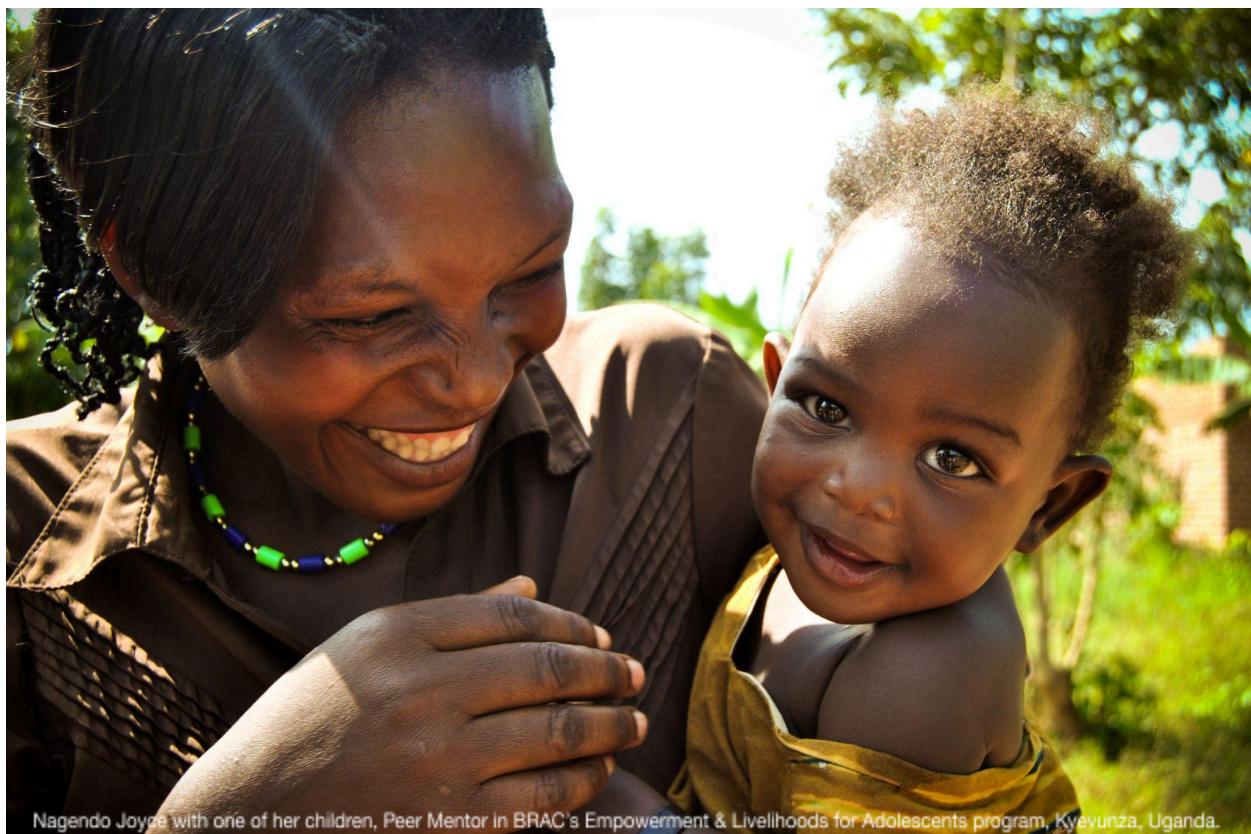




# LEGACY THAT LASTS: A Practical Guide to Making or Updating Your Will

*Create peace of mind for your loved ones—and a legacy that reflects your values.*



Nagendo Joyce with one of her children, Peer Mentor in BRAC's Empowerment & Livelihoods for Adolescents program, Kyevunza, Uganda.

**BRAC USA**

[bracusa.org/legacy](http://bracusa.org/legacy)

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# Why Estate Planning Matters

## Take Control of Your Future—and Your Legacy

*Making a will is one of the most meaningful steps you can take to protect your loved ones, provide peace of mind, and ensure your values live on. Whether your estate is large or modest, your will ensures your voice is heard and your values honored.*

### **Why people make a will:**

- Ensure their assets go where they intend
- Name guardians for minor children or dependents
- Avoid conflict or confusion among loved ones
- Leave a lasting impact through charitable gifts

### **Common Myths:**

- "I'm too young to need a will." ✓ If you're over 18, you should have one.
- "Estate planning is only for the wealthy." ✓ Everyone has something to give.
- "It's expensive or complicated." ✓ It can be free or low-cost.



Roland and his daughter, BRAC agriculture program participant, Liberia



# Major Steps to Planning Your Will

## Step 1. Gather Your Information

Gather key personal, financial, and family care details, plus important documents to get started. (You can use the **Legacy Planning Worksheet** on the next pages.)

### Assets, Liabilities & Loved Ones

- List your property, accounts, valuables, and digital assets
- Identify family, friends, and organizations to include

### Key Roles

- Select an executor to carry out your wishes
- Name guardians for minors or dependents
- Consider a power of attorney for financial and healthcare decisions

### Gifts & Bequests

- Determine specific gifts to loved ones and charities
- Decide on percentages or specific amounts
- Include special instructions or conditions if needed

## Step 2. Draft Your Will

- Use a trusted online tool or estate attorney
- See the next section for more guidance

## Step 3. Store Your Will Safely & Inform

- Keep the original document in a secure, known place
- Inform your executor and trusted loved ones where to find it
- Notify charities like BRAC USA if included (optional, but recommended)

## Step 4. Review and Update Regularly

- Revisit your will after major life events
- Add codicils or create new wills as circumstances change



# Your Legacy Planning Worksheet

*Use this worksheet to start getting organized before you make or update your will.*

## Your Key People

- **Executor (person who carries out your will):**

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- **Backup Executor (optional):**

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- **Guardian(s) for minor children or dependents (if any):**

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- **Power of Attorney (who manages finances/decisions if you're unable, while alive):**

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## Your Assets & Liabilities

*List the major things you own and would like to pass on.*

### Assets:

- Home or real estate: \_\_\_\_\_
- Bank accounts (checking, savings): \_\_\_\_\_
- Investments (stocks, bonds, mutual funds): \_\_\_\_\_
- Retirement accounts (IRA, 401(k), etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
- Life insurance policy: \_\_\_\_\_
- Valuables (art, jewelry, cars, collectibles): \_\_\_\_\_



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- **Digital assets:**

- Email accounts: \_\_\_\_\_
- Cloud storage (Google Drive, Dropbox): \_\_\_\_\_
- Social media accounts (Facebook, X, LinkedIn): \_\_\_\_\_
- Online banking credentials or cryptocurrency wallets: \_\_\_\_\_
- Digital photos/videos: \_\_\_\_\_

- **Other:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Liabilities (mortgage, loans, debts):**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Beneficiaries**

*Who would you like to receive your assets and belongings?*

**Primary Beneficiaries:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Contingent (backup) Beneficiaries:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Special Gifts (heirlooms, keepsakes, property):**

- Item: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_
- Item: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_
- Item: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_

**Charitable Giving**

*Would you like to leave a legacy gift to a nonprofit you care about?*

**Name of Charity:**

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**Gift Type:**

- Specific amount: \$\_\_\_\_\_
- Percentage of estate: \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Remainder of estate after other gifts

**BRAC USA Legal Info (for your attorney):**

"I give [insert amount, percentage, or residue] to BRAC USA, a nonprofit organization located at 26 Broadway #348, New York, NY, 10004. Federal Tax Identification Number: 20-8456741."

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**Other Wishes (Optional)**

- Funeral or burial preferences: \_\_\_\_\_
- Pet care instructions: \_\_\_\_\_



# Ways to Create or Change Your Will

## Choose the Method that Works for You

*There are multiple ways to create a valid will. Choose the one that fits your situation, preferences, and budget.*

### Free & Low Cost Online Tools:

- [FreeWill.com](http://FreeWill.com) – Step-by-step free tool endorsed by many nonprofits
- [Ethos.com](http://Ethos.com) - Low cost, online tool to create a will in minutes
- [LegalZoom.com](http://LegalZoom.com) - Low cost, online tool with attorney support available

### Work with a Licensed Attorney:

- Best if you have complex assets, blended families, or unique needs
- Can help avoid disputes and ensure compliance with your state's laws

### Cost Estimates:

- Free to \$200 (online)
- \$200–\$1,000+ (attorney-drafted, depending on complexity)

### What's Legal in Your State?

Some states require wills to be notarized; others accept handwritten wills. Check your state's requirements or consult a professional.

## What if I Already Have a Will?

*If you already have a will, you don't need to start from scratch to make small updates. You can simply add a codicil, a legal amendment to your existing will.*

### What is a Codicil?

A codicil is a short document that allows you to add, change, or remove provisions in your current will without rewriting the entire thing. It must be signed and witnessed according to your state's legal requirements, just like a full will.



**Common reasons to use a codicil:**

- Adding a charitable gift
- Changing a beneficiary
- Updating an executor
- Adjusting a specific amount or asset

**How to create one:**

- Work with your estate attorney to ensure the codicil is properly executed
- Store the codicil alongside your will and inform your executor of the change



Diane Mukeshimana, her husband Fidele Nzayisenga, and their child, BRAC program participant, Rwanda



# Finding Trusted Help

## Need Guidance? These Resources Can Help

If you're unsure where to start or want legal expertise, the directories below list estate attorneys near you. **Please note:** this is not legal, estate, tax or other professional advice or recommendations, and you should consult with and rely upon your own legal or other professional advice.

### Trusted Directories:

- [NAELA.org](http://NAELA.org) – Elder law and estate planning attorneys
- [ACTEC.org](http://ACTEC.org) – Estate law specialists
- More Estate Planning information from the [American Bar Association](http://American Bar Association)

### What to Ask a Lawyer:

- How long have you been practicing?
- Will you be my point of contact, or will it be someone else, such as a paralegal?
- How will you charge, and what is your rate (hourly vs. fixed rate)?
- Are any charges not included in that rate?

You may want to ask trusted friends and family, your accountant, broker or other professional advisor for recommendations. Or inquire at your local bank's trust department—trust officers frequently work with estate planners.





# How to Include a Gift to Charity

## Make Your Values Part of Your Legacy

*Including a gift to charity in your will is a simple, meaningful way to create lasting impact. It costs nothing during your lifetime and ensures your values live on.*

### Why BRAC USA?

Including BRAC USA in your legacy plans is more than just a reflection of your values—it's an investment in the most effective solutions to global poverty, rooted in dignity and powered by possibility.

By joining the *BRAC Futuremakers* legacy society, you become part of a global movement to unlock human potential. Your gift helps ensure that BRAC's work—empowering people and communities in situations of poverty, illiteracy, disease, and social injustice—continues to grow across Asia and Africa for generations to come.

### Ways to Give:

- **You can add BRAC USA to Your Will by designating:**
  - **Specific Amount:** "I give \$25,000 to BRAC USA."
  - **Percentage:** "I give 10% of my estate to BRAC USA."
  - **Remainder (Residuary):** "I give the remainder of my estate to BRAC USA."

#### Sample Legal Language for Your Will:

"I give [insert amount, percentage, or residue] to **BRAC USA**, a nonprofit organization located at 26 Broadway #348, New York, NY, 10004. **Federal Tax Identification Number: 20-8456741.**"

- **You can also name BRAC USA as a beneficiary for your IRA account or Donor-Advised Fund.**
  - Request a beneficiary designation form from your IRA custodian or DAF provider, listing BRAC USA as a beneficiary.
  - You can specify whether BRAC USA should receive all or a percentage of the account, or be a contingent beneficiary.

**Tip:** Naming a charity as your IRA beneficiary can be tax-smart, because a charity can typically receive the full amount *tax-free*, while heirs often owe income tax on what they withdraw.



# Thank You for Planning a Legacy That Lasts

If you choose to include BRAC USA in your plans, please let us know by filling out our [Bequest Intention Form](#). We'd be honored to thank you and welcome you into the *BRAC Futuremakers* legacy society.

- [legacy@bracusa.org](mailto:legacy@bracusa.org)
- [bracusa.org/legacy](http://bracusa.org/legacy)



*Your legacy becomes a lifeline for others—and a tribute to the values you hold most dear.*



# Frequently Asked Questions

- **Is my will permanent once it's written?**

No. Your will is a flexible legal document. You can change it at any time—especially after major life events like marriage, divorce, or the birth of a child.

- **How do I choose the right executor for my will?**

You can name your spouse, an adult child, or another trusted friend or relative as your executor, just be sure to pick someone trustworthy, organized, and willing to manage your affairs.

If your affairs are complicated, it might make more sense to name an attorney or someone with legal and financial expertise. You can also name joint executors, such as your spouse or partner and your attorney.

- **What's the difference between an executor and a power of attorney?**

The executor is the person you name in your will to manage your estate and carry out your wishes after you pass away. The power of attorney is someone you appoint to make financial or medical decisions on your behalf if you become unable to do so while you're still alive.

- **What happens if I die without a will?**

If you pass away without a will, state law determines how your assets are distributed, which may not reflect your wishes. Having a will gives you control and reduces stress for your loved ones.

- **What's the difference between a will and a living will?**

A will distributes your assets after death. A living will (or advance directive) explains your preferences for medical care if you're unable to speak for yourself. Both are important parts of estate planning.



- **How often does a will need to be updated?**

You may want to revisit your will at times of major life changes like marriage, divorce, the birth of a child, the death of a beneficiary or executor, a significant purchase or inheritance, etc.

A rule of thumb: Review your will every 2-3 years to be safe.

## FAQs on Legacy Gifts

- **What if I already have a will—can I still include BRAC USA?**

Yes. You can easily amend your existing will by adding a simple document called a codicil. Or, you can create a new will to reflect your current wishes.

- **Do I need to tell BRAC USA if I've included a gift?**

You don't have to, but [we'd love to know!](#) It allows us to thank you, welcome you into the *BRAC Futuremakers* legacy society, and plan for the future. ([legacy@bracusa.org](mailto:legacy@bracusa.org))

- **Is it better to give a specific amount or a percentage?**

Both are great options. A percentage (e.g., 5% of your estate) can offer more flexibility if your financial situation changes over time.

- **Will my gift to BRAC USA be used as I intend?**

Yes. Unless otherwise specified, your gift will support BRAC's mission where it's needed most. If you have a specific focus, we're happy to work with you on language that reflects your wishes.