



MUHAMMAD YUNUS (BORN 1940)

Economist and Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus has become internationally renowned for his revolutionary system of *micro-credit*—the extension of small loans to entrepreneurs too poor to qualify for traditional bank loans—that has helped millions to escape poverty.



Born in 1940 in the seaport city of Chittagong, Bangladesh, Yunus' life is motivated by his vision of a world without poverty. It began in 1976 when he saw village basket weavers living in abject poverty despite their skill. Considered poor credit risks, the artisans were forced to borrow money at high interest rates to purchase bamboo and made no profit after repaying moneylenders. From his own pocket, Yunus made a loan of \$27 to a group of women who repaid the funds and, for the first time, made a small profit. Yunus realized that by means of tiny loans and financial services, he could help the poor free themselves from poverty.

In 1983 he established the Grameen Bank (Village Bank), founded on his conviction that credit is a fundamental human right. In a quarter of a century, the bank has stood as the flagship of a 100-country network of similar institutions enabling millions to escape poverty through individual economic empowerment. Professor Yunus is a member of the board of the United Nations Foundation and the recipient of numerous international awards for his humanitarian endeavors.

“Here we were talking about economic development, about investing billions of dollars in various programs, and I could see it wasn’t billions of dollars people needed right away.”

MUHAMMAD YUNUS