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BICYCLES SAIL TO MADAGASCAR

Today, 361 bicycles will start sailing from New Zealand to Madagascar. The donated bicycles, collected in shipping containers, will be supporting the USAID-financed Community-Based Integrated Health Programme, known locally as MAHEFA (Malagasy HEniky ny FAhasakamana).

JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. leads the programme, with support from partners Transaid and The Manoff Group. As part of efforts to mobilise and motivate volunteer community health volunteers (CHVs) in MAHEFA regions, the programme has put in place income generating activities (IGAs). MAHEFA has established bicycle repair shops and trained CHVs in bicycle maintenance and small business management. The aim of these activities is to contribute both to the motivation of CHVs and to the sustainability of a wider MAHEFA bicycle empowerment programme by improving locally available bicycle mechanic expertise.

There are a number of benefits to the communities, as the CHVs receive income through the sales and repairs and a proportion of funds raised go directly to health activities in the community. Also, by significantly increasing the number of bicycles in these regions, the programme creates a critical mass of bicycles, which provides a market for bicycle repair and maintenance services and stimulates the local economy. When the bicycles are sold there is another benefit; the bicycles (both adult and youth) provide an important link for communities to allow them to better access to vital services such as health, education and markets.

Friends of Transaid and MAHEFA in New Zealand worked tirelessly to collect quality bicycles and to stack them into a container headed to the Bemanonga Cooperative in Menabe, Western Madagascar. The bikes will be used for a micro-enterprise specialising in bicycle repair and sales, which will be called the 'E-Box Mandroso' locally.

Stephen Bateman CEO SB Global Logistics (Partner DB Schenker Network) said:

"SB Global Logistics are proud to be part of this very worthy programme. It has always been very much part of the SB culture and values to contribute to these types of community based projects. Receiving over 360 bicycles from many generous and supportive people has been a real eye opener to our company and we thank all those involved for their helping hand and making this project a success. I would like to make a special mention to our SB project leaders Simon Weeks and Katherine Gareau who both spent tireless hours firstly raising awareness of this campaign, coordinating the bikes into our facility, disassembling and loading in to the container."

Gary Forster, CEO of Transaid, said:

"We are very grateful to our partners in New Zealand. In particular, we would like to thank New Zealand Post who donated almost 100 bikes previously used by postal workers, Hamburg Sud who donated the container and to SB Global Logistics who have coordinated the collection, dismantling and shipping of the bikes to Madagascar. These bicycles are helping to increase the reach of health workers in rural parts of Madagascar as well as helping stimulate the local economy with the creation of small businesses."

Chuanpit Chua-oon, JSI Chief of Party, said:

"These efforts by Transaid and their partners will enable dedicated community health volunteers to reach more people with health services and have the opportunity to sustain their efforts through income generation. We are proud of JSI's partnership with Transaid and admire their work to engage global supporters in this component of the MAHEFA program, which works to provide basic, quality health care to isolated populations in six north and northwestern regions of Madagascar."

For more information on the programme visit: <http://www.transaid.org/projects/mahefa-the-malagasy-healthy-families/>

Photo: Mr Frederick president of the Bemanonga Cooperative.

Photo credit: Robin Hammond for the JSI/MAHEFA Program, USAID/Madagascar.
