

# CYCLING AROUND THE WORLD FOR THE GIRL CHILD

James Davis and Emily Conrad-Pickles set off from London last July with a mission of connecting the world through bicycle adventures. Their goal is to cover 20,000km and so far they have covered more than 11,000km.

BY MAKHTUM MUZIRANSA  
mmuziransa@ug.nationmedia.com

**G**iven the unpredictable weather in this part of the world, rainy seasons in Uganda can be unrelenting. Not even young children would dare play in the heavy storms that wash away villages and destroys crops.

Yet for British adventurers James Davis and Emily Conrad-Pickles, the rain was the best way to get ushered into the Pearl of Africa. The duo arrived in Jinja on January 17, two days after cycling past the Kenya-Uganda border in Busia and more than seven months since leaving their home country, England.

After saving for more than two years, the two set off from London on a cycling expedition in July last year. Their goal was to cover 20,000km (12,000miles) to Cape Town, South Africa. The two only encountered rains in Romania in September and since then it was a dry spell until they got to Jinja.

On why they cycle, they say this is to create awareness and support World Bicycle Relief (WBR), a charity which provides bicycles for underprivileged communities in rural Kenya, Zambia and South Africa, among other African countries.

"Predominantly, the bicycles are given to girls of school-going age," James said. "So that distance and time are no longer a barrier for them to get to school. The concept is simple; give them a bike, attendance rates go up, grades go up. Educating

our girls is the long-term strategy to bring our communities out of poverty," he added.

Bikes are also given to health workers to travel to hard to reach areas. This is done to support communities in getting timely healthcare.

"We set ourselves a target of financing 500 bicycles which is £50,000 (about Shs250m). One bicycle is about \$150 (Shs450,000). We just hit the 200 bike barrier," Emily revealed during an interview.

Financially, they have had to spend as minimally as possible on the journey despite attracting sponsors and writing articles for cycling magazines in London. "We are doing it as cheaply as possible; camping in forests and deserts. In Ethiopia and Uganda, there are no places to camp, so we are doing hotels. But it isn't a huge burden," James shared.

They have so far toured 20 countries, including Rwanda and Tanzania, covering more than 11,000km and braving hot temperatures.

## The journey

"It is been hotter than we expected," James intimated before Emily interjected with how much she put into preparations for the tour.

"Back home I trained long distance triathlon, felt fit and thought to myself; this won't be that hard," she recounted. "But we have found it challenging cycling in the heat and I find it difficult in the hills."

From London, the duo cycled to France, fast into west Germany and Austria to complete Eastern Europe from where they entered Romania.

"In almost every country, from Eastern Europe, every village or town we get into, people have gone out of their way to help us," Emily shared.

From Romania, they headed south to Bulgaria then to the coast in Turkey but because of the war, they couldn't get to Syria.

"We had to take a boat to Cyprus from where we had to fly to Jordan and cycle to the Dead Sea, connected to the Red Sea and then to Egypt," James recalled.

"We then travelled the length of the country to Sudan then up and over the mountains in Ethiopia. Then down to Kenya to the west of Lake Turkana from where we crossed into Uganda," he added.

Climbing over mountains, some of more than 10,000ft high, in Ethiopia can be abrasive. But James and Emily braved it all.

"It is very easy to say it in words but in reality it's been a mix of very hot temps, lots of climbing, meeting lots of incredible people on the way," James recounted. They have also gone through deserts, sand-filled roads that are a nightmare to cyclists and also visited some of Africa's most revered physical features and tourist sites.

"Sudan was very difficult in terms of temperature. About 55 degrees Celsius and even at night, it wasn't dropping under 30 so it was tough to sleep.

"Ethiopia was also hard in terms of the terrain and young children who found it an amazing game to throw rocks at cyclists," Emily shared.



## GETTING

The two say they hiccup while riding. "People see two bicycles and ask: 'Can I help? us food, tea so we families,'" Emily recalled.

In her blog on the "London2CapeTown" describes Uganda were most excited set off, with Jinja. She also describes traveller's Mecca source of River Nile.

And Uganda did not. They were welcomed presidential election totally a different they have in England.

"In Uganda, people more than where Emily, who said c



The two cyclists  
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