



Building bicycles, building opportunities, building economies

Prieska (25 June 2021) – Studies have shown that bicycles transform lives and by extension, communities and economies. With a bicycle, young people can get to school, health care workers get to their clinics and entrepreneurs can kick start their businesses through improved mobility, thereby creating employment.

Orion Minerals has partnered with Bicycles for Humanity Western Australia (B4H), which donated 420 pre-loved bicycles to Orion's host communities in Siyathemba and Vanwyksvlei. With import and shipping costs covered by Orion, the container arrived in Prieska in April. Following pro-bono container offloading assistance from Partzone Prieska and NR Engineering, the bicycles are now being stored in a Department of Roads and Public Works warehouse from where they will be assembled and distributed.

Expressions of interest solicited from the community in late 2020 resulted in eight individuals undergoing bicycle mechanic training in June 2021 (having been delayed by a month due to disruptions in the Siyathemba community in May). During the training, provided by Bicycle Empowerment Network (BEN) from Cape Town, approximately 100 of the bicycles were assembled and serviced, ready for distribution.

BEN is a South African public benefit organisation that partners with B4H to provide access to mobility and the opportunities it brings. BEN South Africa's initiatives have enabled people to travel further afield for work and helped develop new businesses which create employment in communities. Increased mobility has also improved access to healthcare and education.

Prieska born Matshego Malunga, 21, who attended the bicycle mechanic training said she found bicycle mechanics fascinating. "The hardest part was fixing the gears," she said, adding that the most rewarding part of her day was learning to ride a bicycle. "There are children that stay far from school and these bicycles will help them because they take more than an hour to get to school," said Malunga.



This bicycle initiative is expected to facilitate social and economic empowerment and provide access to opportunities in the Siyathemba and Vanwyksvlei areas. The project aims to make this impact by focusing on six key pillars, namely:

- improving scholar mobility,
- stimulating and supporting SMME activity,
- supporting health, welfare and community development initiatives,
- contributing to community safety and security,
- creating sport and recreation opportunities,
- supporting local business through improving worker mobility.

In collaboration with the community ambassadors, these streams will be rolled out consecutively starting with scholar mobility and SMME stimulation.

“Consultation is underway with the Department of Education and schools to distribute an initial batch of bicycles to every school in Siyathemba and Vanwyksvlei at the start of the next school term,” said Orion’s Commercial & Business Support Manager Marcus Birch. It is intended that scholars will be selected by the schools and eligibility will be based on performance and/or the distance of their daily commute.

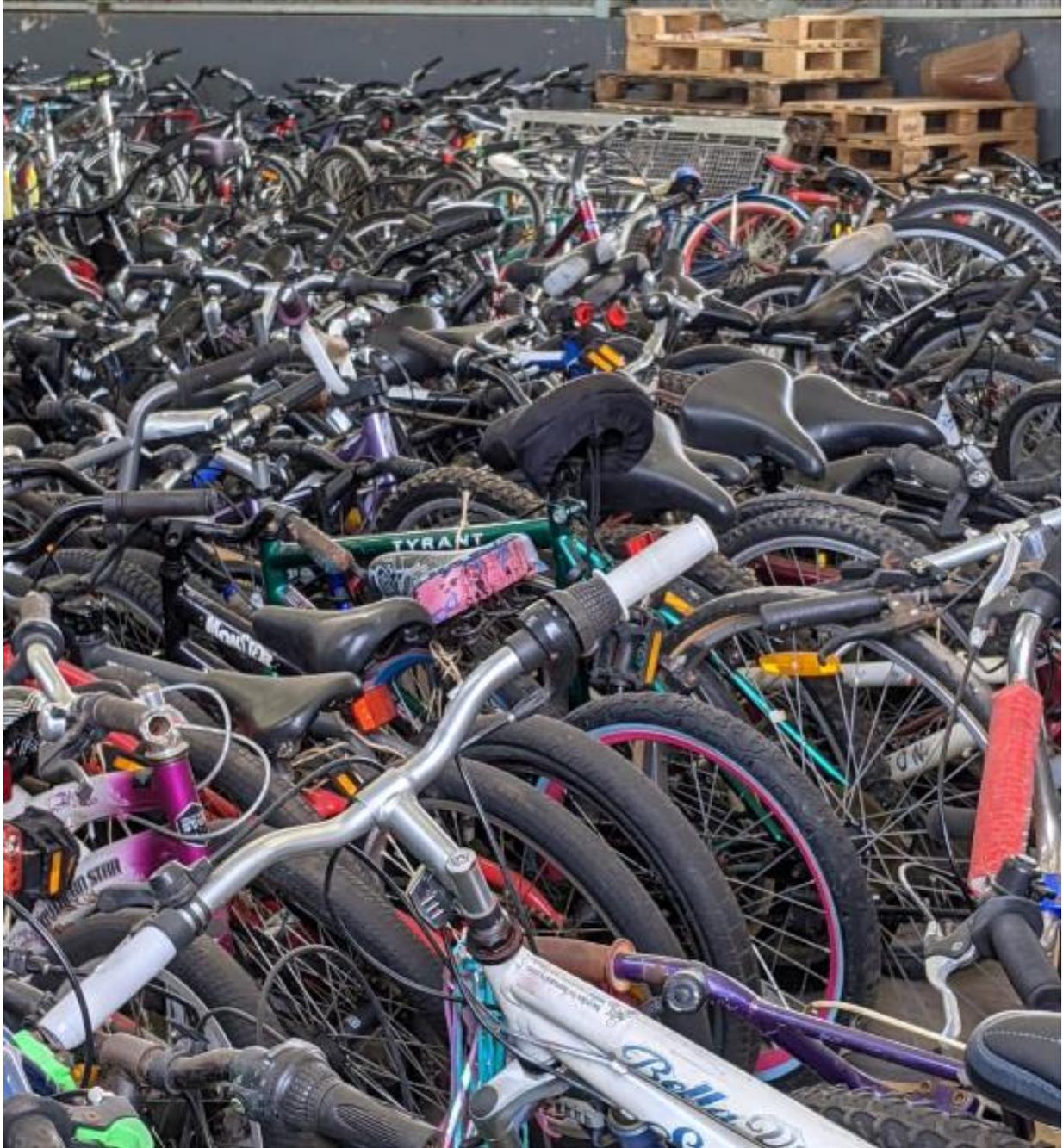
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Caption: Prieska community member Matshego Malunga gets to grips with bicycle mechanics



Caption: Community members prepare for bicycle mechanic training



Caption: Assembled bicycles stored ahead of distribution

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