’s pathway out of poverty, including access to finance, mainstream development programs, and government-led social protection programs. Finally, the preparations and modalities of graduating households were varied.

For USAID, the Graduation Approach represents an adaptable, holistic, and evidence-based strategy that can lead to more scalable and sustainable outcomes in its development programs, ultimately contributing to more stable and prosperous communities worldwide. The graduation approach is appealing in that it has been refined through rigorous application and evaluation, leading to a set of standards, which promote consistency,

4 BRAC Propel Tool kit: An Implementation Guide to the Ultra-Poor Graduation Approach





Beneficiaries in a VSLA group Saving session in Kiboota, Bwizi. Photo:AVSI Uganda

effectiveness, and scalability, while allowing it to be adapted to different contexts⁵. It is a versatile model that sets clear timelines to address multiple challenges simultaneously⁶ (multifaceted design) and can be adapted for implementation through a wide range of agencies and organizations working either singularly or collaboratively in multisectoral settings. For example, the GA model has been used to deliver interventions at the household level from diverse sectors including agriculture, financial services, health, food and nutrition security, WASH, education, child protection, natural resources management, and youth development among others. This facilitates leveraging, maximizing of impact, and improved value for money when well-designed and coordinated. This approach can also be adapted for implementation in a wide range of external operating environments including far-flung and remote climate-affected areas, slums and informal settlements in urban areas, poverty-stricken rural areas, refugee/IDP camps and settlement schemes, and fragile and conflict-prone areas among others. Finally, an ever-growing evidence base (refer to Evidence Section below) of the impact and effectiveness of the GA attests to its suitability for application in diverse USAID development scenarios.⁷

5 Moqueet et al. (May 2019). *Ultra-Poor Graduation Handbook Second Edition*. BRAC/World Vision

6 USAID Report to the Congress on Microenterprise and Pathways out of Poverty

7 USAID. February 2024. *Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance Technical Reference Chapters: Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSA)*



CHAPTER 2: SIX KEY COMPONENTS OF THE GRADUATION APPROACH

The Graduation Approach as applied by USAID/BHA implementing partners in the Horn of Africa region emphasizes six key components that distinguish it from other traditional resilience-building models.

I. Consumption Support

What is Consumption Support?

- A temporary and time-bound assistance provided in kind, in cash, as vouchers, or as a combination to ultra-poor families to enable them to address immediate food and basic household needs. It lasts until they start earning income from their livelihoods.

Why Consumption Support?

Extremely poor families experience severe food insecurity. Chronic food insecurity causes significant stress that reduces

people’s ability to work, engage in program activities, take advantage of opportunities, engage with their community, and plan for their future⁸. For such families, consumption support provides respite from the relentless focus on daily survival and frees them from pressure to engage in negative coping strategies such as disposal of family assets, borrowing from unscrupulous moneylenders, burning charcoal, risky sexual behaviour like transactional sex, illicit trades, and child labour among others. Whether in cash or in kind, consumption support, is designed to create some “breathing space” for participants to focus on other program activities that yield longer-term outcomes as part of the graduation approach.

Consumption support is typically delivered as monthly mobile money disbursements that last for a specified period ranging from 3-24 months. It can also include the distribution of food items and nutritional supplements and may be structured to include seasonal breaks. It is designed and timed to help participants stabilize their household food consumption levels until they start earning income from the livelihoods facilitated through other program components while being careful not to condition the participants into over-reliance on cash support. It is a key cost driver in graduation programs.



Figure 2: The 6-core Components of Graduation Programs in the RFSAs in SECARO Region

⁸ Montesquiou et al. (2014, September). From Extreme Poverty to Sustainable Livelihoods: A Technical Guide to the Graduation Approach



2. Life skills Coaching and Mentoring

What is Life Skills Coaching and Mentoring?

- Regular sessions in which dedicated field staff (mentors) offer participants personalized guidance on essential life skills like problem-solving, building confidence, facing challenges, and decision-making. Mentors also assess participant progress, advise on behaviour change, and facilitate linkages with essential service providers e.g. healthcare, education, market opportunities, and agricultural extension.⁹

Why Mentoring and Coaching on Life Skills?

Having lived marginalized from their communities for generations, extremely poor families enrolled in the program face high emotional hurdles to become confident enough to re-integrate with the community and run successful enterprises. Sustained coaching and mentoring sessions (also referred to as “handholding” or “special sauce”) help them overcome these barriers. Implementing organizations consistently affirm that

individualized “handholding” is crucial to the success of the graduation approach. This component serves as an important entry point to address specific resilience and food security goals within the Resilience and Food Security Activities (RFSAs). It is one of the costliest components of graduation programming.

Home-based mentoring sessions offer one-on-one interactions that allow staff to keep an eye on each participant’s progress, understand household dynamics and barriers, address challenges as they emerge, reinforce critical behaviour change messages promoted by the program, and offer the social support needed for them to move beyond endemic poverty into sustainable livelihoods. Staff also use these sessions to mentor participants, offer business counselling, promote health and nutrition, and encourage positive attitudinal changes on a range of personal issues such as confidence-building, health, hygiene, and children’s education among others.

Some Implementers offer group-based life skills training sessions to complement home-based coaching sessions. Typically held weekly or bi-weekly throughout the program period, these group sessions reinforce peer-to-peer learning and create a strong peer support mechanism for members.



In addition to their core coaching responsibilities, G2R-trained coaches integrated sessions on nutrition, WASH, and MCHN into their coaching curriculum. G2R also incorporated specific malnutrition screening and referral mechanisms, where trained coaches could conduct Mid-Upper-Arm Circumference (MUAC) screening during regular household or group coaching sessions. Coaches then referred acute malnutrition cases to government Village Health Teams when appropriate.

⁹ Bernagros et al. (2022, October). *Considerations for Integrating the Graduation Approach within Resilience Food Security Activities.*



3. Savings and Financial Inclusion

What is Savings and Financial Inclusion?

- Savings refer to a secure and reliable mechanism where participants can deposit and access small amounts of cash safely, conveniently, and affordably.
- Financial inclusion means that all people and businesses have access to, and are empowered to use affordable, responsible, and sustainable financial products and services that meet their needs.¹⁰ These products/services include payments, savings, credit, insurance, and financial literacy training.

Why Savings and Financial Inclusion?

Savings help poor people manage risks, reducing the likelihood that they will have to sell assets or resort to local money lenders when faced with a crisis. Generally, the ultra-poor have no prior access to savings or formal financial services but have dealt with moneylenders and other informal alternatives, at great cost. Saving even small amounts regularly in a formal way helps program participants build financial discipline, leads to a sense of empowerment, and creates a financial cushion/buffer against shocks, enhancing their resilience¹¹. As the savings grow, they can be used to invest in income-generating activities that in turn bring in more income. Increased income helps the poor family better meet its critical needs (self-reliance); boost its income-generating activities by accessing credit (expansion) and; better manage personal and business risks by accessing insurance (resilience and sustainability).

Graduation programs are designed to give participants the opportunity to save, grow savings and eventually access other financial products/services needed for both personal and business development. The programs also train participants in financial literacy equipping them with financial management skills for use at home and in their businesses. Through savings groups (e.g. VSLAs, SILC, VESA, BSG, S4T), graduation programs introduce all their participants to practical lessons in financial management as they save. This inculcates a culture of saving and financial discipline among the participants before the program links them as groups to more formal financial services providers such as SACCOs, cooperatives, MFIs, and banks for better services/products.

¹⁰ World Bank. *Financial Inclusion*

¹¹ USAID Report to the Congress on Microenterprise and Pathways out of Poverty

For Nawiri Project in Marsabit & Isiolo, all participants are in business savings groups (BSG) and save regularly. BSGs largely function as traditional VSLAs, but in addition to encouraging participants to save money into the group fund (for loans) and social fund (for emergencies) only, BSGs introduced a third type of fund called Savings With A Purpose (SWAP) – an adaptation of Village Enterprise. Through SWAP, any BSG member can set a personal savings target for the purpose of acquiring a specific asset. On hitting the target, the member can withdraw her savings and buy the asset without having to wait for the annual group share-out. By introducing SWAP, Nawiri emphasized the urgency and provided the opportunity for individual participants to save more, acquire additional assets, and diversify their own individual income sources alongside the 3-woman group businesses. Through SWAP, some participants were able to buy goats for milk to feed their families. Others bought donkeys to lighten household chores undertaken by women such as fetching water and accessing markets. SWAP accelerated resilience building and fostered self-reliance among individual households.



4. Livelihood Selection and Asset Transfer

What is Livelihood Selection and Asset Transfer?

- A series of programmatic activities that empower participants to select suitable viable livelihood pathways and enable the program to transfer the required assets to the respective participants to launch sustainable livelihoods or income-generating activities (IGAs)

Why Livelihood Selection and Asset Transfer?

The graduation program's success is tied to its ability to help participants jumpstart sustainable IGAs. A prime goal of all graduation programs is livelihood promotion that connects the ultra-poor to market-driven economic activities building their income streams, livelihood capacity, confidence, and social standing. This involves selecting livelihoods, particularly those suitable for women, delivering technical and business training, delivering an asset transfer, and facilitating linkages to support services and markets. Providing the participant with a suitable asset, and then equipping him/her with critical technical and business skills to manage the asset as an enterprise is key to jumpstarting a sustainable IGA.

Graduation programs empower participants to choose their preferred livelihood pathways, whilst avoiding saturation of local markets with competing enterprises. Program staff first identify attractive market sectors and viable livelihood pathways through market assessment findings, then help each participant determine his/her preferred livelihood pathway together with the associated asset package (i.e. what inputs the program will transfer). Program staff hold detailed discussions with participants and their families to understand the livelihood patterns, skill sets, aspirations, and interests of the household before allowing them to make the decision. This step secures the family members' buy-in and helps program staff plan the training and mentoring requirements.

Depending on the program, asset transfers may be offered in-kind (such as livestock and feed or inventory for retail) or cash-based through mobile money or bank transfer. Asset transfers must be large enough to help a household jump-start its IGA and may be offered in one lump sum or through two or more batches. Asset transfers via cash helps build autonomy and develop participants' capacity to procure high-quality assets even on their own. This component is also a key cost driver of graduation programs besides consumption support and mentoring and coaching in life skills.

Despite all precautions, livelihoods and IGAs fail, especially in contexts that are vulnerable to climate shocks or seasonality. A second asset transfer can help households build

Nawiri Project in Turkana & Samburu facilitated Asset Transfers via mobile money through the 3-woman business group model. Each group received US\$375 start-up capital in 2 tranches 6 months apart. The business group model (an adaptation of BOMA in which the asset transfer is made to a group of 3 women participants rather than one) maintains the asset transfer while reducing the cost per person. The group approach also means the 3 women can share business responsibilities, reducing the time burden for each participant. An evaluation of BOMA's model showed that group business incomes were more diverse and stable through the duration of the graduation program leading to greater overall resilience and financial gains. However, group ownership of assets within the business can present various risks and must be monitored closely to maintain social cohesion and prevent conflict.



resilience by diversifying income and spreading risk over different livelihoods. Faced with risk and uncertainty, this adaptive capacity is extremely critical for households. Diversification into a second livelihood takes place after the first livelihood is established.

Links to Support Services and Markets

Once an asset is transferred, certain support services e.g. veterinary services, or agricultural extension services, or suppliers and wholesalers of specific goods etc. will be needed to help ensure the asset begins to grow in value. Availability and accessibility of these support services are context-specific and prior arrangements should be made before the asset transfer. Market linkages are crucial to building a livelihood. Helping households learn how to find the right market for their products, obtain the best price, and negotiate the terms of sale is all part of life skills coaching and mentoring.

5. Livelihood Skills Training and Support

What is Livelihood Skills Training and Support?

- Tailored training centered on how to manage a transferred asset or chosen livelihood in a manner that makes business sense. Normally this training will have a “technical side” that deals with operating the asset or livelihood and a “business side” that focuses on the commercial use of the asset/livelihood. Mostly takes the form of short, practical, hands-on, field-based sessions with periodic refresher or follow-on sessions planned for later dates.

Why Livelihood Skills Training and Support?

After selecting a livelihood pathway, households are enrolled in tailored training sessions that cover both technical and business aspects of their asset and livelihood pathway. To the majority of ultra-poor participants, this is a strange field never before explored. However, through this training component, these participants are gradually equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills, and mentality to use the transferred asset to launch and grow sustainable IGAs. Alongside the asset transfer itself, the training component is a critical factor in the establishment of sustainable livelihoods or IGAs by program participants – which in turn is critical to the overall success of the graduation program.

Different cadres of trainers are used to deliver these trainings ranging from highly trained or technical professionals from specialized organizations or government, to moderately trained community-based resource persons, to seasoned practitioners who have honed their skills in particular fields and peer-to-peer trainers.



6. Linkages and Referrals

What are Linkages and Referrals?

- A strategy for helping participants access critical services and interventions that are not directly provided in-house (i.e. not provided by the partners implementing the graduation program).
- A key feature of the graduation approach in the context of integration into the RFSAs, though some consider it as being a support function.

Why Linkages and Referrals?

The magnitude of services and interventions required by ultra-poor households to graduate out of extreme poverty into sustainable livelihoods far exceeds the level of interventions and services that can be offered directly in-house through the implementing partners. The Graduation approach acknowledges this limitation and makes provision in its design for participants to access complementary services and interventions through linkages and referrals to external parties both in the private and public sectors. Through this provision, the graduation approach (which originated as a livelihoods development model) can now deliver at the household level services/interventions from the health sector, food and nutrition security sector, education sector, child protection sector, and others. Some livelihood development services from the financial sector (micro-credit, micro-insurance, etc) and the agricultural sector (e.g. veterinary services) are also delivered to participants through this provision. Theoretically, most household-level interventions from diverse sectors can be layered onto a graduation program and delivered, but utmost care must be taken by implementing partners not to “do harm” through overburdening the participants and the workforce. Implementers must anticipate operational and programmatic challenges to layering within graduation programs¹².

In Ethiopia, RFSA-Pre-SERVE and SPIR 2 are graduation projects supporting the government’s Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP-5). The 2 projects enrol participants from the PSNP-5 and provide them with interventions from the 5-core components of GA plus services from other sectors before “graduating” them. The 2 projects use Village Economic and Social Associations (VESA) to provide all participants with access to savings and financial literacy training for the first 12 months before linking them to Rural Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (RUSACCOs) and MFIs for additional financial services not provided in-house. These services accessed through linkages and referrals include a) credit at a subsidized interest rate for particular participants to acquire a productive asset b) special financial products tailored to the needs of participants c) additional financial literacy trainings.

12 Bernagros et al. (2022, October). *Considerations for Integrating the Graduation Approach within Resilience Food Security Activities.*



CHAPTER 3: RESOURCES, EVIDENCE, AND TALKING POINTS

a. Resources

- Key Contacts
- Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) - Alexandra Klass
- Office of the Chief Economics (OCE) - Samantha Carter
- Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (BRFS):
- [Slide Deck from the Office of the Chief Economist \(OCE\)](#)
- USAID Graduation Approach Learning Event in Uganda from May 12, 2024, to May 17, 2024.
- Considerations for Integrating the Graduation Approach within Resilience Food Security Activities. (IDEAL): [Considerations for Integrating the Graduation Approach within Resilience Food Security Activities | Food Security and Nutrition Network \(fsnnetwork.org\)](#)
- From Extreme Poverty to Sustainable Livelihoods: A Technical Guide to the Graduation Approach - 2nd Edition. PEI_Graduation_Technical_Guide_2018_Edition.pdf
- USAID Graduating to Resilience (G2R) Project by AVSI Uganda – Resource Materials: [Programming Guide](#) and [Training Book](#)

b. Evidence

Notable Findings around the Graduation Approach	Source and Link to Source
<p>A 6-country study in Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, India Pakistan, and Peru over 3 years found that graduation programs significantly improved livelihoods, income, and health among the extremely poor. Impacts of the program on consumption, household assets, and food security were sustained for at least 36 months after the productive asset transfer.</p>	<p>The Ultra Poor Graduation Approach (IPA) The Ultra Poor Graduation Approach IPA (poverty-action.org)</p>
<p>A six-country study showed that the Graduation program was able to substantially increase consumption of the very poor by the end of the program, with improvements maintained one year later. The study concluded that a multifaceted approach to increasing income and well-being for the ultra-poor is sustainable and cost-effective.</p>	<p>A Multifaceted Program Causes Lasting Progress for the Very Poor: Evidence from Six Countries. (Banerjee et al) A multifaceted program causes lasting progress for the very poor: Evidence from six countries Science</p>
<p>A review of 20 randomized evaluations found that most big-push transfers with multifaceted support like the Graduation Approach, provided a necessary foundation for households to accumulate assets, shift into a more stable self-employment, take on better occupations, increase their standard of living, and grow out of a state of poverty. In most cases, these households were better positioned to take advantage of higher return activities...</p>	<p>Building Stable Livelihoods for Low-Income Households (J-PAL) Building stable livelihoods for low-income households The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab</p>



Notable Findings around the Graduation Approach	Source and Link to Source
<p>A study of the long-term effects of a big-push program providing a large asset transfer to the poorest Indian households. A randomized controlled trial that followed these households over 10 years, found positive effects on consumption, food security, income, and health. These effects grew for the first 7 years following the transfer and persisted until year 10....</p>	<p>Long-term Effects of Targeting the Ultra-Poor Program in West Bengal, India (Banerjee et al) Long-term Effects of the Targeting the Ultra Poor Program NBER</p>
<p>While the Graduation Approach has been successful, it is not inexpensive. Less is known about the relative costs and benefits of the individual standard components of graduation, which typically include cash grants, asset transfers, skills training, individual coaching, access to savings groups, and basic healthcare.</p>	<p>End line Report of the Resilience Food Security Activity Graduating to Resilience (IPA) Search Results: (usaid.gov)</p>
<p>Research finds that many of the positive short-term impacts are sustained 5 years after the asset transfer. In the context of the deteriorating economic conditions, research found that while the targeted ultra-poor program recipients also experienced reductions in consumption, and revenues and income, many of the impacts first seen in 2018, relative to the control group, were sustained in 2021. The program participant households had 16% higher consumption levels and 32% higher income and revenues.</p>	<p>Building Resilient Livelihoods: The Enduring Impacts of Afghanistan’s Targeting the Ultra-Poor Program (World Bank) World Bank Document</p>
<p>A comprehensive study report of prevailing practices in integrating graduation programming across 3 RFSAs: Graduating to Resilience (AVSI/Uganda), Nobo Jatra (WV/Bangladesh) and Nuyok (CRS/Uganda). The study report Outlines the Graduation Approach (GA) and highlights how the 3 RFSAs have applied GA in different contexts. Presents key findings on the adaptation of GA for each graduation component, the integration of graduation programming into these RFSAs, lessons on graduation pathways, and the evidence base for applying GA in RFSAs. Presents recommendations for RFSAs practitioners and USAID/BHA to consider in the design & application of GA in future RFSAs.</p>	<p>Considerations for Integrating the Graduation Approach within Resilience Food Security Activities (IDEAL): Considerations for Integrating the Graduation Approach within Resilience Food Security Activities Food Security and Nutrition Network (fsnnetwork.org)</p>

c. Talking Points

Area	Talking Points
<p>a. What is Graduation Approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A model that uses a sequenced, time-bound set of interventions to guide ultra-poor households’ step by step from poverty to sustainable livelihoods & self-resilience. • Pioneered by BRAC in 2002, classical GA has been adapted and integrated into RFSAs emphasizing 6 key components – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Consumption support › Life Skills Coaching & Mentoring › Savings & Financial Inclusion › Livelihood Selection & Asset Transfer › Livelihood Skills Training & Support › Linkages & Referrals • GA targets ultra-poor families. Normally very difficult to identify and reach. (Chronically food insecure, geographically isolated, socially excluded, disconnected from social protection services, low access to markets, vulnerable to health and natural shocks) • GA uses 4-step targeting process that combines geographical targeting, participatory rural appraisal, poverty scorecard and cross-verification to select deserving families.
<p>b. Consumption Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A temporary and time-bound assistance provided in kind, in cash, as vouchers, or as a combination to ultra-poor families to enable them to address immediate food and basic household needs until they start earning income from their livelihoods. • Designed and timed to help participants meet their household’s basic needs without resorting to negative coping strategies, until they start earning income from the livelihoods facilitated through other program components.



Area	Talking Points
c. Life skills coaching and mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular sessions where dedicated field staff (mentors) offer participants personalized guidance on essential life skills like problem-solving, building confidence, facing challenges, and decision-making. • Mentors also assess participant progress, reinforce other trainings given, advise on behaviour change, and facilitate linkages with essential service providers e.g. healthcare, education, market opportunities, and agricultural extension etc. • Having lived marginalized from their communities for generations, ultra-poor families enrolled in graduation programs face high emotional hurdles to gain confidence to re-integrate with the community and run successful enterprises. Sustained coaching and mentoring sessions help them overcome these barriers.
d. Savings and financial inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings mean a secure and reliable mechanism where participants can deposit, store and access small amounts of cash safely, conveniently, and affordably. Financial inclusion is when all people and businesses can access and use affordable, responsible, and sustainable financial products and services (savings, credit, payments, insurance, financial literacy) that meet their needs. • The ultra-poor have no prior access to savings or formal financial services but have dealt with moneylenders and other informal alternatives, at great cost. Saving even small amounts regularly in a formal, secure and affordable way helps participants build financial discipline, leads to a sense of empowerment, and creates a financial cushion/buffer against shocks, enhancing their resilience.
e. Livelihood selection and Asset transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A series of programmatic activities that empower participants to select suitable viable livelihood pathways and enable the program to transfer the required assets to the respective participants to launch sustainable livelihoods or income-generating activities (IGAs). • Providing the participant with a suitable asset, and then equipping him/her with critical technical and business skills to manage the asset as an enterprise is key to jumpstarting a sustainable IGA. • Diversifying the livelihood pathways for each household enhances sustainability of income streams leading to improved resilience. • Graduation programs empower participants to choose their preferred livelihood pathways, whilst avoiding saturation of local markets with competing enterprises.
f. Livelihood skills training and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored training centred on how to manage a transferred asset or chosen livelihood in a manner that makes business sense. Normally this training will have a “technical side” that deals with operating the asset or livelihood and a “business side” that focuses on the commercial use of the asset/livelihood. • Mostly takes the form of short, practical, hands-on, field-based sessions with periodic refresher or follow-on sessions planned for later dates. • Critical information on markets for inputs, produce, technologies and finances is also availed to participants to help them manoeuvre and operate effectively in the market (cash) economy.
g. Linkages and referrals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategy or provision in the design for helping participants access critical services and interventions that are not directly provided in-house (i.e. not provided by the partners implementing the graduation program). • The magnitude of services/interventions required by ultra-poor families to graduate out of extreme poverty into sustainable livelihoods far exceeds what can be offered directly in-house by implementing partners. Due to this limitation, the GA makes provision in its design for participants to access complementary services/interventions through linkages and referrals to external parties both in the private and public sector. The graduation approach can thus deliver at the household level services/interventions from diverse sectors such as health, food and nutrition security, education, child protection, and others through layering.



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Bischler, J., Doyle, A., Brockerhoff, S., and Ntale, A. (2023) 'Targeting for national economic inclusion programmes: Six lessons from Kenya', Oxford Policy Management. Accessible through https://www.opml.co.uk/sites/default/files/migrated_bolt_files/targeting-national-economic-inclusion-programmes.pdf

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