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Project Tsunami Report Confirms The Power of Bicycles

TANGO International, in conjunction with the University of Sri Lanka and World Vision, released its report in September 2007 on Project Tsunami, the World Bicycle Relief program that granted 24,300 bicycles to people in Sri Lanka following the tsunami of December 2004.

Among its findings, the report highlights and measures the effectiveness of bicycle relief efforts in disaster situations and the ongoing importance they play in the lives of those affected by natural disasters and poverty.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS *(all data as of reporting period ending June 2007)*

Livelihood

- 88%: Recipients relied on the bicycle as part of their livelihood
- 82%: Women recipients reported their bicycle was used for income-generating activities
- 12.5 km per day: Average distance ridden by bicycle recipients.

Education

- 79%: Male student recipients used their bicycle to travel to school
- 62%: Female student recipients used their bicycle to travel to school
- 59%: Total students who received bikes that also carried a passenger with them to school

Economic impact

Perhaps some of the more important findings concern the direct economic influences of a bicycle. Bicycles have the power to mobilize with a direct impact on the livelihood security of the poor:

- \$12.00: Average amount per month a bicycle saved in alternative transportation costs, or 18% of a recipient's \$71 average monthly income. Does not include passenger's savings.
- 1.7 hours/day: Average time saved per day by riding a bike instead of walking. If saved time was spent on productive endeavors, then \$0.52/day additional income could be produced – a more than 17% increase. Does not include passenger's savings.
- While this survey did not specifically calculate the cost savings of a bike recipient's ability to reach regional markets, parallel surveys show significant cost savings.

“Not only are bicycles integral to people's livelihoods, they are a crucial mode of transportation for health care and other services,” according to the report. “The findings provide empirical evidence of the value of bicycles, providing beneficiaries a critical sense of autonomy and independence in the wake of the disaster.”

With Project Tsunami complete, World Bicycle Relief is now engaged in providing large-scale, comprehensive bicycle programs in support of healthcare, education and economic development initiatives. Its projects include:

- 23,000 bicycles in support of volunteer HIV/AIDS caregivers in the African nation of Zambia. The project was completed in April 2009, and an independent study of its efficacy by the Boston University School of Public Health is due in August 2009.
- 1,000-bicycle microfinance pilot programs complete in Zambia and Tanzania, with independent interviewing and data collection in process.
- 50,000 bicycles to school children, teachers and volunteer community school supporters in partnership with the Zambian Ministry of Education and several international Non-Government Organizations (NGOs); measurement study design under way.

For more information visit World Bicycle Relief at www.worldbicyclerelief.org.

MISSION:

To provide access to independence and livelihood through the power of bicycles.