

In conversation with multiple global award-winning humanitarian, Dr Shamila Ramjawan



By [Johannes Masiteng](#)

7 Sep 2021

Throughout her illustrious career, she has been recognised multiple times for her humanitarian work, both locally and globally. But this time around, entrepreneur and humanitarian Dr Shamila Ramjawan (h.c.) has been recognised by the United States President Joe Biden for her outstanding contributions in making a societal impact globally.



Dr Shamila Ramjawan (h.c.) | Source: Supplied

Dr Ramjawan is currently a business management lecturer at the University of South Africa (Unisa) and a global women empowerment speaker who focuses on personal branding, mentoring and coaching.

She earned an honorary doctorate of humanitarianism from the Global International Alliance (GIA) programme for her humanitarian work across the globe. Ramjawan is the founder and CEO of Famram Solutions and the Famram Foundation, an NGO formed to provide CSI solutions that enhance socio-economic development in deeply impoverished areas.

Bizcommunity caught up with Ramjawan to find out more about her career, philanthropic work, accomplishments as well as her product, the PrincessD Menstrual Cup.

 ***Tell us a bit about yourself and your background.***

Dr Shamila Ramjawan (h.c.): I am the former Mrs Johannesburg 2019 as well as an accomplished multiple global award-winning entrepreneur.

When I was 34 years old in 1998, my husband was struck with a sudden heart attack and passed on. This left me as a young widow to fend for myself and take care of my two young children.

Although distraught and enduring this tragic and sudden loss, I decided that I needed to continue studying to be able to support myself and my children. And the only way to face the real world and take care of them was to further my education.

My most prized asset is the knowledge I gained over the years and I am a firm believer in the saying “knowledge is power”. I’ve earned several qualifications and I am currently at the tail-end of my doctoral degree. Acquiring knowledge through these qualifications and life experiences has equipped me to become a powerhouse entrepreneur.

“ From humble beginnings, I know what it is ‘not to have’. I believe that my purpose is to give back to the impoverished. My philanthropic interests lie in changing lives and making a sustainable difference and an impact, regardless of how small the gesture is. It’s all about putting smiles on faces. ”

■ **What are your most recent philanthropic and humanitarian activities?**

Dr Ramjawan: With my continuous and admirable work in communities, I earned the ‘Play Your Part’ Ambassadorship for Brand South Africa.

Continually searching for the silver lining and making the best of any situation I find myself in, I started my own talk show, *Red Corner Show* during the Covid-19 pandemic, where real life stories are shared by people from across the globe, focussing on empowerment.

For Women’s Month 2021 and celebrating the *Red Corner Show*’s first birthday, I invited 31 inspirational women on 31 days in August from across the globe to share their stories of resilience, endurance and success on my show. To date, over 150 people from across the globe have been featured on my show which is co-hosted by my daughter, Daksha Ramjawan.



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I have contributed financially to organisations towards feeding schemes for the victims of the recent unrest in Kwa-Zulu Natal from my own non-profit organisation, Famram Foundation, which is family-owned.

Hailing from humble beginnings where I mainly grew up in hand-me-down second-hand clothing from family members, I heeded the call from Dr Pashy Foundation for people to donate clothes. I also contribute to ad hoc projects managed through my foundation.

■ **What motivates you to do volunteer and humanitarian work?**

Dr Ramjawan: As Mahatma Gandhi states: “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others”. This resonates with who I am as a person.

“ I believe that my passion and purpose is to serve those around me. One of the most common motivational factors I have come across is the desire to give something back and help others. ”

For me, it is a sense of fulfilment.

■ **You are the founder of Famram Solutions and Famram Foundation, tell us more about these two companies.**

Dr Ramjawan: I have two registered companies, Famram Solutions and the Famram Foundation, a self-funded family organisation that empowers, uplifts and provides CSI solutions to enhance socio-economic development in the deeply impoverished areas.

My companies were conceptualised from the realisation that the development of a better way of life for the less fortunate in Africa is a step in the right direction for the betterment of our beautiful continent.

I encourage funding and sponsorships for educational programmes, resources and products from government and corporates that decisively impact the quality of lives in rural communities.



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■ **In 2016, you launched the PrincessD Menstrual Cup. Tell us more about this product and how it is keeping rural girls and young women in the classrooms.**

Dr Ramjawan: The aim for creating the PrincessD Menstrual Cup, which is reusable for 10 years, was to help disadvantaged rural girls, but we found that all girls and women who menstruate are able to benefit from this healthy, hygienic, environmentally-friendly, cost-effective and sustainable solution.

The PrincessD Menstrual Cup lasts for 10 years and equates to just under R2,50 per month. One menstrual cup is equivalent to approximately 3,000 - 5,000 sanitary pads/tampons over a 10-year cycle.

Our combo pack comprises a menstrual cup and a compact, foldable silicone steriliser cup. At the end of the menstrual cycle, only 200ml of boiling water is required per month to sterilise the PrincessD menstrual cup for 15 minutes!

To date, the product has been accepted very well globally in over 22 countries, and there has been lots of brand exposure through the charity work that I embark on.



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■ ***How has the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns affected your work as both an entrepreneur and humanitarian?***

Dr Ramjawan: The Covid-19 pandemic has had profound implications on my business, work as well as studies. Due to the lockdown measures in schools, we could not enter school premises to hand out PrincessD Menstrual Cups.

It is quite sad that many girls do not have sanitary products and this surely had an effect on them. God knows what they used during that time of the month. It also affected our exports because all international borders were closed.

■ ***US president Joe Biden recently honoured you for your volunteer work with a Lifetime Achievement Award. What does this mean to you?***

Dr Ramjawan:

“ Receiving lifetime achievement awards is a big honour. It is only given to the best of the best. ”

The President of the United States, Joe Biden, awarded this award to me for my outstanding vision, dedication, commitment, and contributions in making a societal impact in the lives of people, not just in South Africa but across the globe.

My special thanks to ambassador Lenora Pieterse from the Global International Alliance (GIA) that nominated me for the award. Receiving this award got me in tears as I could not believe that I was holding a certificate that came from the US President's office and signed by him!

This is very special and I will always treasure this award as I have made history - A first for South Africa. I am so proud to put my beautiful country on the map on numerous occasions for my selfless humanitarian work.

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📌 **What advice would you give to girls and young women?**

Dr Ramjawan: In order to grow, one needs to have patience because we deal with a different calibre of people throughout our careers. Having said that, I remained positive throughout many negative situations and surfaced with great success.

Women and girls are strong. We can overcome anything. Never give up. We all have fallen and jumped up again, so pick yourself up and be proud to be a woman. Take calculated risks and get rid of the fear of failure symptoms because hard work eventually pays off.

As individual women, we can break our own personal glass ceiling and rise to meet the success we deserve. But, as a community, we can uplift others, helping them to build their own staircase to prosperity.

I leave you with this:

“ Never let anyone tell you that the sky is your limit because it is not. We are limitless. ”

ABOUT JOHANNES MASITENG

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