

# IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE



Around the world, rural communities lag behind urban areas on nearly every health metric.



Rural children are often half as likely to be immunized<sup>1</sup>; more likely to suffer from stunting<sup>2</sup>; and more likely to die<sup>3</sup> before their fifth birthday—often of preventable or treatable conditions.

Likewise, rural women and girls are less likely to have access to modern family planning, less likely to receive prenatal care<sup>4</sup>, and are much more likely to die<sup>5</sup> in childbirth.

**In addition to poverty and gender and social norms, a growing body of research has identified one underappreciated hurdle to improved health in rural areas: *distance*.**

According to the World Bank, about one billion people<sup>6</sup>—that's one out of every eight people across the globe—lived in rural communities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, far from the nearest paved road, often putting them prohibitively far from the nearest health clinic. In Africa, 70% of the population has no access to an all-weather road, leaving more than 700 million people to walk—often hours and sometimes for days—along dirt tracks to access basic healthcare.

A survey<sup>7</sup> across 14 sub-Saharan countries found that rural women walk an average of 108 minutes—while in labor—to access the nearest skilled birth attendant. It is little wonder then, that a majority of rural African women still give birth without a trained professional<sup>8</sup> by their side.

Researchers estimate that 75% of deaths<sup>9</sup> across rural sub-Saharan Africa are related to distance. Patients simply cannot reach health facilities in time, if at all.

We can help prevent this unnecessary suffering and death.

**World Bicycle Relief's rugged, durable bicycle and programming closes the gap between rural communities and lifesaving health services in a number of ways.**

## EQUIPPING HEALTH WORKERS TO CONNECT COMMUNITIES WITH HEALTHCARE

World Bicycle Relief has partnered with health ministries, UN agencies, bilateral organizations, and civil society organizations to distribute Buffalo Bicycles to more than 152,588 health workers in seven countries to accelerate the progress and magnify the impact of critical healthcare programs.

These bicycles ensure community health workers spend less time in transit and more time with patients; delivering vaccines, medicines and family planning; ensuring compliance with TB and HIV medication; and helping transport women in labor and severely ill patients via bicycle ambulance.

Overall, bicycles can significantly contribute to delivering health services, optimizing efficiency and improving overall health outcomes.

**IN A USAID-FUNDED PROJECT IN KENYA,** community health workers riding World Bicycle Relief's Buffalo Bicycles saw 88% more patients and referred 50% more patients for TB screening at a local clinic. Community health workers equipped with bicycles were also less likely to quit.

**IN A USAID-FUNDED PROJECT IN ZAMBIA,** community health workers riding World Bicycle Relief's Buffalo Bicycles in nine provinces quadrupled the frequency of visits to their patients. And the retention rate of Community Health Workers nearly doubled when provided with a Buffalo Bicycle to ease transport.

**IN A WORLD VISION PROJECT IN GHANA,** community health volunteers riding World Bicycle Relief's Buffalo Bicycles reported a 39% reduction in time traveled to visit their patients, and a 25% increase in time spent in communities delivering services.

**IN UGANDA,** recent research found that the poorest and most vulnerable people were the least able to access health facilities—in large part because of distance. The study called bicycles a "pro poor tool to increase health access equity."<sup>10</sup>



**88%**  
HEALTH WORKERS WITH  
BUFFALO BICYCLES  
INCREASED PATIENT  
VISITS BY 88%



## EQUIPPING RURAL WOMEN IN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES WITH BICYCLES

World Bicycle Relief partners with communities to implement programming and distribute bicycles. Seventy percent of the bicycles from our community-led programs go to women and girls.

These bicycles, used to attend school, access markets and jobs, and transport water, are also used in health emergencies to summon help or bring patients to the nearest clinic.

**IN ZAMBIA,** 80% of bicycle recipients reported that in addition to using their bike to get children to school and access markets, they rely on their bike to access healthcare at the nearest health facility, which is, on average, 4.9 kilometers (3 miles) away.

Access to reliable transportation allows mothers to get their children the healthcare they need to survive and thrive.

# CREATING A SUSTAINABLE BICYCLE ECOSYSTEM

World Bicycle Relief doesn't simply distribute bicycles. We create sustainable bicycle ecosystems by training local mechanics, linking communities with our global supply network for spare parts, and creating local community committees to shape, manage, and lead local bicycle programming.

Our goal is to ensure that in 10+ years, health workers, women, and other community members are still using our specially designed Buffalo Bicycles to broaden access to critical healthcare, education, livelihood opportunities and other essential services.



## PARTNERS



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



## ABOUT WORLD BICYCLE RELIEF

**World Bicycle Relief** partners with communities, governments, and the private sector to improve access to healthcare, education, markets, and critical government services for rural communities left behind by current development initiatives. Founded in 2005, World Bicycle Relief has already helped accelerate the journey out of poverty for more than 3.5 million people in 21 countries. When women, girls, community health workers, farmers, and entrepreneurs have durable bicycles, they can access the services and opportunities they need to build a better life.

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