

ALEX COUNTS
PRESIDENT & CEO
GRAMEEN FOUNDATION



Alex Counts is President and CEO of Grameen Foundation, a dynamic Washington D.C.-based nonprofit organization focusing on enabling the poor, and especially the poorest, to create a world without poverty, utilizing the tools of microfinance and technology. GF has grown to a global network of microfinance and technology partners in more than 25 countries. Counts became Grameen Foundation's first chief executive in 1997, after ten years of working in microfinance and poverty reduction, including six years living and working in Bangladesh.

A 1988 Cornell University graduate, with a degree in economics, Counts' commitment to poverty eradication deepened as a 1988-9 Fulbright scholar in Bangladesh, where he witnessed dire poverty as well as the innovative solutions that had been developed and applied on a wide scale by the Grameen Bank and other members of the Grameen family of companies. He trained under and worked closely with **Dr. Muhammad Yunus**, the founder and managing director of the Grameen Bank, and the co-recipient of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize.

Counts founded Grameen Foundation (www.grameenfoundation.org) in 1997 with a mere \$6,000 in seed capital and a charge from Dr. Yunus. This new organization was to play the role of catalyst, channeling human, financial and technological resources in the United States to support the growth of the poverty-focused microfinance movement internationally.

Grameen Foundation's annual budget has grown in each year of its existence, from \$100,000 in 1997 to over \$22 million ten years later, and since inception it has mobilized more than \$200 million* in support of its poverty-reduction programs. Its breakthrough impact has been chronicled in the *Economist* and elsewhere.

Counts has propelled Grameen Foundation's philosophy and approach through his writings on poverty and microcredit for the poor. His latest work, *Small Loans, Big Dreams: How Nobel Prize Winner Muhammad Yunus and Microfinance Are Changing the World*, was published by John Wiley & Sons in April 2008. He is also the author of *Give Us Credit: How Muhammad Yunus' Microlending Revolution is Empowering Women from Bangladesh to Chicago*, which was published by Random House in 1996. The Indian edition of this book was the inspiration behind the establishment of Grameen Koota, a microfinance institution in Bangalore, India, that was serving 110,000 women as of June 2007. He has been published in the *Washington Post*, the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Miami Herald*, the *Christian Science Monitor* and elsewhere.

Counts serves on the Board of Directors similar governing bodies of many poverty-focused institutions. He chairs the board of Project Enterprise in New York City, and is vice-chair of the board of Fonkoze USA, which supports microfinance in Haiti. He is a member of the Advisory Council of the Center for Financial Inclusion at Accion International and is Co-Chair of the Microenterprise Coalition, a network of U.S.-based organizations working to promote more supportive policies for microfinance.

In addition to working with Grameen Bank in 1988-89 and 1992-1994, he served for three years as the legislative director of RESULTS, an international grassroots citizen's lobbying group working to create the political will to end hunger that has played a leading role in advocating for increased funding and better targeting of resources to support global health, education and microfinance initiatives. He also served as a regional project manager for CARE-Bangladesh for two years.

In 2007, he received the Horace Mann Alumni Association's Award for Distinguished Achievement.

Counts speaks Bengali and lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife Emily and cat, Seymour.

**Figure accurate as of October 2008*

Note: This biographical sketch can be used for introducing Alex. It does not have to be read in its entirety.

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