

WHEELS



AID: A Cambodian man and his child (above) are grateful for the bike. Mr Chan Chong Kai (right, front row, right) and Mr Roger Low (middle) with villagers they helped. PICTURES: WHEELS FOR HOPE, CHAN CHONG KAI



Doing the ride thing

Cycling enthusiasts set up charity that donates bikes to the poor

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The humble bicycle can impact the lives of the less fortunate.

And one group in Singapore is trying to change lives for the better in Cambodia by getting bicycles for people in need.

Under the auspices of Wheels for Hope, a not-for-profit group started two years ago, a group of cycling enthusiasts have already sponsored 178 bicycles in Cambodia. Each bicycle benefits one family.

"For these Cambodians, one bicycle means that the family would not have to waste what little money they have on public transportation," says Mr Chan Chong Kai, 40, who founded the group with his brother, Mr Chan Gin Kai, 42.

"My brother was already involved in charity work in Cambodia before this, so when he alerted us to this opportunity, my cycling friends and I decided that it was the right opportunity to help out."

On their trips to Cambodia, the brothers saw how the bicycles improved people's lives.

"For example, some of the kids had to walk 90 minutes from their village of Oudong to their school, but with the bicycles, the journey is now just 30 minutes. Plus the kids are now able to help their parents out by going into town to sell their wares," says Mr Chan, who works as a film producer.

The group has organised two charity trips to Cambodia so far, with another

coming up in February next year.

On their last trip in September this year, they got 113 bicycles which were distributed to deserving families.

These families were identified by charity organisation Hope Worldwide Cambodia.

"Through Hope Worldwide, we also work closely with the village head to ensure that bicycles are put to their intended use and not sold," says Mr Chan.

Now the cycling enthusiasts are trying to raise funds for a trip in April to bring more relief to families there.

"It might just be a bicycle to you, but every bicycle donated helps to save the villagers precious time and money," says Mr Chan.

They are aiming to donate at least 100 bicycles on that trip.

"We've only just sent out a Facebook post asking for donations two weeks ago. So the number of donations we received is enough for three bicycles," said Mr Roger Low, 37, a member of Wheels for Hope.

"But we are going to be ramping up our donation drive in January, so we are hoping for more," said the business controller who is a part of the charity trip organising team.

At least one bicycle company here is committed to helping the poor.

Creed Cycle, located at Waringin Park, a 10-minute walk from Kembangan MRT

station, is donating 20 per cent from the profits of every Vanmoof bicycle sold for this cause.

The popular bicycle from Holland, which costs between \$1,288 and \$1,488, is designed specifically for inner city travel.

"I saw a story on the Wheels for Hope Facebook page of how an HIV-positive woman in Cambodia will no longer have to travel 20km on foot to Phnom Penh to get treatment," says Mr Kevin Tan, 31, one of the three owners of Creed Cycle.

"Now, one of her five children can ferry her for her treatment on the bicycle."

Mr Tan says Vanmoofs are just starting to become popular in Singapore. The cult brand is very much in demand overseas. It was featured in the Wall Street Journal earlier this year.

Creed Cycle's other two owners, Mr Yap Ching Keong, 40 and Mr Eugene Tan, who is in his 30s, are fully on board to help people through Wheels for Hope.

"We are hoping that our example would galvanise others in the cycling community to come out and help this worthy cause," said Mr Tan.

"It might just be a bicycle to you, but every bicycle donated helps to save the villagers precious time and money."

— Mr Chan Chong Kai, co-founder of charity Wheels for Hope

What's at the fair

Creed Cycle will be taking part in ST Classified's Bike-A-Fair at Zouk today.

They are donating 20 per cent of each Vanmoof sold for the cause.

The brand Vanmoof is a popular Dutch bicycle made for city riding. One of its features is its hidden bicycle chain. This protects cyclists from getting any grease on their clothes. The model 3.2 (below) retails for \$1,288.

Another model that they will be selling today is the exclusive Aoi.Cycle. According to owner Mr Kevin Tan, there are only 100 bicycles made each year.

The 260-3L will cost \$3,180 for the five-speed version and \$3,300 for the eight-speed version.

■ ST Classified's Bike-A-Fair will be held at Zouk's staff carpark from 11am to 6pm today. Attendees that spend more than \$30 will be eligible for a Buyer's Draw. There will also be an Event Draw with \$600 of shopping and F&B vouchers to be won. If you want to find non-bike related bargains, there is also the Best Flea Forever flea market held at the same time inside Zouk. Admission to both events is free.

