

For More Information:

Julie Staadecker
Cone
(617) 939-8427
jstaadecker@coneinc.com

Stephanie Martinovich
Lemelson-MIT Program
(617) 258-0632
smartino@mit.edu

**SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR AND BUILD CHANGE FOUNDER HONORED FOR
EARTHQUAKE-RESISTANT HOUSING INNOVATION****\$100,000 Lemelson-MIT Award for Sustainability Awarded to Dr. Elizabeth Hausler for Culturally Accepted, Sustainable Reconstruction in Developing Countries**

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (May 10, 2011) – The [Lemelson-MIT Program](#) today announced [Dr. Elizabeth Hausler](#) as the recipient of the 2011 \$100,000 [Lemelson-MIT Award for Sustainability](#) in recognition of her engineering accomplishments and creation of a model that establishes sustainable earthquake-resistant housing in the developing world. Hausler, CEO and Founder of [Build Change](#), shaped a reconstruction solution to combat building collapses during natural disasters, which can potentially save thousands of lives.

A lack of building standards in many developing countries can lead to poorly designed and constructed homes that collapse when earthquakes strike, displacing, injuring and killing people. The 2010 earthquake in Haiti alone claimed hundreds of thousands of lives when the 7.0 magnitude tremor crumbled homes into rubble.¹ Knowing there was a simple solution to this man-made problem, Hausler created a six-step process for home reconstruction that yields sturdy, economically and culturally feasible buildings which she has been implementing since 2004.

Empowering Homeowners to Rebuild

Build Change's model is based on simplicity. Beginning with a thorough examination of a region's unsafe housing issues, Hausler's team makes slight adjustments to the original building construction plans rather than overhauling an area's traditional architectural structure. Build Change then helps community members work with locally available materials and labor to rebuild. The outcome is a cost-effective, easily modified, and most importantly, culturally accepted construction method the homeowner adopts and understands.

Build Change homes cost anywhere from \$3,000 to \$17,000 less than similar structures built in donor-driven environments. Despite the clear benefits, many communities are rooted in custom and therefore resistant to change. As a solution, Build Change educates and trains anyone who will play a role in the rebuilding process, including homeowners themselves, materials vendors, engineers and builders. The nonprofit also works with local governments to instruct officials on the technology, helping to enforce the reconstruction model as a new building standard, reducing community resistance and leading to further implementation.

“Dr. Hausler's work proves that the wheel doesn't need to be re-invented. Innovation as a result of smart improvements to existing technologies can be equally effective. Elizabeth is a remarkable example of someone whose work is a catalyst for wide-scale adoption by using a model that is economically and socially sustainable,” states Joshua Schuler, executive director of the Lemelson-MIT Program. “She realizes that local people will use only what skilled labor and materials are readily available in their

¹ United States Geological Survey, January 2010,
<http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/recenteqsww/Quakes/us2010rja6.php#summary>

communities to build their homes. Leveraging that knowledge, and coupling it with her engineering aptitude and ability to teach, she has transformed the standard donor-driven model of post-earthquake reconstruction.”

Currently, Build Change has improved the design and construction of nearly 20,000 homes, impacting more than 73,000 people in China, Haiti and Indonesia. The organization has partnered with some of the world’s largest relief agencies, including Mercy Corps, Oxfam and Save the Children.

Hausler also realizes the importance of acting as a role model in order to encourage future inventors and social entrepreneurs. She has a passion for teaching and spends time abroad training the staff and residents in Build Change communities on safer building technology. She stresses the need to use these skills that work hand-in-hand with creativity and innovation to make real and sustainable change in the developing world.

“Winning the Lemelson-MIT Award for Sustainability is an honor. Shedding light on Build Change will help us show other agencies more lasting approaches to post-disaster reconstruction and convince governments to enforce building codes and systems that are easy to implement and more sustainable,” claims Hausler. She advises young inventors to spend time in the field, working with local people and asking questions that are vital to determining the best way to build and distribute a product or method.

A distinguished panel of scientists, technologists, engineers and entrepreneurs selected Hausler as the winner of the prestigious award, which honors individuals whose technological innovations improve the lives of impoverished people in the developing world, in addition to being economically viable and scalable. Hausler will accept the award and present her work to the public at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology during the Lemelson-MIT Program’s fifth-annual [EurekaFest](#), a multi-day celebration of the inventive spirit, June 15 – 18, 2011.

Seeking Nominees for 2012 \$100,000 Lemelson-MIT Award for Global Innovation

Moving forward, this award will be renamed to better reflect its recent focus on individuals whose technological innovations improve the lives of impoverished people in the developing world. The award will continue to seek nominees who can inspire youth to solve challenges in the areas of basic human needs and sustainable livelihoods for the world's poorest populations. Nomination information for the 2012 \$100,000 Lemelson-MIT Award for Global Innovation is now available at <http://web.mit.edu/invent/a-award.html>.

ABOUT THE LEMELSON-MIT PROGRAM

Celebrating innovation, inspiring youth

The Lemelson-MIT Program celebrates outstanding innovators and inspires young people to pursue creative lives and careers through invention.

Jerome H. Lemelson, one of U.S. history’s most prolific inventors, and his wife Dorothy founded the Lemelson-MIT Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1994. It is funded by The Lemelson Foundation and administered by the School of Engineering. The Foundation sparks, sustains and celebrates innovation and the inventive spirit. It supports projects in the U.S. and developing countries that nurture innovators and unleash invention to advance economic, social and environmentally sustainable development. To date The Lemelson Foundation has donated or committed more than U.S. \$150 million in support of its mission. <http://web.mit.edu/invent/>

###