Conversation with Martín Burt

In this People First Talk, we explored approaches to activate agency and leadership from within communities using the innovative Poverty Stoplight tool. Watch the talk here.

Key ideas

- With the prevalence of technology, families who are living in poverty now have the capability to measure and assess their own poverty. This shifts the paradigm away from a top-down approach to one that honors the agency that exists within these families & communities.

- The Poverty Stoplight activates the potential of families to lift themselves out of poverty. Using simple technology, it offers a self-assessment survey with 50 indicators and an intervention model that enables people to develop practical solutions to overcome their own challenges.

- These bottom-up metrics illuminate the fact that each family may be doing well on some dimensions and not so well on other dimensions, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of “who is poor” and a more tailored approach to forming solutions.

- When the family owns their data, they have the agency to reflect and take action; instead of top-down national development plans, families create their own development plans.

- Albert Bandura, a psychologist from Stanford University, said that for people to change, they have to answer two questions: (1) Is it worth it? (agency) and (2) Can I do it? (self-efficacy)

- Agency is not only for individuals, there has to be social agency. Peer pressure and group support can accelerate motivation and action.

- For every challenge, there are positive deviants. This allows for the creation of solution banks that are built on real solutions that some families have found have worked for them.

Martín Burt
Founder & CEO,
Poverty Stoplight,
& Fundación Paraguaya

“There is no substitute to empowering the head of a household. You already know what they’re doing without resources and tools, but empower that woman with information and agency, the head of a household who is empowered is unbeatable.”

Coming up next

Our next People First Talk will be with Safeena Husain, Founder of Educate Girls on August 3rd at 9:00 a.m. EDT / 2:00 p.m. BST / 6:30 p.m. IST. You can register for the talk here.

For more information on the People First Community and effort, please visit peoplefirstdev.org or sign-up here.
To connect directly with Martin, reach out at: martin@povertystoplight.org