

Position paper

How can the bicycle assist in poverty eradication and social development in Africa ?

**The Bicycle Sponsorship Project and Workshop
The First African Bicycle Information Office FABIO**

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1. Structure and purpose of our organisations

The *Bicycle Sponsorship Project and Workshop (BSPW)* is a registered NGO situated near Jinja, Ugandas second largest city. It cooperates with a german NGO - *Jugendhilfe Ostafrika* (Karlsruhe). *Jugendhilfe* is doing fundraising for *BSPW* and creating awareness in Germany for the transport-problems of the majority in Africa. Together they aim to improve the access of rural household to economical and social services by focussing the promotion of bicycle-usage and its infrastructure in rural regions of East-Africa. We guess, that the bicycle has a positive impact on the income of a household and could lessen the time, spent on transport-activities.

Since 1990 more than 5500 bicycles have been given out - founding on a sponsorship-concept with the above mentioned organisation. Beneficiaries are households, individuals and groups with a high transport demand (farmers, traders) or with a social function (health-workers, teachers, midwives). These target-groups shall be stimulated in their social and economic development through the ownership over a bicycle.

Additionally *BSPW* is carrying out *capacity-building-seminars and workshops* on transport-policy and cycling-issues on local and regional level. *BSPW* plans to build up an Information-Centre: *First African Bicycle Information Office (FABIO)* - a network for bicycle-organisations, -projects and for interested people. For the year 2001 the project intends to organise an international conference on the above mentioned issues.

2. The results of a research-project

As far as we know from the direct feedback from the beneficiaries, the delivered bikes significantly enhance social and economical development in most cases. A bicycle can directly create employment (trade-business, taxi-services). In an indirect way it probably reduces poverty by improved access to daily needs (water-source, firewood-place) and lessen the transport burden - especially of female household-members.

In 9 years of project-work we acknowledged a number of circumstances, which influence cycling-intensity according to the different geographical regions and to the different ethnic and cultural conditions. A sufficient cycling-infrastructure is not yet present and women on bikes - who probably would have an enormous *effect on poverty-alleviation* - are seen very seldom.

What we begun and will finish in march 2000 is a scientific research on the effectiveness of bicycle-ownership from both male and female perspective.

3. Empirical steps

We realised the described *long-term-study* (over a period of 1 ½year) on household-level in different regions of Uganda. It was intended to find social, economical and cultural causes/effects of bicycle-usage. The basic question was, under which circumstances and preconditions the bicycle can stand for a appropriate and sustainable vehicle for travel and transport for male and female users.

As a first step we developed an adequate household-questionnaire with regard to the relevant social, economical and cultural criteria. In January this 1999 we have realised an initial interview with about 160 selected households. Each of them has received a bicycle from our project for a reduced price.

After a period of 1 year a second questionnaire is carried out with the same participants and with regard to the same criteria as in the initial questionnaire. It will be completed with a gender-specific interview concerning the main positive and negative aspects of bicycle-usage within the household.

4. Data-Analysis

The analysis of the collected data ran into results from 4 different points of view:

1. In which way *mobility and accessibility* is improved ?
2. What are the main *qualitative and quantitative effects* on the participating households ?
3. Where are *gender-specific differences* of bicycle-usages and what are the reasons ?
4. Where are *geographical differences* of cycling-intensity and reasons ?

We will present and discuss the findings of our study a planned *Panafrican Bicycle Congress (PABIC)* – which will probably take place in may 2001 in Jinja/Uganda. This Congress will bring together all African stakeholders in bicycle promoting and lobbying. Aim of the congress is to build up a network and exchange knowledge and experience with all participating organisations – mainly NGO's - in order to increase efficiency of their work and to bring the bicycle on the political agenda in transport politics in all African countries.