



MARTIN BURT, 1994 PARAGUAY

Founder and Executive Director, Fundacion Paraguaya, General Secretary to the Presidency (Chief of Cabinet) President of Paraguay

“It is magical to show that the world need not be governed by greed but by humanism.” So says Martin Burt, referring to the much-touted success Fundacion Paraguaya has enjoyed in promoting financial literacy and eliminating poverty through entrepreneurship.



Nearly 30 years ago, in 1985, together with a group of visionary businessmen and professionals including Eisenhower Fellow, Guillermo Peroni, '70, Paraguay, Burt founded Fundacion Paraguaya. It was the country's first microfinance program and first development NGO. Working under a military dictatorship, the objective was to develop social innovations that could help create jobs and increase family income among the country's low income population.

Burt's expertise in developing young entrepreneurs was honed by the models for tackling poverty through market mechanisms which he discovered in China, Taiwan in 1993 and in the U.S. in 1994 traveling as an Eisenhower Fellow. While exchanging ideas with innovators, as well as his fellow Fellows, Burt deepened his perspectives of the common causes of poverty throughout the world. And as his insights into the importance of sustainable development grew, Burt found many compatriots who shared his vision of how to approach poverty elimination. Burt adapted these models when he served as mayor of Asuncion from 1996 to 2001.

As a pioneer in applying microfinance, microfranchise, youth entrepreneurship and financial literacy methodologies to address chronic poverty, Burt co-founded “Teach a Man to Fish”, one of the world's first financially self-sufficient agricultural schools for the rural poor. This self-sufficient school model is now being replicated by more than 50 organizations in 27 countries.

For his work in civil society, making highly effective contributions to social programs and creating a sustainable institution that has had a profound impact in the country for over two decades and now globally, as well as for his dedication to EF as a member of the Alumni Advisory Council and Paraguay Nominating Committee, Burt was awarded EF's Distinguished Alumnus Award in May, 2013.

Martin has also received the Microfinance Award for Excellence in Social Responsibility from the Inter-American Development Bank, the Outstanding Social Entrepreneur Award from the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, the Skoll Foundation Social Entrepreneur Award and the UNESCO Orbis Guaranicus Medal and Fundacion Paraguaya was awarded the Nestle Prize for Shared Value in 2012.

Martin truly believes that his Eisenhower Fellowship experience enabled him to further international understanding and peace and at the same time bring thousands of young people out of poverty and into a productive, sustainable livelihood.

Leaders bettering the world around them.