



***Report by BEN Namibia on the
Okathitu Bicycle Workshop***

February 2007

I. Introduction

The *Okathitu Bicycle Workshop* is a project developed by the Bicycling Empowerment Network Namibia (BEN Namibia) and the Okathitu Anglican Home-Based Care Lazarus Centre (Okathitu Centre). It was implemented in November 2006 thanks to a grant from the American Ambassador's HIV/AIDS Self-Help Program, equivalent to N\$ 121,800, and 300 second-hand, donated bicycles collected and shipped by Bicycles for Humanity in Canada.

Okathitu Bicycle Workshop is an income generation project, run by the community through the Okathitu Centre. It consists in a 12m shipping container delivered to Okathitu with second-hand bicycles, spare parts, tools, and workbenches. The bicycles are refurbished by employing and training local people in bicycle mechanics. The bicycle distribution addresses different needs and priorities of the community. Some are distributed to home-based care (HBC) volunteers and to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). Some are sold at affordable prices to community members.

With the Workshop, the Okathitu Centre aims to improve local social and economic conditions in a number of ways:

- It provides bicycles and ongoing maintenance to HBC volunteers, enabling them to visit more families affected by HIV/AIDS, spend longer with each and deliver more supplies.
- It provides bicycles to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), improving their access to education.
- It provides bicycles to members of the local HIV/AIDS support group, improving their access to health care, economic opportunities and community activities.
- It provides income generation for the community, assisting other projects run by the Centre such as food distribution for OVC.

The container was delivered on 18 November. During the first two months of operation, the Okathitu Bicycle Workshop distributed 23 bicycles and sold more than 30. From 23 December to 5 January, BEN Namibia staff were in Okathitu in order to understand the challenges faced by the Centre, and to carry out a first round of monitoring activities. This report outlines activities, data collected and lessons learned thus far. More comprehensive notes and photographs are available upon request.



Orphans and vulnerable children supported by Okathitu Centre

II. Overview of the Project

OBJECTIVES

Objectives planned	Indicators in January 2007
1. Improve the effectiveness of HBC projects in Okathitu by providing bicycles to volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35% of volunteers have doubled the number of clients. • HBC volunteers spend from 40% more time with clients. • HBC volunteers spend 46% less time travelling than before. • HBC carry more supplies to their visit, including firewood, water and food.
2. Improve access to income generation opportunities of Okathitu community by training members in bicycle mechanical skills and providing them an opportunity to work in the Okathitu Bicycle Workshop.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 30 bicycles sold at affordable prices (N\$250-400) to community members. • Eight volunteers trained in bicycle mechanics. • Three people employed by Okathitu Bicycle Workshop.



Handover ceremony on 19 November 2006



OUTPUTS

Outputs planned	Delivery by January 2007
1. One 12m shipping container to be delivered to Okathitu and established as the Okathitu Bicycle Workshop.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Container delivered on 18 November 2006. • Container modified from 23 December to 5 Jan.
2. 300 second-hand bicycles delivered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered on 18 November 2006.
3. Bicycle tools, workbenches and spare parts delivered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered on 18 November and 23 December 2006.
4. Six mechanics trained in advanced bicycle repair and maintenance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten mechanics trained by Hilya Ekandjo¹ by December. • Refresher training of Okathitu Bicycle Workshop's staff held by Michael Linke over first week of January.
5. 61 HBC volunteers led through awareness sessions.	<p>Awareness sessions held with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 volunteers from Okapya on 2 January; • 20 volunteers from Okathitu and Ondeka on 3 Jan.
6. Capacity-building for the Okathitu Centre in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of bicycle workshop; • Monitoring and evaluation activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two planning sessions held on 29 December and 3 January. • Training of Okathitu Bicycle Workshop's staff for facilitation of awareness sessions with HBC volunteers. • Reference material sent by BEN Namibia, i.e. press releases, annual budget, workshop job-sheets and refurbishment checklist, certificates of training, training checklist. • Technical support provided by BEN Namibia to Okathitu Bicycle Workshop's staff on access to purchase of spare parts and tools in Windhoek, over 29 and 30 January. <p>Note: BEN Namibia will allocate one more mechanic in Okathitu for one-month period, at the convenience of both BEN Namibia and the Centre.</p>
7. Project's baseline data and impact assessment.	<p>Baseline data collected through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys with 50 HBC volunteers and eight mechanics. • Interview with 10 community members.

¹ Hilya Ekandjo is directly involved in the Okathitu Bicycle Workshop as the main mechanic and trainer. She was trained by BEN Namibia during 2006.



III. Planning sessions

On 29 December and 3 January, BEN Namibia held two planning sessions with members of Okathitu community to plan the implementation of the Bicycle Workshop. The activity was very productive and resulted in substantial improvements to the container over the following days. It also resulted in action points that they will implement in the coming months.

Participants:

- Father Lazarus Ekandjo (manager);
- Hilya Ekandjo (main mechanic and trainer);
- Lusia Eita (a HBC volunteer, who is now working full time in the Workshop);
- Beata Ekandjo (trainee);
- Kristofina Shilongo, HBC volunteer from Okathitu;
- Suama Magongo, HBC volunteer from Ondeka;
- Paulina Endjala (mechanic from BEN Namibia in Windhoek, originally from nearby Okathitu Kashau);
- Michael Linke (BEN Namibia) and
- Clarisse Cunha (BEN Namibia – facilitator).

All participants were active in setting the agenda and in discussing each topic, which included:

- Groups directly and indirectly involved in the Workshop;
- Container modifications;
- Opportunities and constraints for the Workshop;
- Marketing strategies;
- Customer care services;
- Promotion of cycling;
- Weaknesses and strengths of the project until January 2007;
- Financial management;
- The future.

The Okathitu Bicycle Workshop is already considered a successful community-based business. During the first two months of operations, the Workshop sold more than 30 bicycles at affordable prices to members of the community, and distributed 23 to HBC volunteers and OVC.

From now on, BEN Namibia will work with the Workshop to:

- Develop a strategy to top-up the bicycles when the first batch finishes;
- Establish direct links between the Workshop and suppliers;
- Identify a partner for training in financial management skills.

IV. Modifying the container

In spite of the heat, Okathitu community members and BEN Namibia staff worked non-stop over two weeks to improve the container structure. As this is the first containerised workshop BEN Namibia has implemented, discussions about how to make the container more workable addressed many unforeseen issues.

In two weeks, the container was painted, got a roof, had signage added and the internal layout organised with a price list, tool board, hangers for accessories, and boxes for parts.

Construction also began on a berm wall using sand and recycled car tyres to reduce the heating of the container. After modifications, the internal temperature of the container dropped from around 35°C at midday to a more comfortable 26°C.



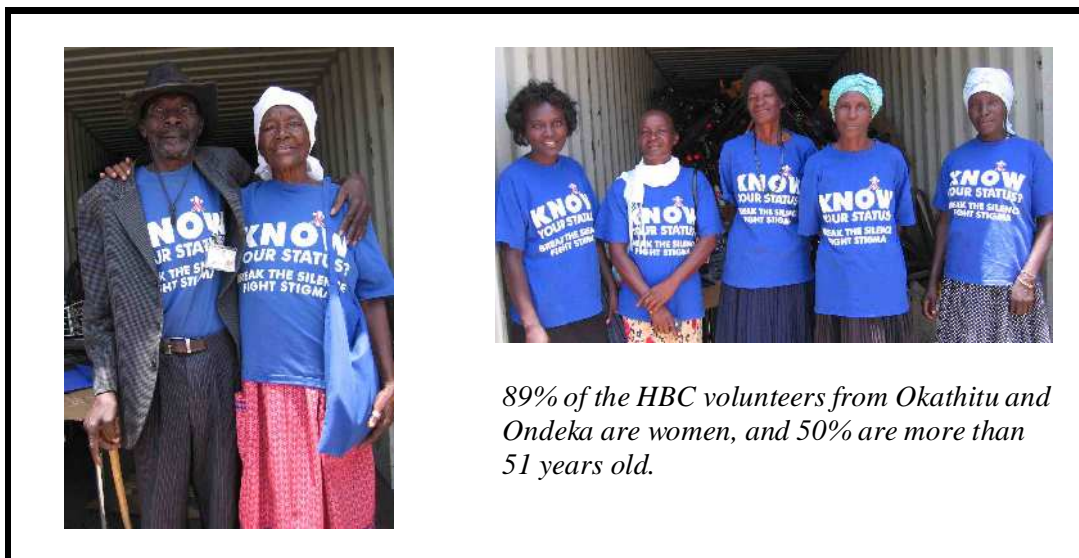
V. HBC volunteers

HBC volunteers are key players in the fight against HIV/AIDS. They provide counselling and education to community members, clients and their family members on nutrition, treatment of common symptoms at home, positive living with HIV/AIDS and referral. Through their work, the care and support of people living with HIV/AIDS is leveraged at the community level—a crucial step to their reintegration and negotiation of their position within families and communities.

Over these two weeks in Okathitu, BEN Namibia had the opportunity to conduct two awareness sessions and several interviews with HBC volunteers from Okathitu, Ondeka and Okapya.

Okathitu and Ondeka groups

The volunteers from Okathitu and Ondeka received their bicycles in several batches since September 2005, when the partnership between Okathitu Centre and BEN Namibia started. The cost of these first bicycles was sponsored by the Anglican Diocese of Manchester, which has a sister parish arrangement with Okathitu. Therefore, the discussion group with 20 volunteers from Okathitu and Ondeka, conducted on 3 January 2007, was particularly interesting as it examined the impact of bicycles more than one year after the delivery. Together with the surveys conducted during 2006, it provided valuable insights on the bicycles' role on their work and lives.



89% of the HBC volunteers from Okathitu and Ondeka are women, and 50% are more than 51 years old.

Main positive findings on the bicycles' impact:

- The overall opinion is that the bicycles have made their work and their lives easier.

- 35% of volunteers have doubled the number of clients.
- Volunteers spend 40% more time with clients and 46% less time travelling than before.
- Bicycles allow them to carry more supplies on their visits, including firewood, water, and food.
- All volunteers have assisted at least one client to go to clinics using their bicycle—either taking them directly to the clinic or taking them to hike in the main roads.
- Even when they cannot take the client to hospital due to his/her condition, the bicycles make it easier to look for help in an emergency situation.
- The bicycles boost communication at the village level.
 - It is easier to send information to different recipients (i.e. look for help, organise meetings);
 - More people in the community are aware of the HBC work, resulting in more people enrolling as either client or caregiver.

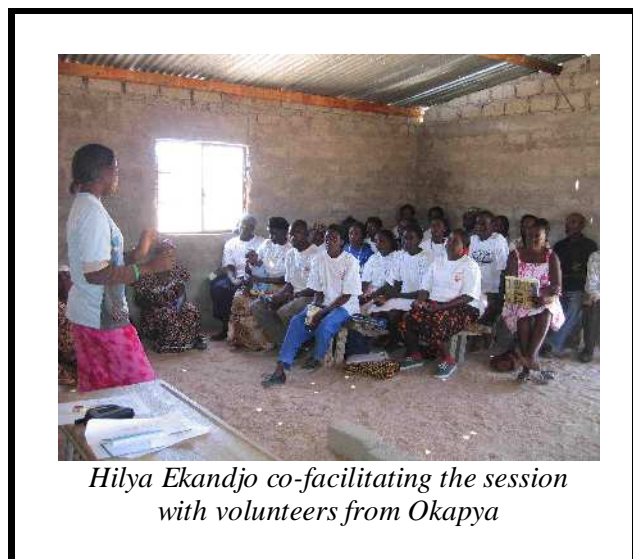
Main negative findings on the bicycles' impact:

- After receiving bicycles, clients and their families request more work, medicine, food and transport from volunteers. Negotiation with clients and education of the families are considered the main coping strategies.
- Volunteers do not have total control of the bicycle inside their house. Family members can be very abusive and take the bicycle, even when they need it for HBC activities. The participants discussed strategies to control the bicycle, including use of locks and stickers saying *HBC Bicycle*—they believe people will not feel comfortable being seen in the community using the bicycle. BEN Namibia and Okathitu Centre are in charge of budgeting and fundraising for kits including locks, stickers, helmets and pumps.

Okapya group

On 2 January 2007, Okathitu Centre and BEN Namibia conducted an awareness session with volunteers from Okapya, who were receiving their bicycles. The session aimed to leverage the volunteers' understanding about the relation between the bicycles and HBC work. The volunteers examined how the bicycles might help in their work, improving activities such as: visiting clients, assisting clients to go to clinics, and visiting hospital for supervision and collection of supplies.

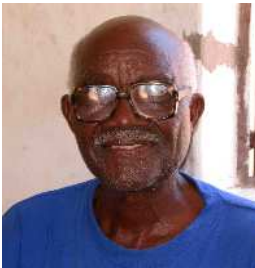
They also discussed potential problems they might have with the bicycles, and possible coping strategies.



Hilya Ekandjo co-facilitating the session with volunteers from Okapya



Juliaruth Simon, 51, is a volunteer in Ondeka, a kindergarten teacher and one of the Advisors for the Traditional Authority of her village. After receiving the bicycle, she has doubled the number of clients from 7 to 14, and has doubled the time she spends on each visit.



David Shigwedha, 78, has been a volunteer in Ondeka for 10 years. There are 12 people living in his house, seven of whom are orphans. Nobody has permanent paid work. With the bicycle he is far less tired after HBC visits and feels he can visit more people. Sometimes he makes three or four visits in one day.



Lusia Eita, 30, is a resident of nearby Okathitu Kashau. She was trained in bicycle mechanics and now works at the Okathitu Bicycle Workshop. Previously unemployed, she is proud of having a job that will give pay the school fees for her two children.



Marth Franis, 48, is a volunteer in Okapya. Mother of seven and hosting three orphans, she believes the bicycle will bring real change for her work and her family. By saving travelling time to visit her clients, she will be able to spend more time with her own family.



Natango Amutenya, 40, is from Okathitu. Even though she struggles to keep her bicycle out of reach from her five sons, she believes her work became much easier after receiving it. Besides being a HBC volunteer, she is also a kindergarten teacher for which she earns just US\$3 per month. She is very happy for being trained in bicycle mechanic, an activity she thought was only for men.

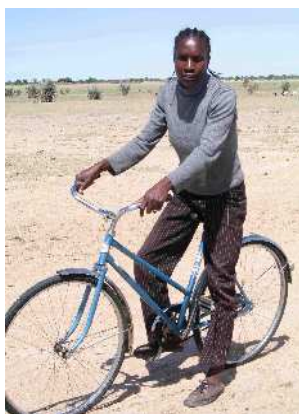
VI. OVCs and HIV/AIDS support group

Besides providing bicycles to HBC volunteers, the Okathitu Bicycle Workshop is working hard to redistribute its benefits in the community, particularly among OVCs and members of the local HIV/AIDS support group.

At the end of 2006, Okathitu Bicycle Workshop launched a campaign with four combined schools in the region, in which the orphans with the best performance would win a bicycle. The delivery happened on Christmas Day, during the Parish functions.



Kronelia Penda (13 years-old, student from Okathitu Combined School), *Jacobina Nambinga* (15, Ongola Combined School), *Johannes Dosantar* (14, Onangholo Combined School) and *Oskar Kaapanda* (16, Obaje Primary School) were the winners. All of them took a two-week training course at the Okathitu Bicycle Workshop on how to repair and maintain their own bicycles.



Magdalena Amadilla is the leader of the HIV/AIDS support group in Ondeka. She is currently one of the HIV/AIDS Advisors for the Ondeka Governor’s Office. She also takes part in the Childcare committee from Development Aid from People to People (DAPP). Magdalena is a key player to help minimise stigmatisation in the area. With a bicycle, she can arrange more meetings for the support group and visit the clinic, which is 20 km far from her house, more often.



VII. Lessons learned

1. The Okathitu Bicycle Workshop was conceived as a result of an 11-month partnership between BEN Namibia and Okathitu Centre. The design of the project was rushed due to a funding opportunity, and there was no comprehensive discussion in advance, particularly on management issues. The partnership has been successful due to the stability of the relationship between the two organisations. However, for projects with new partners, there must be more wide-ranging discussion with the community prior to the delivery, in order to have a better understanding of opportunities and constraints.
2. Along with the container, BEN Namibia should also deliver a package with:
 - a. Pre-fabricated roof, 20 litres of paint, storage trays and tool board;
 - b. Suggested guidelines for modification of the container structure (e.g. suggestions on doors, windows and extra shade);
 - c. Suggested guidelines for layout inside the container.
3. It is necessary to include another partner to provide capacity building on financial management and support on marketing activities.
4. Besides training in bicycle mechanics, it is necessary to deliver suggested systems for the workshop daily activities, such as display of parts and tools, job-sheets, refurbishment checklists and manuals for the use of tools.
5. There must be ongoing opportunities for refresher training in bicycle mechanics with BEN Namibia.
6. It is necessary to provide bicycle tools to the volunteers who are also trainees in bicycle mechanics but do not work in the Workshop.
7. It is crucial to take into account that HBC volunteers might face difficulties to control the use of their bicycles inside their houses. Locks and stickers might minimise the problem.
8. It is important to include pumps and helmets in the kit for the HBC volunteers, functioning also as an incentive package.
9. Strategies for bicycle distribution (i.e. bicycles for HBC volunteers, OVCs and members of support group), should consider institutional structures in the community and aim to reinforce current successful initiatives.
10. Training women in bicycle mechanics addresses the practical need of teaching them how to maintain their bikes, and is an entry point for changing existing gender division of labour. It is, therefore, an opportunity to promote more fundamental changes in gender roles and relations. The project design should consider strategies to make best use of this opportunity.

11. Providing bicycles to HBC volunteers make their work easier but, at the same time, increase their workload, particularly in the case of women. Project design should plan to balance woman's triple role (i.e. reproductive work, productive work and community managing), and not to overburden one role, to the detriment of others. It is necessary to carry out intersectoral work with other partners planning to avoid this problem.
12. Projects following the containerised workshop model may require two weeks or more of research and support in the field from BEN Namibia staff. However, this should not be in the very beginning of the project, as the local partner gains valuable insights into the main/immediate challenges to be addressed only after a period of managing the resource.
13. In order to secure sustainability of the project, it is necessary to develop a strategy that gradually decreases BEN Namibia's role and increases local partner's responsibility and autonomy in terms of supplying more bicycles, tools and parts.



HBC volunteers from Okapya.



About Okathitu Centre

The Okathitu Anglican Home-Based Care Lazarus Centre is a community-based organisation in the Omusati Region. The Centre coordinates the home-based care activities of 61 volunteers. It also works closely with local HIV/AIDS support groups and with local initiatives for the care of 233 orphans and vulnerable children in the region. Its projects include provision of school uniforms, feeding programmes and distribution of mosquito nets. As the village and surrounding areas have no electricity, the Centre has recently installed a small solar electricity system, enabling community members to recharge their mobile phones.

About BEN Namibia

BEN Namibia is a non-profit organisation based in Windhoek that aims to empower disadvantaged Namibians through provision of sustainable transport and bicycle-related income generation opportunities. It has already arranged the distribution of around 2,500 bicycles to home-based care volunteers in the Northern and North-Eastern regions through more than 22 partnerships with different Namibian grassroots organisations.

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