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## Outapi, Mobility and the Bicycle Lady

Outapi is being touted as the bicycle hub of Namibia, thanks to a collaboration project between SunCycles Namibia, the Bicycle Empowerment Network of Namibia and Hilya Ekandjo, the owner of Okathitu Bicycle Shop in Outapi.



Various projects aimed at mobility solutions are seeing to it that Outapi has an inspired bicycle-friendly culture. With approximately 6500 inhabitants, Outapi, a rural town in Northern Namibia, has become a centre of two-wheeled transportation.

What makes this project especially unique is that many of the bicycles in the town of Outapi, are SunCycles Namibia bicycles. SunCycles Namibia is a social enterprise that specialises in e-mobility and solar recharge systems. They were the first to make e-bikes (electric bicycles) technology available to Namibians. What makes e-bikes unique is that they are electrified (making them easier to use) using the sun (making them environmentally friendly).

99FM's MYD Heart spoke to Marita van Rooyen, Co-Founder of SunCycles Namibia, as she was about to travel to Outapi with her latest delivery of solar powered bicycles, to be delivered to people most in need of these tools of transportation. "We are going to Outapi to visit a very inspirational lady, Hilya Ekandjo, who is in charge of a bicycle shop in Outapi, but not only that, she's also in charge of maintaining e-bikes for the Kindergarten Teachers at DAPP, who received electric bicycles to take them further, to give them a little bit of extra range to visit their students."

Hilya Ekandjo is a remarkable woman, who not only supports teachers from the DAPP Training Centre with e-bike maintenance and free recharge facilities, she is also the coordinator of a children's BMX project, the manager of an e-bike ambulance fleet and soon she will be in charge of Africa's first e-taxi.



Explaining their support for the teachers, Marita notes, "They can travel up to twenty kilometres to reach the kindergartens. At the moment they mostly do it on foot or they take a taxi, which is really expensive, so they end up spending most of their income on travel expenses, which doesn't make any sense. We gave them electric bikes to test and see if this makes a difference to their daily tasks." Marita explains this project was supported by the FNB Foundation.

Now their most recent collaboration with Hilya will see electric ambulances being delivered to Outapi. "We are delivering electric ambulances to her which she will be in charge of. She will be the main point of contact for people that need to go to a clinic, or hospital or something that's a bit further away, and don't have a car to do that." Says Marita.

The concept, explains Marita, is simple and functional, "It's a trailer that's connected to an electric bike. Hilya will be in charge of these ambulances, so they will be stationed at her bike shop, which is very central in town. The e-bikes will be used to bring patients in communities or villages to the hospital or clinic in Outapi."

A collaboration between SunCycles Namibia and Bicycle Empowerment Network of Namibia, this project is ensuring that the needs of the people that it supports, are met in a way that really assists them.

For more information about SunCycles Namibia, find their website by clicking here (<http://www.suncycles-namibia.org/index.html>)

For more information about Hilya Ekandjo's bicycle shop in Outapi, Okathitu Bicycle Shop, click here (<https://www.facebook.com/OkathituBikeShop/>)



Written by Kirsty Watermeyer

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