



THE FACE OF PHILANTHROPY

Wheels of Progress

When the Indian Ocean tsunami crashed over Sri Lanka's coastline in December 2004, F.K. Day watched with a mixture of "helplessness and resolve" as the disaster unfolded on television.

But Mr. Day did not simply write a check to assist survivors. As a co-founder of the SRAM Corporation, a manufacturer of bicycle components, he was well equipped to provide a more unusual form of aid.

In coordination with Trek Bicycle and World Vision Sri Lanka, Mr. Day devised a plan to provide 25,000 locally built bicycles to the people most affected by the catastrophe. Today almost 90 percent of the Sri Lankan recipients depend on their bikes not only for transportation, but also to earn a livelihood. The non-profit group born of that effort—World Bicycle Relief—has since turned its attention to Zambia, where poverty and HIV/AIDS ran rampant.

"There's a tsunami in Africa every day, and it occurs silently and relentlessly," says Mr. Day, who serves as the group's president.

The Chicago organization started working in Zambia in 2006, and so far has provided 23,000 bicycles to volunteers trained by World Vision to work in remote areas educating people about how to curb the spread of HIV.

World Bicycle Relief is now embarking on the second phase of its Zambia project: delivering 50,000 bikes to help children travel to and from school, cutting down on arduous treks that may take up to four hours round trip.

To help keep the bikes on the road, World Bicycle Relief has trained 500 people as mechanics in Sri Lanka, and is educating a similar number in Zambia. Moreover, the bicycles are specifically built to handle rough terrain and transport hundreds of pounds of supplies over many years.

The charity, unlike many other organizations facing a rocky economy, raised far more than it needed last year. It took in \$2.2-million, a 40-percent increase from 2007. It decided to keep its budget last year at \$1.3-million because it assumes that raising money will be challenging this year. Two-thirds of the organization's money comes from individuals while the rest comes from corporations and foundations.

Here, Mr. Day completes a final check on a bike in Chongwe, Zambia, under the watchful eye of a mechanic trained by the group.

-MARTY MICHAELS

Photograph by Leah Missbach Day