

Windhoek, 3 July 2006

Dear Pat and friends,

I'm writing to thank you all for your work in collecting and shipping the first container of bikes from Bicycles for Humanity to Namibia. Having volunteered at the collection end in the UK I know what a huge undertaking it is.

Each of you gave up your own time to participate in this great community activity, and I would like you to think about the impact of your time on the Namibians who will receive the bikes.

Assume that of the 412 bicycles you loaded, 350 are distributed to HIV/AIDS home based carers, low income earners commuting to work, students riding to school, women in villages carrying water, food and firewood and people running businesses like deliv-



Above: The bikes are unloaded and sorted into different categories to help speed the inventory and storage process. Left: BEN Namibia mechanic Jonas Lazarus takes a breather during unloading.

ery services based on the use of the bike itself. Notwithstanding the other benefits of the remaining 68 small children's bikes and recreational racers, these 350 bikes represent hours of saved time and effort every single day.

This is extra time that a HIV/AIDS home based carer has for her clients, extra energy that a young student has for her studies, extra time a low-paid worker has to attend evening classes to improve his employment opportunities.

Assuming conservatively that each bike saves its user, on average, 1.5 hours per working day, and that each bike lasts only 6 years, the bikes you shipped to Namibia represent a staggering total of 819,000 hours, or 93 years worth of time saved on travel!



Left: Some recent beneficiaries at a local orphanage. Many of the bikes sent by Bicycles for Humanity will be supplied to children who walk long distances to school. Above: BEN Namibia mechanic Paulina Ekandja with a selection of the bikes.

The arrival of the container from Kelowna was a landmark for BEN Namibia. I was in the village of Okathitu in the north of Namibia implementing a training program, so wasn't able to be present. The unloading, inventory and stacking of the bikes was done entirely by our team of young mechanics and some volunteers. The success of the team in taking on this responsibility was a big step towards the organisation being run entirely by Namibians within the next two years.

The shipment also contained soccer equipment, a huge addition to its value to Namibia. This equipment will be used by Windhoek-based Rotarian, MaryBeth Gallagher, in her soccer programme. Marybeth's program engages over 500 youth each week, most of whom are lucky to own shoes, so complete soccer uniforms will be a huge boost.

We have been fortunate to have good support from local Rotary Clubs. One club, Rotary Windhoek, has used our bikes as incentive prizes for people riding single gear bikes in the annual Namibian Cycle Classic, and have also provided them to children in a local orphanage. Another local club, Rotary Auas, have visited our premises and have expressed interest in supporting our projects.

As the BEN Namibia mechanics begin refurbishing and distributing the bikes you helped to ship, I hope you allow yourselves a little time for congratulations, and reflection on the many positive effects of your act of humanity.

Best wishes,

Michael Linke
Director, BEN Namibia