Would Paul Farmer like BanaPads?  
An Assessment of Social Enterprise as a Women’s Health Intervention  
Caroline de Bie  
Public Health Major, Chemistry and Biology Minors  
Mentor: Keith Douglass Warner OFM  
Reader: Laura Chyu

**Abstract**
The social enterprise BanaPads Limited fulfills many of the criteria of a successful intervention as laid out by Paul Farmer and goes a step further by focusing on other key issues like women’s entrepreneurship, women’s rights, and the value of peer-to-peer last-mile distribution.

**Dr. Paul Farmer**
Global Health Expert

Paul Farmer has dedicated his life to ensuring that everyone receives the health services that they need. His organization, Partners in Health, has dozens of clinics in several countries including Haiti, Rwanda, Mexico and Malawi and has directly served over 2.5 million people.

**Farmer’s Criteria for Successful Public Health Interventions**

- **Development**
  People need to consider development on a local level, partnering with officials to reduce corruption and reform aid.

- **Human Rights**
  There needs to be a shift in the way we talk about human rights to include the rights of the poor.

- **Public Goods for Public Health**
  Some things shouldn’t be reserved for those who can afford it.

BanaPads is a social enterprise in Mpigi, Uganda that manufactures and sells low-cost sanitary pads made from banana pseudostem fibers. They hire women to produce and sell the pads to girls and women in their community. The mission is to keep girls from missing school due to menstruation and to provide a livelihood for women.

**Activities**

- Employ women  
- Sell pads to girls  
- Menstruation education  
- Community Partnerships

**Outputs**

- Hundreds of Champions  
- Thousands of pads sold  
- Dozens of workshops held  
- Connected with churches & schools

**Outcomes**

- Women can spend money on family  
- Girls stay in school  
- Break silence around menstruation  
- Increased trust for BanaPads

**Impact**

- Reduced poverty  
- More women in Universities  
- Greater female autonomy  
- Stronger community

**Social Enterprise as a Public Health Intervention**
The ideals of women’s entrepreneurship, actualized women’s rights and peer-to-peer last-mile distribution suggest that more can be done beyond Farmer’s proposals and that social entrepreneurship can be an effective mode of public health delivery.

**Conclusion**
As advocated by Paul Farmer, BanaPads is working towards development and human rights. But the BanaPads model suggests the public-goods-for-public-health paradigm does not work for every health intervention.

**References**