

**Better Transportation system - Decreasing poverty gap**  
**Bicycle and cart distribution program in Singani village, Zambia**

**Background**

Facilitating transportation and decreasing the poverty gap is a humanitarian project that aims to help the people of Singani village in the Southern province of Zambia. The project aims to provide bicycles and carts to thirty families. Transportation is an integral part of almost all daily subsistence and social activities; therefore this project will facilitate access to the market for families to sell their products, it will ease access to school, cities and health clinics. This peace project will promote access to materials that will contribute to economic growth by accelerating production, increasing family income, improving the standard of living and decreasing the existing poverty and inequality gap between cities and villages. It will also decrease the burden individuals face in transporting their commodities from one place to another. The overarching goal of the project is to distribute high quality bicycles and cargo bicycle trailers (carts) to the underprivileged and empowering them to fight the mind-set of poverty and address the economic and social needs of Zambia, starting with Singani Village as a sample

**Singani Village**

Singani is a large village located 50 kilometres east of Choma, which is the nearest major city. It is linked to Choma through poorly structured, dusty and bumpy roads; it takes approximately five hours or more to get to Singani from Choma depending on your means of transportation. Singani has a strong system of governance in which the great paramount chief is at the top of the hierarchy and he has many headmen and advisors that answer to him. In 2012, Choma was declared the provincial capital of the southern province of Zambia and it is since then that it started growing at a faster rate encouraging investment from the nearby villages. This growth has started to consume the nearby village populations, as there has been an increase in the rural to urban migration of people aspiring to make a successful living in the city. Singani village is among the villages that fell victim to the rising rural – urban migration, which mainly involves young hardworking men that move to the city, leaving behind a majority of old men, many women and children in the villages.

Singani village is very large, with approximately 500 inhabitants composed of 100 families and as a result, there is large variance of economic disparity. The majority of people live in poverty, below an average standard of living for the country; whilst at the same time they are others that are relatively well-off with significantly more resources. The village is comprised of mostly small-scale farmers who sell their produce to Choma. The sale of charcoal is also something that is very common in Singani village as it is very profitable. In order for villagers to sell products and produce in Choma, the common means of transportation used are the traditional (heavy-built) bicycles in which they carry high stacks of goods on a single bicycle. It is only a small fraction of the population that own these traditional bicycles. This not only limits the amount of goods they can transport to Choma, but it also increases the burden of the transit. This toil reduces the economic potential of these villagers and it makes it difficult for them to compete with the fortunate few economically-advantaged Singani residents that have access to higher means of transportation such as canterers and trucks. This project therefore offers a rare opportunity for the small scale farmers and financially disadvantaged retailers to fight poverty and decrease the economic gap within the village and the nearby city.

**Project review and sustainability**

The primary objective of this project is to unleash the economic potential of Singani village. A better form of transportation is an integral part of a country's means of poverty reduction. Therefore, this project is intended to give the opportunity to Singani families to accumulate enough human, physical, financial and social assets to tackle problems such as: the increasing socio-economic uncertainty in the community, the current migration by young adult and the increasing illiteracy rate among young children. The project is designed to meet rising needs of the people of Singani village and this year, we will be dealing with decreasing the poverty gap by improving the transportation system. In the coming years, we hope to initiate other project such as possibly purchasing grinding meals and water filters depending on the future needs of the people.

Since Singani village has a large population, criteria will be devised in order to help us distribute the bicycles and carts to the families that need them the most and are able to keep up to the terms of the project. With the help of our local efforts including utilizing first-hand knowledge, village elders and other sources of

information, efforts will be made that the project targets those families that have significant potential to lucratively make use of the bikes and carts yet are limited in some way by their lower financial status. Each family receiving a bicycle will have to sign an agreement form, noting that they are fully responsible for the bicycles and carts and that any acts of damage or theft will be entirely on them to compensate with payment to the committee in accordance to the damage or loss. To help the people take great care of the bicycles and carts, additional items will be supplied to them such as locks, chains and a cart repair too to keep them safe and running efficiently.

With the help of Chief Singani and a committee that will be appointed to monitor the project, each family with the bicycle and cart will deposit a fee into the project account. It is intended that in 2015, with the help of Chief Singani and the project committee, the money collected from the payments shall be used to implement a second project that will have been already structured depending on the rising need of the people. As mentioned earlier, this could include the purchasing of grain grinders or water filters. The project leaders shall do the structuring of the project from Bucknell in correspondence with Chief Singani and the project committee. After the implementation of the second project, the village committee will have the full responsibility of the project and will decide upcoming projects based on the needs of the village.

Families with the bicycles and carts will renew them on a monthly basis. It is during this time of renewal that there will be maintenance checks and a deposit made to continue using the bicycles and carts. Failure to renew the bicycle and cart will result in the respective family not being able to rent the bicycle and cart for that month, unless it is for a special case in which it is up to the committee to decide whether they could rent it for the month and pay the sum at a later date.

#### **Timeline**

**Week 1** The team of Bucknell students will meet with the families, the chief and the committee to explain the project conditions. To emphasize the importance of the project and the obligation of families toward the project, an agreement (consent form) will be signed by the owner of the bicycle and cart, by the local authorities and the project leaders. The materials will be purchased from a reputable vendor Lusaka and transported to Singani village, Choma.

**Week 2** The team of Bucknell students as well as the committee will distribute the bicycles, carts, repair tools and locks to the families. The locks and repair tools will be bought from a tools supplier from Lusaka. The cart and bicycle connection locks (connectors manufactured in order to connect the bicycle and the cart) will be manufactured by a company called Zambikes that is located in Lusaka, the capital city. In addition, project leaders from Bucknell, with the help of the committee members will be holding workshops to educate families about the advantages of the project. Finally, the team will teach bicycle maintenance/repair skills.

#### **Documentary**

A local screening crew from Choma will accompany the Bucknell team during the implementation of the project to shoot a documentary. This will increase our goals of inspiring other people to do the same in other villages, and with the increasing attention, we are more likely to receive funding for future projects within Singani and also volunteers who could join in the work towards the well-being of the projects. We will also take pictures and video footage to present to Bucknell University and the Davis Foundation about the implementation of the project in Singani village. Funding for a film crew, transportation and supplies has been obtained from a Bucknell internal grant.

#### **Conclusion**

With the support of Chief Singani and the project committee, we hope to make a long-lasting impression of which in the near future Singani village will be self-sustainable and the economic gap between the residents will be lessened. We aspire to be eventually become an NGO in which people from all around the world could come and volunteer; with international funding, we could tackle even greater problems causing and resulting from the economic gap within Singani village. It is in our long-term goal to expand within the continent, reaching out to neighbouring countries like Zimbabwe and beyond with time.