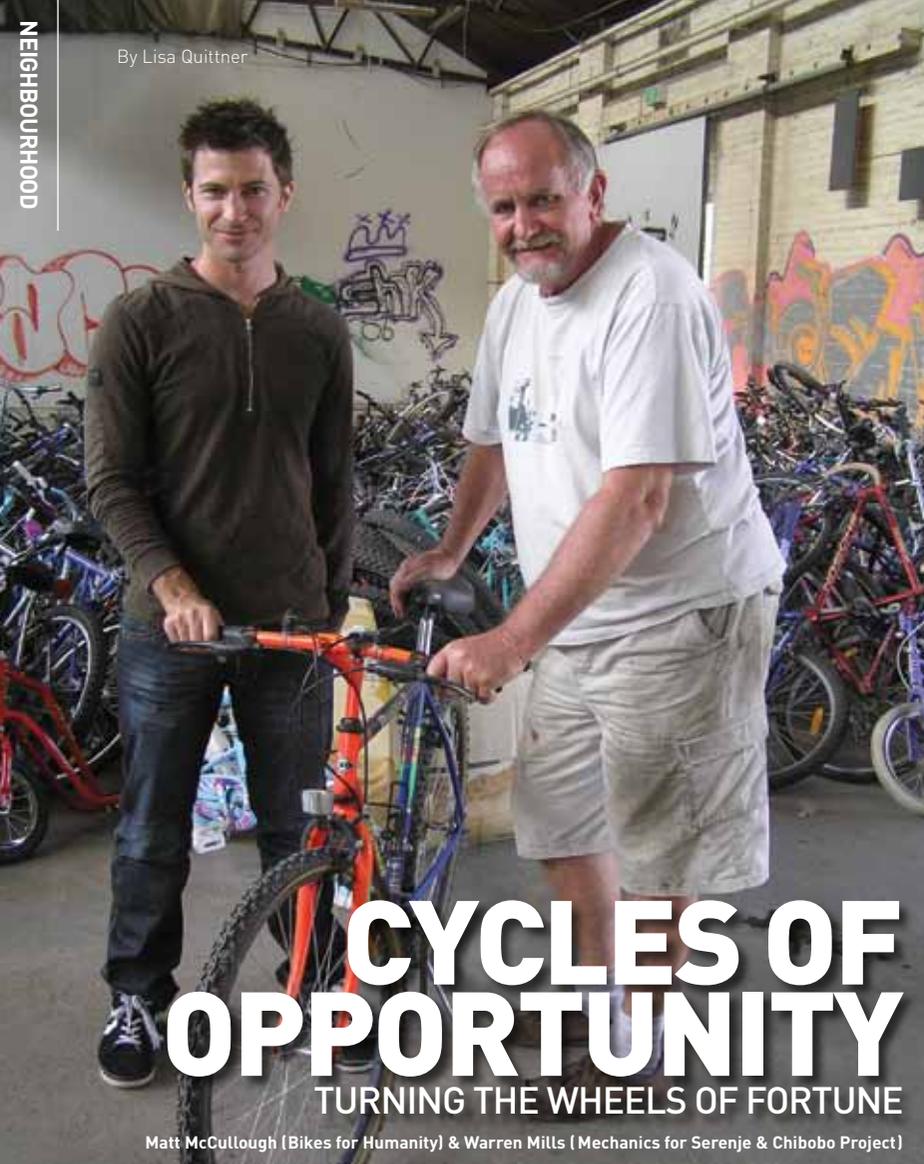


By Lisa Quittner



CYCLES OF OPPORTUNITY

TURNING THE WHEELS OF FORTUNE

Matt McCullough [Bikes for Humanity] & Warren Mills [Mechanics for Serenje & Chibobo Project]



Working together to achieve parallel goals will always be more fruitful. The joint venture between Mechanics for Serenje and Chibobo, Overnewton Anglican College in Keilor and the Melbourne chapter of Bicycles for Humanity have come together to send a 40' container load of bicycles to Zambia in Africa, to enrich the lives of others in a most inspiring way.

Bicycles for Humanity recently launched the project at Docklands to rally the donation of bicycles to ship over to Zambia to support AIDS orphans in the Serenje-Chibobo district, their care providers and the subsistence farmers of the area. A bike can provide access to education, health care, food, water, community and economic opportunity where previously these things would have been difficult or impossible to access.

Docklands resident and business owner, Warren Mills has been instrumental in the Mechanics for Chibobo project, which began as a dedicated project team daring to make a difference in the lives of others. Their initial vision to train orphan, John Chilangwa from the remote African Chibobo district as a motor mechanic would allow him to maintain the vehicles and machinery at the Chibobo orphanage and improve the standard of living for others in his community.

The vision grew; the joining of forces with other like minded 'doers' as well as offers of assistance from various sources including Kangan Batman TAFE and suppliers of automotive equipment which Warren Mills has helped to facilitate, the project developed into an international undertaking, to establish a commercial automotive workshop in the nearby township of Serenje, north-east of Zambia also enabled by means of local council support in obtaining almost half an acre of commercial land.

The offer of assistance from the Melbourne chapter of Bicycles for Humanity to provide a container-load

of used bicycles furthered the initial project into this inspiring task to benefit orphanages and subsistence farming communities via the construction of a large mechanical workshop in Serenje that could provide a source of income, vocational opportunities for the children and most of all hope to the entire community for eventual self sufficiency.

Connecting with Michael Linke was also an integral part of the project, through his Bicycle Empowerment Network (BEN) in adjoining Namibia, Michael brings the experience and knowledge through the previous distribution of bikes to the area that provides essential transport but also provide a means of training, funding and management, enabling recipients to pay for and maintain their bikes.

The Bicycle Empowerment Centres (BECs) the shipping containers, become the kind of micro-financed business and entrepreneurial enterprises that are lately seen as one of the major ways forward for Africa to cease to be aid dependant.

To date approximately 230 bikes are generously being housed at the Goods Shed rent free with thanks to VicUrban, another 170 are sought to enable the next container load in April to proceed. This is an amazing project with such far reaching affects. You can help by taking your used bikes of any size, in working or fixable order to any Bicycle Super Store, the closest to Docklands is the Flemington Store – 1300 611 514.

Alternatively, sponsorship and or donations to fund the container passage to Africa is also sought, as are tools and equipment for the automotive workshop.

For further information on the project contact Warren Mills – **0419 329 877** or at **warren.m@crms.com.au**

BEN Namibia
- **www.benbikes.org.za/namibia/**
Bicycles for Humanity Melbourne
- **www.bicyclesforhumanity.com**