An Out-Spokin’ Individual

31-year-old Frankie Hinds, the Pinelands Creative Workshop’s lead bike mechanic was a late comer to the Pinelands bike project, but it would appear that he was destined for it from early childhood. Frankie has been a resident of the Pinelands, a low-income area in Barbados, since age 6. Inspired by a cycling uncle, Frankie took early to bicycles. From his uncle, Frankie got his first bike at age 11, a hand-me-down Raleigh, and rode it constantly.

Not only does Frankie have a natural mechanical talent, he(ed a recipe for frustration. Even with a small loan from the Pinelands micro-credit program, the business simply could not grow. Aside from work, security reasons already takes his tools home with him. “But there is a public need, however. Frankie, who for security reasons already takes his tools home with him every day, also takes customer bikes home from time to time to repair—giving new meaning to the old expression “taking his work home with him.”

Beginning in 1995, the bicycle project of Barbados’ Pinelands Creative Workshop has received more than 6,000 Pedals for Progress bicycles, distributing them throughout this Caribbean island of fewer than 300,000 people. Besides providing affordable transport for recreational, educational, and employment use, Pinelands manages multiple programs benefiting the Pinelands and greater Bridgetown communities, including micro-med, Meal on Wheels, and Youth development through the Performing Arts.

In so doing, Frankie absorbed the underlying numeric logic of spoke interaction. After all, “it’s a question of numbers.”

Soon Frankie was truing wheels for friends in the Pinelands area. He recalls his early days, working with bikes that were so oxidized that when truing a wheel using his thumb as a gauge, the rust on the rim wore down his thumbnail. Pedals for Progress bikes, at least, don’t put his thumbs to the test on a daily basis. However, they do often require some work. To satisfy local tastes, he modifies “drop bar” road bikes, substituting straight handlebars and new brake assemblies. Although the conditions under which Frankie labors are not always the best, he generally converts each bike in the space of 15 or 20 minutes. His small workspace is crowded with bikes, and lacks a truing stand or ever a work stand with clamp. To work on bikes Frankie must hang the bike by its seat on a strap attached to the ceiling. This makeshift stand is unsteady, but functional, permitting him to use both hands while making repairs.

Frankie did not come straight from the schoolyard to the bike shop, however. On leaving school, Frankie became interested in Rastafarianism and organic foods, selling natural fruit juices as a micro business. However, the competition for space in his mother’s kitchen limited his production and his ability to earn a living—a recipe for frustration. Even with a small loan from the Pinelands micro-credit program, the business simply could not grow.

In early 2001, with the growth of the Pinelands bike project, an opportunity came for him to work in the shop. Frankie began truing wheels on a part-time basis, but when the regular mechanic resigned to take a job outside the cycling profession, Frankie stepped up and took his place.
As reported in the last issue of InGear, the initial shipment of bicycles to EcoBici in Rivas, Nicaragua was funded by the Claerbout Family in memory of their late son, Jos, an avid cyclist with a passionate interest in Latin American development and social justice. EcoBici’s inaugural shipment arrived on April 28, 2003 and became the foundation of what is now a thriving new project.

In 1998, project managers Wilfredo Santana R. and his wife Carla Bello left the Rivas program, Association for Community Development (ADC), and went north to Jinotepe to start the spin-off EcoTran. Having a well-established EcoBici in the capable hands of Martin Melendez, Wilfredo and Carla returned home to Rivas to rebuild ADC, which languished in their absence. Essentially beginning anew in Rivas, they’ve named their project EcoBici.

EcoBici serves low-income residents in the many small towns of the southern Pacific coast region of Nicaragua, where the terrain is flat and rolling, ideal for cyclists. As in the case of EcoTran, EcoBici’s “profits” from sales are financing small-scale rural community development projects selected and implemented by representative community organizations. These include the construction of health clinics, schools, community potable water systems, and the planting of community wood lots.

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EcoBici has also donated Pedals for Progress supplied servicing machines and baseball equipment to the José María Moncada School, the Susana López Carazo School, and the Nandaimen Women’s Center. After receiving the first container of bicycles, so generously donated by the Claerbout Family, EcoBici has since imported four more containers, growth resulting directly from that initial shipment. The sale of those first bicycles provided crucial seed money for future shipments. And now a healthy revolving fund system is sustaining EcoBici.

The revolving fund system created by Pedals for Progress is key to enabling us to continue shipping containers to programs overseas. Combined with the customary hard work of Pedals For Progress bike collectors and project managers, EcoBici can now claim nearly 2,500 bicycles shipped. What’s more, over 2,000 bikes per year will arrive there for the foreseeable future.

A giant thanks to the Claerbout family for making this happen.
MISSION STATEMENT
Pedals for Progress envisioned a day when:
1. North America recycles over half of the 15 million bicycles discarded each year.
2. Poor people in developing countries have bicycles to get to work, obtain services, and meet other needs.
3. The bicycle is an effective tool for self-help in all developing countries.
4. Trade regulations enhance international commerce in bicycles and parts.
5. To foster environmentally sound disposal of bicycles, parts, and accessories.

OBJECTIVES ARE:
1. To enhance the productivity of low-income workers overseas where rehabilitation and self-help are most needed.
2. To break the cycle of poverty by providing transportation.
3. The bicycle is an effective tool for self-help in all developing countries.
4. Poor people in developing countries have bicycles to get to work, obtain services, and meet other needs.
5. To foster environmentally sound disposal of bicycles, parts, and accessories.

President’s Message
I would like to put right a few misconceptions about bicycle collections:

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Pedals for Progress in Ghana

Since January 1st, 2000 Pedals for Progress has shipped 4,500 bicycles to five separate programs in Ghana. Although there are many bicycles in Ghana already (and new bicycles are generally available), the cost of a new or locally resold bicycle is well beyond the economic reach of many Ghanaians. Thus, the ability to access used bicycles from us allows our partners to offer bicycles to the poorest segment of the population whose budgets are more closely aligned with their economic circumstances. Additionally, the used bikes we have shipped from the United States have been, more often than not, of a much higher quality and lower priced than the new bikes available in that country.

In the beginning, it was the shipment of high-cost, forklift costs for thousands of bicycles per year, Pedals For Progress conceived and implemented (and continually administrates), a ‘revolving funds program’ in which Pedals for Progress pre-pays the shipping costs of a new program’s first container, using funds retained and budgeted for this purpose and to grow the enterprise. Thus, once an area is qualified as a viable partner, PEDF commits to expediting the startup of their operation by this one time only offsetting of their biggest expense - shipping costs. Subsequently, through the sale of bikes, at a lower cost, our partner organizations generate the capability to pay for their domestic wages and infrastructure; and to view the Pedals for Progress program as a self-sustaining enterprise.

For Progress to pay shipping costs for the next container load of bikes, to date, employing this method, Pedals for Progress has been able to ship 8,000 bicycles to 28 countries worldwide.

One important benchmark included in the maintenance of the revolving funds process is “cost per unit delivered”. One important benchmark included in the maintenance of the revolving funds process is “cost per unit delivered”. For Progress, however, Reinel is increasingly free to spend part of his day on two wheels, away from the jail’s intense close confines, earning money for the day when he will regain his liberty.

For six years, Reinel Oviedo sat in a Colombian prison at the foot of the Andean Mountains, about 90 miles west of the capital of Bogota, losing hope and gaining weight. Thanks to Pedals for Progress, however, Reinel is increasingly free to spend part of his day on two wheels, away from the jail’s intense close confines, earning money for the day when he will regain his liberty.

Reinel, and others like him at Colombia’s Rialcito Prison, have earned work-release privileges to work for Horizons for Freedom Foundation (HFF). ‘CompAMail Messenger Service’. With bicycles provided by Pedals for Progress, inmates travel from the penitentiary to the service’s headquarters and from there to the service’s clients in the city of Ibagué. Reinel, who had nearly forgotten the freedom afforded by a bicycle, a reports he has regained his sense of autonomy and self-worth while earning an income. In his own words, “The benefits obtained have been many. Riding a bike has given me a feeling of liberty. My job has become almost a recreational activity. My physical condition has improved; the pounding put on by penitentiary food has been eliminated. Today I possess an athlete's physique. I've had to abandon my earlier cigarette vice, and physical activity during the day benefits obtained have been many. Riding a bike has given me a feeling of liberty. My job has become almost a recreational activity. My physical condition has improved; the pounding put on by penitentiary food has been eliminated. Today I possess an athlete's physique. I've had to abandon my earlier cigarette vice, and physical activity during the day benefits obtained have been many. Riding a bike has given me a feeling of liberty. My job has become almost a recreational activity. My physical condition has improved; the pounding put on by penitentiary food has been eliminated. Today I possess an athlete's physique. I’ve had to abandon my earlier cigarette vice, and physical activity during the day...”

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Pedals for Progress’ involvement with HFF goes back to the summer of 2002, when HFF founder and director, David Toro, approached us requesting a container of bicycles. Toro, a former Rialcito inmate, is a nationally-recognized ‘social entrepreneur’ and winner of a prestigious Ashoka Fellowship for social enterprise. Since 2002, HFF has received two subsidized PFP shipments totaling about 900 bikes. Besides using bicycles in its program endeavors promoted by them.

Regaining a Feeling of Freedom

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