

# MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

## Summary of management response

DFAT thanks the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for undertaking the Programme Completion Review (PCR) of the Strategic Partnership Arrangement Phase 2 (SPA 2, 2016-2021). As SPA 2 partners, Australia had agreed to undertake the Mid-term Review (MTR, 2018) and the UK the completion review for SPA 2. The PCR sufficiently addresses the Terms of Reference and meets DFAT's monitoring and evaluation standards. The findings, lessons learned, and recommendations are based on consultation with key stakeholders at strategic and operational levels across the three SPA partners (BRAC, Australia and the UK), and covers the entirety of SPA programs.

The PCR found that BRAC had supported almost 84.08 million poor, vulnerable and marginalised people with SPA 2 funding. It achieved or exceeded most of the outcome indicators, demonstrating delivery of development results at scale, and made significant progress on institutional strengthening aspects. Areas for further strengthening include focusing and progressing efforts to influence national level policy and practice, progressing the roll-out of Enterprise Resource Planning and continue embedding safeguarding at the programmatic level.

This management response to the recommendations and learnings identified by the PCR has been developed by DFAT in consultation with BRAC. It focuses on the recommendations relevant to DFAT's areas of focus under SPA 2, including education, skills training, poverty alleviation and institutional strengthening. BRAC has already progressed some of the areas identified by the PCR. DFAT will continue to monitor progress toward the actions outlined in the management response over the third phase of the SPA (SPA 3, 2021-26).

## Individual management response to the recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p>1. BRAC has demonstrated proven models of reaching the poorest with basic services (health, education, nutrition, WASH and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and sustainably lifting them out of poverty, and is increasing aligned with Government to ensure the BRAC activities do not displace Government services. Although there will be no further UK funding through SPA, BRAC may secure funding for these programmes from FCDO bilateral programmes or from other development partners to continue its commitment to Leaving No-one Behind.</p>	N/A	Related to FCDO funding. For FCDO's consideration.	No action required.	-
<p>2. The Cost Recovery Model, pursued by BRAC with strong support from DFID/FCDO, may not be the best option to reach the poorest and most marginalised. This has become more relevant as a large number of 'new poor' have emerged due to COVID-19. BRAC's innovations and targeted programmes are well placed to support those populations.</p>	Agree	Noted	DFAT will continue to work closely with BRAC to ensure BRAC programs and services reach the most marginalised people and the cost recovery model does not divert SPA resources away from the SPA objective of poverty reduction.	Throughout SPA Phase 3

<p>3. With technical support through SPA 2, BRAC has introduced a robust Value for Money (VFM) Framework, which has already proven to be useful for the organisation to maximise its impact. This is, however, still at an early stage - BRAC should continue its efforts with the support of senior leadership so that a strong culture of VFM is embedded within the organisation, at all levels.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	
<p>4. During SPA 2, BRAC made stronger efforts to influence Government policy by bringing evidence from the grassroots, although progress was slow. Building on this, BRAC should develop a robust advocacy and engagement plan that identifies policy areas it can influence. This can include collaborations with the Government and NGOs to address difficult development challenges, which Government or NGOs alone cannot solve (e.g. social protection targeting, nationwide scaling up of UPG, mitigating climate change impacts).</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The current BRAC Strategy 2021-25 includes a stronger focus on policy influence, and the design for SPA 3 identifies a number of key areas for influence.</p>	<p>Drawing from its Strategy 2021-2025, BRAC to develop an annual advocacy and engagement plan that identifies policy areas it can influence. DFAT will monitor its implementation through the policy related items in the SPA 3 Results Framework and the policy matrix developed at part of the design for SPA 3.</p>	<p>Annually</p>
<p>5. BRAC's progress with mainstreaming disability inclusion over the SPA 2 period has been very promising. BRAC now has the potential to emerge as a model for other development organisations in Bangladesh. BRAC should invest in documenting lessons and sharing its experiences with development partners.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BRAC has already started sharing its experience on DID and has published several articles on the BRAC Blog.</p>	<p>BRAC to develop stories and short video of staff/program participants with disabilities to show case their contribution and the importance of inclusive development and organisations.</p>	<p>One story/video per year</p>

<p>6. BRAC has developed a number of innovative, cost-effective approaches that can have a transformative impact on the lives of the poorest and most marginalised. These are very relevant for Bangladesh, especially with the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19. FCDO should consider how innovations nurtured during the two phases of SPA can be integrated in present and future programmes in collaboration with BRAC.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Related to FCDO programming. For FCDO's consideration.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>7. The RO model is working well as a means of providing quick, safe access to drinking water, but BRAC needs to identify a technology/solution that can be scaled up in specific regions. BRAC should consider joint programming with institutions, civil society organisations, technological research bodies, and community entrepreneurs to address the scale issue.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Related to FCDO programming focus. For FCDO's consideration.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>8. Self-financing safely managed water and sanitation infrastructure at the household level with the upper poor and non-poor is working well. Learning from this can be captured to inform the evolving WASH social enterprise of BRAC, particularly finding out the balance between reaching grant support for the poorest and cost recovery from other clients.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Related to FCDO programming focus. For FCDO's consideration.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>9. Evidence suggests that NGO-driven community health interventions are effective, manageable and scalable. BRAC should explore an enduring, collaborative model with Government.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Related to FCDO programming focus. For FCDO's consideration.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>	<p>-</p>

<p>10. The Government of Bangladesh has accepted BEP's Social Emotional Learning and 2-year Pre-primary curriculum. BRAC should prioritise this as an advocacy agenda with the National Curriculum and Textbook Board to mainstream the curriculum.</p>	<p>Agree</p>		<p>BRAC to add mainstreaming of the Social Emotional Learning and 2-year Pre-primary curriculum to the advocacy and engagement plan referred to in the action for recommendation 4.</p>	<p>Annually</p>
<p>11. The technology-driven teaching-learning process promoted during the pandemic poses various challenges related to the cost of equipment and connectivity, data credibility, effective coordination for quality assurance, and equitable access. BRAC should review this to make sure it does not further exacerbate the digital divide that the poor and marginalised already face.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>During school closures students were supported through individual home visits by teachers and provided self-learning materials to assist with learning continuity for those with limited access to technology.</p> <p>The education program will continue to monitor and adapt its educational technology interventions so that it is not negatively contributing to the digital divide.</p>	<p>Education program to continue monitoring its interventions on equitable access and include in program progress reporting.</p>	<p>Annual progress reports</p>
<p>12. The need for BRAC's education services varies across the country. BRAC should identify geographic locations/regions (e.g. remote chars, haors, coastal belts, hill tracts) where there are the most significant gaps in quality education services and develop a more targeted approach.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BRAC started geographic targeting in 2021. BRAC identifies locations with high incidences of poverty, significant numbers of primary aged Out of School Children (OoSC), prevalence of disability, incidences of child marriage, areas impacted by climate change and hard to reach (chars, haors, coastal belts, slums).</p>	<p>DFAT will continue to monitor the targeting of BRAC education services as part of SPA 3.</p>	<p>Throughout SPA 3.</p>

<p>13. Although SDP has been able to increase the number of female learners significantly, their dropout rate is still high due to the weak and inconvenient work environment for women in the private sector. The other reason for dropout is social stigmatisation related to women's mobility. BRAC should consider these aspects in the design of future skills programmes.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>In SDP's 2021-25 strategy, working closely with market systems is one of the five pillars of skills development. This includes sensitising markets, engaging men and boys in inclusion training and awareness building. SDP will be working closely with the Gender, Justice and Diversity (GJD) program on sensitisation and the design of inclusive interventions for markets.</p>	<p>DFAT to monitor through the SDP Technical Working Group.</p>	<p>Throughout SPA Phase 3</p>
<p>14. There remains a gap between the skills required by the formal sector in Bangladesh and what skills development programmes are offering. BRAC should consider working more closely with the private sector to understand changing demands for skills and tailor programmes accordingly. There is an inconsistency in development partners' approaches to funding skills programmes. Many programmes continue to provide stipends to participants, whereas BRAC was asked to develop a self-sustainable fee-based model. A more consistent development partner (DP) approach, brokered through the Local Consultative Group, could be key to making skills programmes more effective.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BRAC updates curriculums regularly based on the needs of the private sector and is working closely with sector specific players, including in the ready-made garment and information and communication technology sectors.</p> <p>The stipend-based models are predominately funded by the development banks and implemented by the Ministry of Finance so BRAC has little room to guide terms.</p> <p>BRAC has two streams for skills training – a model with a modest stipend and fee-based model that helps subsidise the stipend mode. BRAC regularly assesses the demand for both models and reports as part of program progress reporting.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>15. BRAC is contributing to a Multi-Donor Trust Fund with the World Bank for the Partnership for</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>No further action required.</p>	<p>-</p>

<p>Economic Inclusion. This has been formed to accelerate eradication of extreme poverty in partnership with Governments around the world. The inclusion of an NGO in a Multi-Donor Fund led by World Bank is happening for the first time, and is due to BRAC's global reputation. BRAC can use this to further strengthen the UPG model and promote its global replicability.</p>				
<p>16. Bangladesh is experiencing the emergence of millions of 'new poor' due to COVID-19. BRAC should consider further adapting UPG to offer a package of interventions for the newly emerged poor so that they can exit poverty again as quickly as possible.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BRAC developed and started implementation of a modified UPG for the new poor in 2021. To date, 81,344 people, including returning migrants effected by the COVID-19 pandemic, have participated in this program.</p> <p>In 2022 a number of pilot interventions are planned to test and strengthen the shock responsive graduation approach.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue to monitor the modified UPG for the new poor through the SPA 3 Results Framework.</p>	<p>Throughout SPA 3</p>
<p>17. Mainstreaming gender equality, women's empowerment and diversity is an ongoing process and needs longer term commitment from higher management. The commitment in BRAC's draft strategy for 2021-2025 to address patriarchy, as the underlying cause, is both brave and commendable, but will require a significant investment of staff and financial resources.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>

<p>18. Learning from GJD suggests that both the need for women to access services and addressing the power imbalance between women and men are essential, but the second brings more transformational results. BRAC may use this learning in programming to ensure that projects invest in both.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>19. Applying cost recovery to interventions such as Polli Samaj and popular theatre, designed to promote awareness of rights, is challenging. BRAC should consider undertaking a thorough analysis to inform future strategies.</p>	<p>Agree in part</p>	<p>Note that Polli Samaj has never been considered as a cost recovery based program. However, the communities are charged a small fee to cover actor's costs for the Popular Theatre component. Once paid, anyone from the community can attend.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	
<p>20. The use of digital technology and virtual platforms is an opportunity to save costs, but technologies are not gender or class neutral. In addition to limited knowledge about technologies, extremely poor, PwDs and women often struggle to access technologies, such as, the internet and smartphones. Even women from non-poor households cannot access technologies as they do not own the required digital devices. BRAC should reflect on the experiences of the use of technology during the pandemic and share its experiences, to avoid exaggerating the digital divide in relation to gender, poverty and social marginalisation.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Currently more than 80% participants have access to mobile devices (basic set) when they enrol. For the rest of the participants, program staff assist them with financial planning to purchase mobile phones. Participants are provided with hands on coaching on the use of this digital financial platform to build their understanding and confidence.</p>	<p>DFAT to continue to monitor through the UPG Technical Working Group.</p>	<p>Throughout SPA Phase 3</p>

<p>21. There is a need for evidence-based advocacy focusing on the high rate of violence and the low rate of actions against perpetrators. Connecting community-based platforms and partnering with national-level networks, BRAC can systematically provide information on trends. The rise of VAWG during the pandemic and how BRAC has quickly analysed data from its community-based platforms is a good example of this.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BRAC's Strategy 2021-25 includes a strong emphasis on ending gender based violence, including through working with the government law enforcement agencies and communities. Under SPA 3, BRAC will advocate for the strengthening of the public prosecution system to better address grievous crime against women and children.</p>	<p>BRAC is currently collecting and analysing data from three community-based programs and will contribute to advocacy in partnership with national level networks of which it is a member, including the Rape Law Reform Coalition and National Girl Child Advocacy Forum.</p>	<p>Throughout SPA 3</p>
<p>22. BRAC has further enhanced its position on engaging men and boys in promoting women's empowerment. This can be documented and shared with wider audiences.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BRAC has developed a toolkit, video stories and blog posts on its work with men and boys to promote women's empowerment. Men and boys actively engaged in promoting gender equality and women empowerment an identified outcome of SPA Phase 3.</p>	<p>BRAC to continue to share stories and information on it work on engaging men and boys.</p>	<p>Throughout SPA 3</p>
<p>23. CCP conducted a detailed assessment on carbon footprint and an energy audit in 2019 for BRAC Centres. This is part of BRAC's aspiration to become carbon neutral. As a follow up, BRAC can continue investing in cutting its carbon footprint to become a more energy efficient organisation, and share lessons on progress towards carbon neutrality with other organisations.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Related to FCDO programming focus. For FCDO's consideration.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>

<p>24. BRAC should look for opportunities to scale up the innovative climate resilient housing-cum-mini-cyclone shelters, which can accommodate 35 to 50 individuals and their livestock during cyclones, with Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR).</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Related to FCDO programming focus. For FCDO's consideration.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>25. BHP has the capacity to respond to any disaster within 24-72 hours, anywhere in the country. BHP is also working to integrate a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) component to all programmes so that risks are minimised. This is in the early stages and BRAC needs to continue its commitment to mainstream this within the organisation in order to be better prepared.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Noted. DFAT to monitor through SPA 3 reporting.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>26. UDP's previous experience in handling emergencies such as slum fires and evictions helped in managing BRAC's COVID-19 response in urban areas. However, a proportion of the livelihoods and enterprise development support to beneficiaries was spent to meet basic food needs due to sudden economic hardship. This could have been mitigated with better coordination with community-level activities carried out by other organisations in any given location.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>

<p>27. The draft BRAC Bangladesh Strategy (2021-2025) has been greatly influenced by the impacts of COVID-19 on Bangladesh's economy, marginalised communities, and most affected sectors. The strategy suggests a two phase approach: Phase 1 - Economic Recovery Strategy for 2021-2022 with no cost recovery in place; and Phase 2 - Revival and accelerated inclusive growth for 2023-2025. Once finalised, we would encourage BRAC to share the strategy widely to promote greater collaboration between BRAC, development partners, and the Government of Bangladesh.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BRAC's Strategy 2021-25 is now finalised, has been published online and shared with stakeholders.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>28. BRAC should document its learning from its COVID-19 responses, especially the flexibility offered by the SPA 2 partnership. This can inform future collaboration between BRAC and development partners in responding to any future crisis such as a pandemic and other disasters.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>In 2021, BRAC published the "COVID yearbook" to showcase learnings from its work responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.  BRAC also continues to publish articles on lessons learned from its COVID-19 intervention on its blog.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>29. Close collaboration with BRAC University is affected by budget and contracting difficulties. The two organisations are legally separate entities with separate budgets, which can act as barrier to collaboration. BRAC could consider having an agreement with BRAC University that enables collaboration on learning.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>This is beyond the scope of the SPA.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>

<p>30. Stakeholder interviews suggested that BRAC needs to re-establish learning and experimentation at the heart of its work. This includes building staff capability to use data analysis and insights from field staff to design and improve the next generation of interventions. The role of monitoring for learning and improvement should also be clarified and strengthened.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Increased use of streamlined data and evidence by BRAC staff to make decisions, learn lessons and report is an identified outcome of SPA Phase 3.</p> <p>The implementation of the re-engineered M&amp;E system will take place over SPA Phase 3, this includes capacity building and training.</p>	<p>DFAT to monitor through the SPA Phase 3 Results Framework.</p>	<p>Throughout SPA Phase 3.</p>
<p>31. The roll out of ERP has started but will require more time to complete considering the size of BRAC and some resistance to change, mainly from field-level officers. As ERP has demonstrated the value of digitising and systematising processes, resources should be allocated to ERP to continue roll out and socialisation of the process amongst staff.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>BRAC will continue ERP Change Management, with a focus on module integration, scalability, data usage and stabilisation efforts in the 2021-25 strategy period.</p>	<p>BRAC to complete the roll out of the remaining four (of a total of eight) ERP learning modules.</p>	<p>By 2023</p>
<p>32. BRAC's brand now enables it to attract talented young graduates and early career professionals, many of whom would not have previously considered working in the development sector. This has been an important achievement, especially given the scarcity of highly skilled graduates in Bangladesh. The new generation brings skills relevant for BRAC's transition and future ambition.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>No action required</p>	
<p>33. BRAC needs to ensure that it harnesses the diversity of the skills and experiences that its staff brings (field implementation, strategy, communications and digital). The challenge is to instil BRAC's ethos among the new recruits, train them on development programming, and help them fit within a changing organisation. The field immersion programme helps young professionals to</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>	

understand the needs of the marginalised populations.				
34. FCDO's direction and technical assistance on safeguarding management helped BRAC to develop its organisational capacity and to strengthen systems. BRAC has made excellent progress in ensuring safeguarding for BRAC staff. However, BRAC should continue embedding safeguarding in all programmes, so that beneficiaries are further empowered to report cases and an efficient case management system is fully developed.	Agree	Direction and technical assistance from both FCDO and DFAT during SPA 2 have significantly strengthened BRAC's safeguarding capacity. Continued integration of safeguards at the program level and training for staff is important to ensure new staff receive training as soon as possible and ongoing staff receive regular refresher training. Improved organisational culture and practices with rigorous safeguarding systems is identified as an outcome of SPA 3.	DFAT will work closely with BRAC in embedding safeguarding in all programs, and track progress through BRAC's reporting against this item in the SPA 3 Results Framework. DFAT will also monitor through this through the DFAT annual Safeguarding Plan for SPA 3.	Through SPA Phase 3
35. BRAC has benefitted from the VfM framework - programmes are now able to monitor and report on economy, effectiveness, efficiency and equity. This is in line with BRAC's overarching ambition to become a more impactful and effective organisation. BRAC senior leadership should continue investing in developing an organizational culture that upholds VfM principles, beyond SPA 2.	N/A	Related to FCDO programming focus. For FCDO's consideration.	No further action.	
36. A lesson learnt from influencing the 8th FYP with the UPG model is that influencing government policy requires considerable time and long-term engagement. BRAC could develop a detail advocacy plan to engage with relevant government agencies with a particular focus on how BRAC can support government in lifting extremely poor households out of poverty at a scale using experiences of the UPG model. This requires a shift from promoting BRAC's	Agree	Noted.	BRAC to incorporate addressing extreme poverty to the advocacy and engagement plan referred to in the action for recommendation 4.	In the annual plan as required.

model to engaging in a collaborative process for developing government's own approach for addressing extreme poverty using learning from the UPG model.				
37. The skills conference recognised that policy reforms are needed for the skills development of informal sector workers as the informal economy plays an important role in employment generation. BRAC should continue to seek opportunities to influence policies highlighting the importance of the informal sector.	Agree	Noted.	BRAC to incorporate highlighting the importance of the informal sector in skills training to the advocacy and engagement plan referred to in the action for recommendation 4.	In the annual plan as required.
38. BRAC's learning on what works and why is hugely relevant for global development partners. BRAC could seek opportunities to organise and showcase BRAC development approaches and share innovations and promising proven practices as this would contribute to foster global south partnerships and strengthen BRAC's global profile. FCDO should continue to promote BRAC as a centre of development expertise, innovation, and adaptive programming.	Agree	Noted.	No further action.	
39. The VfM framework has enabled BRAC to track and monitor how each programme is progressing on economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity. However, BRAC needs to define how it wants to report on all four Es, rather than focusing more on efficiency. A practical way forward could be to reflect on the reports produced by the four programmes and identify the areas for improvement.	N/A	Related to FCDO programming focus. For FCDO's consideration.	No further action.	-

<p>40. Data and evidence from multiple BRAC programmes, including UPG, BEP, HNPP, and BRAC Enterprises was used by ASC to redesign its response to COVID-19. BRAC should consider documenting the learning emerged from the influencing work facilitated by ASC and share widely.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>In 2021, BRAC published the "COVID yearbook" to showcase learnings from its work responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>This includes the use of data from BRAC programs by the Advocacy for Social Change (ASC) section to adapt its programming.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>41. FCDO has traditionally accounted for its disbursements to BRAC as core contributions and recorded as expenditure at the point the payment is made. In any future engagement (if any) FCDO should ensure that resource adjustments (accruals) are applied (FCDO).</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Related to FCDO funding, For FCDO's consideration.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>	<p>-</p>