



Do you have an old bike lying around at home? Think it's too small, or too beat up, to be of use? Think again. That old bike could change someone's life.

LIFE WITHOUT WHEELS

In much of southern Africa, cars are rare. Motor vehicles cost too much for people who earn, on average, \$1 per day. Public transportation, such as buses or trains, is also uncommon. Walking is the only option most people have for getting around.

DID YOU KNOW?

Each year, between 15 and 20 million bikes are purchased in the U.S. And every year, about 10 million bikes are discarded.

This makes life difficult. On foot, it can take hours to do the shopping or fetch water. Lack of transportation can make it impossible for students from small villages to attend schools ten or 20 kilometres away. People who are too sick to walk may not get the medical care they need. And it's hard for healthcare workers to transport medical supplies and drugs to people who need them.

A SOLUTION ROLLS IN

Bicycles are an obvious solution. They allow people to travel long distances quickly. They can

be used on paths as well as on dirt roads. Bikes cost nothing to operate. They are easy and inexpensive to maintain.

The problem is, most people in this part of Africa don't own a bicycle. But that's starting to change.

THE CANADIAN CONNECTION

In recent years, a number of groups have begun sending new or used bicycles to needy African countries. One of the largest is Bicycles for Humanity. This Canadian organization was created in 2005 by a group of friends in B.C. They decided to raise funds to ship donated bikes to Namibia.



The first year, the group sent one **container** of bikes overseas. The following year, four. Then, eight. This year, Bicycles for Humanity hopes to ship 16 containers.

CATCHING THE SPIRIT

But it's not just the number of bikes being shipped that's increasing. The organization itself is mushrooming,

SETTING UP SHOP IN AFRICA

What happens when the **shipping containers** loaded with bikes arrive at their destination?

First, the cargo – usually between 300 and 400 bikes, plus spare parts and tools – is unloaded. Then, the shipping container is converted into a bike workshop. Local residents are trained in bike maintenance. This provides work for unemployed people and keeps the community's bikes in repair.

Most bikes are distributed by the Bicycle Empowerment Network in Namibia – or BEN Bikes, as the group is often called. Eighty percent of the bicycles that BEN Bikes distributes comes from Canada. In 2009, the group hopes to deliver its 10,000th bicycle.

with chapters in Alberta, B.C., Ontario, Quebec, and Saskatchewan. Other chapters have sprung up in the United States and Australia.

It seems that more and more people, many of them Canadians, want to help improve the lives of people in Africa by giving them wheels. Are you one of them? ★

DEFINITIONS

SHIPPING CONTAINER: a large rectangular box, similar to a train boxcar, used to store and transport various items



BEFORE READING: ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

1. Decide if the following helpful actions result in a *short-term difference* or a *lasting difference*:

- cleaning a younger sibling's room
- teaching a younger sibling how to clean his/her own room

- giving someone a paper bag to carry groceries
- giving someone a cloth bag to carry groceries

- recycling your lunch containers
- bringing a litter-free lunch

2. Answer the following question: How might a bicycle make a short-term difference to someone's life? A lasting difference?

DURING READING: EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

As you read the article "Making a Difference, One Bike at a Time," list how bicycles are making a short-term difference and a lasting difference to the lives of people in Namibia.

AFTER READING: GET INVOLVED IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE

1. Decide how you might get involved in making a difference for the Bicycles for Humanity project (or another project in your community that makes a lasting difference in people's lives). You might consider one of the following actions: collect old bikes, tell other people about the need to send old bicycles to Africa, start a local chapter or raise money to help chapters cover the cost of sending containers to Africa. For fundraising ideas, visit the Bicycles for Humanity website at <http://www.bicycles-for-humanity.org/>

2. Once you have chosen your action, brainstorm three or four possible strategies that would allow you (or you and your classmates) to successfully carry out your action.

3. Complete the **Making a Difference** organizer. Briefly explain each strategy. Then rate each one against the criteria for a feasible strategy using the following ratings: \checkmark = meets the criterion; **X** = does not meet the criterion; \sim = partially meets the criterion. Select the most feasible strategy (the one most likely to work).

4. Detail your plan. List the materials you'll need, write down the steps and create a timeline (what will be done, when and by whom). Reflect on what success will look like (how will you know you've successfully completed your plan?).

5. Carry out your plan.

EXTENSION

Share your plans and results with the Bicycles for Humanity team at: info@bicycles-for-humanity.org



Rating Scale
 ✓ = meets the challenge
 X = does not meet the criterion
 ~ = partially meets the criterion

Name: _____
 Action: _____

Possible strategy #1:	Possible strategy #2:	Possible strategy #3:	Possible strategy #4:
realistic (it can be done) <input type="checkbox"/>	realistic (it can be done) <input type="checkbox"/>	realistic (it can be done) <input type="checkbox"/>	realistic (it can be done) <input type="checkbox"/>
allowable by my teacher/parents <input type="checkbox"/>	allowable by my teacher/parents <input type="checkbox"/>	allowable by my teacher/parents <input type="checkbox"/>	allowable by my teacher/parents <input type="checkbox"/>
doable by me <input type="checkbox"/>	doable by me <input type="checkbox"/>	doable by me <input type="checkbox"/>	doable by me <input type="checkbox"/>
timely (can be completed within a given time frame) <input type="checkbox"/>	timely (can be completed within a given time frame) <input type="checkbox"/>	timely (can be completed within a given time frame) <input type="checkbox"/>	timely (can be completed within a given time frame) <input type="checkbox"/>

I am going to choose strategy # _____ because : _____
