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An interview with Professor Paul L. Miller, Executive Director

What inspired you to lead the Stanford Institute for Innovation in Developing Economies (SEED)?

Design for Extreme Affordability is intended to improve the lives of the world's poor. The problems these poor face are quite different from those of the middle class. The solutions that we are considering are intended to improve health and education, clean water, sanitation—and these are all examples of quality of life that can significantly improve the well-being of people in developing countries.

What does the SEED strategy look like?

SEED's strategy is to help entrepreneurs succeed in emerging economies. We help build businesses and entrepreneurial ecosystems in parts of Africa and South Asia where we believe SEED can make a difference. We are integrating a lot of that feedback into our strategy and plans in ways that will enhance the effectiveness of our programs.

What attracted you to lead the Stanford Institute for Innovation in Developing Economies (SEED)?

I joined the Stanford Institute for Innovation in Developing Economies (SEED) because the mission was compelling. As a former executive in the Fortune 100, an entrepreneur and high-level scale-up executive, I was looking for meaningful ways to help solve the world's greatest problems.

You often start conversations by asking what poverty means. What does it mean to SEED?

For SEED, poverty means deprivation. It affects billions of people across the world. It is not just about a lack of income or per capita GDP. It is about the broad confines of health, education, clean water, sanitation, and many other factors that impact the well-being of people. Poverty is a complex topic and involves a wide range of issues. It is not just a single indicator that can characterize the condition of a country or a region.