

MAMAS International Proposes Partnership with Riders for Health for “Mobile MAMAS: Mapping, Tracking and Transport” as last mile IT/transportation

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/AboutUs/Announcements/Announce-070109.htm>



This motorcyclist for Riders for Health is delivering medicine to patients in the Binga District, one of the poorest regions of Zimbabwe.
Courtesy of Riders for Health

Riders for Health: Breaking Down Borders

Over the past two decades, new kinds of international and institutional relationships have emerged to help the needy in the developing world, breaking down borders between donor countries and recipients and boundaries between nonprofit and business models. In rural Africa, transporting the sick to appropriate medical facilities can be a serious issue.

Official assistance programs had spent significant amounts purchasing vehicles for this purpose, but trained drivers were lacking and the vehicles were either underutilized or failing for want of required maintenance.

Enter California native Randy Mamola, a Grand Prix motorcycle racing star, and his colleagues Andrea and Barry Coleman. Examining carefully local needs and circumstances, and often working with local public health officials and national governments, the trio founded the U.K.-based Riders for Health. The organization raised

private donations to fund training for drivers and other necessary experts in Uganda, Gambia, and Lesotho. Today, Riders for Health is managed completely by African teams, and it maintains two- and four-wheeled vehicles that deliver health care services to nearly 11 million people across Africa.

An AIDS patient from the Makoni district in Zimbabwe explains how the Uhuru — a special motorcycle developed by Riders for Health to function on all types of off-road terrain — made life easier for him and his family: “Before the Uhuru, (<http://tinyurl.com/2qogkb>) it used to be a nightmare to get to the hospital. My family had to go and hire a vehicle to pick me up from home and transport me to the hospital. ...”

The Uhuru has also allowed medical teams to deliver substantive aid to treat preventable diseases. One study, conducted by Riders for Health and local public health officials in Zimbabwe, documented a 20 percent decrease in new malaria cases in the Binga District, where Riders was active. Binga’s neighboring districts continued to suffer from increasing rates of infection.

In Zambia, for example, women are able to provide for their families and pay their children’s school fees from the income obtained from the increased yield of their gardens. Because the Uhuru helps carry and pump extra water for these gardens, the additional produce grown is then transported to urban areas for sale; providing extra income to the families.

In many parts of rural Africa, a minor injury or illness can easily be fatal simply for lack of transport to a clinic or hospital.

Africa - The "Uhuru": Marrying Freedom and Transport

Most of rural Africa lacks the infrastructure for vehicle maintenance that would ensure lasting and cost-efficient transportation and facilitate a lifeline for needed supplies.

To address the problem of cost-effective transport for patients, drugs and other basic needs, Barry and Andrea Coleman's Riders program created the Uhuru vehicle. Swahili for "freedom", the Uhuru combines a rugged motorcycle with a multi purpose side-car manufactured in Africa using local materials, and serves both as an ambulance and as a community business vehicle at a much smaller cost than typical vehicles.

The vehicle is lightweight and extremely sturdy, powered by a small capacity motorcycle and fitted with off-road tires. Installed equipment includes a 20-litre water/petrol can, a hand winch, large battery, emergency lighting, cargo carrying area, lockable equipment storage locker, and removable stretcher system for ambulance duty and it has rain protection for patients and a towing hitch.

"The Transport Sector Board is very excited about this multi-purpose transport vehicle, which truly links transport with development," said Maryvonne Plessis-Fraissard, Director of the Bank's Transport Sector Board.

The vehicles are operated by local cooperatives with support from Riders, ensuring good maintenance practices while earning revenue for financial sustainability of the project.

With its multiple functions, the Uhuru is not only a cost effective way of providing transportation for health, educational and other services to rural communities, but it supports income-generating activities, too. Through its ability to pump water, generate electricity, provide lighting, and carry water or freight, the Uhuru is also helping rural people generate income. In Zambia, for example, women are able to provide for their families and pay their children's school fees from the income obtained from the increased yield of their gardens. Because the Uhuru helps carry and pump extra water for these gardens, the additional produce grown is then transported to urban areas for sale; providing extra income to the families.

” “ What makes this clinic truly remarkable, though, is the outreach. Doctors don't just sit and wait for patients, they go out and find them, treat them and make regular follow up calls. The outreach is the brainchild of two British dirt bikers, Barry and Andrea Coleman, who realized that a transport network is the missing link.

- Christiane Amanpour, CNN, July 2006

The "Uhuru" transport vehicle, is a cost-effective, lightweight and extremely sturdy sidecar powered by a retrofitted motorcycle. It won a \$ 123,000 grant at the 2002 Development Marketplace and is now ready to be scaled-up