

Fall 2018

INGEAR INSTITCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF PEDALS FOR PROGRESS THE NEWSLETTER OF SEWING PEACE

Nicaragua 2018: a Pause in Our Longest-running Program

1. A 27-Year Partnership

In the 1970s and 1980s there was a civil war in Nicaragua. Violence and destruction were widespread. The warring sides would burn the crops of their enemies, so hunger was also widespread. Many bridges and roads were impassable.

U.S. religious groups were sending humanitarian aid such as food and medical supplies to Nicaragua. A couple of these groups were in New Jersey, including a group at the United Methodist Church in Plainfield. I asked if I could put some of my bikes into the containers they were shipping to Nicaragua. That's how our first bikes went to Nicaragua.



After a few of these containers had been shipped, the church groups invited their Nicaraguan partners to a meeting in New Jersey to talk about our projects. One of the Nicaraguans was Wilfredo Santana, head of the Association for the Community Development of Rivas, a town in southwestern Nicaragua. Wilfredo was talking to the group about his programs and the shipments from the U.S. and he said, "Forget all that other stuff. Just send us bikes." Gasps all around. The roads and bridges were in such bad shape, and gasoline was so scarce, that a bike was an incredible advantage in Nicaragua at that time.

The group had a picnic where I had a chance to talk with Wilfredo. He said that he didn't have any money for the first shipment, but that if I could ship him a container of bikes at no charge, he could make enough money on the bikes to pay for the next shipment. Each shipment would pay for the next, and this could go on indefinitely. This was the origin of what we call the revolving fund idea, which we have used ever since.



I decided to make P4P-only shipments instead of sharing the other groups' containers. I went to the SeaLand shipping company and told them that if they would donate the cost of the first shipment, I would become a long-term customer. They made the shipment at no charge and I became a long-term customer. Since then, it has sometimes been a struggle to fund the first shipment to a new partner. But we're still in business, we've shipped more than 155,000 bikes, and we're still using our revolving funds to pay most of our international shipping costs.

End of an Era

There are several reasons a P4P partner program might end: the local market for bikes can become saturated; the business might not be well run or might lose key people; the government might impose prohibitive import rules or fees; the local economy might collapse. Despite all these unhappy possibilities, our P4P program in Nicaragua has had an amazing run.

Between 1992 and 2016, we sent more than 40,000 bicycles to Nicaragua and more than 20,000 to Rivas. Now seems like a good time to pause the program. Demand for our bikes is down because we've shipped so many and because of the terrible political and economic times in Nicaragua in 2018.

Given the right circumstances, we may revive the EcoBici program down the road. For now, though, we're making the Rivas program inactive. Goodbye for now and good luck to our good friends in Nicaragua.

2. ECOBICI, Rivas, Nicaragua

By Wilfredo Santana

In the 1990s, after the war in Nicaragua, the impact on Rivas of the arrival of bicycles was very great. The country was economically destroyed, public transport was insufficient, and the unemployment rate was high. So for people with scarce resources it was extraordinarily helpful when we started selling bikes at modest prices.

Our organization, the Association for the Community Development of Rivas, developed several programs in Rivas and the nearby communities of Veracruz, Buenos Aires, La Chocolata, and Tola. Our programs benefited single mothers, mothers who lost their children or husbands in the war, teachers, and workers. We had programs to build rope pumps for water wells, transport drinking water, build latrines, and build roofs for houses.

We established bike shops where we sold and repaired bikes and bike parts, and we trained bike mechanics to work in the shops. We call our bike business EcoBicicletas.

Rivas has become somewhat more prosperous over the last couple of decades, so the use of motorcycles and autos has increased. We do not have the same demand for bikes that we had years ago, but we still sell many bikes, mostly to young people, women, and some elderly people. And the bicycle is still an economical means of transport for many.

Besides providing affordable transportation to thousands of adults and children in Nicaragua, EcoBicicletas has, for almost three decades, offered steady jobs for the three women who run the organization.

Now, in late 2018, Nicaragua is in the middle of a socio-economic crisis, including violence in the streets. The deterioration of the economy has impacted the sales of bicycles to such a degree that we fear for the survival of our business. We hope that the situation will normalize and the pace of product sales will resume. ♦



Fall 2018: Bike School and Bike Jobs in Albania

By the Ecovolis Team



It was a Saturday afternoon when the activists of EcoVolis went out as usual to patrol the new bicycle lanes here in Tirana, Albania. In one lane there was a motorcycle driving fast, in another a car that had completely blocked the bike lane. A total of 12 miles of lanes built in a very short time by the head of PASS/Ecovolis, now titled the “Bike Mayor”. PASS and Pedals for Progress are the right combination to turn Tirana into the City of Bikes.

In just a moment we counted over ten bikers using the lanes. It was a rare emotion for the activists who have fought for ten years for protected lanes. Now these lanes are flowing rivers of bikers. Just like boats on true rivers, these bikers go about their days on these lanes.



We take a look back in time: How did we get here? The collaboration with Pedals for Progress gave the opportunity to PASS, the mother organization of EcoVolis, to undertake tens and hundreds of activities with the mission to return bikes to Tirana. It was the start of this partnership in 2000 that decided how things were going to be for the bikers of Tirana today. And how beautiful things are!

There are daily bikers for the Day Care, Two-wheels Academy, Free the Lanes, weekend biking, tour guides for guests, bikes for kids who cannot afford them, bikes for the elderly and the communities that need them. One great example is the transformation of 30 bikes from P4P into cargo bikes for the Romanian community to work in the recycling field (a total of 60 new jobs).

The number of bikers in Tirana has grown tenfold. At the EcoVolis Service shop a lot of bikers come to repair or exchange their bikes for better ones from the U.S.A. This led us to start to train young girls and boys to repair bikes in order to open more EcoVolis Service points and also to create new jobs for more people.



Now that there are more than 7000 bikes from P4P, EcoVolis has another ambitious mission: to open a bike school. Taking as examples other countries where bikes are ubiquitous—the Netherlands and Denmark, for example—Tirana is also at the point in which it is opening the first schools for bikes. The bikes of this school, its devoted activists are the full support of P4P. This school, which organizational workings are in progress, is expected to add 3000–4000 bikers to the lanes per year.

To change movement in a city with over 1 million inhabitants is the story of the success of a strong partnership like the one between U.S.A./P4P and Albania/PASS. When we look back we cannot believe that fate and time approached us with such a virtuous organization, whose support and energy helped us to create so many jobs for the community and to make a two-wheel revolution for our city. Thank you, Pedals For Progress. You are already a Nobel Prize organization. ♦

Report from Ethiopia, Fall 2018

By Samson Tsegaye

[In July 2017 we shipped 72 sewing machines to our partner in Ethiopia, Stiftung Solarenergie — Solar Energy Foundation. Political and logistical problems slowed the program. But we just got this report from Country Director Samson Tsegaye; the training has begun.]



Finally I managed to start the sewing machine training for 25 women. I am so happy to inform you of this. It was so challenging to get this far.

They will have 21 days of training on sewing technique and then they will receive one sewing machine to start their own business.

Thank you so much again for your great help.

Best Regards,

Samson Tsegaye, Ethiopia Country Director
Stiftung Solarenergie—Solar Energy Foundation ♦



Report from Kenya, Fall 2018

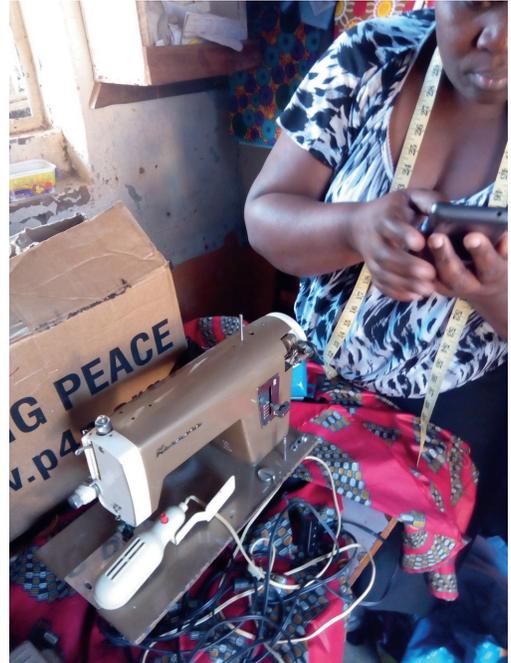
By Tom Ademba

[In March 2018 Sewing Peace made its first shipment to Aid the Needy in Homa Bay, located on the eastern shore of Lake Victoria in Western Kenya. The shipment of 72 sewing machines arrived in June. It was funded in part by the William and Helen Mazer Foundation of New Jersey.]

One of the beneficiaries of our first SP project in Kenya is a group called the Maseno Deaf Project. This is an organization of deaf people in Western Kenya running small businesses. They requested Aid The Needy to support them with a few sewing machines. They are making school uniforms, and designing various household garments that they sell to support their families. The group has 36 members working towards economic development.

Another Aid the Needy project is at the Atela Secondary School, where they use sewing machines in their Home Science classes. Atela Secondary School is a rural institution supporting education of young people from the smallholder farming communities in Rachuonyo District, Homa Bay County, Kenya. The school has a Home Science curriculum where sewing machines are a critical part of the syllabus. They now have good machines that support their classes.

Mother Teresa Van Miert, in Oyugis town, is a school run by the Franciscan Sisters supporting education of young children. The School has more than 300 children. By regulation, the school children must have uniforms. With SP sewing machines they are able to produce the uniforms within the school and make them affordable to the parents.



Luke is a cobbler who repairs shoes and bags, including lots of school bags. He also designs footwear from car tires. He does it so well that with only a few tools he earns good money. He purchased one machine that can run both manually and electrically. He operates under a shade tree in Oyugis Town, Homa Bay County, Kenya. ♦

Fall 2018: New Partner in Tanzania: the Matabaiki Olere Organization

By Giza Mdoe

[In October 2018, P4P shipped a container with 469 bikes and 119 sewing machines to our new partner in Tanzania, the Matabaiki Olere Organization. Giza Mdoe is our contact there. Here he introduces himself, his region, and his plans for two projects: one with sewing machines and one with bikes.]

The Matabaiki Olere Organization is based in the town of Arusha, Tanzania. Arusha is a tourist hub, 60 miles from Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, and 100 miles from the Serengeti Plains and the Ngorongoro Crater, the world's largest caldera, home to the world's only tree-climbing lions. The Ngorongoro Conservation Area also contains the Olduvai Gorge, one of the most important paleoanthropological sites in the world.



I grew up in Kenya, where I was raised by a foster family. They live in Boston now.

Bicycle Project: Watu wa Delivery (WWD)

Watu wa Delivery (WWD) is Swahili for “delivery people”. It is designed to create employment for impoverished youth in urban areas. Employees will use bicycles to deliver food to urban residential areas and mail to commercial centers.

I expect to put at least 200 bikes into the delivery business project and sell the rest to raise the U.S. \$6000 for our next shipment. Since I have never done such a project before I don't know how long it will take but am assuming a couple of months.

The program will begin in Mbeya, which has a large population of urban unemployed youth.

The initiative will hire a delivery crew of 1500 and a dispatch and maintenance crew of 500. We will establish 50 Dispatch Centres. Each Dispatch Centre will have 10 bikes and each bike will be assigned between 2 and 3 delivery persons to work half- and full-day shifts according to their availability.

WWD will also establish telecom, internet, and networking services. Examples of these services are low-cost mobile calls and texts, marketing for sellers, a mobile app and a WWD website for buying, selling, and customer rating of sellers.

Besides job-specific activities, WWD will conduct monthly outreach programs for youth providing education on sexual health, drug abuse, youth rights, hygiene, health and nutrition, environment, vocational training and accelerated learning options.

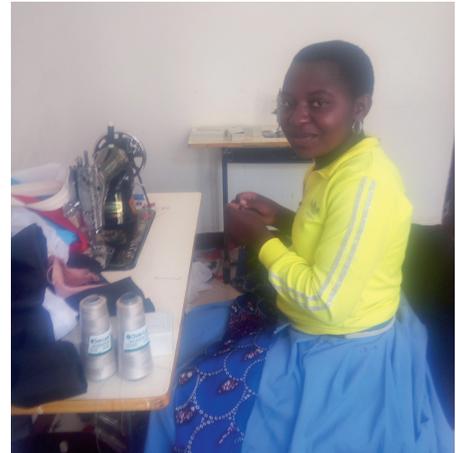
Sewing-machine Project: Fabrics of Society (FOST)

Fabrics of Society (FOST) is a project for training single mothers in sewing, tailoring, design, and marketing.

The sewing machines will all go into a production line for various items to be sold in country and exported, including to the U.S. At the moment I enroll school drop-outs who are single mothers. We have five sewing machines and the women make sandals as well as clothes. In this country when a girl gets pregnant in school she is expelled and is not allowed back into school even after her child is born, worsening the cycle of poverty.

The girls learn to use the machines free of charge. They take a percentage of the sales. We donate books and supplies to local schools where our girls give testimonials to help with awareness.

Depending on availability of sewing machines and trainers, FOST aims to enroll 180 women in the training program and 20 tailors (who have previous experience). We will hire 2 teachers and 3 training assistants.



The trainees will attend 3-hour classes 3 times a week. The training is done in 4 stages, each lasting 3 months with each stage marking a specific level of proficiency. A small enrolment fee is charged to give the members a sense of responsibility and ownership.

The initiative is done in partnership with VETA, the Tanzanian Vocational Education and Training Authority, who will issue the graduates certificates of achievements. The project will start in Dar es Salaam and then move to other regions.

Besides technical training in tailoring, the initiative provides basic life skills in health, nutrition and sanitation. Focus is family planning as well as the importance of pre- and post-natal clinics, breastfeeding, balanced diets and personal hygiene. ♦



Mt Kilimanjaro
Tanzania

Report from Kosovo, Fall 2018

By Kushtrim Gojani

Kujtim Mehmeti is one of the co-owners of an auto-repair shop called “D-Max”. The service is located near Vushtrri, a town about 10 miles from the capital, Prishtina. Owing to his profession, Kujtim inevitably loves wheels and speed. He is very fond of bicycles, too, to the point that he still cannot part with his very first BMX bike—on which he learned to cycle and which he still keeps in the attic of his house.



However, when Kujtim bought a big black and green Huffy bike from the GoBike store on July 16th, he didn't just buy it for himself. He primarily bought it for the employees of his auto shop: Altin Istrefi and Muhamed Shabani. Up until then, they used to hop in the car for everything. They took the car whenever they needed to go for supplies or food. They have now replaced the car with the bicycle—and they are loving it! Kujtim hasn't crunched the numbers to know how much he is saving on fuel costs by using the bike instead of the car. But the benefits to the environment and to their health are invaluable.

On Sundays, when the shop is closed, Kujtim and his friend Alban Kasumi (who also bought his bike from GoBike) go cycling for 10 miles just to keep fit. Kujtim was the first to buy his bike. Alban bought his the very next day, after spending a sleepless night from the fear that his favorite Kent 700 Roadtech bike might be sold. Both love the effect the bicycles are having on their fitness and general well-being. They can't wait for Kosovo's infrastructure to recover to enable people to change—where possible—from cars to bicycles.

Marjana Neziraj, whom her family and friends call Jana, is 9 years old. She lives in Pristina with her mom Kristina, dad Bruno, and her brother Daniel. Jana loves being outdoors. She thought she liked only swimming during the hot summer months, but after her father bought her the Venus Rock Candy from the GoBike store, she discovered how much she misses cycling too.



Whilst she was off school during the summer break, she used her bike almost every day. The bike was a tool for Jana and her favorite doll of more than 7 years, Beba Trashes, to go for a ride around the neighborhood, or to go to visit her grandfather, aunts, and uncles. Now that school has started, her father often takes the bike to school when he goes to collect her. Jana then rides home, under the guidance of her father, as Pristina is not yet a cycling friendly city for adults, let alone children. Jana's one regret is that her father works very hard and does not have time to go riding bicycles with her in Germia Park, just on the outskirts of the capital city. However, she is determined to carry on cycling, on her own if needs be. She is a very determined girl, and the bike is not only helping her with mobility, but also to learn to be independent. ♦

2018 Success Story from Uganda: Agnes Nakabuye

By Mathew Yawe

Agnes Nakabuye is a 38-year-old widow and single mother of 4. Our vocational project sponsored her 2 years of training in sewing, tailoring, and fashion design. At the end of her 2-year course, the project gave her at no cost a manual Singer sewing machine from Sewing Peace.

For her business, Agnes hired a space on the veranda in our town of Mityana for U.S. \$5.40 per month. She earns daily U.S. \$2 to \$4 selling second-hand clothes, fitting and repairing clothes, and making school uniforms.

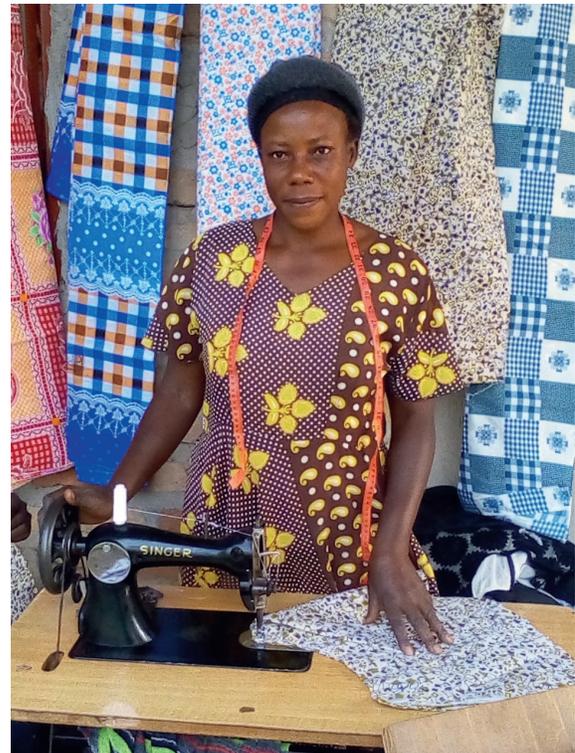
Agnes has managed to save money for renting the room where her family lives, for buying food and medication, and for paying school fees for three of her children. Her first-born is 18 years old in senior six; her second-born is 15 years old in senior four; her third-born is 13 years old in senior one; and the last born, 9 years old, dropped out of school in primary six because Agnes could not afford the school fees.

Agnes has several challenges, and several hopes and dreams for the future.

- She would like to expand her business, so she would like to be able to afford more material for her tailoring.
- She would like to be able to afford a better sewing machine: one that can work on tougher fabrics and that has overlocking capability.
- She would like to be able to rent a shop where she can safely store her customers' clothes and her sewing machine. As of now, every day she must carry the machine and her materials between her room and her space on the veranda!
- Ideally, she would like to be able to afford her own property, where she could build a house, grow food, and start a poultry-farming project.

Besides running our training programs, the Mityana Open Troop Foundation has also set up a sewing-machine shop in Mityana Town where schools and other tailors can buy high-quality sewing machines at reasonable prices. The profits from the shop help pay our instructors and shipping costs.

We extend our sincere thanks to Sewing Peace for providing the machines that we use in our training programs, that we provide to our graduates in starting their own businesses, and that we sell in our shop to make our organization successful. ♦



Report from Vietnam, Fall 2018

By Nguyen Hanh

Nhi Cao, 10 years old, was born into a poor family with five children in a village in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. The family lives in a dilapidated house that was built in 2008 with the help of generous donors. Her father, 48 years old, has been working in construction for more than ten years, and can make only irregular visits home from his far-away construction sites. Her mother, 42 years old, earns income for the family with all kinds of work, including selling lottery tickets. Though she is the youngest child, Nhi helps her mother with the house work, and earns a little income by knitting, feeding chickens, and harvesting vegetables after school.

Most of the time, Nhi and her sister and brother walked more than 2 miles to school while her mother also walked around 25 miles per day selling lottery tickets, earning \$10–\$15. Nhi’s mom usually works from dawn to dusk but is still unable to meet the family’s expenses. In early 2018 the mother was provided with a micro-loan from The Dariu Foundation (TDF) to invest in raising 100 chickens with the hope of earning enough profit to buy a bike by the end of the year.

In June 2018, The Dariu Foundation received a container of bikes from Pedals for Progress (P4P) and Nhi was among the eligible recipients. After TDF refurbished the bike, they sold it to Nhi in June 2018. TDF also used some spare parts from the P4P container to fix Nhi’s old bike.

Nhi and her brother share the P4P bike to ride to school in the morning. The third child uses the repaired bike to ride to school in the afternoon. Nhi’s mother uses the old bike in the morning and the P4P bike in the afternoon, and as a result has nearly doubled her income from her lottery ticket sales.



At the end of August, her mother got a second loan of \$400 from Dariu, which, together with the profit of \$230 from selling the chickens, she invested in raising a cow. She expects that she could earn \$800 from this business by end of 2019, along with an annual profit of around \$2,400 from selling lottery tickets. This money should help her repair the house and invest in her children’s education.

In July 2018, Nhi joined Dariu’s coding skill training program (Scratch) for secondary students. She completed a project at the end of the training course, and entered her project in Dariu’s competition among primary students. Unexpectedly, Nhi was among the top ten project winners of Dariu Scratch Summer Camp 2018.

Nhi studies hard and is one of the best students in the class. “Thank you Dariu for giving me such a beautiful and good bicycle. It not only helps me to ride to school but also my mom in her business,” said Nhi. Her mother explained, “I don’t have to use the broken old bike all the time. I am very grateful. I hope in the future my children can continue their education and that Nhi can achieve her dream of becoming a doctor”. ♦

Report from Vermont, Fall 2018

By Joanne Heidkamp

[The partnership between the Green Mountain Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and P4P goes waaaaay back. They started their P4P collections in 1999. For our spring 2011 newsletter, they wrote a “Recipe for Collecting Bikes”. In 2014, they collected their 3000th bike. Now, in fall 2018, they sent us another truckload of bikes and sewing machines. Here’s the report.]

Hi David and Lori:

Our 2018 collection on Saturday September 29th was successful. We loaded 193 bikes and 75 sewing machines into 4 FedEx containers.



Our two miniature bike mechanics Noah (age 5) and Melek (age 3) arrived at 8:30 a.m. to donate Noah’s outgrown bike. They stayed on, with their parents, until we closed up the truck at 1:30. They never stopped working. They strapped pedals to the frames, they greeted people bringing bikes and sewing machines, and they looked everyone straight in the eye and said “will you be donating \$10 for shipping by check or with cash?” Quite a few people ended up donating extra.



Unfortunately, the quality of bikes is down this year. About 100 of the bikes came from some rural churches that held mini-collections—even after we eliminated the bikes with obvious rust, there are still quite a few marginal bikes in the load.

We are also feeling the impact of Old Spokes Home, a local bike shop plus non-profit that has expanded considerably in the past couple of years. They hold several big collections a year. At this point they are probably skimming 500–800 high-quality bikes a year from the local donation pool. It’s hard for us to compete with their impressive local accomplishments in providing transportation and skills to local teens, refugees, people who can’t drive or don’t have cars, guys on parole, etc. It’s an excellent project. They have donated bikes to P4P when they have a surplus. They get bikes from college campuses in the spring, and from local police departments—both are sources we can not tap into because we don’t have storage, and we don’t want to have to fundraise the \$10 per bike.

We also loaded 4 cases of brand new bicycle seats donated by Terry Bicycles, a women-focused bike clothing and accessories company located in Burlington. Our contact at Terry is Colin Sturgess, the operations manager. Colin was the manager at FedEx who first provided us free shipping to New Jersey, back around 2000. He saw our truck in the KMart parking lot last year and left a note sending good wishes. We followed up, and this year he invited us to do outreach at Terry’s annual tent sale in August, and made the offer of donated bike seats as well.

The quality of the sewing machines is up. As you know, half of the machines were collected by Mary

O'Brien in Springfield, who checks each one carefully before turning them over to us. The other half came in on Saturday—a lot of nice 1980's portables in their own case, as well as several Bernina overlock sergers, which are fantastic for sewing knits. We also loaded a 1930s Singer with a knee controller.

Mary O'Brien works in solid waste management for the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, southeast of Burlington. She has been collecting sewing machines for us since 2014. This year she collected 36 machines that she had individually tested. The solid waste district covers the \$10 per item. We are in awe of her! ♦



Postscript to the 2018 GMRPCVs FedEx Shipment

On October 16, 2018, the FedEx truck from the Green Mountain Returned Peace Corps Volunteers got to the P4P trailers in Glen Gardner, New Jersey.

We had our regular driver and he is highly skilled. We were perfectly happy with his first try to park the truck next to our loading dock, but he was not. He wanted to be closer the dock to make the unloading easier.



When he tried to get closer, though, he got stuck in a hidden low muddy spot in front of the trailers—wheels spinning, mud flying, truck not moving. It looked like getting the stuck tractor-trailer out would be a huge problem.



In the meantime, we unloaded the 4 FedEx canisters: 193 bikes and 75 sewing machines.



The driver called a local towing company and the biggest tow truck I have ever seen showed up. The two drivers chatted amiably for a few minutes. Then the tow-truck driver hooked up a cable to the FedEx truck, flipped a lever on the tow track, and winched the FedEx truck to the asphalt in about 15 seconds. The tow truck never moved. What problem? ♦



P4P/SP Active Partnerships

November 2018

ALBANIA, Tirana, PASS, community development: 6,902 bikes (2010 – 2019), 306 sewing machines (2010 – 2019)

CAMEROON, Buea, United Action for Children, youth development: 462 bicycles (2018), 100 sewing machines (2018)

GUATEMALA, Chimaltenango, Fundacion Integral de Desarrollo Sostenible y Medio Ambiente (FIDESMA), small-business promotion: 9,409 bikes (1999 – 2017), 274 sewing machines (2003 – 2017)

KENYA, Homa Bay, Aid the Needy, community development: 72 sewing machines (2018)

KOSOVO, Kastriot, GoBike, community development: 450 bikes (2018), 50 sewing machines (2018)

PERÚ, Ucayali region, Alianza Arkana, community development, 65 sewing machines (2018)

TANZANIA, Arusha, Matabaiki Loere Organization (MATOLO), community development, 469 bikes (2018), 119 sewing machines (2018)

UGANDA, Mityana, Mityana Open Troop Foundation, community development: 137 sewing machines (2017)

UGANDA, Iganga, Office of the Mayor, community development: 69 sewing machines (2018)

VIETNAM, Can Tho City, Dariu Foundation, community development, 528 bikes (2018)

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