

AcPrac Case Study

# The Art and Practice of Academic-Practitioner Collaboration: Lessons from Bangladesh

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FOR SOCIAL AND  
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## About AFSEE

[The Atlantic Fellows for Social and Economic Equity \(AFSEE\)](#) at the LSE International Inequalities Institute is an innovative fellowship programme that is funded through a landmark grant from Atlantic Philanthropies.

AFSEE aims to build a community of changemakers whose work addresses social and economic inequalities across the globe, while supporting them in developing imaginative approaches to their work. Adopting an ethos of collective action, the programme encourages collaborations between a range of stakeholders, including academics, activists, artists, development practitioners, and policymakers.

## About the AcPrac Project

This case study is published as part of the '[Exploring the Potential of Academic-Practitioner Collaborations for Social Change \(AcPrac\)](#)' project. The AcPrac project has two key objectives: 1) to contribute to AFSEE's theory of change by exploring the conditions that are conducive to developing generative processes of knowledge exchange between academics and practitioners; and 2) to examine the methodological and epistemological challenges of researching inequalities, and particularly how the latter might be reproduced through the research process itself.

The project also makes theoretical contributions by reflecting on the drivers behind the collaborations that different stakeholders pursue and it explores the potential of collaborative research, as a methodology, in challenging knowledge inequalities and in decolonising research.

# **The Art and Practice of Academic-Practitioner Collaboration: Lessons from Bangladesh**

## **Abstract**

The benefits of academic-practitioner (AcPrac) collaboration in international development are well-known, yet it is difficult to collaborate effectively. Drawing on the author's first-hand experiences of working as a practitioner and a researcher, this reflection piece discusses the nuances of AcPrac collaborations in the context of Bangladesh. The paper argues that collaborative projects are often shaped by invisible contextual factors, such as power and identity. It presents BRAC's case in Bangladesh as a successful example of academics and practitioners working together and proposes five principles for achieving impactful collaboration.

## **The Complexity of Collaboration**

Many consider academic-practitioner (AcPrac) collaboration as an ideal scenario in international development. While it is logical to expect that in such collaborations, academics would bring their scientific rigour, research expertise, and practitioners their tacit knowledge and insights from the grassroots, the reality is more complex. A large body of literature points to the clear benefits of such collaborations as well as identifies a myriad of challenges encountered by both parties (Aniekwe et al., 2012; Hanley and Vogel, 2012; Stevens et al., 2013). As a former development practitioner working in academia, I have had the privilege to experience both worlds and observe the complexity of such collaborations. This reflection piece will explore AcPrac collaborations in the development sector in Bangladesh and present some key observations and principles to make such efforts more impactful, drawing specifically on the case study of BRAC - one of the largest development organisations in the world (Ahmed et al., 2023; Lei Ravelo, 2021).

## **AcPrac Collaboration in the Context of Bangladesh**

Since the beginning of the 1970s, Bangladesh has virtually become a laboratory for designing and experimenting with different development models and approaches (Rahman, 2006). Different agencies of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB), international donors, and non-government organisations (NGOs) have experimented with a wide range of models and approaches to institution building for rural and local level development (Kramsjo and Wood, 1992). Despite all these different institutional and experimental interventions over the years, alleviating poverty and tackling rising levels of inequality remain significant challenges for Bangladesh (Afsar, 2010). It is also one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impacts of the climate crisis – flooding is intensifying, rainfall patterns are changing, and riverbank erosion is increasing (Huq et al., 1999; Nishat and Mukherjee, 2013). All these interconnected challenges call for a different approach to

bring change faster and more sustainably, which is impossible to achieve through isolated efforts of development organisations.

In addition to the emerging challenges in poverty, inequality, and climate, funding sources for development projects are drying up as Bangladesh is scheduled to officially become a developing country in 2026, graduating from its existing status as a 'Least Developed Country' (LDC) ('Bangladesh graduation status | LDC Portal - International Support Measures for Least Developed Countries,' 2021). While this is an overall positive achievement for the country, there are unavoidable negative consequences for the availability of donor funding (Razzaque and Khan, 2021), as many international donors might shift their attention to other countries and regions in greater need. Previous simple approaches of identifying a community in need and offering them basic services such as essential healthcare or microloans are insufficient to get noticed in the increasingly complex and competitive landscape.



Dhaka – the growing capital of Bangladesh (Image: [Salman Preeom](#) on [Unsplash](#))

As the complexity of the challenges increases, so does the push from stakeholders – government, donors, and other institutional partners, to combine the grassroots insights and scientific research so that development projects can maximise their 'return on investment' -a familiar terminology in the commercial sector. Also, many stakeholders raise concerns about the legitimacy and sustainability of the NGO-dominated, aid-dependent development approach, as they think it leads to perpetual dependency (Banks et al., 2015; Kabeer et al., 2010). Facing these criticisms, many national and local development organisations have no options other than incorporating more

monitoring, evaluation, and in some cases, combining a research agenda into the development interventions if resources are available.

However, local universities and research institutions lack the capacity to support such endeavours. According to the annual report of the University Grants Commission (UGC), the government body responsible for regulating higher education institutions, 125 public and private universities in the country altogether spent only 1.5 billion Taka (equivalent to 13 million GBP) on research activities in 2019, which is only 1 percent of their total expenditure (Jasim, 2021). As a result, unless specified and endorsed by the funder to engage local research institutions, the development practitioners prefer collaborating with well-funded universities and academics from abroad. Western academics' credibility and global recognition are perceived as helpful contributions to raising the profile of the development project and the organisation behind it. Similarly, sometimes academics from elite institutions also prefer to join their research efforts with more established organisations, which makes it difficult for smaller organisations to attract qualified research collaborators. In summary, the research landscape in the development sector has become complex and competitive, dominated by money, power, and changing realities.

### **In Between Two Worlds: Observations from the Field**

For the past 50 years, BRAC has been a pioneer in international development, successfully implementing a wide range of development programmes across ten countries in South Asia and Africa, touching the lives of over 130 million people ('About Us - BRAC International,' 2020). Starting from a humble beginning in the war-torn, newly independent country in 1971, it has come a long way and gained global attention for its formidable scale and impact (Chowdhury et al., 2014; Dees, 2010). My mother started her career as a frontline health worker at BRAC, going from door to door in rural communities and offering women essential health advice. Due to her long-standing connection with BRAC, I learned about the organisation long before I officially worked there. I remember visiting field offices with her and listening to after-office conversations. Seeing my mother and her colleagues wrestle with the practical challenges of working in development was a part of growing up and learning about how the world of social change works.

Later, when I joined BRAC as a young professional, one of my tasks was to accompany foreign visitors, including academics, as a translator during their field visits in rural Bangladesh. During one of those visits, a young researcher was interviewing one of the microfinance loan officers. She was a white woman in her early 30s, full of excitement and enthusiasm. In sharp contrast, the loan officer was a middle-aged man, exhausted after coming from his loan collection visits, and could not care any less about the questions she asked. I could sense the awkwardness

in the air but did not intervene; I was just a translator. At one point, she asked, 'Why did you choose to become a loan officer?' When I translated the question into Bengali and looked at the officer for his response, his facial expression said a thousand words. He stared at me without answering the question. After a few moments of pin-drop silence, I turned to the researcher and said, 'Madam, people like him don't have the luxury to 'choose' their jobs. Any salaried work is extremely difficult to get, and they just go for the first one that they can manage, especially when it comes after multiple years of unemployment.' The interviewee and interviewer did not speak each other's languages - literally and metaphorically. They belonged in different worlds that were too far from each other, with no bridges between them. Any exchange of experience was impossible, let alone a meaningful exchange.

Not all barriers are visible. Many challenges in AcPrac collaboration originate from subtle ideological differences between the parties. Sometimes, practitioners think they are doing the 'real work' and dealing with 'real problems' on the ground, which academics fail to understand because of their lack of connections to the problems. In a country like Bangladesh, where development challenges are intertwined, and resources for new interventions are incredibly scarce, many practitioners think there is no point in doing such research if the research does not give answers quickly enough. On the other hand, many academics struggle to consider factors outside their research interest, and their priorities do not always align with the priorities of the practitioners. These issues create plenty of tension while working together on a shared agenda.



A local community meeting in Rangpur, Bangladesh (Image: Anjali Sarker)

To add to the complexity, collaborations are often negatively influenced by unequal power relations within and between organisations. Usually, the entity that controls the funding holds more power over the one that does not, which weakens the overall impact of the collaboration. One of my practitioner colleagues, feeling quite frustrated after a meeting with a group of academics, remarked sarcastically: 'wish I could tell them to keep their logo and ego outside the meeting room.' Despite the frustration, he did not say anything. After all, the academics brought the research funding with them and criticising their work did not seem like an excellent idea for the partnership moving forward.

Complex and unequal power dynamics do not exist only between academics and practitioners; organisational culture also plays an important role and affects the collaboration process and outcomes. Bangladeshi development organisations are hierarchical, where a top-down approach to leadership and decision-making is the default way to operate. Therefore, it is not surprising that important discussions are often dominated by a handful of people, if not one person, who hold high-ranked positions in the organisational hierarchy. In addition to an obsession with designation and formal authority, gender and age also play important roles in the organisational context, deeply rooted in the patriarchal culture in Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2009) that favours male and more senior employees. Such internal practices influence the nature of collaboration, though AcPrac projects often do not consider these subtle contextual differences when designing the project plan and timeline. Designed to maximise efficiency, often with good intentions to save money and time, such projects suffer as soon as the academics encounter the ground realities and discover that those realities are a lot more complex than expected.

In one such project, I was sitting in a room with two academics from a leading UK university who were interested to understand the siloes between different interventions targeted towards the Rohingya refugees. In front of them was a group of local staff leading various programmes in the refugee camp. They were knowledgeable and arguably the best people to share the obstacles of operating in such a challenging context without enough government or local host community support. However, the academics brought a complex visual map with them, which was a well-intentioned effort to simplify the missing connections among a wide range of interventions. The practitioners were expected to give feedback on the map, but the language barrier and the complexity of such visualisation meant it was incomprehensible to the audience. No one uttered a word; they just kept nodding and smiling politely to convey that it was a beautiful map! As someone who has been part of many post-meeting conversations on both sides, I often heard practitioners saying: 'these academics live inside their academic bubbles. They wouldn't understand the real challenges we face every day.' On the other side, facing a lack of cooperation



from the practitioners, my academic colleagues made surface-level conclusions and felt frustrated with the challenges of working with practitioners.

What gets lost amidst these tensions is that many practitioners do not feel comfortable to challenge academics, as research and education-related activities are considered quite sophisticated matters in the socio-cultural context of Bangladesh, especially if such activities are conducted in English (Erling et al., 2014). A practitioner with an undergraduate degree from a second or third-tier university in Bangladesh is unlikely to challenge a confident-looking, native English speaker researcher coming from abroad. Academic honorifics such as the title of 'professor' or 'doctor' carry tremendous prestige in a country where a decent university education is a luxury many cannot afford. Hence, even if the practitioners have different viewpoints or want to disagree with the academics, they refrain from expressing their opinions.

### **To Collaborate or Not to Collaborate?**

Many development organisations in Bangladesh are looking for better ways to address the emerging wicked problems and adopt a more evidence-based approach towards their interventions, which leads to the desire for impactful AcPrac collaboration. Often, practitioners who possess a deep understanding of the issues on the ground lack the capacity to conduct research independently, so their success stories remain anecdotal and limited within their specific context. They know 'what' works but struggle to explain 'how' and determine the pathway to influence critical stakeholders, such as other organisations or the government, to adopt the lessons. On the other hand, academics can go deeper and exceptionally specific in their research effort, but without support from the practitioners, even finding relevant questions worth exploring becomes a challenge. This is especially true when the academics come from a different context, often from prestigious institutions based in the global north, and therefore are not entirely familiar with the ground-level realities in developing countries like Bangladesh. As described in the last section, it is not easy to collaborate across sectors and often, well-intentioned efforts to collaborate lead to less-than-ideal outcomes. From my experience of wearing both hats, I have observed that at the grant proposal writing stage, many academics and practitioners share the dream of achieving synergy, that the impact of their collaboration would be more than the sum of the parts. However, despite such noble intentions, many AcPrac projects fail to deliver results as expected. This raises the question: what does it take to collaborate effectively?

Effective AcPrac collaboration is a rather time and resource-intensive process. Sometimes, it means significantly adjusting expectations on both sides. Practitioners need to take on additional work to support the research team, often on top of an already overburdened work

schedule. Academics make sacrifices from their side too, relying on the support of others in a very different context and pushing against many barriers to get quality research done may feel like an uphill battle. Both parties face difficult decisions and trade-offs – especially regarding resource allocation. The prospect of learning, experimenting, and discovering seems like a great opportunity. However, it almost inevitably slows down the primary activity of both academics and practitioners. AcPrac collaborations, as promising as they may look on paper, become a delicate balancing act between competing priorities in practice.

Despite AcPrac collaborations' benefits, it cannot be considered an add-on to all development projects or a one-stop solution to other problems that are more deeply rooted. If a development intervention is weak by design and not grounded in realities, collaborating with high-profile academics, and writing case studies will not cover the shortcomings. Based on my observations and engagements in many AcPrac projects, it can be argued that, in most cases, AcPrac collaboration has the potential to amplify a development intervention's impact. However, this can only happen when the intervention is worth replicating in the first place.

### **BRAC's Approach to AcPrac Collaboration: Transforming a Bangladeshi Model into a Global Development Success Story**

The benefits of AcPrac collaborations are well known, but it often remains unclear exactly how to achieve synergy in such cross-sector partnerships. There are not enough resources specifically designed for building and managing AcPrac collaborations. Several scholars point out how successful AcPrac collaborations are exceptions, not the rule (Liu et al., 2023; Roper, 2002). Considering how rare such successful collaborations are, it is worth presenting a case study to explore the nature of collaboration in detail and extract critical insights that could be useful for contexts beyond Bangladesh.

Over the last five decades, BRAC has repeatedly demonstrated an ability to devise innovative programmes and scale up nationally and internationally using a wide range of strategies, including implementation, partnerships, and policy influence (Ahmed and French, 2006; Hossain and Sengupta, 2009). The sheer magnitude of the challenges influenced BRAC to lean towards collaborative models for impact, usually in partnership with governments and other development organisations, to ensure concordance with larger strategic aims and policies (Ahmed and French, 2006). In addition to other actors in the development sector, it has also started working with research institutes, think tanks and universities to decode its success and share the lessons with the international development community. Unlike many other development organisations, BRAC's senior leaders did not want the organisation to stop at service delivery. Instead, they aspired to establish BRAC as a thought leader in this space and utilise its substantial

expertise in development to spread good models and ideas further and faster across the Global South (Zaman et al., 2022). The ambition is aptly captured in an office adage attributed to BRAC's founder, Sir Fazle Hasan Abed: 'small is beautiful, big is necessary' (Ahmed and Rafi, 1999).

To assist the most disadvantaged people in their fight against poverty, it is necessary to challenge the traditional ways and bring innovative solutions to the frontiers of poverty reduction. Through its Ultra-Poor Graduation (UPG) programme in Bangladesh, BRAC pioneered a 'graduation model' that lifts the ultra-poor population out of poverty (Hashemi and De Montesquiou, 2011; Tambe, 2022). The model is recognised worldwide as the 'graduation approach' and is acclaimed for its innovative and holistic solution to ultra-poverty (Ultra-poor Graduation Initiative - BRAC, 2023). It is a comprehensive, time-bound, integrated and sequenced set of interventions that aims to enable households living in ultra-poverty to achieve key milestones towards sustainable livelihoods and socioeconomic resilience to progress along a pathway out of extreme poverty. Until 2020, the programme served over 2.1 million ultra-poor households in Bangladesh (Gomes et al., 2023), grounded on the principles of the four pillars of the graduation approach; livelihoods promotion, financial inclusion, social protection, and social empowerment (Islam, 2019). The programme addresses poverty multi-dimensionally, mitigating context-specific and people-specific challenges (Halder and Mosley, 2004).



Amina, a participant in the BRAC UPG programme, tends to her livelihood asset in Bangladesh (Image: BRAC UPG Initiative)

Since the programme began, several universities and academics have been affiliated with the effort who have played an integral part in its global success. For example, a large-scale randomised control trial led by a team of LSE academics surveyed 21,000 households in 1,309 villages over seven years and found that the model is highly feasible and effective in combating extreme poverty among diverse marginalised populations, even in the most resource-constrained contexts (Bandiera et al., 2017). Another team led by Nobel laureates Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo published encouraging findings in their 'A Multifaceted Program Causes Lasting Progress for the Very Poor: Evidence from Six Countries,' which included BRAC's model (Banerjee et al., 2015). Receiving strong validation from multiple leading academic institutions paved the way for the next phase of the programme – launching the Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative (UPGI) in 2016 - BRAC's latest initiative to provide advisory services and technical support to governments and NGO partners looking to design and implement graduation and economic inclusion programmes. Building on the success in Bangladesh, UPGI's primary goal is to scale graduation through governments in Africa and Asia to enable 4.6 million households to escape extreme poverty by 2026, integrating the approach into existing programmes and supporting policy change to better serve people living in extreme poverty (Ultra-Poor Graduation - BRAC International, 2021). To date, UPGI has worked alongside partners in Egypt, Guinea, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Tunisia, Uganda, and more to drive policy change and provide people in extreme poverty with the resources and tools needed to meet their multidimensional needs long term (BRAC Ultra Poor Graduation Initiative | A Global Program of BRAC, 2023).

Since BRAC pioneered the graduation approach in Bangladesh in 2002, more than 100 partners have adopted it in nearly 50 countries around the world (Ultra-Poor Graduation - BRAC International, 2021). Combining research with practice gave this model an edge over many other poverty alleviation models and significantly contributed to its global success. During my time at BRAC, our team's mandate was to externalise tacit knowledge, create a porous organisational boundary for ideas and partnerships, and support innovation across the organisation. With this vision, we closely studied the graduation model and observed the multiple AcPrac collaborations (Bandiera et al., 2017; Banerjee et al., 2015) that made it possible to replicate a home-grown poverty alleviation model around the world. It was evident that successful AcPrac collaboration requires much more than a project plan and funding to support it. Relationships, advocacy, opportunism, and several other factors are integral to the success story. Our experience indicated that AcPrac collaborators need to think of themselves as a collective working on a shared agenda. We also realised that rather than limiting ourselves to being only implementers of solutions, it is



design of the project. Without such space, the whole collaboration is placed in a risky position, and success becomes hard to achieve.

Successful AcPrac collaboration requires a distinct skill set, relationships, commitment to core values, and a shared vision for success. Rather than having solely operational goals or research objectives and chasing them separately from two sides, it helps immensely to engage in collective problem-solving, which many AcPrac collaborators fail to do. If done well, such collaborations can produce critical resources and catalyse the necessary evidence of impact, political goodwill, civil society interest, and platforms for dialogue, which is necessary to achieve long-term impact.

To be sure, one might think that AcPrac collaboration has benefits, but the journey is full of unknowns and risks. Why should someone take so much trouble when the safe option is always there – keeping research and practice separate within the siloed worlds of academia and development? Why bother to bear the burden of collaboration?

I think about this often, and it takes me back to my first-ever field visit to see the graduation approach in action. For anyone who has never met a person living in ultra-poverty, it is hard to describe what it means to live under 2.15 USD per day, the poverty line set by the World Bank (World Bank, 2022). Selina, a client of BRAC's Targeting the Ultra Poor programme, used to live in such a state. In fact, she was one of the poorest in the village, living in a damaged hut. No assets, no stable income - life was a burden to her. However, when we met, she appeared to be a confident and entrepreneurial woman. It was hard to believe it when she said, 'after losing my husband ten years ago, I became completely helpless. There was a time when I couldn't even manage two meals a day. There were days when I had no way, other than begging, to provide for myself.'

I could not match that helpless widow with the Selina standing before me -the difference was striking. Looking at my surprised eyes, she laughed like only winners do; 'please come to my house and see what I have accomplished,' she said proudly. When I entered her house, following the local cultural custom, she showed me the rooms and surroundings. It was a neat, clean, well-built tin-shed house; I could not find any sign of extreme poverty. At the back of her house was a beautiful green nursery full of fruit saplings and medicinal herbs. She started this nursery four years ago as part of the graduation programme. On a small piece of land, she has been cultivating saplings and selling them in the market at a higher price. Though she never went to school and can barely sign her name on paper, she can be considered the expert in her locality when it comes to financial decisions. Our conversation was not something one would expect to happen between a poor widow and a development worker. Instead, I felt like a novice student interviewing a

seasoned entrepreneur when she explained why women should invest in assets like land and how to find new ways to market the saplings.



A participant in BRAC's Ultra-Poor Graduation programme in Rangpur, Bangladesh (Image: BRAC UPG Initiative)

Most development projects target people who are discriminated against, marginalised, or ignored. It is easy and tempting to assume that the tangible set of products and services (things that are easier for donors to measure and implementing organisations to offer) will be gladly accepted by the communities, and their lives will be changed. But what holds in Bangladesh and could be true in other developing country contexts is the need to create large-scale changes that will last. The poor and vulnerable people not only struggle financially but also fail to access the psychological and social support that they need to summon the courage to stand on their feet. Despite being eligible for certain benefits and rights, they rarely gather the courage and confidence to claim those and hold the authorities accountable. Poverty makes them oblivious to the dignity they deserve as human beings and their rights as citizens. The lack of feeling dignified and a sense of belonging creates a vacuum in their lives –one which cannot be filled with tangible, material offerings such as a stack of cash or a cow. While development practitioners can keep offering such products and services forever, or at least as long as donor funding is available, the root problems persist. If poverty alleviation is the aim, practitioners need to go beyond offering services and seek support from academics to understand what is causing the problem in the first place and how to solve it.

If development organisations are bold enough to think of ways to build a fairer world that will make them obsolete, practitioners need to join forces with academics and policymakers. Such visions of change should be placed at the heart of development projects, not service delivery or other short-term solutions. The development sector in Bangladesh is often described as overcrowded, with thousands of NGOs offering basic services, full of inefficiencies and duplicated efforts (Kabeer et al., 2010). While different practitioners might have different opinions on this, almost everyone would agree that a scarcity of resources, especially decreasing donor funding, has pushed the sector to a point where cross-sector collaboration is not a buzzword; it is essential.

### **Five Principles for a Successful AcPrac Collaboration**

From signing the partnership agreement to making real change, it is a long journey full of unforeseen obstacles and surprises. Often, practitioners and academics do not speak each other's languages, and expectations vary widely between parties, leading to miscommunication and misunderstanding. This chaotic side of AcPrac collaboration rarely rises to the surface, mainly because the people who do not hold power in an unequal partnership do not bother stirring things up and challenging their more powerful counterparts. However, it is important to remember that knowledge doesn't exist solely within any one stakeholder; it lies in the AcPrac relationship, and both partners need to interact meaningfully to make the collaboration a success. While it is impractical to develop a one-size-fits-all model that will benefit everyone, from what I have observed throughout my engagement with AcPrac collaboration efforts in Bangladesh, there are some key principles that can be followed more widely, even beyond Bangladesh:

- **Deep Appreciation for the Problem, Not the Solution**

It is easy to fall in love with the solution in mind, be it the model a practitioner developed or a research approach that sits at the core of an academic's interest. However, as evident as it may appear, a collaboration is different from a solo pursuit. Both academics and practitioners need to compromise their own interests for better collaboration. Rather than having a rigid approach, it is better to maintain mechanisms for learning and refining as the collaboration progresses.

- **Planning for Success, as well as Setbacks**

Many AcPrac collaborators focus on developing a linear plan that leads to a desired outcome at the end of the project. However, the planning should consider multiple potential outcomes and paths towards those. Proactively thinking about potential barriers and setbacks at the early stage and preparing for them saves valuable resources in the future.



- **Adopting a Pragmatic Approach**

Collaboration is not easy; therefore, both parties need to choose their priorities and battles wisely. In successful AcPrac collaborations, academics and practitioners maintain flexibility and openness, recognising that such collaborations are dynamic and require constant adjustments in response to unpredictable challenges. Recognising that plans will change once collaborative work starts, it helps to have a mutually agreed understanding of non-negotiables so that the key objectives are not compromised in the face of changing contexts.

- **Relationships Matter**

Sometimes, if not often, AcPrac collaboration projects are born in response to a call for funding opportunities and present an aspirational, almost romanticised vision of a perfect arrangement that brings the best of both worlds. However, capitalising on each of the parties' strengths requires plenty of groundwork and investment in understanding each other. If there is one thing that pays off, regardless of the context and issue at hand, it is building trusted relationships and rapport among AcPrac collaborators.

- **Going Big and Taking a Long View**

'Big impact' mentality and commitment towards a shared vision of success are essential in AcPrac collaborations. Given the dependency on donor funds and the scarcity of funding sources, development interventions need to find creative ways of achieving social change. Well-executed AcPrac collaborations are more likely to draw the attention of the decision-makers and influence policy change rather than the traditional advocacy done by the development practitioners themselves. In the context of Bangladesh, BRAC and other leading development organisations have demonstrated in the past how such well-designed collaborations can amplify the impact of development interventions, going beyond a specific context and making the knowledge accessible to the world.

In a nutshell, meaningful collaboration requires bringing diverse stakeholders together to learn and deliver simultaneously. As the famous African proverb goes: 'If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.' Scaling up development interventions requires going with others and forging a better path, even if that demands more effort from everyone involved. The days of operating in a green field with limited regulation or government oversight are gone. Increasingly, the challenge in development is building the capacity for effective action -of communities, organisations, and policymakers. Thoughtfully designed and executed AcPrac collaborations could be a game changer in such efforts.

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