

Request for funding Fasta Cycle Messengers

Background to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Dar es Salaam is a city of approximately 3.6 million people. It is the commercial capital of Tanzania in East Africa, and is situated on the coast of the Indian ocean.

While Dar es Salaam has a growing middle class, it also has severe urban poverty problems, with a large proportion of the population living in over-crowded slum conditions and relying on very low and unstable sources of income.

Traffic congestion is an increasing problem in Dar es Salaam with the middle class increasingly using private cars causing severe traffic jams, and motorization has also brought problems of urban air quality. Bicycles are also widely used as a means of transport but cyclists are often not respected on the roads and looked down upon as they are considered poor.

Background to UWABA

Umma wa Wapanda Baisikeli Dar es Salaam (UWABA) is a registered NGO in Tanzania working to improve safety for cyclists in Dar es Salaam and encouraging cycling as a sustainable means of urban transport. UWABA was established in 2006 and the membership is made up entirely of people who use cycles as their means of transport in Dar es Salaam. UWABA has no paid staff, only members who volunteer their time. Detailed information about UWABA including annual report for 2009 is available on the UWABA website www.uwaba.or.tz/index-en.htm

Background to Fasta Cycle Messengers

Among UWABA's members are some cyclists who are living in poverty and who do not have a stable source of income. Nonetheless, these members have been among the most dedicated in contributing their time to UWABA's work over the past four years.

At present in Dar es Salaam, no cycle messenger (cycle courier) services are available – all courier services are provided by courier companies using motorized vehicles and motorcycles. UWABA was inspired by cycle courier cooperatives which work in other cities in the world to provide cycle messenger services by bicycles. Enquiries were made with various organizations in Dar es Salaam including embassies, businesses and newspapers and it was established that there would be demand for cycle messenger services if such services were provided. UWABA decided to select 16 of its most impoverished and also most committed of its members to form a cycle messenger cooperative in Dar es Salaam (two of the 16 are disabled cyclists). The members decided to call the cooperative “Fasta Cycle Messengers Cooperative”.

Objectives

The objectives of setting up Fasta Cycle Messengers are:

- to provide high quality messenger/courier services in Dar es Salaam using entirely non-motorized transport (bicycles and other cycles)
- to provide income generation opportunities for cyclists living in urban poverty who have proved themselves as reliable and trustworthy people in their communities
- to contribute to better air quality in Dar es Salaam, reduction of traffic congestion in Dar es Salaam and reduction of global carbon emissions by providing messenger services using non-motorized transport
- to set up a business as a cooperative to ensure that profits remain in the hands of the cyclist members themselves

Progress so far

UWABA has already begun this project. So far, UWABA has succeeded in researching how to set up a cooperative and how to run messenger services and researching market demand for such services. UWABA has successfully completed the registration process for a cooperative under Tanzanian law with the assistance of the District Cooperatives Officer and Fasta Cycle Messengers now has a certificate of registration. The 16 selected members have joined the Fasta cooperative and paid a small entrance fee. A volunteer (former cycle messenger) from Hungary who was living in Tanzania helped Fasta to organize an Alley Cat competition as a preliminary training event and the members completed the Alley Cat exercise successfully.

Need for funding assistance

There are various up-front costs associated with setting up Fasta Cycle Messengers Cooperative. Among these are:

- Setting up a small office with some office furniture and supplies. It is a requirement under Tanzanian regulations that providers of courier services have such an office before receiving a courier license. This office will be a small room in an area of the city where rents are low in order to keep costs down.
- License fees. As well as registering as a cooperative (already done for a small fee), Fasta must obtain a courier license from the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), which involves a substantial license fee of Tsh 1,000,000 (US\$770).
- Training for members. UWABA would like to run some short training courses for Fasta members in how to run a cooperative correctly and how to provide high quality courier services. These trainings have various administrative costs.
- Initial advertising. Fasta would like to produce flyers as advertising. If possible, Fasta would also like to have an official launch press conference.
- Reflective jackets printed with the Fasta logo for members.
- Additional items. If enough funding was received, Fasta would also like to purchase some dedicated bicycles and repair tools, a computer and computer accessories, Fasta website hosting fee (separate to UWABA website) and other items to help the start up project.

The 16 Fasta members are not in a financial position to contribute much capital to the start up of Fasta. UWABA would therefore like to request financial assistance from other people or organizations who agree with the aims and objectives of this project and would like to contribute towards it. Full accounts of all expenditure as well as reports on the progress of this project will be available to contributors online.

Our funding target is USD\$5,000. If additional funds are collected, they will be channeled to the additional items above.

How to contribute

Contributors living in Tanzania can contribute via the UWABA bank account in National Microfinance Bank Account number 2052300909. Contributions in kind are also welcome, as well as contributions of time or expertise.

Providers of small contributions from outside Tanzania can contribute via partner organizations in your country who have agreed to gather funds and send them to UWABA, including IBike (www.ibike.org), or by credit card via UWABA facebook causes page <http://www.causes.com/causes/385490/about> .

For larger donations or grants please contact UWABA on uwabadar@yahoo.co.uk