

FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT / RAPPORT TECHNIQUE FINAL BRAC-CEGA LEARNING COLLABORATIVE: FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT

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IDRC Grant / Subvention du CRDI: 108466-001-Supporting graduation programs through empirical evidence and leadership promotion

BRAC-CEGA LEARNING COLLABORATIVE - SUPPORTING GRADUATION PROGRAMS THROUGH EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE AND LEADERSHIP PROMOTION



**FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT
Independent Evaluation and Research
Cell (IERC), BRAC International**

Kampala, June 2020

BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION

PROJECT TITLE:	BRAC-CEGA Learning Collaborative - Supporting graduation programs through empirical evidence and leadership promotion
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COLLABORATING INSTITUTION:	The Center for Effective Global Action (CEGA) headquartered at the University of California, Berkeley, USA
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ABSTRACT

This report provides the details of the activities accomplished under the project while focusing on the substantive achievements and lessons learned through the implementation. To this end, BRAC-CEGA Learning Collaborative has continued with building the research capacity of BRAC International countries through skill-specific training and hands-on research implementation. By this, the collaboration aimed to contribute to the BRAC's long term goal of institutionalizing the use of evidence in creating opportunities for economic growth and wellbeing among those living in (extreme) poverty. The networking and the research capacity in terms of new skills, knowledge and research opportunities have increased substantially, which strengthened the fundraising capacity of both partners. Several new collaborations have been developed and opportunities have been created for new projects. BRAC programs, especially the ones in Sub-Saharan Africa, have benefited from the research learnings some of which are in implementation stage. Evidence generated on graduation program with gender and youth focused research have resulted in creating new projects. Findings from the projects, including the ones that are yet to be published, are expected to continue informing the graduation agenda.

Keywords: BRAC, CEGA, IDRC, Research, Impact Evaluation, Research Grant

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1. CONTEXT of PROJECT

Established in Bangladesh in 1972, BRAC is the largest development NGO in the world, providing almost 140 million people globally with empowerment and livelihood programs, financial services, and health care. As a learning organization, BRAC maintains an introspective focus as highlighted by the establishment of the Research and Evaluation Division (RED) in Bangladesh in 1975. Taking the decades-long learning in Bangladesh, RED rolled out to the countries where BRAC International works as Research and Evaluation Unit (REU) in 2007 which was rebranded to morph into the Independent Research and Evaluation Cell (IERC) in 2015. IERC, with its central team based in Uganda, envisions making strategic contributions for BRAC programs and international development agenda by influencing the development stakeholders and policy actors for large scale positive changes. IERC aims to generate knowledge on the relevance, impact, and sustainability of BRAC's interventions particularly under BRAC International which will contribute to large scale positive impacts through scaling up effective interventions and policies across countries.

The IERC, while remaining within the administrative framework of BRAC International, is affiliated with BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) at BRAC University. To build capacity for rigorous program evaluation, BRAC has partnered with the Center for Effective Global Action (CEGA), a development research hub at the University of California, Berkeley. Together, BRAC and CEGA have created a pilot Collaborative program with the long-term goal to use evidence to promote economic growth and wellbeing among those living in poverty, financial inclusion, livelihoods, and women's empowerment, a set of priorities that are closely aligned with IDRC's Employment and Growth Program. During these three years, the BRAC-CEGA Learning Collaborative (hereafter **BCLC**) has invested heavily in research and learning across the agency—from Dhaka to Kampala to Juba. The project activities primarily focused on capacity building of the research team of BRAC International countries, especially in Africa, by providing both skills specific training and hands-on research implementation.

This is the Final Technical Report for the IDRC funded project “**BRAC-CEGA Learning Collaboration - Supporting graduation programs through empirical evidence and leadership promotion Project**”, implemented from 28 February 2017 to 31 March 2020.

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES and METHODOLOGY

BRAC and CEGA at UC Berkeley have created the collaborative program to support BRAC International in acquiring the rigorous research design and analysis skills to ensure that programming is based on rigorous evidence with the objectives of:

- 1) Building BRAC's capacity to generate new research on livelihoods for women and youth;
- 2) Formally institutionalizing the use of evidence in BRAC service delivery; and
- 3) Sharing BRAC's lessons more broadly within the development research community.

This report provides information on the activities set under this project to measure the achievement toward the objectives set. It reports on the following activities, outputs, and outcomes:

- **Creating leadership:** Three BRAC-CEGA research fellows (three male) completed their four months-long fellowships at UC Berkeley and two are in a finishing phase (two female).

- **Promoting new collaborations:** One Matchmaking Workshop was organised along with several online matchmaking opportunities. Three exploratory travel grants, one scoping work and one research project were awarded.
- **Generating evidence:** Out of nine applications for Research Grants, four research projects were awarded funding for research in Uganda, Afghanistan and Tanzania. All four projects are led by female Principle Investigators (PIs) from CEGA affiliates with two (out of four) BRAC PIs who are female.
- **Improving Research Design:** BRAC Research Review Committee was formed along with the Terms of Reference (ToR) in October 2018 to support research capacity and rigour by BRAC.
- **Enabling BRAC Program Managers to use Evidence:** Executive education was conducted and knowledge management initiatives have been undertaken to increase the research uptake.
- **Enhancing Analytical skills:** BRAC employees increased analytical skills, of whom seven researchers (four female) and seven Field Supervisors (five female) completed the online courses on Applied Impact Evaluation by UC Berkeley. In addition, seven field supervisors (five female) accomplished the course on M&E: Result-based Project Management by the University of Witwatersrand.
- **Diffuse research:** There are three online platforms – IERC website with BIGD, BRAC Research Repository, and BRAC-CEGA Learning Collaborative in CEGA website - to diffuse the project's learning and BRAC research.

3. PROJECT ACTIVITIES, OUTPUTS, and OUTCOMES

The project had seven outcomes set in its M&E framework. The following sub-sections of the report discusses each of the outcomes with detailed of their respective outputs and activities.

3.1 Creating leadership: the BRAC-CEGA Research Fellowship

Outcome 3.1: *Between 2018 and 2020, BRAC researchers (selected fellows) increase their capacity to design and implement impact evaluations, and develop important professional skills and professional development*

Output 3.1.1.: The number of high-quality presentations at seminars/conferences

Target: 2 high-quality presentations per semester per fellow

Result: 21 presentations held

During the length of the program, the BCLC brought on board five IERC researchers as fellows: Patrick Olobo Okello (2018), Danish Us Salam (2018), Esau Tugume (2019), Mary Namubiru (2020), and Pallavi Prabhakar (2020). All the fellows are from developing countries, and 2 of them are female. IERC staffs (Pallavi Prabhakar and Mary Namubiru) who are currently completing their fellowship (in spring 2020) had to move parts of their activities online and finalise it remotely due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The selection of fellows followed a two-stage process. BRAC first nominated a pool of candidates for the fellowship, and in the next step, they were ranked by the CEGA faculty based on the following four criteria: demonstrated quantitative research ability, impact evaluation interest and

understanding, fit with CEGA’s research community, and potential impact of fellowship on BRAC. All visiting fellows were interviewed by CEGA staff before being selected. Final selections were decided jointly by a conference call. In the 2019 RFA, 2 out of 4 applicants were female, whereas in 2018, out of 6 nominees, none were female. For the second round, fellows were selected based on an open Request for Applications (RFA) and their applications were reviewed by a former fellow, in addition to CEGA staff. Although all 4 applicants met the bar and were selected for the fellowship, one BRAC researcher (Abdul Alim) was ultimately unable to enrol in the fellowship due to his country office’s changed research needs.

Fellows were paired with a faculty mentor who provided support in research design, quantitative data collection and analysis, proposal writing, and scientific presentation. They were also paired with PhD students for peer support. Selected fellows audited courses, presented their research ideas/designs at seminars, attended conferences, and designed collaborative research projects. They received a living stipend, one round-trip air travel, and housing and were administered by a dedicated CEGA Program Associate, Program Manager and HR Associate who arranged their coursework and training, and logistics (e.g. accommodation, visa, travel, etc.). Research fellows also participated in cutting edge courses, workshops, and activities related to research transparency and reproducibility in the social sciences. Notably, BCLC fellows benefit greatly from the presence of fellows from CEGA’s other capacity-building programs, such as the East Africa Social Science Translation (EASST) collaborative. Fellows lived together at UC Berkeley International House and interacted informally and professionally throughout the semester. They provided feedback to each other and at times collaborated on the research. For example, Esau Tugume was at UC Berkeley at the same time as another Ugandan EASST fellow Ronald Mulebeke, and both had many productive research conversations.



BRAC Fellows Mary Namubiru and Pallavi Prabhakar with other Fellows

The **first research fellowship round** closed out the visits of **Patrick Olobo and Danish Us-Salaam**, from January to May 2018. Danish Us Salam and Patrick Olobo each presented twice at UC Berkeley, and once each at UC San Diego, UC Santa Cruz, UC Los Angeles, and the University of San Francisco (totalling six presentations each).

It was noted by CEGA staff that from their first presentation at UC Berkeley (at a small seminar of PhD students and CEGA staff) to their final presentation at the end of the semester (a more formal development seminar attended by many faculty and students in the economics department) fellows’ confidence level and overall quality of the presentations improved. Staff analyzed powerpoints created by fellows at the beginning of the semester to the end and found that they were far more sophisticated, clear, and technical after completing the fellowship.

The **second research fellowship round** was finished by **Esau Tugume** in fall 2019, whereas **Mary Namubiru** and **Pallavi Prabhakar** came to UC Berkeley for spring 2020 semester and shifted to remote training at the UC Berkley on 17 March 2020 due to COVID-19 . They are due to finish their fellowship by June 2020. **Esau** presented his research twice at UC Berkeley, and once at UC Davis, the University of Southern California, and the UC Los Angeles. **Pallavi**

presented at the UC Berkeley's prestigious Development Lunch and for a small gathering of the UC Davis professors. **Mary** held a presentation at UC Berkeley in May 2020. CEGA staff arranged for a virtual multi-campus seminar, where **Pallavi** presented to an audience of academics from the University of Southern California, UC Los Angeles, and UC San Diego.

Output 3.1.2.: The number of fellows completing all fellowship requirements (submitting a research proposal, meetings with mentors and other faculty, coursework, presentations)

Target: 2 per year

Result: 3 completed fellowships and 2 closing

Three fellows completed the fellowship requirements and two are about to finish. The fellowship includes the development of a sophisticated, relevant impact evaluation research proposal, delivery of several presentations at various campuses, regular meetings with their assigned faculty mentor, peer mentor, and other faculty, auditing at least three courses, completing coursework as required, and attending the Development Lunch and Development Seminar at UC Berkeley. All fellows were presented with a calendar of deliverables, three of them achieved set goals and two of them are on track to complete the requirements by the end of the 2020 semester, i.e. end of June 2020. The key deliverable of the fellowship is the final research proposal—the process requires fellows to submit multiple drafts throughout the semester. All fellows submitted required drafts of their research proposals and made notable refinements.

The first proposal by **Danish Us Salam** developed significantly throughout the semester, from an evaluation of a primary school-based intervention in Sierra Leone to the introduction of sport's curriculum into BRAC's Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) clubs in Uganda. Similarly, with insights from his Faculty mentor and CEGA Advisor, **Patrick Olobo** made significant strides on his original project aimed at increasing informal sector engagement among youth in Uganda. In his proposal, the original intervention was a social experiment that uses visual stimulus to reshape youth's negative opinions of the informal sector. This intervention shifted to an informational campaign specific to agricultural enterprises, which intends to influence an individual's risk preferences. Patrick also made significant strides on his original project.

Danish and Patrick formed strong working relationships with their PhD peer mentors and reported consistent weekly meetings. As a testament to the value of this collaboration, Danish applied to the CEGA Development Challenge grant with his mentor. Moreover, in exit interviews with the PhD peer mentors, both fellows said the mentorship was rewarding and that they would be open to future collaborations with their mentors.

One area where fellows' outcomes fell short was in their pairing with faculty mentors—while Patrick and his mentor met and collaborated frequently, Danish and his mentor were unable to establish the required routine. This can mostly be attributable to misaligned research interests. Due to the limited number of CEGA affiliates working on education interventions at UC Berkeley, Danish was paired with an affiliate whose research focuses on educational institutions, legal institutions, and social interactions. Fortunately, through visits to UCSD, UCLA, and UC Santa Cruz, Danish had the opportunity to meet with and receive feedback from affiliates with research focused on improving education in developing countries.

Patrick and Danish audited the following courses: Applied Impact Evaluation, Development Economics, and Decision Analysis, Modeling, and Quantitative Methods. They regularly attended two weekly development seminars and presented at the Development Lunch at UC Berkeley in May. In addition to their Faculty Mentors, Danish met formally with 8 different Professors and Patrick met with 6 of them.

For the first month of the semester, **Esau Tugume** focused on conceptualizing a secondary data analysis paper that built off of a research project with his faculty mentor. Although Esau said this was valuable for constructing a do file in STATA and gaining STATA skills he was missing, he ultimately switched his key deliverable to designing a rigorous impact evaluation proposal. His proposal was on, “Effects of Vocational Education Training on Labour Productivity: A Randomised Control Trial in Northern Uganda.” Esau’s PhD partner said, “It was exciting to see him switch to designing a Randomized Control Trial (RCT)...that has come far over the semester to a solidly designed RCT, with well thought out measures.” She emphasized that his “technical knowledge, in terms of RCT design, definitely improved though this deliverable.”

Esau developed a strong working relationship with his faculty mentor, Vittorio Bassi, as co-PIs on a BRAC research project. CEGA staff arranged for Esau to spend a full week at USC where his mentor is based to meet with Vittorio multiple times in person and work on his research, as well as presentation skills. Esau audited the courses “Statistics for Program Evaluation” and “Economic Policy” and took several training sessions in Geospatial Analysis and STATA.

Mary Namubiru had already been working with her PhD partner (Livia Alfonsi) and faculty mentor (Jeremy Magruder) on a BCLC funded research project, “Meet your future: Job Search Effort and Aspirations of Young Jobseekers.” **Pallavi Prabhakar** was paired with a PhD partner and faculty mentor (Aprajit Mahajan), they met regularly and have reported a successful working relationship thus far.

Mary and Pallavi both audited Applied Impact Evaluation and Development Economics. For their third class, Mary audited Decision Analysis, Modeling and Quantitative Methods and Pallavi took a PhD level Econometrics course. Their mentors have been critical in guiding them to take the appropriate training courses during their fellowship. All fellows also regularly attended UC Berkeley’s Economics Department’s weekly Development Lunch (featuring the work of PhD students) and Development Seminar (featuring the work of faculty), Mary and Pallavi have continued attending the Development Lunch virtually through Zoom.

Although it’s early to see the lasting impact of the fellowship on these 5 BRAC researchers, preliminary evidence from a May 2020 interview with Danish Us Salam shows that he has just finished his first year of a PhD in Economics at Trinity College Dublin and is consulting part-time for BRAC. According to him, “coming to Berkeley played a huge role in confirming my desire to pursue a PhD and really prepared me for this.” The courses he found to be the most influential—“the Development Economics course had all PhD level students and listening to how they interact with the material trains you and prepares for a PhD level course.” Danish also mentioned that the fellowship taught him the importance of networks and he is still in touch today with most the people he met during the fellowship. The Annex 4 briefs the two projects conceptualised during their fellowship by Danish Us Salam and Patrick Olobo.

The fellowship has contributed to improving the skills of IERC researchers, and thereby in completing research studies that they started working on during the early stage of this project. Patrick Olobo and Danish Us Salaam have co-authored a working paper that evaluates the graduation programme targeting youth population in Uganda. Data analysis and analytical skills acquired through their fellowships and presentations made at CEGA helped them in completing this task and inform the new programme design. This research output has informed in designing a new graduation initiative in Uganda called Disability Inclusive Graduation (DIG). IERC has now partnered with Programme for Evidence to Inform Disability led by London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to conduct research on this initiative. Patrick Olobo is acting as a Co-PI in this new project.

Output 3.1.3.: Percentage increase in fellows' knowledge of rigorous research methods

Target: At least a 10% increase in fellows' knowledge of rigorous research methods

Results: Patrick Olobo's score increased by 2 percentage points (from 62% to 64%), Danish Us Salam's score dropped by 5 percentage points (from 74% to 69%), Esau Tugume's score increased by 19.3 percentage points. Mary Namubiru's and Pallavi Prabhakar's scores are still to get after their final assessment.

Patrick Olobo and **Danish Us Salam** fell short of their target for increased scores, partly due to their fairly high score upon entry into the program and also, the assessment materials used may not accurately reflect the skills they acquired. The survey was focused on the technical aspects of research methods only and did not capture the analytical aspects of evaluation strategies and designs. Qualitative assessments by CEGA staff and fellows' respective peer mentors showed an improvement in their research skills and quantitative abilities. According to his mentor, Patrick was able to improve his ability to "take an interesting research topic and develop it into a research question that can generate insightful, novel knowledge." Danish's mentor similarly reported that he "progressed in the rigour" of his work, meeting the "level necessary for Development Lunch presentations", including developing skills in "conducting complicated power calculations."

Esau Tugume managed to improve his knowledge of rigorous research methods by 19.3 percentage points, which is the biggest improvement among the fellows. He said his courses have changed the way he does research. In his exit interview, he said, "I used to not care about impact evaluation so deeply and how the different methods are used. I used to just clean data and leave it for others to do the analysis, but now my analytical skills have improved and I can analyze data and interpret it." CEGA is yet to receive the results of **Pallavi Prabhakar** and **Mary Namubiru**, who will take the endline upon completion of their fellowships in June 2020. Based on qualitative interviews with their PhD mentors, it is evident that their technical skills advanced during the fellowship. According to Mary's mentor, she "gained the skills to develop a research proposal from step zero." As a field specialist at BRAC, this was Mary's first time having this opportunity. Although this was challenging for her, her mentor said it has been impactful because "it's changed the way they work on their BCLC funded project together—Mary is much more involved in the analytical process, instead of just in the fieldwork component." Pallavi's mentor, on the other hand, noted that she came in with "a high level of quantitative skills but needed assistance in econometrics." She said she was able to "push her and challenge her econometric skills," which were directly applied to her research proposal.

Output 3.1.4.: Number of conferences/seminars attended by fellows to present their research ideas

Target: 3 conferences per fellow

Results: 11 conferences attended

Patrick Olobo and **Danish Us Salam** attended the following 6 conferences: 2018 Africa Business Forum, Pacific International Development Conference, Artificial Intelligence in Economic Development, Psychology and Development Working Group, the Development and Political Economics PhD Student Conference, and the Working Group on African Political Economy.

Esau Tugume attended 4 conferences: Evidence to Action 2019: Innovations in Health Data and Measurement, CEGA's Annual Research Retreat, 2019 Berkeley Initiative for Transparency in

the Social Sciences (BITSS) Annual Meeting, and a conference at Stanford on Firms, Trade and Development. **Pallavi Prabhakar** and **Mary Namubiru** attended the Pacific Conference on International Development remotely and were not able to attend others due to COVID-19.

Through these conferences, fellows reported in their exit interviews that their insights into the development space, as well as their professional networks, greatly expanded. In turn, they were able to represent BRAC as an institution to garner support for BRAC programs and research.

3.2 New collaborations: Matchmaking Workshops and Exploratory Travel Grants

Outcome 3.2: *At the end of 2018, new partnerships between BRAC and CEGA researchers are developed and maintained after the Matching Workshop*

Output 3.2.1.: The number of presentations given by fellows during the workshops

Result: 2 presentations given by Patrick Olobo and Danish Us Salam

Research fellow **Patrick Olobo** held a presentation about a case study on *Regression Discontinuity Design* (RDD) and Impact Evaluation in the field, whereas **Danish Us Salam** presented a case study on the *Differences in Differences* (DID) research method. Patrick also shared his fellowship experience at UC Berkeley within the presentations. Unfortunately, due to limited time, there was no opportunity for Danish to speak about his experience and learnings.

Output 3.2.2.: The number of new collaborations made during the Matching Workshop

Result: 6 collaborations made

Six of the nine proposals submitted to the Research Grant Competition (RGC) were a result of new collaborations made at the Matchmaking Workshop. Additional 2 research collaborations were made from CEGA introductions. Annex 1 gives the list of all research proposals submitted to the RGS. Face to face meetings in Uganda catalyzed the collaborative process, by building trust and initiating relationships that are difficult to forge virtually and across time zones; and the momentum was taken forward online.

- **Inauguration of the BRAC-CEGA Learning Workshop** was organized after the executive training workshop on **4 July 2018**, to give an overview of the BRAC-CEGA learning collaborative, share experience and learning resulting from it. A cocktail reception attended by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister as the Chief Guest followed the inauguration. BRAC and CEGA staff, external invitees such as field specialists and government officials from relevant ministries also participated in the event.
- **Research Matchmaking Workshop** was held on **5 July 2018** to promote interaction between BRAC researchers, program leaders and CEGA affiliated researchers and to exchange the ideas for joint research projects. The workshop featured presentations from CEGA and BRAC researchers, a panel discussion on priority themes to identify future research agenda considering the needs of the programs, and networking sessions to establish new collaborations. The workshop was followed by a cocktail reception where BRAC staff and CEGA affiliates interacted and exchanged ideas on possible research areas for cooperation. A feedback form assessed how satisfied the participants were with the event. In response to “How satisfied are you with the BRAC-CEGA Workshop overall?” 39% marked “very satisfied”

and 61% marked "satisfied". One participant said, "...the networking with eminent professors, researchers, and participants from other countries was very useful."

The events were inaugurated by General Moses Ali, First Deputy Prime Minister of Uganda, held at the Fairway Hotel in Kampala. 71 participants attended the Executive Education and the Research Matchmaking Workshop. The inauguration of the BRAC-CEGA Workshop was, besides, attended by many external guests such as three professors from different universities from Uganda, six officers representing INGOs and Embassies and five government officials from relevant ministries. The national media like *Daily Monitor* and *New vision* reported on the event, and audio interviews were broadcasted on 93.3 *KFM* radio station of Kampala. Carson Christiano, Deputy Director at CEGA, Dr Zulfiqar Ali, Director of IERC, and Hasina Akhter, Country representative at BRAC Uganda were interviewed on the objectives of the event.



Participants at BRAC-CEGA workshop in Kampala

Output 3.2.3.: The number of Exploratory Travel Grants

Target: 6 Exploratory Travel Grants funded

Result: 3 Exploratory Travel Grants, 1 scoping work and 1 research project funded

Exploratory Travel Grants for CEGA researchers to visit BRAC offices and field sites are key to seeding new early-stage collaborative research. During the project implementation, four Exploratory Travel Grants were awarded to CEGA affiliated researchers based on two rounds of calls for expression of Interest (EOI) in 2018 and 2019. Although additional two Exploratory Travel Grants were awarded in the 2018 call ("Correcting an oversight: why do so many people still need eyeglasses?" and "Addressing gaps in Uganda's health care delivery infrastructure using ICT"), the funds were rescinded due to scheduling conflicts for the CEGA PI's. These funds were reallocated to support Vittorio Bassi and Esau Tugume's research project.

To encourage higher take-up and successful implementation of this opportunity in 2019, the competition was revised to include several steps to encourage collaborations. These included, 1) curating a list of high-priority topics for research collaboration from BRAC to send to CEGA affiliates, a short EOI form for CEGA affiliates and PhD students to indicate which projects they were interested in exploring; 2) Matchmaking calls with BRAC program and research staff, based on topics of interest; 3) Invitation to submit a short concept note for a travel grant if a viable project is established through the calls. In the 2019 Exploratory Travel Grant call, 9 EOIs were received, out of which 3 were selected.

The remainder of the Exploratory Travel Grant funds were used to support scoping work for the larger BRAC-CEGA project "Meet your Future: Job Search Efforts and Aspirations of Young Jobseekers" and the support was mainly for international travel. The leftover was also used to provide additional funding for a BRAC project funded under the East Africa Social Science Translation Collaborative (EASST) at CEGA.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the selected 2019 Exploratory Travel Grants have been delayed. However, below are summaries of the three selected proposals, the scoping work, and the research project that was partially funded.

Scoping - Meet Your Future: Job Search Effort and Aspirations of Young Jobseekers

PI's on Project: Livia Alfonsi (PhD Student, UC Berkeley) and Jeremy Magruder, PhD (Professor of Agriculture and Resource Economics, UC Berkeley)

Amount Awarded: USD 3,600

Place and date of visit: Uganda

Due to changes within BRAC programs, Livia Alfonsi was awarded additional travel funding to conduct scoping work for her larger BRAC-CEGA grant “Meet your Future: Job Search Efforts and Aspirations of Young Jobseekers”. She travelled to BRAC Uganda to connect with the seven new Vocational Training Centers that BRAC Uganda was partnering with as part of their BTVET (technical and vocational education and training) program. These institutions, together with the courses they are offering, are new to the research team. Visiting the centres was needed to assess the feasibility of the alumni-trainee matching and the interest of the centres in being partners in this study. The team is looking at answers to questions such as do these VTI already have an alumni program in place? If not, why? Do they have data/contacts for their alumni? Are they interested in the project/are they willing to share the contacts of the alumni and partner with BRAC for the piloting of the Alumni program? Through meetings with the management of these 7 VTI Centers and focus groups with current students, alumni and teachers, the research team tailored the scope of the “Meet Your Future” project.

PIs of the project have secured additional top-up funding from the University of California to enrich their project design and outcome. This additional funding will help them to increase their sample size and reduce the attrition rate during the endline.

The Returns to Scale: Stimulating Productivity in Firm Clusters in Uganda

PI's on Project: Vittorio Bassi (Assistant Professor of Economics, University of Southern California), Esau Tugume (Research Associate, BRAC Uganda)

Amount Awarded: USD 8,408

Place and date of visit: Uganda, TBD

In industries with economies of scale, small firm size may itself be a driver of low productivity by hindering technology adoption and mechanization. In Uganda, furniture making is one such industry that has a high potential to benefit from increased scale. This pilot intervention randomly allocates furniture making firms to be part of (i) business clubs, (ii) business clubs with the opportunity to rent machines, and, (iii) a control group. This intervention aims to overcome the small scale of operations by fostering cooperation among entrepreneurs in clusters of firms. Results from this pilot will inform decisions being made by the Ministry of Trade in Uganda, which has already provided machines to clusters of businesses.

Evaluation of Early Childhood Development Play-Based Learning Program (PB-ECD) in Uganda

PI's on Project: Michael Walker, PhD (postdoctoral researcher at CEGA) and Julius Rüschenpöhler, PhD (Postdoctoral Researcher, University of California, Berkeley)

Amount Awarded: USD 4,000

Place and date of visit: Uganda, March 2020.

This project seeks to identify opportunities to study BRAC's Early Childhood Development Play-Based Learning Program (PB-ECD). In an ongoing study, BRAC has randomly assigned samples of children to PB-ECD learning centres at sites in both Uganda and Tanzania. In each country, samples of children have also been assigned to placebo groups with standard ECD treatment. BRAC has completed its endline evaluation survey.

This grant was intended for Julius and Michael to travel to the BRAC Uganda office and PB-ECD learning centres to explore the potential of three avenues for future collaboration, together with BRAC researchers. The research team intended to better understand key technical and methodological features of the ongoing evaluation to understand the feasibility of evaluating the long-term effects of the learning centres. Importantly, the research team was funded to conduct qualitative focus-group interviews to better understand the relevance of parental aspirations for their children's educational attainment, their future occupation, social status, and income.

In March 2020, Michael visited the PB-ECD program, their beneficiaries, and had discussed with the program managers and BRAC researchers. Since the existing research project is across three countries (Uganda, Tanzania, and Bangladesh), the cross country learning will expectedly provide many new research questions. Even though Julius was not able to visit Uganda because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Michael's visit created the opportunity of understanding BRAC PlayLab project in detail, making it easy to design new research project on this when the opportunity arises.

Income timing, savings constraints, and investment takeup: evidence from Ultra-Poor Groups in Liberia

PI on Project: Alfredo Burlando, PhD (Associate Professor, Department of Economics, University of Oregon)

Amount Awarded: USD 3,300

Place and date of visit: Uganda

The project will study whether income timing influences a persons' ability to undertake future profitable investment opportunities. It will take place among beneficiaries of an Ultra-Poor Graduation Program in Liberia. In the study, beneficiaries will be randomly assigned to receive a consumption payment as a flow (over three to four months) or as a delayed lump sum. The beneficiaries' savings constraints were relaxed by savings groups, which will allow them to accumulate savings. Moreover, an investment opportunity was provided several months after the end of the consumption support, in the form of matching grants to individual savings contributions in their savings groups. Thus, the effects of delayed lump-sum payments over time will be measured. The study will provide useful evidence of the impact of income timing on household investments among the ultra-poor. Alfredo is yet to visit Liberia as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted international travels from the USA.

Integrating TB Program in Community Health Work in Refugee Hosting Districts of West Nile Region of Northern Uganda

PI on Project: Lakshmi Gopalakrishnan (PhD Student, UC Berkeley)

Amount Awarded: USD 4,000
Place and date of visit: Uganda

BRAC Uganda is implementing a project called, TB Reach. The goal of this project is to contribute to improving TB detection, linkage to treatment, and reporting in refugee-hosting districts of West Nile region, Uganda through strengthening existing community health systems. To align the operations research with the programmatic focus, the study will emphasize on understanding barriers to screening and case detection. It will also touch on treatment adherence using a mixed-method approach. The specific research questions are: (1) What are the knowledge and attitudinal barriers for case detection and treatment-seeking among the host and refugee population? (2) How do these differ between male and female population? (3) What are the socio-economic factors associated with screening and health-seeking for TB?

Lakshmi chose to visit this project with a hope to explore further research question in the context of least developed countries (LDCs) especially under BRAC's Community Health Promoters (CHW) model to reduce TB and other diseases. By understanding the root cause of stigma and its manifestations, better training programs can be developed for providers and Community Health Workers to deal with TB patients and their caregivers.

Output 3.2.4.: The number of projects resulting from exploratory grants

Target: 1+ full project resulted from exploratory travel grants

Result: 0

Livia Alfonsi's *Scoping-Meet Your Future: Job Search Effort and Aspirations of Young Jobseekers* project received an exploratory grant to for initial scoping, which supported her main work. So far, as many Exploratory Travel Grants have recently been funded and delayed due to COVID-19 pandemic, they have not yet resulted in full-scale projects. However, the PIs of the project have secured successful top-up funding from JPAL post-primary education initiatives. This will help them to ensure large enough sampling and stricter tracking during endline.

Alfredo Burlando has been providing critical input to Patrick Olobo (his IERC counterpart as PI) to improve the project design in Liberia and the experimental variations have been implemented between August 2019 and March 2020. The follow-up surveys are expected to be completed in late 2020 (or early 2021). However, an interim output will be generated by using administrative records that are maintained by graduation programme. Patrick's exposure to graduation and behavioural economics literature and his completed study in Uganda enabled him to take lead on implementation of this project in Liberia.

3.3 Generating evidence: Research Grant Competitions

Outcome 3.3: *Between 2018 and 2020, eligible evaluations are implemented and conducted after the research grants competition*

Output 3.3.1.: The number of applications submitted to grant competition (by gender and country/nationality)

Target: 10 applications

Result: 9 applications submitted

Rigorous evidence is a key product of BRAC-CEGA Learning Collaborative. The Collaborative aimed to support 4-8 new program evaluations, to generate durable evidence on the design of financial services and economic empowerment programs for women, adolescents, and migrant labourers. Eligible evaluations must be jointly led by at least one CEGA affiliate and one BRAC researcher, serving as Co-PIs. A Research Review Committee, comprised of CEGA affiliates and senior BRAC researchers, evaluated the submitted proposals to ensure their significance, rigour, and viability.

The Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Research Grant Competition was released in August 2018, following the matchmaking workshop in Uganda. The BRAC-CEGA Research Review Committee evaluated all proposals in strict accordance with the evaluation criteria outlined in the RFP. The competition was open to CEGA Affiliates, BRAC researchers, and BRAC program staff.

The BSLC received 10 research proposals. One proposal was ineligible (as it was missing a CEGA PI), and, therefore, 9 proposals were considered. **Annex 1** gives the list of all research proposals submitted with PIs by gender and country. The proposals received by BRAC employees were as follows: two proposals were submitted by female Canadian nationals, five by male Bangladeshi nationals, two by male Pakistani nationals and one by male Ugandan national. On CEGA's side, seven female and six male submitted research proposals. Out of nine research proposals that had been evaluated, five proposals targeted Uganda as the main country to conduct the research, one of the research projects was to be conducted in Sierra Leone, one in Afghanistan and another two in Tanzania.

The final selection was based on an aggregate score of four independent reviewers (2 CEGA affiliates and 2 BRAC researchers). Evaluation criteria (see **Annex 5**) were set and reviewers assessed each proposal according to the following criteria: significance and innovation, appropriateness, capacity building, methodology and viability, and funding recommendation. Reviewer's comments were shared with applicants for transparency and relevant learning. Four proposals were selected to receive funding for research in Uganda, Afghanistan and Tanzania. The leading CEGA PI on all four projects are female and two BRAC PIs are female. See details on these projects in the following section.

Output 3.3.2.: The number of impact evaluations implemented and conducted in 2018, 2019, 2020 on funded research studies

Target: 4 working papers on funded research studies (one per project), 4 follow-ups on research grant applications by BRAC-CEGA grantee (one per project)

Result: 2 follow-up reports delivered per a grantee and 4 working papers on research studies in progress

The 4 supported studies are at different stages of implementation and their final outputs were expected by late 2020, which has been delayed due to ongoing COVID crises. All four projects have completed their respective baseline data collection. However, the outputs with research findings are expected to be available in the next 1-2 years. Since all four research projects are of evaluative nature, the final outputs can only be expected after completing follow-up surveys. However, one of the projects (Project 1 below) have generated a paper with theoretical discussion and baseline statistics. Despite lack of evaluation findings, one of the other studies (Project 2 below) have already informed programme design based on lessons learned during baseline surveys. BRAC and CEGA are committed to completing these studies, and BRAC will submit the working papers (as soon as drafts are ready) and publications out of these projects with IDRC.

Project 1: Meet Your Future: Job Search Efforts and Aspirations of Young Jobseekers

BRAC Investigator: Mary Namubiru, BRAC Uganda; Munshi Sulaiman, BRAC Uganda

CEGA Investigator: Jeremy Magruder, UC Berkeley; Livia Alfonsi, UC Berkeley

Implementation period: 1 January 2019 to 31 July 2021

Amount awarded: USD 50,000

This research uses a **Randomised Control Trial (RCT)** to measure the impacts of career-coaching and job search assistance to influence trainees' expectations and labour market trajectories. The study sample included the National Certificate's year one students from 5 Vocational Institutes (VTIs): Nile VTI in Jinja, Pioneer Technical Institute in Iganga, Jinja VTI in Jinja, Bbira VTI in Wakiso, and Lady Valeria Vocational and Business school in Wakiso. The sample size was 1,180 students: 80 BRAC trainees and 1,100 non-BRAC trainees enrolled in 5 VTIs. The intervention consists of two treatments: a pure information treatment (T1) and a career-coaching treatment (T2). The research is to inform the contribution of career-coaching to economic outcomes and influencing the expectations and labour market trajectories of 1,100 disadvantaged youth enrolled in VTIs. It will inform the effectiveness of existing approaches in youth employment and improvements for future drives.



Trainees from TVET institute of MYF project.

The research activities of the project are under the midline phase. The baseline survey and related data cleaning and analysis have been completed. The relevant IRB approvals were secured. Data cleaning and analysis connected with the midline survey from the end of 2019 is currently ongoing as well as alumni-tracking phone survey. A small survey will be conducted to track the students not interviewed in the midline survey and the baseline and midline survey for the new VTIs will be conducted.

The challenges faced were the attrition and delays caused by the students being sent away from school to secure fees or by the students who completed the exams and went home for holidays or by the incorrect contact information. Notwithstanding the challenges, the researchers have completed a working paper on their theoretical underpinnings of their experiment. Presentations have also been made of the baseline results.

Project 2: Getting Girls Back into School: The Returns to Alternative Education in Tanzania

BRAC Investigator: SK Tariquzzaman, BRAC Tanzania

CEGA Investigator: Ketki Sheth, UC Merced

Implementation period: 3 January 2019 to 31 December 2021

Amount awarded: USD 64,800

This experimental (RCT) study plans to evaluate the impact of the "Education, Empowerment and Life-skills for Adolescent Girls and Young Children (EELAY)" project being implemented in Tanzania from 2018 to 2021. The target population is 700 out-of-school girls ages 15 to 19. The

research sample covered 25 EELAY centres, clustered by streets with one treatment and one control arm. The research will assess the contribution of the tutoring course within the EELAY program to reintegrate 300 out-of-school girls into the mainstream educational system and accelerate their learning required to earn a secondary degree and enroll in tertiary education. It will inform on the gaps, weaknesses and strengths needed for future improvements of the project.

The randomization of girls in treatment and control and two rounds of surveys so far have been completed after securing the relevant approvals from COSTECH. Implementation of the intervention and associated monitoring of compliance being done by the EELAY team. The study registration is available at <https://www.socialscienceregistry.org/trials/3942>.

Tragically, BRAC PI SK Tariquzzaman passed away during the implementation of the project, which resulted in a disruption of communication. The CEGA researcher (Ketki Sheth) in conversation with BRAC decided to continue with Julietha Komba as her counterpart for this project. On the implementation, a challenge has been the intention to participate. During rolling out of the baseline survey, the researchers identified that the intention to participate of girls in the intervention could be a bigger challenge than what the EELAY team was envisaging. This prompted the research team to work with EELAY in increasing the selection of eligible girls.¹ Subsequently, the administrative records indicate that the intervention uptake has been around 50%, compared to 80% that EELAY was assuming. The project, therefore, made a direct (and somewhat unintended) contribution to the programme in reaching its target.

Project 3: Evaluating peer-to-peer mentorship and human capital development among adolescent girls in Afghanistan

BRAC Investigator: Abdul Alim, BRAC Afghanistan

CEGA Investigator: Elizabeth Lyons, UC San Diego

Implementation period: 31 January 2019 to 31 March 2022

Amount awarded: USD 65,000

The objective of this RCT is to evaluate the impact of the “Community Based Education for Marginalised Girls” program being implemented within 300 government schools around 9 provinces of Afghanistan (Kabul, Kapisa, Parwan, Balkh Samangan, Jawzjan, Baghlan, Herat and Nangarhar). The target population are the girls enrolled in government schools, grades 6 and 8 and ages 12 to 15. The research sample was covering 250 mentors and 750 mentees from 50 schools that received the intervention and 25 mentors and 375 mentees from schools without intervention. This research will inform how effective the peer-to-peer mentorship was in improving attendance, learning and school performance, and mental health of around 30,000 girls, grades 6 and 8, across 300 government schools. These research findings will contribute to advocating the BRAC informal education model to scale and to be mainstreamed into the national education system.

Completed activities include the students, teachers, and households’ interviews, cleaning and preliminary analysis of the mentor and mentee interviews. The relevant IRB approvals were secured. Translation of the qualitative interview questions into English and the analysis of quantitative interview questions are currently ongoing.

¹ The increase of baseline sample was to mitigate risk of low uptake. Had the uptake been as high as EELAY anticipated, the study would have used a larger ratio of the sample in control group.

The insecurity during data collection at schools is a common challenge of doing research in the project area. The need to organise enumerators' training in four different provinces delayed the baseline survey. Even the restriction of movement by female interviewers was a challenge as well as finding a good quality translator for the qualitative data.

Project 4: Take up and Impact of Digital Repayment in Microfinance in Uganda

BRAC Investigator: Denise Ferris, BRAC Uganda

CEGA Investigators: Fred Finan, UC Berkeley; Isabelle Cohen, UC Berkeley

Implementation period: 31 January 2019 to 31 March 2022

Amount awarded: USD 64,901

The experimental study aims to evaluate the impact of the digital repayment on BRAC's Microfinance program. The target beneficiaries were BRAC Uganda's microfinance groups. The research sample was randomised at the group level and groups were allocated into cash repayment (C), individual decisions on take-up (T1), and digital repayment (T2). The research will assess and explore the feasibility of the digital loan disbursement and repayment to the uptake by 2,000 microfinance users, portfolio, operational costs, quality of service, and the integrity of the microfinance joint liability model. This will contribute BRAC microfinance program which recently was transformed into a bank to roll out the idea of the digital loan disbursement and repayment in Uganda.

The research team received an additional USD 45,000.00 from CEGA's Digital Credit Observatory (DCO). Therefore, some of the initial BRAC-CEGA endline funds has been used to expand the research sample and covering the costs associated with respondents playing three-experimental games at baseline. The baseline is ongoing as well as the analysis of the experimental game data. BRAC Microfinance is expected to purchase and install the integration software in Q2 of 2020, after which the research team can start the rollout of the intervention. The relevant IRB approvals were secured.

The challenges faced were organizational delays in adapting to the core banking system due to the need to use a third-party integration software, which led to a twelve-month delay in research implementation.

3.4. Improving research design: BRAC Research Review Committee

Outcome 3.4: *Between 2018 and 2021, BRAC and CEGA researchers establish review protocols to ensure scientific quality and strengthen the credibility of BRAC research projects*

Output 3.4.1.: A Research Review Committee is established

Result: Research Review Committee put in place from October 2018

Collaborations with CEGA faculty and other top academics have been key to ensure the quality of BRAC's research. However, projects are often undertaken independently by BRAC researchers, without establishing these collaborations. Systematically improving the quality of outputs from these "in-house" projects is critical. CEGA supported BRAC in establishing a Research Review Committee (RRC) and setting review protocols that can be used to ensure

scientific quality and strengthen the credibility of BRAC research projects that are not supported by the Collaborative.

The BRAC RRC has been put in place in October 2018 which has subsequently been further formalised with a ToR for the committee members (Annex 2: The terms of reference (ToR) of the Research Review Committee). The RRC is comprised of Prof. Shyamal Chowdhury (University of Sydney), Prof. Kevin McKague (Cape Breton University), Dr Ketki Sheth (University of California), Dr Niklas Buehren (the World Bank), Prof. Selim Gulesci (Bocconi University) and Imran Matin (BRAC University). The committee also includes two senior staff from BRAC – Kazi Eliza Islam from BRAC International and Scott McMillan from BRAC USA.

The objectives of the RRC as they are in the ToR are, among others, to establish and maintain a system of oversight to maximise the quality of research and minimise its risks, review and approve all research projects for scientific merit and institutional appropriateness, advise BRAC International on the relative priority of approved research projects, ensure that all research conducted adheres to the applicable ethical standards, promote visibility and transparency of research activity within BRAC and the wider community, offer an independent analysis of research, and provide appropriate advice on research matters.

The RRC meets annually and if required through video conference, for reviewing the overall performance of IERC. The review of new research proposals or papers is done continuously and independently by two members, one of each representing academics and practitioners.

Output 3.4.2.: New existing review protocols to ensure scientific quality (Review protocols will be established by the Scientific Research Review Committee)

Result: Research Grant Competition Scorecard and the application form for research proposal submission

For the Research Grant Competition, a BRAC-CEGA Research Grant Competition Scorecard and the application form for research proposal submission were developed. The scorecard and the proposal format are now being used even to assess other new projects' assessment and planning. The main contents of the scorecard are the review process, instructions and criteria, and scoring grant chart. The RRC will adapt and update the scorecards and proposal formats to use for any new works and different project purposes.

3.5. Enabling BRAC program managers to use evidence: Executive education

Outcome 3.5: *Between 2018 and 2021, BRAC's Management staff improve their skills in research and evaluation methodologies*

Output 3.5.1.: Short-term Executive Education for BRAC Program managers is held to improve Program Managers knowledge of impact evaluations and use of evidence

Target: At least a 10% increase in Program Manager knowledge, 100 % of evaluations are fed into BRAC programs

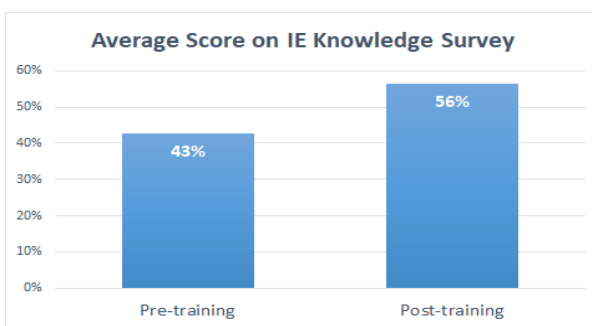
Result: The knowledge of program managers increased by 13pp



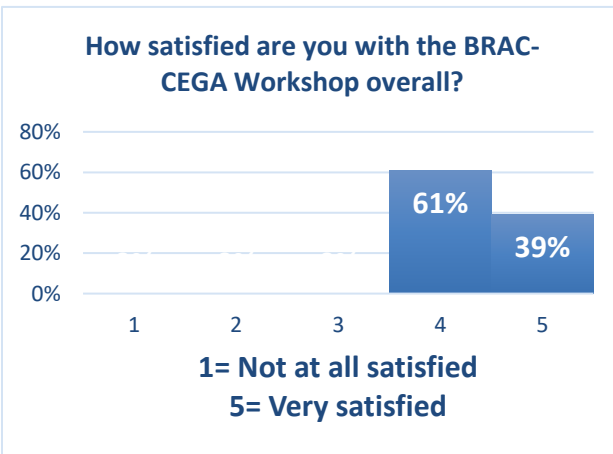
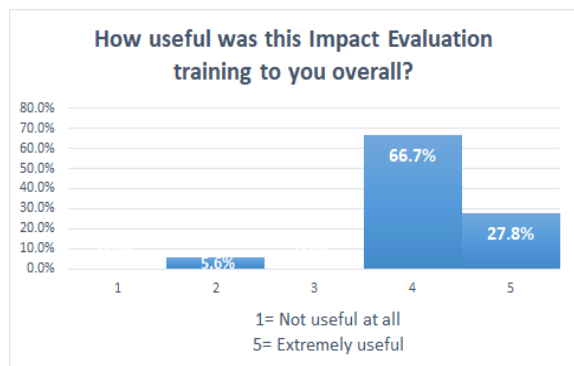
Executive training on impact evaluation

Executive Education was the BRAC-CEGA executive training workshop, organized from **3 to 4 July 2018** by CEGA affiliates and BRAC-CEGA fellows. Leaders and BRAC program staff were able to learn more about generation and use of high-quality evidence. The workshop facilitated a dialogue between BRAC researchers and BRAC leaders/program staff to align priorities. A pre-training and post-training Impact Evaluation (IE) Knowledge survey was used

to measure knowledge gained. The average score on the IE survey was 43% pre-training and 56% post-training, representing a 13 percentage point increase in average score. After the training, a survey for general feedback was administered and a majority of comments from participants were positive. In response to “How useful was this Impact Evaluation training to you overall?” with 5 being extremely useful and 1 being not useful at all, 27.8% marked “extremely useful”, 66.7% marked “useful” and 5.6% marked not useful. Some key takeaways from the participant feedback form are: 1) Extend the length of the training, 2) Increase the time allotment for case studies and practical examples, and 3) Add guided practice using statistical software.



The graph below (left) displays the participants’ skill level on Impact Evaluation before the training and their understanding after the training. In addition, a survey was conducted after the Impact Evaluation Training Workshop to learn about the participant’s feedback on the Impact Evaluation Training Workshop². The results of a survey are provided in a graph on the right.



² BRAC-CEGA IE Training Feedback: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1UGjguv-Cg83F1bVgfi6qZ_Qu2hC6VEYjU1ki1UFxmyg/edit?ts=5b635d35

3.6. Enhancing analytical skills: Online Course in Data Analysis and Field Methods

Outcome 3.6: *At the end of 2019, BRAC field supervisors and data analysts improve their analytical skills*

Output 3.6.1.: The number of users within BRAC (by gender, country); Number of users within BRAC University (by gender, country), Number of course completions, Scores on Course

Target: At least 20 new users/course completions

Result: 14 users 21 certificates on two-course completions

Several online courses from different websites and Universities have been shortlisted for BRAC IERC researchers and field staff to improve their research and data analysis skills. Among the selected courses, the online course *Applied Impact Evaluation*³ by Edx and the University of California Berkeley and *Result-based Project Management: Monitoring and Evaluation*⁴ were decided for IERC staff for conceptual and practical understanding on impact evaluation and data analysis. Professor Alexandra Orsola-Vidal from the University of San Francisco and CEGA Advisor Dr Munshi Sulaiman were set as administrators to follow on the progress of the completion of the course by BRAC staff.



RBPM: M&E certificate from Wits University

Seven Field Supervisors from IERC, Uganda accomplished the course on *M&E: Result-based Project* Management by the University of Witwatersrand (7 female). The course's minimum pass marks were 50%. Also, the online course *Applied Impact Evaluation* was completed by 14 IERC research staff. Seven researchers (4 female) and seven Field Supervisors (5 female) completed the course. The minimum passing mark for this Evaluation course was 65%. All 14 staff have received their certificates. These courses have substantially increased the confidence and capacity of the research staff on research concepts and data analysis skills.

CEGA certificate on applied impact evaluation

³ https://edge.edx.org/courses/BerkeleyX/CEGA101AIE/2015_2016/about

⁴ <https://www.edx.org/course/results-based-project-management-monitoring-and-ev>

3.7. Diffuse research: Online Platform

Outcome 3.7: *Between 2018 and 2021, the content developed for an IERC website galvanizes linkages among researchers, implementers and policymakers across the African region and beyond*

Output 3.7.1.: Website launched

Target: Website includes 4 policy briefs (one per project) 4 blog posts (one per project), online project descriptions (one per project)

Result: Project descriptions are available within the BRAC-CEGA Learning Collaborative sub-page within CEGA website and the CEGA blog. Policy briefs will be produced once studies are finalised

In the performance period, the BCLC wrote up several research descriptions on the CEGA website (<https://cega.berkeley.edu/our-research/?query=§or=all&investigators=all&themes=all&country=all&initiatives=brac-cega-learning-collaborative>). Apart from BRAC and CEGA website, a dedicated website (<https://bigd.bracu.ac.bd/ierc/about/>) for disseminating research outputs of BRAC International is leveraged with BIGD website. It contains the information on studies, publications, partners, IERC staff, research reports, policy briefs and a link to the BRAC Research Repository. The purpose of this online platform was to merge with centralised research entity of BRAC at BIGD which now coordinates the research works at BRAC International, BRAC University, and BRAC Bangladesh. Dissemination of BRAC's research knowledge through a dedicated website, among other media, is a way to communicate and influence related stakeholders on the international development agenda.

Moreover, the BRAC Research Repository (<https://bracresearch.net/aboutus.php>) website compiles all research reports from BRAC International countries. However, since it includes both published and unpublished and reviewed and not-reviewed research reports, it allows full access only for BRAC researchers and BRAC staff and limited access for external users.

Output 3.7.2.: Number of users/sessions, number of subscribers

Result: The visitors and the subscribers couldn't be tracked since the website doesn't have the tracking mechanism.

Unfortunately, for now, the websites do not have the visitors' trackers and so could not be tracked the visitors.

4. OVERALL ASSESSMENT and RECOMMENDATIONS

Usefulness in achieving the Project's objectives through any partnerships with Canadian or other researchers, with Canadian or other capacity or policy-oriented organizations, and with other donors

- **Collaboration with CEGA**

The collaboration with CEGA proved essential in building capacity for rigorous evaluation of BRAC livelihood and employment programs for women, youth and other vulnerable groups across Sub-Saharan Africa. During the scaling-up, CEGA was a valuable partner for designing, implementing and assessing the effectiveness of networking and matchmaking workshops and events, coordinating fellowships for IERC staff within the US Berkeley, administering competitive calls for research grants and exploratory travel grants as well as disseminating BRAC learning, research and project results via website and blog. The collaboration, through all of the activities, helped to share BRAC learnings with a wide research and development community, promoted the culture of evidence-based programming within BRAC, and built up IERC capacity in impact evaluation, especially through networking with CEGA researchers.

- **Collaboration with BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD)**

Being encouraged with this project's facilitation, IERC is now technically affiliated with BIGD and thus BIGD's technical reporting line is linked with the Executive Director of BIGD. This has greatly increased the credibility and the status of independence research entity of IERC. BIGD at BRAC University is a centre of policy research and academic excellence, which now provides IERC with technical supervision, capacity support, and facilitation any collaboration with other BRAC's research entities. IERC and BIGD now share a sub-page for IERC to centralize the dissemination of BRAC learning and diffusion of publications and research projects. The two entities have started some collaborative research projects which will increase the technical and operational quality of the research and their impacts at policy and advocacy level.

- **Other donors and partners**

The members of the BRAC Research Review Committee (RRC) are from the World Bank (Dr Niklas Buehren), Bocconi University (Selim Gulesci), and Cape Breton University (Prof. Kevin McKague), among others (UC Berkeley, BRAC University). These direct engagement and collaboration have increased the technical capacity and credibility of IERC to other relevant stakeholders.

The PIs of the three of the research grants have secured new top-up research projects from other donors during this project period. Livia Alfonsi and Mary Namiburo for their Meet Your Future project have been awarded additional funding by Post Primary Education Initiative of JPAL. Similarly, Denise Ferris and Isabela for their Digital Mobile Money project have secured additional funding from Digital Credit Observatory (DCO) and CEGA. These collaborations will further strengthen the network and research capacity of BRAC International.

- **Contributions to development by the project**

The BCLC has made much progress towards development. The first contribution is changing BRAC structures to strengthen future research generation. The Research Review Committee improved existing protocols for research projects and impact evaluation as well as reviewing all research papers produced within the IERC. Therefore, this committee is a legacy, to guide on ethical principles in research, oversee present and advise on future endeavours, nurture existing and make new connections with researchers, donors and development experts around the world and promote visibility, transparency and uptake of research-based evidence.

Secondly, the project greatly invested in the research capacity of global south scholars. There is a gap in the capacities research outputs of global south scholars as compared to global north researchers, and this project worked towards closing that gap through its unique collaborative model that coupled deep investment in individuals with broad networks. IERC employees had an opportunity to boost up their knowledge and develop analytical skills essential for rigorous impact evaluations through the fellowship at the UC Berkeley, while the rest levelled-up their applied impact evaluation skills t by enrolling in the online course. BRAC program managers improved their knowledge and uptake of research results through executive workshops. An example of how building the research capacity of BRAC employees continued beyond the fellowship is that Patrick Olobo, after completing the fellowship, went on to conduct a quasi-experimental evaluation of a graduation pilot by BRAC in Uganda in 2019. He has also designed new research on “design optimization” of the model by incorporating behavioural aspects in a graduation program in Liberia. More recently, he is working with a team of researchers at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to design an RCT for a “disability-inclusive graduation” model in Uganda to be implemented in collaboration with BRAC Uganda, Handicap International and NUWODU (National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda).

Thirdly, many research collaborations have taken root between BRAC and CEGA, seeded by both the exploratory grants as well as research grants. This will contribute to informing BRAC’s decisions on interventions, including the ones on livelihood and employment of youth, women and other vulnerable groups as well as guide future improvements. It will also contribute to BRAC’s position as a knowledge-generating institute that can provide valuable lessons to policymakers in East Africa and beyond.

What would you do differently as a result of this experience, and what general and useful lessons can be derived for improving future projects?

- Based on the high interest and number of submissions for the research grant competitions, there was a real need for more funds in this area. Many proposals were not funded, and also, some principal investigators were short on money for some activities forcing them to improvise.
- Involving implementing organizations beyond BRAC in future would be the natural course for greater utilization of the skills acquired by the research staff. In future, we envision that IERC researchers trained from CEGA could conduct research with other NGOs and make an effort to form a learning partnership with them and with government initiatives.

- BRAC went through several shifts in personnel at the beginning of the project, which made the project difficult to coordinate in years 1 and 2.
- BRAC and CEGA would have benefitted from more face-to-face meetings to plan and coordinate the project activities.

Briefly provide your views on the value and importance of the project relative to the investment of time, effort, and funding.

The Project was of great importance and essential for scaling-up the existing collaborations as well as for developing new partnerships. It substantially expanded networking and increased the capacity of the IERC in terms of new skills and knowledge and strengthened fundraising capacity of both, IERC and BRAC. BRAC programs have been benefited from the research learning many of which will still come to publish. CEGA, in turn, benefitted from this extremely helpful collaboration with BRAC, which provided many research opportunities to students and faculty. The project has provided a number of collaboration among the interacting partners and has even created opportunities for new projects.

Include any recommendations that you would like to make to IDRC. Candid observations about the overall experience with the project are encouraged. However, any sensitive or confidential information should be addressed through a direct exchange with the program officer and documented and filed separately.

This has been a great experience for all individuals from BRAC and CEGA who have been involved in the project implementation. As such, we do not have any recommendation based on the interactions and supports received from IDRC during the project experience.

Annex 1: The list of research projects thought research grant competition

SL	Title	Duration	Country	PIs, Gender, Country	Fund
1	Meet Your Future: Job Search Efforts and Aspirations of Young Jobseekers	1 Jan 2019 to 31 Jul 2021	Uganda	Mary Namubiru (F, Uganda) Livia Alfonsi (F, USA)	YES, USD 50,000
2	Take-up and Impact of Digital Repayment in Microfinance	31 Jan 2019 to 31 Mar 2022	Uganda	Denise Ferris (F, Uganda) Isabelle Cohen (F, USA)	YES, USD 64,901
3	Evaluating peer-to-peer mentorship and human capital development among adolescent girls in Afghanistan	31 Mar 2019 to 31 Mar 2022	Afghanistan	Md. Abdul Alim (M, Afghanistan) Elizabeth Lyons (F, USA)	YES, USD 65,000
4	Getting Girls Back into School: The Returns to Alternative Education	1 Jan 2019 to 31 Dec 2021	Tanzania	SK Tariquzzaman (M, Tanzania) Ketki Sheth (F, USA)	YES, USD 64,800
5	Empowering Adolescent Girls to Access Effective Contraceptives	5 Jan 2019 to 11 Jan 2020	Uganda	Denise Ferris (F, Uganda) Simone Schaner (F, USA) Jessica Leight (F, USA)	NO
6	The Interaction of Microfinance Loans and Business Skills Training: Selection and Treatment Effects	1 Jan 2019 to 1 Jan 2020	Sierra Leone	Ethan Ligon (M, USA), Carly Trachtman (F, USA), James Ward Khakshi (M, Sierra Leone)	NO
7	Walking the Talk: Using a Phonics Curriculum to Nudge Early Grade English Skills	2 Jan 2019 to 6 Jan 2020	Uganda	Danish Us Salam (M, Uganda)	NO
8	Nudging Mental Health and Preferences: Experimental Evidence of a Sports-Based Curriculum Targeting Adolescent Girls	2 Jan 2019 to 6 Jan 2020	Uganda	Danish Us Salam (M, Uganda)	NO
9	Re-evaluating ELA: Capabilities and Spillovers	12 Jan 2018 to 12 Jan 2020	Tanzania	Sk. Tariquzzaman (M, Tanzania) Denise Ferris (F, Uganda)	NO

Annex 2: ToR of the Research Review Committee (RRC)

Research Review Committee Independent Evaluation and Research Cell (IERC), BRAC International

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To function as a group of practitioners and researchers to guide IERC on research and outputs particularly in areas of innovation, quality, risk and integration with BRAC International's programmes.
- 1.2 To act as a scientific advisory committee and review of all research that involves IERC's mandate.
- 1.3 To provide peer oversight and expert advice to enable IERC to achieve organizational goals of supporting and promoting high-quality research. The Committee will have an advisory role on ways of encouraging more practice-oriented research, especially on BRAC International's priority sectors.
- 1.4 To identify areas of potential growth in high-quality research and to promote mechanisms to stimulate appropriate research programmes in such areas.
- 1.5 To oversee and promote the development and implementation of the links between IERC and BRAC University and Programme Development, Resource Mobilization and Learning (PRL) unit of BRAC.
- 1.6 To provide a conduit for the accountability of IERC researchers to BRAC International via BIGD.
- 1.7 To establish a subcommittee (if necessary) to review research applications.

2. Objective

- 2.1 To establish and maintain a system of oversight that maximizes the quality of research and minimizes its risks.
- 2.2 To review and approve all research project for scientific merit and institutional appropriateness.
- 2.3 To advise BRAC International on the relative priority of approved research projects.
- 2.4 To ensure that all research conducted adheres to a) the ethical standards according to the local ethics committees such as Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) and Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH).
- 2.5 To promote visibility and transparency of research activity within BRAC and the wider community.
- 2.6 To offer an independent analysis of research where proposer or management support for a proposal conflict.
- 2.7 To provide advice to the organisation on research matters with appropriate consultation with colleagues, researchers and staff when appropriate.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 A research project is defined as any scientific study (either experimental or observational). A formal committee review is required for all research projects when applying for research grants. Otherwise, “operational research” can be reviewed outside the committee on delegated authority.
- 3.2 All research, irrespective of funding status, is included under these Terms of Reference
- 3.3 “Operational research” under these Terms of Reference is defined as any research project that does not involve research grant mobilization and is conducted as part of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) budget of BRAC’s programme.

4. Chairperson

- 4.1 The Chair shall be the Executive Director of BRAC Institute of Governance and Development, BRAC University.

5. Membership

- 5.1 There shall be at least 8 members in addition to the Chair and a Convener. Each member will be appointed for three years with reappointment for a subsequent term at the direction of the Chair.
 - The RRC Chair
 - A convener, one of the two Regional Research Leads for BRAC International
 - At least 5 academics with a mix of quantitative and qualitative research expertise.
 - At least 3 practitioners from BRAC programme

6. Appointment Process

- 6.1 Nominations will be sought from BRAC programmes and affiliates, and the appointment will be made by the RRC Chair for a 3-year term.

7. Secretariat

- 7.1 Secretariat support will be provided by the IERC team in Uganda.
- 7.2 Preparation and presentation of papers, agendas and minutes will follow standard communication formats.

8. Procedure

- 8.1 The RRC will meet annually and as required through video conference for reviewing the overall performance of IERC.
- 8.2 A quorum will be five members with at least two representing BRAC programmes.
- 8.3 Members will attend meetings having read the associated papers and research matters as appropriate.

- 8.4 Decisions will be made on a consensus basis.
- 8.5 Review of new research proposals or papers will be done independently by two members, one of each representing academics and practitioners. A third member will be assigned by the Chair for review in case of divergence in the recommendation of the two initial reviewers.
- 8.6 Submissions to RRC will be made through Regional Research Lead of IERC, who would seek advice from the Chair for appropriate reviewers.

9. Accountability

- 9.1 Perform functions in good faith, honestly and impartially and avoid situations which may compromise the integrity of, or external confidence in, the RRC processes.
- 9.2 Feedback on scientific review and the decision to support or decline an application will be provided to the applicant within five working days of the RRC meeting.
- 9.3 The Committee will seek advice related to research issues (e.g. legal, scientific) as appropriate.

10. Activities

- 10.1 The Committee will review all research projects submitted to it for scientific merit and rigor and establish procedures for clearing applications that are subsequently submitted to research bid or for publications. Decisions to support applications need, at a minimum, to demonstrate the following characteristics:
 - Evidence of rigor (this can be shown through previous external scientific review):
 - Consistent with BRAC International's policies, goals and objectives:
 - Complies with all current regulations, standards, guidelines and ethical approval processes.
- 10.2 The Committee will review and respond to issues and concerns brought to its attention, regarding research being proposed or research outputs (such reports or working papers) to BRAC International through an appropriate committee member.
- 10.3 The Committee will consider any appeal when management approval for research has been declined and make a recommendation for action.
- 10.4 The Committee will seek outside-advice related to research issues (e.g. legal, scientific) as appropriate.
- 10.5 The Committee will advise management on declared Conflict of Interest related to research projects undertaken within IERC.

11. Dual Interest

- 11.1 If a member of the committee has an interest in any proposal, they shall declare a dual interest and withdraw (if deemed appropriate by the Committee), from the discussion and decision making for that particular research project or projects.

Annex 3: Table – Project outcomes and outputs overview

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR RIGOROUS RESEARCH	
1.1. CREATING LEADERSHIP: THE BRAC-CEGA Research Fellowship	
Outcome: Between 2018 and 2020, BRAC researchers (selected fellows) increase their capacity to design and implement impact evaluations, and develop important professional skills and professional development	
1.1.1. Number of high-quality presentations at seminars/conferences	Target: 2 high-quality presentations per fellow Result: 21 presentations held by 5 fellow
1.1.2. Number of fellows completing all fellowship requirements (submitting a research proposal, meetings with mentors and other faculty, coursework, presentations)	Target: 2 per year Result: 3 completed (male) and 2 finalising remotely (females) by June 2020 - delay due to COVID-19
1.1.3. Percentage increase in fellows' knowledge of rigorous research methods	Target: at least a 10% increase in fellows' knowledge Result: Patrick Olobo's score increased by 2 percentage points (from 62% to 64%), Danish Us Salam's score dropped by 5 percentage points (from 74% to 69 %), Esau Tugume's score increased by 19.3 percentage points, Mary Namubiru's and Pallavi Prabhakar's scores TBA - delay due to COVID-19
1.1.4. Number of conferences/seminars attended by fellows to present their research ideas	Target: 3 per fellow Result: 11 conferences attended, others postponed due to COVID-19
1.2. PROMOTING NEW COLLABORATIONS: Matchmaking Workshops and Exploratory Travel Grants	
Outcome: At the end of 2018, new partnerships between BRAC and CEGA researchers are developed and maintained after the Matching Workshop	
1.2.1. Number of presentations given by fellows during the workshop	Result: 2 presentations given by fellows Patric Olobo and Danish Us Salam
1.2.2. Number of new collaborations made during the Matching Workshop	Result: 6 of the 9 proposals submitted to the Research Grant Competition were a result of new collaborations made at the Matchmaking Workshop. An additional 2 research collaborations were made from CEGA introductions
1.2.3. Number of exploratory travel grants funded	Target: 6 exploratory travel grants funded Result: 5 exploratory travel grants was funded.
1.2.4. Number of projects resulting from exploratory grants	Target: 1+ full project resulted from exploratory travel grants Result: most of the Exploratory Travel Grant visits were postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic and the PIs are yet to explore possibilities for future collaborations. However, the PIs of the <i>Scoping-Meet Your Future: Job Search Effort and Aspirations of</i>

	<p>Young Jobseekers project have secured additional top-up funding from the University of California to enrich their project design and outcome.</p>
<p>1.3. GENERATING EVIDENCE: RESEARCH GRANT COMPETITIONS</p>	
<p>Outcome: Between 2018 and 2020, eligible evaluations are implemented and conducted after the research grants competition</p>	
<p>1.3.1. The number of applications submitted to grant competition (by gender and country/nationality)</p>	<p>Target: 4-8 proposals submitted Result: 10 research proposals were submitted, but one was ineligible (as it was missing a CEGA PI), and, therefore, 9 were considered for evaluation; the four projects are led by female Principle Investigators (PIs) from CEGA affiliates with two (out of four) BRAC PIs who are female</p>
<p>1.3.2. The number of impact evaluations implemented & conducted in 2018, 2019, 2020 on funded research studies</p>	<p>Target: 4 working papers on funded research studies (one per project) 4 follow-on research grant applications by BRAC-CEGA grantee (one per project) Result: 2 follow-up reports per project delivered and 4 working papers on research studies in progress</p>
<p>1.4. IMPROVING RESEARCH DESIGN: BRAC Research Review Committee</p>	
<p>Outcome: Between 2018 and 2021, BRAC and CEGA researchers establish review protocols to ensure scientific quality and strengthen the credibility of BRAC research projects</p>	
<p>1.4.1. A research review committee is established</p>	<p>Result: Research Review Committee (RRC) put in place from October 2018, RRC Terms of Reference developed. Members: Prof. Shyamal Chowdhury (University of Sydney), Prof. Kevin McKague (Cape Breton University), Dr Ketki Sheth (University of California), Dr Niklas Buehren (the World Bank), Prof. Selim Gulesci (Bocconi University) and Imran Matin (BRAC University)</p>
<p>1.4.2. New existing review protocols to ensure scientific quality (Review protocols will be established by the Scientific Research Review Committee).</p>	<p>Target: e.g. a format for research proposals Result: Research Grant Competition Scorecard and the application form for research proposal submission developed</p>
<p>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: INSTITUTIONALISE THE USE OF EVIDENCE FOR PROGRAM DELIVERY</p>	
<p>2.1. ENABLING BRAC PROGRAM MANAGERS TO USE EVIDENCE: Executive Education</p>	
<p>Outcome: Between 2018 and 2020, BRAC's Management staff improve their skills in research and evaluation methodologies</p>	
<p>Short-term Executive Education for BRAC Program managers is held to improve Program Managers knowledge of impact evaluations and use of evidence</p>	<p>Target: at least a 10% increase in Program Manager knowledge, 100 % of evaluations are fed into BRAC program Result: the knowledge of program managers increased by 13 percentage points and knowledge</p>

	management initiatives have been undertaken to increase the research uptake
2.2. ENHANCING ANALYTICAL SKILLS; Online course in Data Analysis and Field Methods	
Outcome: At the end of 2019, BRAC field supervisors and data analysts improve their analytical skills	
Number of users within BRAC (by gender, country); Number of users within BRAC University (by gender, country), Number of course completions, Scores on Course	Target: At least 21 new users/course completions Result: 7 field supervisors from IERC, Uganda accomplished the course on <i>M&E: Result-based Project Management</i> by the University of Witwatersrand (5 female). The online course <i>Applied Impact Evaluation</i> was finished by 7 IERC researchers (4 female) and 7 IERC Field Supervisors (5 female).
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: ENHANCING CAPACITY TO DISSEMINATE RESEARCH	
3.1. DIFFUSING RESEARCH: Online Platform	
Outcome: Between 2018 and 2021, the content developed for an IERC website galvanises linkages among researchers, implementers and policymakers across the African region and beyond	
3.1.1. Website launched	Target: Website includes 4 policy briefs (one per project) 4 blog posts (one per project) online project descriptions (one per project) Result: the BCLC wrote up several projects and research descriptions on the CEGA website and the CEGA blog . Policy briefs will be produced upon finalisation of Research Grant studies
3.1.2. Number of users/sessions, number of subscribers	Result: The website doesn't have the visitors' trackers and so couldn't be tracked the visitors so far

Annex 4: Two projects conceptualized by Danish Us Salam and Patrick Olobo

Danish’s project, “Using Sports to Nudge Psychological Wellbeing in Adolescent Girls in Uganda” tests whether adding a physical education component to BRAC’s Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) Clubs will improve mental health outcomes. Combining the existing ELA model with a sports and games curriculum allows testing whether the complementarity of these programs impacts psychological well-being among ELA club members. The design of the project will also inform program managers on whether it’s a sports curriculum or effective monitoring of existing sports activities (compliance/adherence) which makes the difference. The long-term goal of this project is to introduce formal and structured sports and games curriculum into the existing Uganda ELA club curriculum by embedding sports training and facilitation into existing club mentor training. Lessons learned from this project can begin to inform whether and how BRAC can adopt such an intervention: first at scale in ELA Uganda, and then into BRAC ELA Clubs in other countries.

Patrick’s project “The Unemployment Problem and the Informal Economy: Can Bridging Information Gaps increase Labor Market Engagement” focuses on providing a novel intervention to address information gaps on youth in Uganda. Improving employment and socio-economic outcomes among youth is one of BRAC’s key focus areas. This study intends to provide youth foundational training in business skills and management and bridging information asymmetries that may exist in their understanding of enterprises. It proposes to use a combination of information and communications technologies (ICT) to bridge informational asymmetries of enterprise entry costs, profit margins, market prices to potentially improve participation rates and agricultural productivity. The objective is to provide youth with enterprise-specific information that will enable them to have more constructive engagements in agriculture. This study will contribute to understanding whether information packaging and delivery, as a low-cost, low maintenance intervention, could indeed be a barrier/facilitator to agricultural participation rates and how BRAC can exploit this to structure its agriculture programs.

Annex 5: Grant Competition Evaluation Criteria (scorecard)

See file attachment.



Annex 5 - Research
Grant Competition Ev