

Case 7: Surgical Referral Systems with BRAC in Bangladesh

Case Overview

BRAC is a development organization that was founded in 1972 in Bangladesh. It works to assuage poverty with priority areas of focus being women, grassroots empowerment, health and education, supporting farmers, developing financial opportunities, and creating self-sustaining solutions. BRAC's work has since spread to 10 additional countries, and it is now considered the largest development organization in the world. BRAC has numerous programs focused on health. From a surgical perspective, they have created a highly functional and equitable surgical referral system which facilitates provision of surgical care to people living in some of the most remote regions of Bangladesh. A construct commonly known in health delivery circles as the "three delays" identifies the barriers for low-income access to care as centering around (1) the delay in deciding to seek care, (2) the delay in actual transportation to a healthcare facility, and (3) the delay in receiving appropriate treatment once at the appropriate facility. BRAC has developed an efficient referral system through its extensive network of community health workers to significantly reduce all three delays as pertains to emergency obstetric surgical care.