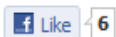


The enterprising woman

wowElle

Elizabeth Scharpf's SHE is awarded the 2010 Curry Stone Design Prize for her innovative line of banana-leaf based sanitary pads

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Sustainable Health Enterprises (SHE) has been awarded the 2010 Curry Stone Design Prize for development of a locally-produced and distributed sanitary pad that enhances women's dignity and allows better access to education and occupation. In numerous developing countries, the stigma of menstruation is exacerbated by the lack of adequate, affordable sanitary devices, often keeping girls and women away from school and work for days or even weeks during a year. The Curry Stone Design Prize is an annual prize awarded to an individual or group for developing and implementing a visionary design solution that addresses social justice needs in the area of access to shelter, health care, clean air, clean water, clean food, education and peace. [The Curry Stone Design Prize](#) makes a "no strings attached" award of \$100,000 to its annual winner.

Currently, girls and women in this setting—if they have an option at all—turn to premium priced international brands which are too costly to sustain (e.g., in Rwanda, of the girls who miss school, 36% of them miss because pads are too expensive). Alternatively, they turn to rags which, in combination with a lack of a clean accessible water supply, are unhygienic and potentially harmful, let alone ineffective to contain leakage. SHE's goal is to tackle the taboo and the stigma of menstruation in a multi-faceted, "quilt-like" approach involving advocacy and education, as well as the promotion of a local business model based on the sustainably designed pad.



Elizabeth Scharpf is the founder of [SHE](#) (*its Chief Instigating Officer as she describes herself*) and an entrepreneur who has spent most of her professional career starting up ventures or advising businesses on growth strategies in the health care industry. She has spent time as a strategic management consultant at Cambridge Pharma Consultancy as well as stints at the Clinton Foundation and the World Bank in Asia and



East Africa, respectively. Elizabeth has an MBA from Harvard Business School, an MPA in international development from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and a BA from the University of Notre Dame. Despite all the academic acronyms, she thinks her best education has come from talking with those sitting next to her on buses around the world. SHE's origins were a logical outcome to Scharpf's graduate studies at Harvard's Business School and its Kennedy School of Government.

Scharpf learned about the issues limiting women's access to education and work through a World Bank program she studied in Mozambique and the perspective of fellow Harvard students from developing countries, such as Bangladesh. "A huge impetus for me to start SHE was to get away from the charity model" of addressing issues in the developing world, she says.

Working with a range of people and organizations in Rwanda for the past two years, SHE has addressed the stigma of menstruation on several fronts. SHE has advocated for more government support for access to women's sanitary devices, educated individual and groups of Rwandans about basic aspects of women's health and how they can be improved, developed a cost-effective prototype of a sanitary pad made from banana tree fibers, and started the organization of a franchise-based micro capital business model to distribute these pads once they are in regular production.



SHE has expanded to include partners now working in Rwanda full-time, along with technical assistance or product development from the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology, North Carolina State's program in medical fiber technology, and M.I.T. Scharpf describes both SHE's team and its efforts as a "quilt:" diverse people and talents working towards larger ideals to improve opportunity for half the world's population. She hopes the model in Rwanda can be expanded to other countries and areas over

time. Scharpf describes her idea of success for SHE in Rwanda as the point at which, "I'm driven out of a job."

Scharpf and SHE have already been recognized on a number of fronts.

MIT awarded the project a Legatum Seed Grant, and it was included at the Clinton Global Initiative in 2009. Scharpf became Harvard Business School's first Social Enterprise Fellow, and the Presidential Innovation Award from the Global Fund for Children.

Elizabeth Scharpf speaks about SHE's latest initiative, the SHE 28 Program which will provide the spark to a new sustainable economic model in Africa.



A very inspiring and insightful interview that Elizabeth Scharpf had with the [Unreasonable Institute](#) on what it takes to be a Social Entrepreneur in its fullest sense and her vision of making SHE the spark of change.

