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BRAC, Global Policy Language, and Women in Bangladesh: Transformation and Manipulation

By Manzurul Mannan



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A critical examination of the impact of BRAC, the world's largest NGO, on the status of women in Southern Bangladeshi cultural life.

Founded in 1972 and now the largest NGO in the world, BRAC has been lauded for its efforts aimed at lifting the poor, especially women, out of poverty. In *BRAC, Global Policy Language, and Women in Bangladesh*, Manzurul Mannan—while not denying the many positive accomplishments of BRAC—places the organization under a critical microscope. Drawing on his experience as a Bangladeshi native and BRAC insider, Mannan provides unique insights into not only BRAC's phenomenal growth and its role in diffusing western and development ideologies but also, more importantly, how target populations have been affected culturally and socially. He explains how BRAC has employed western ideas, theories, and philosophies of agency when engaging in development interventions in even the remotest villages, seeking to transform social structures, women's status, and the local polity. The resulting intermingling of exogenous perspectives with local knowledge leads to a degree of inconsistency and dissonance within BRAC's own operations, while generating opposition from local commoners and elites. Cautionary yet hopeful, the book advocates greater cultural sensitivity as a way to mitigate conflict between BRAC and the constituencies it serves.

Manzurul Mannan is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the Independent University, Bangladesh.



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- Sales Rank: #2379928 in eBooks
- Published on: 2015-09-01
- Released on: 2015-09-01
- Format: Kindle eBook

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