

# INGEAR

THE NEWSLETTER OF PEDALS FOR PROGRESS



Tran Thi Cam Nhung is a farmer living with her family in the Vinh Long province of southern Vietnam. Nhung and her husband, Nguyen Van Can, have two children, a five-year-old son and a thirteen-year-old daughter. Having little money, Nhung and her family have always had to work hard to make ends meet.

In 2009, Nhung joined the microfinance program of the Dairu Foundation, a partner with Pedals for Progress. The Dairu Foundation provides low-income families such as Nhung's with microloans to assist them in the process of generating savings. The group also offers financial services poorer families would normally not have access to, such as help with fostering basic savings skills, investment advice, and guidance toward making sure money does not go wasted.

Nhung took out several loans for the purpose of investing in her farm, on which she grows rice and various vegetables and raises animals such as pigs and chickens. Her daughter, currently in seventh grade, spends half her days at school and half at home, helping her mother on the farm by tending the crops, feeding the animals, and collecting eggs.

Although Nhung and her family work hard to grow and maintain their farm, they do not have much to work with, only owning a small plot of land. As such, Nhung and her husband Can must work whatever other jobs they are able to find to support the family.

Can works as a mason, taking construction site positions and working at brick manufacturing plants. Nhung, too, works various labor-intensive positions, some days spending long hours harvesting in rice fields, other days gutting and cleaning fish at local fish processing operations. With the two parents working so much, their daughter must take time off from school to—in

addition to working on the farm—help with house chores and pick up and look after her younger brother once he is done with kindergarten for the day.

Unfortunately, a lack of transportation limited Nhung and Can's ability to find work. They were only able to take jobs at nearby villages within walking distance and found the amount of work available in these places to be sparse. Though the entire family was pitching in, being able to travel no further than their immediately surrounding areas severely hindered whatever potential there might have been for them to create a stable income.



However, in September of 2012, out of hundreds of disadvantaged women, Tran Thi Cam Nhung was chosen to receive a used bicycle jointly donated by Pedals for Progress and the Dairu Foundation. Having the bicycle has since proven to be a great boon to the family's livelihood, helping them in every facet of their daily routine.

Now Nhung is able to make more money from her farm by transporting eggs, vegetables, chickens, and pork to the local

market for sale early every morning. Afterward, her husband will ride the bike to villages farther off where more masonry work is available. The couple's income has doubled, raising their earnings from \$5 to \$10 per day on average—a considerable difference for a family of humble means in rural Vietnam. Furthermore, now that the couple can use their bicycle to find work more easily and make money more readily, they can gradually spend less time searching for employment and more time with their children.

This is just one story. Since 2011, the Dairu Foundation has been assisting numerous families throughout Vietnam, thus far distributing over one-thousand used bicycles, all donated by Pedals for Progress.

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## MISSION STATEMENT

TO DELIVER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AID BY  
RECYCLING BICYCLES AND SEWING  
MACHINES IN THE U.S. AND SHIPPING THEM TO  
THE PEOPLE OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD



Incarnations of Unwanted Sewing Machines: From Landfill Candidate to Instrument of Economic Recovery  
by Patricia Hamill

It's true. Most high-end products and appliances these days are more expensive to fix than to replace and, though this is an uncomfortable reality, it is one that most Americans have become used to. So, until we can address and rectify this wasteful trend in production, what is one to do with machines destined to be discarded? No one really wants to add to landfills and groundwater pollution even if replacement is the only economical option; but, these things can't be stored in a "cloud" like data.

For teachers in the Governor Livingston High School (GLHS) in Berkeley Heights, NJ, this problem became a pressing issue. Because of the high cost of labor in the United States, it became necessary to replace the aging sewing machines in the school's Home Economics class rather than to repair them. It was not, however, an option for the school to simply toss the rejected machines in the garbage. Having heard about P4P's programs



and realizing that sewing machines are part of the organization's collection focus, GLHS chose to donate rather than dump their 15 sewing machines.

It is not often that a group, school, or organization is able to support economic development in another country while also ensuring that American students get training in needed skills. While this option became a reality for GLHS, there was still the issue of repairing the machines for use once they found a stopping point at P4P. Mark and Martha Hall represent the unseen portion of the process that gets the sewing machines from rejection and collection to distribution. Martha recalls her initial contact with P4P: "I first learned of P4P when my local YMCA did a bicycle collection in 2006. We had the typical basement full of outgrown and unused bicycles. I brought several over to that collection." When she went to the web site to learn more about P4P's collections and partners, she learned that sewing machines were also in demand. This got her full attention: "I like the idea that unused sewing machines can be put back to good use in teaching young people how to sew and especially to help women set up indepen-



dent and productive sewing businesses."

Martha's interest in sewing developed in her Home Economics class as a child, continued into her activities in the Girl Scouts, and evolved into a passion for creating quilts and quilted art. It took some time, but, in 2011, Martha was able to gather her quilters' guild members

and schedule a sewing-machine collection. With the help of P4P staff member Gary Michel, Martha and her husband Mark oversaw the event, and, thanks to the participation of the guild members and public outreach, 16 sewing machines arrived to await new homes.

Many of our readers are not privy to the work required after we have finished a day's collecting. P4P is not just a transportation center for bicycles and sewing machines. It is a stop point for evaluation and rehabilitation of the cycles and machines and we take very seriously the importance of providing reliable and lasting goods as well as access to resources for repairing these after they have arrived at our partners' bases.

It was during the above 2011 collection that a casual conversation led to Mark becoming P4P's go-to man for the repairs of donated machines. According to Martha, they established an efficient and thorough process with Mark being the overall repairman and Martha being in charge of cleaning the parts and doing the test runs of finished machines. Ultimately all of the machines are cleaned, their gears greased, and all moving parts oiled. Dried out rubber O-rings are replaced so that bobbin winders run smoothly. New needles are a must. Any machines too far gone to be fixed are used for parts. Finally, each machine is tagged and ready for David or Gary to retrieve them for shipping to waiting partners.

The particular machines from the Governor Livingston High School were destined for a group of women living in the barrio Rosario Tablon in the county of Tenancingo, El Salvador, a country where P4P's partner CESTA has run other environmental programs. Tenancingo (Tenantzincu or the "place of the little valleys") is located north of San Salvador and is counted as

part of an extension of the "department" or region of Cuscatlán, created for the Yaquis and Pipil Indians. The twelve years of armed conflict that began in 1980 and engulfed all of El Salvador severely affected this region, causing this county to have one of the highest rates of poverty in the entire country. Of the approximately 7,488 inhabitants, 1,195 people are located in urban surroundings and 6,293 live in rural environs. CESTA's mission is to support the creation of a sustainable economy and improved lifestyle for these people.

The opportunities for income here are limited and CESTA and the mayor's office of the town work together to generate more options for people in the rural locations of Rosario Tablon, Pepecto, Corral Viejo, and Rosario Perico. Tenancingo is currently best known for its palm plantations and the production of palm hats, which are braided by hand by the women who live in this area and sold in Cojutepeque as well as in San Salvador. There are other opportunities for income generation like ownership of small commercial stores, various types of agricultural activity such as pig farming, and seasonal work mechanical repair and security services but, just as with any developing infrastructure, there must be economic growth. When the municipal government realized the potential that the influx of sewing machines held, they requested that CESTA increase the number to about 30 with a plan to create small factories for sewing and dressmaking where many women and young people would be employed.



So it is that the ten sewing machines from the 15 collected in New Jersey arrived fully repaired and ready for work in Rosario Tablon, where the group who received these sewing machines constructed a cultural center in which different sewing skills such as embroidery, dressmaking, and tailoring are practiced. The parts of the unsalvageable 5 machines were incorporated into these 10 or set aside for future repairs. Nothing wasted. The people awaiting the future deliveries of machines may never know that their future employment was influenced by the choice

of one American school to incorporate global awareness into its own financial considerations.

If our readers had not before comprehended the impact that a few Americans and their seemingly obsolete possessions have had and will continue to have on international economic development, empowerment of women, and skills acquisition for the young, the above system of collection, repair, and distribution hopefully illuminated the tangible contributions of P4P and its partners to this change. For the many of us who did not know who works behind the scenes ensuring that contributions are truly ready for immediate use and long-term continuity, this revelation offers a new dimension to the image of who it is that steps up and gets involved in our mission.

For more information on CESTA, go to [www.p4p.org](http://www.p4p.org) and click on Our Partners then select Sewing Machines and click on the flag of El Salvador.

#### COUNTRY UPDATE: GUATEMALA

Doña Marina lives in the town of San Andrés Itzapa, Chimaltenango, Guatemala in the county of San Antonio. Growing up, Marina's family was very poor. She was never given the opportunity to attend school as her father died in 1980, leaving her with the responsibility of taking care of both her mother and her handicapped sister.

To help provide for the family, Marina learned to sew. She started out making aprons and small cushions, each of which sold for the equivalent in American currency of one penny and one-and-a-half pennies respectively. Over time, Marina's skill improved so that she was capable of sewing blouses, skirts, day dresses, wedding dresses, and women's pants. For many years, she used the same sewing machine: an extremely old, foot-operated model. This made performing the work integral to her livelihood a laborious and protracted task.



However, in the year 2000, Marina received her first electric sewing machine from Pedals for Progress partner, FIDESMA. This greatly increased the ease with which she could produce garments. Furthermore, as a result of the added speed provided by an electric sewing machine, Marina was able to take on many more jobs. Eventually, in 2012, she made enough money to purchase herself a second sewing machine. Doña Marina is extremely grateful to Pedals for Progress and FIDESMA for giving her the opportunity to own two electric sewing machines despite her low income. She is now able to work much more rapidly and can produce multiple items of clothing daily. Now, with the extra money she makes, Marina can better support her sister and her elderly mother.

Héctor Rolando Sunuc Mututz is a 33-year old Guatemalan who has worked for the Catholic mission, The Apostles of Infinite Love, since he was a child. Born into a poor family, Rolando always needed to make money, forcing him to abandon his education after completing elementary school. With his family having so few resources, The Apostles of Infinite Love took care of and looked after Rolando throughout his childhood. Now, as an adult he is still with the mission and has become one of its key employees.



Rolando is married and has four children. He and his family live in the town of San Andrés Itzapa, 2km away from the mission. In need of transportation to and from work, Rolando's only option initially was to hire a motorized tuk-tuk on a daily basis. However, considering his modest income, this was not a practical solution to his transportation problem. So, Rolando turned to FIDESMA, a Pedals for Progress partner that distributes bicycles, supports agricultural extension, and performs other services within the community of the San Andrés Itzapa area.

The bicycle Rolando received from FIDESMA and P4P provides him with his own method of transportation for his daily commute. Furthermore, with the goal of him and his family becoming fully self-sufficient, Rolando has acquired some land on which he grows corn, beans, and various other fruits and vegetables. However, the land is 10km away from his home. He is only able to tend to his garden and keep it flourishing thanks to his

bicycle that allows him to make the 20km round trip once every week.



Rolando states that he is very thankful to FIDESMA and Pedals for Progress for their bicycle program. As affordable transportation options in his area are scarce, Rolando would have to walk for hours and hours to accomplish what he can instead do quite rapidly now that he has a bike. Above all, Rolando is just happy to have the ability to get to where he needs to go on his own terms.

#### COUNTRY UPDATE: NICARAGUA

In the early nineties, Pedals for Progress founder and current president, David Schweidenback, met Wilfredo Santana of Ecobici, a low-income bicycle distributor based in Rivas, Nicaragua. Together, they developed the concept of revolving funds in order to sustainably pay for the cost of transporting bicycles from the United States to Nicaragua. In 1992, Jose Dolores Hernandez purchased one of the first bikes shipped to Ecobici by Pedals for Progress.

The bicycle was a Raleigh 26" Mountain Bike and proved to be a highly dependable vehicle for Jose. He, his wife, and his three sons made varied use of the bike for fifteen years. Throughout this period, Jose, a mason and general contractor by trade, made countless trips transporting tools and materials between his home and multiple worksites.

Unfortunately, in 2007, while riding the Raleigh, one of Jose's sons accidentally landed on it in such a way that he broke the bicycle's frame. It was therefore that Jose was forced to buy another bicycle. He managed to get another bike of decent, though not quite as good quality as his first one. Regardless, Jose, now 65 and a grandfather of three grandchildren, continues to take great care of his second bike and uses it for work daily. Furthermore, Jose's son eventually managed to repair the original Raleigh and that bike, originally purchased in 1992, has now become an indispensable tool to another generation. Pedals for Progress' partnership with Ecobici was the organization's first, long-lasting major program and is still currently in

operation. Since its inception, Pedals for Progress has shipped 52 containers, or over 22,000 bicycles, to the small town of Rivas, Nicaragua with still more to come.

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