

BAMBOO BIKES FROM GHANA INFLUENCING THE LATEST TRENDS OF SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

By Kim Assaël

The innovative design of the bamboo bicycle made in Ghana, is growing international attention not only for its frame shaped by bamboo, with an incredible tensile strength compared to steel, but also for its social and environmental value.

Many companies manufacturing the product for the market especially in Africa, are most of all social enterprises. Each bike produced in Ghana is handmade and customized by artisans for individual needs and considering local social, environmental and economic conditions.

These enterprises, training local people to produce and commercialize bicycles, are reducing youth unemployment. Rural young trainees are taken through the entire manufacturing process, from the harvesting of bamboo through the final assembly, until they are equipped with a diverse skill set. Part of the profit generated from the sales often supports educational and economic empowerment of young people in rural areas.

The bikes are joined together by warming various glues over fires, while sourcing many of the additional parts (e.g. chains, bolts) from either low-cost Chinese-made parts or local markets. A Bamboo Bike produced in Ghana has a total retail price of around 120-150 USD. Even though manufacturing in rural areas, with low capital and unreliable electricity sources, the production of these bicycles is quickly increasing and it is intended to travel the globe with a portfolio of bikes in both male and female versions.

Bamboo bikes gained the attention of the United Nations and won many international prizes as inclusive business model that deliver both commercial success and help improve social, economic or environmental conditions. As pointed out by the United Nations Environment Programme UNEP, the sustainable global transport will increase by 2020 reaching a market of \$197bn with a central stage of bamboo bicycles in the coming years (about a 40% of it). Ghana Bamboo Bikes was selected as a [winner of the 2010 UNEP Seed Initiative Award](#). In 2013, the bicycle was presented in the [Warsaw Climate Change Conference](#) with the participation of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. The Bamboo Bike Initiative in Ghana, supported by



[GEF Small Grants Programme](#) (GEF SGP), implemented by UNDP, continues to build capacity and create employment opportunities for skilled and unskilled youth and women. People is trained to set up their own small-scale production base in any part of the country, creating jobs at local level (bike shops and other bike related businesses upon completion) and significantly contributing to reduce poverty in Ghana's rural communities.

The bamboo bicycle is emerging as a catalyst for economic growth in many other African countries supporting the local and international bamboo bike industry. As highlighted into the original first patent approved in 1896, Bamboo is a highly desirable material because practical and sustainable. Bamboo is one of the fastest growing plants on earth, absorbing more carbon than any other plant and helping the protection of the environment by climate mitigation.

In many countries a number of companies are seizing the opportunity to make use of this abundant, natural resource to create a boom in cycling. The bamboo bicycle is today increasing in popularity across the world because in addition to functionality, sustainability, social employment opportunities and economic venues, the customized furniture's answers the fashion actual trend of the sustainable transport for its unique design that can to be adapted to different purposes.

In many cases the Ghanaian production of the bamboo bikes involved different organisations and enterprises which collaborate among each other in the co-production with Ghana or in their foreign commercialisation. Many African countries established agreements to enhance the expertise learnt by the artisans of Ghana. An example is the Californian organization [Bamboosero](#), dedicated in enlarging the bamboo bikes network in many African countries and online. International distributors of Bamboo Bikes produced in Ghana can be found also in Australia, Germany, Taiwan, The Netherlands and Italy.

In other countries such as China, Japan, Singapore, Germany, United Kingdom, Brazil, Finland Philippines and the United States, the original prototype is used to realize bicycles who combine bamboo with different construction materials. Often they are professional grade bamboo bikes, with several high-end models and they are expensive.

The Bamboo bicycle is a beautiful example of innovation, born to give an answer to the problems of transport of rural people and becoming increasingly popular within the modern fashion of sustainable mobility. Riding a bamboo bicycle has become greener everywhere and people who use it as an ordinary mean of transport can be satisfied for having started the trend and have given a contribution to the sustainability of our world.

To know more

Ghanabamboobikes.org

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[Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiative](#)

[Article in UN and climate change website](#)



[Article in United Nations University website](#)

[Article in SGP Programme website](#)

[Article in climatechangenews.com](#)

[Video in TWAS website](#)

www.bamboosero.com

[Bamboo bicycle club website](#)

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[Video in bbc.com](#)

[Article in bbc.com](#)

[Article in cnn.com](#)

[Article in theguardian](#)

[Blackstarbikes website](#)

[Citylab website](#)

[Article in shbarcelona.com](#)

[Video *Pedaling to a better tomorrow* in shopcalfee.com](#)

[Video in youtube](#)

[Koala bicycles.com](#)

[Dragonflybamboo.com](#)

[International Network of Bamboo website](#)

