

## INAUGURAL WISE PRIZE FOR EDUCATION GOES TO BANGLADESHI FAZLE HASAN ABED

**Education underpins development for 138 million poor**

**Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, founder of BRAC, has been awarded the world's first major prize for education by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar**

*"I am guided by an ideal of a world free from all forms of exploitation and discrimination. Education is the answer to this quest." Fazle Hasan Abed*

---

**Doha, Qatar – November 1, 2011.** Sir Fazle Hasan Abed has been awarded the first WISE Prize for Education in recognition of his 40-year career dedicated to alleviating poverty through education.

A specially designed gold medal, bearing the word "education" in over 50 languages, was presented to Abed in Doha (on 1 November) by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, before 1,300 delegates at the opening session of the third World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE).

Abed founded BRAC, formerly known as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), in 1972 to address the humanitarian crisis, which followed the country's struggle for independence from Pakistan. Over the next four decades, he built the world's largest and most efficient NGO with 120,000 workers, based on the principle of empowering people to grow as individuals, to manage the welfare of their families and to contribute to their societies. Its learning and teaching activities now reach almost 140 million people in 10 Asian, African and Central American countries. Under Abed's guidance they have acquired the tools to set up their own micro-businesses, become health workers, or teach generations of children. To achieve this, he established and nurtured international networks of like-minded individuals, organizations and government institutions.

BRAC is also one of the largest non-government providers of education in the world, contributing directly to the pre-primary, primary and secondary education of more than 10 million students. It concentrates on bringing education to children and young people who are not reached by the traditional education system.

The establishment of the WISE Prize was announced at the closing of the last WISE Summit in December 2010 as a major accolade to recognize an individual or team for an outstanding, world-class contribution to education. In addition to the gold medal, the winner receives an award of \$500,000 (US).

Following an international call for nominations, an 11-strong international committee of educational experts made a preliminary assessment and a high-level Jury of five eminent individuals, chaired by Dr. Abdulla bin Ali Al-Thani, took the final decision.

The members of WISE Prize 2011 Jury are:

- Dr James H Billington, Librarian of Congress, USA

- H.E. Naledi Pandor, Minister of Science and Technology, MP, South Africa
- Prof. Jeffrey D Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute, Columbia University, USA
- Mrs Fatma Rafiq Zakaria, Chairman of the Maulana Azad Educational Trust, India
- H.E. Sheikh Abdulla bin Ali Al-Thani, PhD, Chairman of WISE and Chairman of the Jury, Qatar Foundation, Qatar

## **A vision: education to change the lives of the poorest**

Born in 1936, Sir Fazle Hasan Abed completed his secondary education in Dhaka and went on to study at the University of Glasgow. He trained as a management accountant in London and came back to his homeland to eventually lead the finance division of Shell Oil Company there.

He returned to the UK during the 1971 Bangladesh war of independence from Pakistan where he lobbied and raised funds for his country's struggle. After the conflict he discovered the newly-born country in ruins. Using his own savings, he established the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and launched a lifelong campaign to improve lives by educating the rural poor, now reaching nearly 138 million people in 10 countries.

BRAC has applied the principle of self-help through education to a wide range of development sectors, including essential healthcare, agricultural support, human rights and legal services, as well as microfinance and enterprise development.

Over more than 40 years BRAC has become one of the largest non-government providers of education in the world and has contributed directly to the education of more than 10 million students at a variety of levels. BRAC concentrates on bringing education to children and young people who are not reached by the traditional education system.

Currently, around 750,000 children – 70 per cent of them girls – are enrolled in 25,000 BRAC primary schools in Bangladesh. Pass rates are significantly higher than in the formal primary schools system and virtually all go on to learn in secondary schools. BRAC has expanded its work to pre-primary education, post-primary and continuing education, and has established an adolescent development center for girls.

BRAC has also adapted its programs to a number of other countries in Africa, Asia and Central America through another 11,000 schools. In Afghanistan alone BRAC has established over 4,000 primary schools. More than 122,000 students – 84 per cent of them girls – have graduated from primary school and a further 125,000 are currently enrolled.

Under the leadership of Fazle Hasan Abed, BRAC has continued to evolve, experiment and grow, collaborating with partners and adapting its experience to expand inclusion, empowerment and opportunity.