

## A tribute to Sir Fazle Hasan Abed



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Dear Friends,

It is with much sadness that I share with you the news that the inaugural WISE Prize for Education Laureate, Sir Fazle Hasan Abed passed away in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 20 December. He was 83.

It is impossible to overstate the contributions of Sir Fazle to the work of poverty alleviation and development both in his native Bangladesh and around the world. BRAC, the organization that he founded in 1972 with proceeds from the sale of his London flat, has now grown into one of the world's largest and most effective non-governmental organizations with activities across the full spectrum of social development including education, healthcare, and microfinance. As recently as 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019, the Economist reported that "BRAC has about 100,000 full-time staff, 8,000 of whom work outside Bangladesh. In 2018 it lent money to almost 8m people and educated more than 1m children across Bangladesh and ten other

countries... It is also one of the world's best charities." It is estimated that in the course of its nearly 50 year existence, BRAC has benefitted in excess of 100 million people worldwide.

BRAC's success owes much to the character and ethos of its founder. As noted by Ms Ameerah Haq, Chair, BRAC Global Board, "Unflinching dedication, focus and work ethic are what we have always experienced in Sir Fazle, or Abed Bhai, as the BRAC family calls him lovingly. He always put others before himself and let his work speak for itself. Even when BRAC attained its global stature, his concern and focus were on the less fortunate in society and those whose potential needed nurturing. He embodied the highest level of integrity, humility and humanity, which continues to be the essential guiding spirit of BRAC." In building BRAC, Sir Fazle was able to attract top talent from some of the world's most prestigious private sector organisations, evidence of his ability to inspire, and instil a sense of purpose amongst his colleagues.

At WISE we were privileged to have Sir Fazle as our inaugural WISE Prize for Education Laureate. It is no secret that in accepting the Prize he set a very high benchmark for us to fulfil during our now biennial deliberations. In accepting the Prize, Sir Fazle spoke about the centrality of education in addressing issues of inequity around the world, and issued a call to action to ensure universal access to quality education. Notwithstanding considerable personal and professional success, I always found Sir Fazle to be humble and approachable, and happy when asked to offer sage advice and counsel. Although we will miss him, we remain committed to our shared goal of building the future of education as a means of achieving a more peaceful, prosperous, healthier, and fairer world.

On behalf of the WISE Team, I extend our sincerest condolences to Lady Abed, his children and grandchildren, and his extended family at BRAC. May they find solace in their memories of him and in the knowledge that his was truly a life well lived.

Sincerely,

**Stavros N. Yiannouka**  
CEO