Mobilising People with Bicycles

qhubeka.org

Bicycle Education Empowerment Programme
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Qhubeka and World Vision

Qhubeka

Qhubeka is an Nguni (Zulu, Xhosa) word that means “to carry on”, “to progress” or “to move forward”.

Qhubeka helps people move forward by giving bicycles in return for work done to improve communities, the environment or academic results. Having a bicycle changes lives by increasing the distance a person can travel, what they can carry, where they can go and how fast they can get there.

Qhubeka’s mission is to uplift African communities by improving access to essential services through bicycles. A quality bicycle provides access to education, healthcare and economic opportunity.

Founded in 2005, Qhubeka has provided over 40,000 bicycles to date and is supported by leaders in the international bicycle industry, such as Trek, SRAM and World Bicycle Relief.

World Bicycle Relief

Qhubeka is World Bicycle Relief’s programme in South Africa. World Bicycle Relief (WBR) provides Qhubeka with product development expertise, supply chain logistics, operational and programme design, as well as fundraising facilitation.

World Bicycle Relief is a US-based non-profit organisation dedicated to transforming individuals and communities through The Power of Bicycles. Since 2005, World Bicycle Relief has trained more than 1100 field mechanics and provided more than 160,000 specially designed, locally assembled quality bicycles to disaster survivors, healthcare workers, students and entrepreneurs in the developing world. For more information, please visit www.worldbicyclerelief.org.

World Vision South Africa

With over 50 years experience in delivering quality child focused, community based, transformational development programmes, World Vision is the largest privately funded international relief, development and advocacy charity in the world. World Vision’s highly trained and experienced staff manage Child Sponsorship Projects locally, and the input of the community is fundamental to the development work undertaken.
Motivated by the belief that no child should live in poverty, World Vision works alongside communities to improve the well-being of children, serving all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

World Vision South Africa operates through 20 area development programmes (ADPs) situated throughout the country and supports nearly 50,000 children through sponsorship.
The Need

- Of the 16 million children in school in South Africa, 12 million walk to school.
- Of these, 500,000 walk more than two hours each way, spending four hours getting to school and back each day.
- Over 50% of each day is spent in walking to meet basic survival needs and access economic and social opportunities in rural South Africa.
- Only 40% of South African students achieve a qualification higher than grade 9.
- 55% of children who enrol in grade 1 will never pass grade 12.
- South Africa was placed 115th out of 144 countries with regard to access by children to primary schools.

"We have failed to give [schoolchildren] the tools that should be there at the foundation phase of schooling… We have given up trying to find ways of dealing with the problem."

Prof Jonathan Jansen
University of the Free State vice chancellor

Retaining Girls in Schools

In the developing world, girls’ educational aspirations are sacrificed to the requirements of household chores, early marriages and economic scarcity coupled with social bias that often favours educating a boy over a girl. Many times, girls are valued for their contribution to the household or their “sale” for a dowry into an early marriage as compared to them achieving an education.

- Approximately one-quarter of girls in developing countries are not in school. 38% marry before age 18\(^1\)
- One quarter to one half of girls in developing countries become mothers before age 18; 14 million girls aged 15 to 19 give birth in developing countries each year\(^2\)
- When you educate a girl in the developing world, remarkable things occur: When a girl in the developing world receives seven or more years of education, she marries four years later and has 2.2 fewer children\(^3\)
- An extra year of primary school boosts girls’ eventual wages by 10 to 20%. An extra year of secondary school: 15 to 25%\(^4\)
- Research in developing countries has shown a consistent relationship between better infant and child health and higher levels of schooling among mothers\(^5\)
- When women and girls earn income, they reinvest 90% of it into their families, as compared to only 30 to 40% for a man\(^6\)
**BEEP History and Overview**

The Bicycle Education Empowerment Programme (BEEP) originally began in Zambia, in 2009, when World Bicycle Relief engaged with the Zambian Ministry of Education to discuss the challenge of distance travelled by school-going children in the rural areas.

It was found that many students had to walk 10 to 15km on a daily basis to reach their schools. Furthermore, the majority of school-aged girls had the extra burden of completing the household chores before leaving for school. This resulted in increased tardiness, absenteeism, exhaustion and often the complete withdrawal of the child from the educational system. Girls are especially vulnerable. Many schoolchildren in South Africa face these same challenges.

Research shows that education is an essential element in fighting disease and poverty in developing countries. While the scope of this problem is broad, one way to immediately increase school attendance and children’s well-being is safe, reliable and affordable transportation.

WBR collaborated with the Ministry to further investigate the needs of schoolchildren through field assessments by interviewing schools in remote locations over several months. From that experience and the feedback obtained, the BEEP was developed with the goal to improve the educational outcomes for students living in rural areas.

As at the end of 2012, BEEP has been implemented in 150 schools in seven districts across Zambia, delivering 23,269 bicycles and training 310 bicycle field mechanics.

*In partnership with World Vision, Qhubeka plans to roll out BEEP into rural communities in South Africa that will benefit from the provision of bicycles.*

**BEEP Objectives**

The strategic objectives of BEEP are to:

- Increase attendance and performance of vulnerable children in community and government schools
- Retain more girls in school
- Improve teacher attendance and access to professional development activities
- Uplift livelihoods of bicycle beneficiaries and their families
- Improve safety and security of students travelling to and from school
BEEP is designed to empower schools and communities to select and have oversight of bicycle beneficiaries. The primary selection criterion for beneficiaries is need and is based on the distance beneficiaries have to travel to school. Generally, 85% of bicycles per school are allocated to students and 15% to teachers and community supporters, and 70% of the students’ allocation is designated for girl students.

How BEEP helps communities to move forward

Results

World Bicycle Relief launched BEEP in Zambia in 2009. In December 2012, a monitoring and evaluation impact study of 600 households / 300 students was undertaken across the Mumbwa and Kaindu communities as an assessment of programme outcomes at or near completion of the two-year contract signed during bicycle distribution, which showed the following results:

School Attendance

Prior to bicycle distribution, 21% of parents reported that distance was a primary reason for their children’s absence from school; after bicycle distribution, none of them attributed their children’s absence to distance.

Following bicycle distribution, the study indicated:
- An average 28% improvement in attendance for girls
- An average 25% improvement in attendance for boys

Academic Performance

Academic performance data collected from schools in this study indicate an average 22 percentage point improvement for both girls and boys after bicycle distribution (59% and 58% percentage improvement respectively) as measured by term-end average scores.

Sustaining substantially improved passing rates two years after distribution is an encouraging indicator of the programme’s long-term benefit to the students who received bicycles.
Travel Time to School

- Prior to bicycle distribution, 33% of students travelled to school in one hour or less. After bicycle distribution, 89% of students were able to get to school in an hour or less
- The percentage of students who required more than two hours to get to school was reduced from 29% to less than 1%

We believe that reduced travel times contribute to the increased attendance rates.

Quality of Life

Both the larger study referred to above and some smaller studies surveyed programme participants and community members about quality of life improvements related to the bicycles. Surveyed students rated their own feelings of well-being. 73% indicated they felt their lives were significantly improved after receiving the bicycles, and 17% reported noticeable change.

Travel Safety

All of the surveyed students indicated they were afraid while travelling to school on foot. Most feared attack by wild animals, such as snakes, hyenas and elephants, because they began the long walk in the dark. After bicycles were distributed, 69% of the students reported feeling safe most of the time while they travelled to school.

Access to Healthcare

Many survey respondents indicated that they used the bicycle to go to the local clinic. An interview with the Chilala Clinic revealed that visits for children under the age of five more than doubled. This was attributed to the bicycles, as mothers were more easily able to transport young children for vaccinations and treatment.

_Qhubeka believes that by strategically implementing BEEP across communities in South Africa, children’s lives can be improved by providing them with bicycles, which facilitate access to education, healthcare and economic opportunity._
**BEEP: Core Tenets for Implementation**

**Key factors for implementing a successful BEEP project**

- Conduct a field assessment to gauge appropriateness of a BEEP intervention, examining existing bicycle usage, distances travelled and community acceptance
- Engage national and relevant government officials at a local, regional and national level, as required
- Engage local traditional leaders
- Partner with World Vision in the field to mobilise the community and monitor usage
- Ensure a broad and diverse bicycle supervisory committee to determine beneficiaries based upon need in a transparent process
- Utilise service-to-own contracts that clearly state the purpose of improving educational outcomes and have the ability to remove the bicycles from the beneficiary if the terms are not adhered to
- Supply quality bicycles that serve the end-users needs (Buffalo Bicycles)
- Train bicycle field mechanics and create an economic mechanism to replenish supply of spare parts to promote sustainability
- Conduct Distribution Ceremonies that include the entire community and school, which highlight the importance of education, particularly for girls, and the adherence to the service-to-own contracts
- Establish a strong monitoring and evaluation framework to measure impact and to inform on necessary programme adjustments
 Roles & Responsibilities

Qhubeka

- Qhubeka oversees BEEP programme design and implementation tools
- Qhubeka, through Buffalo Bicycles, supplies quality bicycles that meet the end-users needs and are locally compatible and appropriate
- Qhubeka, through Buffalo Bicycles, supplies quality spare parts to ensure the long-term sustainability of the BEEP project

World Vision – BEEP implementation partner

World Vision has extensive experience in community development and mobilisation, as well as resources in the communities where BEEP is to be implemented.

World Vision has overall supervisory and oversight responsibilities of BEEP, including:

- Formation and representation on the bicycle supervisory committee
- Mobilisation of the community for sensitisations and distribution ceremonies
- Liaising with traditional leaders and local government officials
- Ongoing monitoring of bicycle usage and adherence to the service-to-own contracts
- Training of bicycle field mechanics with resources from Qhubeka
- Data collection and analysis of monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment reports

Schools

The school officials ultimately determine the success of the programme. Their collaboration and enthusiasm for the programme is essential to assure adherence to the BEEP guidelines. An initial assessment of their engagement and level of commitment should be obtained before beginning implementation.

School officials should be represented on the bicycle supervisory committee. As the authority at the school, caution should be taken that they do not strong-arm the beneficiary selection process. Their role should centre on facilitation and participation.
**Government**

Education is a fundamental function of a government. Any programme that is implemented through the educational system must have the endorsement and authorisation from the government on a national and local level. A memorandum of understanding with the government outlining the scope and goals of BEEP facilitates implementation. With the authority of government, engagement with traditional leaders, school officials and the community can be greatly eased.

**Traditional Leaders**

Similar to government authority, obtaining permission from and joining in collaboration with the local traditional leadership is essential for community engagement. Experience has shown that long-term programme sustainability requires this partnership, especially as it relates to the monitoring of bicycle usage and the adherence to the service-to-own contracts. Representation of the traditional leadership on the bicycle supervisory committee is essential for success.

**Bicycle Supervisory Committee**

Comprising school and community members, the bicycle supervisory committee (BSC) is mobilised and formed by World Vision and school officials. It becomes the local authority for BEEP, empowered to:

- Determine the project beneficiaries, based upon prescribed programme ratios and requirements
- Facilitate community mobilisation for community sensitisations and distribution ceremonies
- Select and monitor community-based bicycle field mechanics to be trained
- Administer the service-to-own contracts for the bicycle beneficiaries
- Monitor usage of the bicycles and adherence to the contract
- Arbitrate any violation of the contracts, counsel the family and potentially repossess and reallocate the bicycle if there is continued non-adherence
- Facilitate spare parts store and spares sales and distribution

Composition of the bicycle supervisory committee should be broad and diverse to guard against local jealousies and to ensure community commitment. Actions of the bicycle supervisory committee should be transparent and open to broader public observation.
**Bicycle Field Mechanic Training**

The bicycle supervisory committee selects and has oversight of the community-based bicycle field mechanic to be trained in support of the BEEP. The goal in selection should be the upliftment of the existing economic infrastructure.

Qhubeka supplies the necessary technical manuals and curriculum to train mechanics (typically a three- to five-day session focusing on business skills and the proper assembly, maintenance and repair of Buffalo Bicycles).

Field mechanics also enter into a service-to-own contract, whereby they pledge to provide repair support to BEEP for a certain period of time, typically two years.

Trained mechanics should be supplied with the following:

- Buffalo Bicycle
- Proper tool kit (supplied by Qhubeka)
- Technical manual for assembly and repair (supplied by Buffalo Bicycles)
- Certificate of completion
- BEEP branded coveralls

The supply of quality spares is an important step in supporting the extended usability of the bicycles. The Qhubeka Buffalo Bicycle is designed to be compatible with the locally available spare parts, as it has a standardised wheel size, spoke length, bottom bracket, etc. Nevertheless, it is recommended that authentic Buffalo Bicycle spares be supplied during BEEP implementation to ensure the long-term usability of the bicycles.

**Service-to-own Contract**

Qhubeka believes good development happens when a community is given a hand-up, not a hand-out. Local context can drive what specific contractual conditions are appropriate, but we’ve found the best option to be a service-to-own contract, where the improvement of educational access is the focus.

Beneficiaries (and / or their guardians), and a representative of the bicycle supervisory committee, sign a two-year contract pledging that:

- Students and teachers will attend school faithfully and on time
- Teachers will assess pupils not attending
- Community supporters will support the efforts of the school and improve its educational outcomes
Terms of the contract state that prior to the completion of two-year period, the bicycle remains the property of Qhubeka and is under the supervision and control of the bicycle supervisory committee. If the beneficiary does not abide by the conditions of the contract, the committee has the authority to withdraw the bicycle.

A critical consideration is that of personal property and not communal property. Beneficiaries will be more likely to maintain the bicycles if they know it will be their personal property after a certain period if terms are met.

The terms and conditions of the service-to-own contract can be modified to align with local realities.

**Distribution Ceremony**

After the bicycle supervisory committee has determined the beneficiaries and a community gender awareness intervention has been implemented, a public Distribution Ceremony should be scheduled to deliver the bicycles.

The Distribution Ceremony is when the service-to-own contracts are signed and community awareness about the programme and the importance of educating girls can be further stimulated. Local government and traditional leaders should be invited to attend, as well as parents and the community at large. This should be a big celebration that creates a social contract with the community and uplifts the beneficiaries, which reduces jealousies and promotes better oversight of bicycle usage.

Distribution Ceremonies include: speeches by school, government and traditional leaders; singing, dancing and theatrical skits on proper bicycle usage by students; an overview of the contract’s terms and conditions, discussion on the importance of girls’ education; signing of contract by beneficiaries, guardians and committee members; the handing over of bicycles and the introduction of the trained bicycle field mechanic who can provide simple maintenance tips and perform bicycle safety training.
Monitoring & Evaluation

Good development requires the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programmes to measure impact, improve future implementation and flag any adverse unexpected outcomes.

World Vision, in coordination with the school and bicycle supervisory committee, will create a measurement framework and tools that combine quantitative and qualitative research, including:

- Measurement of attendance before and after bicycle distribution (control for seasonal influences by measuring same period year over year)
- Measure academic performance through test scores and matriculation rates
- Focus group discussions with distinct groups, such as:
  - Students
  - Teachers
  - Bicycle Supervisory Committee
  - Parents / community members

References

Qhubeka Contact Details
email: info@qhubeka.org
tel: +27 11 467 8726

@qhubeka
Qhubekabicycles
Qhubekabikes
Qhubeka

Physical Address
30A Dias Crescent
Douglasdale
Johannesburg
2152
South Africa

Postal Address
Postnet Suite 394
Private Bag X75
Bryanston
2021
South Africa