

A guide to starting a B4H Chapter

Overview

Bicycles for Humanity (B4H) is a grassroots network of local groups or chapters in developed countries that aims to empower the people of Africa by helping them solve the basic problem of mobility. A bicycle allows a healthcare worker to visit 3 to 4 times the number of patients in a day, it allows a mother to transport water and get her goods to market. For students living a long way from schools, it allows them more time and energy for studies and helping at home.

B4H Chapters come together to collect bicycles and ship them to community based organizations in Africa. Bicycles are loaded in 40 ft containers which are delivered to the partner organizations, where they remain and are run as community bicycle workshops, which we call Bicycle Empowerment Centres (BECs). All bikes are distributed locally, providing mobility to healthcare workers and other community members. BECs are also supplied with tools and trained locals provide valuable maintenance services.

Empowerment in Africa is the ultimate goal, but as a grassroots network, B4H can also empower members of your community by getting involved and helping others in a direct and tangible way. Our projects are very rewarding on many fronts. Firstly, we believe that it should be fun, every team has their own unique style and each group's approach is different and exciting. Recognizing that there is a learning curve, the growing B4H family is developing a number of tools to help you and your team to get going easily and efficiently.

What is Grassroots?

Often when assisting an organization that works in developing countries, supporters are not sure exactly where their funds go, and rarely have any direct input into projects on the ground. Each B4H chapter has the opportunity of knowing the partner organization in Africa and is able to communicate with them to help understand their needs. Each chapter also defines the fund raising initiatives and bike



Bob and Brenda Burchell head the Cambridge chapter, pictured here during their first container loading.



A BEC in Namibia. This one is run by an orphan support group called TOV.

collection strategy. You and your team handle all aspects and are free to take it in whatever direction you wish, raising funds as you see fit and knowing that all money raised goes directly to the costs associated with sending the BEC, and not a cent to any organizational or administrative costs beyond your control.

Bicycles For Humanity's Role

Today's internet age allows us to link, share ideas and directly help others thousands of miles away. Organizing fund-raising, collecting bikes and following the journey of the container and how the bikes change lives is the fun and rewarding part. Drawing on the experiences of B4H Chapters to date, we have summarized as much of the administrative, 'getting started' and operational issues as possible to help you start organizing in your community as soon as possible. This is an evolving document and we've tried to address the issues in the order you are most likely to experience them.

B4H Web site

At the Bicycles for Humanity website you will notice on the left side links to the various chapters. We will provide your group a link and a templated website which we will populate with all pertinent material related to your initiative. As press announcements and radio, print and TV broad-

casts happen, we will link them into your site and into the main updates and spotlight sections. We also have photo galleries that we will populate and link to your site and to the main B4H site. All of this is free of charge to your chapter and it will always be no matter how many times you want to change it or update it. We will also provide you with all of the B4H email addresses you need. Our webmaster is Ryan Lanctot and Ryan can be reached at rlanctot@shaw.ca

Humanity Image and Limited Edition prints

You will notice on the home page the Humanity Image at the top, painted and donated to B4H by Liz Woodside. Please feel free to copy, duplicate or use this image in any way you think best to help you market what you are doing. We also produced a limited edition print of 1000 all signed and numbered by Liz and we will send as many as you need to help with fund-raising. Some chapters have been giving the prints away for donations of \$100 or more. We also still have a limited supply of posters and cards left with the image on them. Many chapters have packaged the cards and given them out as thank-yous for donations. We have the very high resolution digitized TIF file, and if anyone is interested in creating their own fund-raising product, we will send the file to you.



T-shirts, hats, cards,

With the wonderful Humanity Image and Logo created by Liz, groups have been able to create many exciting fund raising products and all groups are keen to share their products with you. There will be a cost to each of these items and it will be whatever it cost the chapter to produce. If you can think of other products, please go ahead, the more the merrier. If you would like to know more about what others have done or if the idea has been tried, please contact me at pat@bicycles-for-humanity.org

Humanity Rocks, The Song

Near the bottom of the home page on the left, you will notice the Humanity Rocks button. Julie Masi, a hugely talented artist like Liz wrote a theme song for Bicycles for Humanity called Humanity rocks. It's free to download http://www.bicycles-for-humanity.org/Humanity_Rocks_Song.php and please copy it, use it and send it out to whoever you think might want to hear it, it's simply amazing. Our hope is that someday a recording artist finds us, hears the song and decides to put it on an album or do a concert to help generate awareness to the role of a bicycle and the funds needed to get them to Africa.

With a website, Limited Edition Prints, Posters and a theme song, your initiative has a good start on the branding, image and platform to get your message out into your community. The arts are a very powerful way to tell a story and thanks to the efforts of Liz Woodside and Julie Masi, we have the ability to tell the story on many levels reaching many senses.

Partnering in Africa

Several years ago, I met Michael Linke just as he was founding the Bicycling Empowerment Network Namibia (BEN Namibia). Michael and his wife Clarisse have done an incredible job finding qualified partners, training mechanics and ensuring that programs on the African side run efficiently and professionally. Rescuing bikes from the landfill or people's basements is great, but when your team is partnered with an African community that you can communicate with, get to know the people and understand their needs and challenges, well, it simply takes all we are doing to a whole new level and brings meaning to the efforts of your team. We have many exciting partnerships in Namibia and Uganda and Michael and Clarisse will help you find a partner and begin to communicate who that partner is, their needs and as the project evolves, help with the feedback and flow on pictures and information from our partner. The efforts of Michael and Clarisse are key to solving the mobility problem plaguing all of Africa and we simply believe together, using creativity, energy and a lot of grassroots know-how, we can all make the world a bit of a better place. Michael can be reached at michael@bicycles-for-humanity.org.

Today we are in Namibia where there is a huge need, but this year we will also be branching into Uganda. As the B4H team grows globally we will look at projects in other countries, Zambia being the most likely next one, being close to Namibia.

Now that you have a team coming together in your community and a partner in Africa the next step becomes organizing, holding the fund-raising events to pay for the container and the shipping of it and making it happen. There are many things that you will need to know and hopefully we can answer many in the next sections.



Liz Woodside's
Humanity image

Getting Started

Mentoring

It looks like a daunting task, but with a communications infrastructure in place and a partner community in Namibia, you are on the way to making it happen. Every chapter last year had to learn a lot of it on their own, with Michael, I and the early chapter partners like Steve in Thunder Bay, Terry in Brampton, Seb in Ottawa, Scott in Vancouver, Bob and Brenda in Cambridge learning a lot of it on the fly. This year, our hope is that mentors from within the established chapters will each help one or two other chapters through the process, answering the questions and giving advice learned the hard way. Our goal is to take all that is new and continually build our knowledge database.

Fund-raising

To send a container or BEC to Africa, there are 2 major costs, buying the container and shipping it there. We have great partners and connections in the shipping industry, but unfortunately we still have to pay. To give



All BEC partners in Africa receive training in bicycle mechanics so that the bikes can be maintained and new jobs created.

you an idea, we send 40 ft high cube containers, the extra foot over a normal container allows for an extra row of bikes to be loaded, bringing the number of bikes to around 400. A container costs around \$2500. Shipping to Africa is around \$5-\$7000 depending on where you are located, bringing the total cost to between \$8 and \$10,000. There are many ways to raise the funds and all this part of the process is a lot of fun. We suggest that after your team has come together you begin to think about how you want to raise the funds in your community.

Tax Status

B4H does not have charitable tax status. The prime reason being, we are now starting chapters in four countries: Canada, the States, the UK and Australia, with even more on the cards for 2008. Each country has different tax laws, so the idea of us registering in Canada did not make a lot of sense. We have however come up with a number of creative ideas to help you with your fundraising efforts.

Aids Action groups in your community

Almost every community has an Aids Action group that has charitable tax status. Last year we partnered with Living Positive Resource Centre and Thunder Bay Aids. They were more than happy in that our actions also helped them get their message out in the local community and with our focus on Aids education, hospice and delivery of drugs, it fit nicely with the local goals of the Aids Action Groups.

Churches and Civic Groups

Every church has charitable tax status as well as all Rotary, Kiwanis and other civic groups. Talking to them and bringing them on board is another way to gain tax status. In the States, it is much easier than in Canada and our chapter in Colorado is going through the process as is Joseph in Boston. If you have any questions in this area, give me a call or drop me an email.

Fundraising Events

In a very short time, we have seen a number of exciting and interesting ways to raise the funds. Selling prints is a great way to get going, but we have also had a number of Humanity Rocks Concerts: local bands putting on a fundraising concert, donating their time. Other events have included Celebration of Friends parties, wine and cheese events, children's art for sale in malls, bike rides you name it, let your imagination run wild but have fun first and foremost.

Corporate

This is an area that I think will be very valuable to the fundraising cause both here and in Africa. Corporations are looking for ways to show they care, that they are involved in sustainable, humanitarian and environmentally friendly projects. They need it for their image, their annual report and to make people aware of their products and services. With the amount of media you will receive there is a great deal of value to a corporate supporter.

Media

The media simply loves this initiative and radio, print and TV will give you all the time you need. It is a great story for them because it's local, global, sustainable, environmentally friendly, grassroots, involves a lot of people and shows compassion and caring. Once you know what you want to do, and when, through the various aspects of the project, fund-raising, collecting bikes or informing them of where the bikes are, the local and national media will be very supportive.

Logistics

Now that your team is organized, the website is up, you have an African partner, fund-raising has started, the next phase is planning and executing a Bike Collection and loading the container. Having a storage facility to collect and prep the bikes is ideal, but in a lot of communities this is not possible. To this end we have developed a just in time distribution model where the container arrives the first day of the collection, and bikes are collected over a one or two day period, prepped and loaded. This model requires a bit more planning but it has worked out very well for a number of chapters. We will be updating in greater detail this section over the next few weeks.

Container and Shipping

All containers going to Africa are shipped from the east coast, Montreal, Halifax or Newark, New Jersey and are delivered there by rail. With access to wholesale used container companies and shipping lines, we generally go to them a few months before the collection for pricing. The prices generally tend to hold, as they will commit. A number of us have experience in this area, and when the time comes, we will assist you in establishing the relationships.

Many of the chapters also have contacts in these areas locally and they have been able to do incredible things to reduce price. My suggestion is to seek out local suppliers of both containers and shipping services and we can also get you in touch with the contacts we have.

Organizing a Bike collection

Once a date is established and the media made aware, a funny thing will happen, bikes will just begin to appear and

the key is to cut it off at 400. We really emphasize mountain bikes, as bikes with narrow tires are of little value in rural areas with sandy, thorny tracks. With the evolution of the mountain bike to full suspension and disc brakes, there are literally millions of old solid frame mountain bikes sitting in basements and garages. These bikes along with all old tires, tubes, and working spare parts of all kinds are pure gold in Africa. You will often find that your local bike shops will be more than happy to collect working spare parts if you collect them regularly.

Loading a Container

This is a science and we are finalizing a separate manual that details how to do this. When organizing volunteers, there are three main groups needed when managing a collection. The first group thanks the people for donating their bike, listens to the stories of what the bike meant to them and receives any cash donations from those donating bikes. A second group preps and loads the bikes into the container. This requires 2 people per bikes to be efficient and a prepped bike has the handlebars turned in the direction of the wheel, the pedals removed and tied to the frame, seat lowered and any baskets taken off. With the bike now reduced to a low and narrow profile it is ready to be loaded. Bikes are loaded in rows starting at the back with each bike pointed in the opposite direction to its neighbor. Bikes are loaded three rows on top of each other and all spare parts, soccer gear etc. is packed between the bikes as they are loaded. A well packed row can hold 19 bikes across. When the last bikes are loaded in, the doors closed, it's time to celebrate a job well done.

Summary

I know this is very basic, but it gives you an idea of the various pieces and tasks. From experience we have found that it is fun, your community will get behind it, it's a great way to meet new people in your community and in doing so build community pride in knowing that everyone who helped, donated a bike or donated funds to send the bikes to Africa made a difference and that everyone can feel proud of what they have accomplished.

Contacts

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Chapter contacts:

see www.bicycles-for-humanity.org 'chapters and partners' in left hand column.