

**Entrepreneur
Spotlight: Vaughn
Spethmann, Co-
Founder, Zambikes/
Akerfa, Zambia**
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Vaughn Spethmann is Co-Founder of Zambikes, that focusses on mobilizing people out of poverty through the production of bicycles. Vaughn joins us at SOCAP/Europe, having received the SOCAP/Europe Scholarship. In his blog he tells us why he participates in SOCAP/Europe, what his biggest challenges are and how he deals with these challenges.

I am participating in SOCAP/Europe because I believe that the most effective way to break poverty is through the opportunities which successful businesses give to the underprivileged. Business is the best avenue to supply needed goods, fund healthcare and education, get people linked via communication, teach life skills and give perspective. Through the work of Akerfa (a developing-world transportation non-profit based in the USA, [akerfa.org](#)) and Zambikes, we have seen lives sustainably improved. I hope at SOCAP I can learn how to help even more people and discover new ways to help the people we have already touched.

With Zambikes we have a multifold way of helping a broken place. Zambia and all of sub-Saharan Africa have an overwhelming number of problems, including access to clean water and health care, illiteracy, and 50% unemployment. It is amazing how getting people mobilized using a cost-effective bicycle can help with so many of these issues.

Zambikes has distributed more than 8,000 bicycles, over 900 bicycle ambulances and cargo carts, supplied much-needed spare parts, sold over 200 bamboo bicycle frames world wide and have employed over 100 Zambians. Our products are saving and changing lives. We are creating opportunity and employment. Our goal of having Zambikes be run by Zambian nationals will ensure that Zambikes will be a catalyst for change for decades to come.

Our main road blocks are that we are trying to employ and empower the uneducated and underprivileged, yet have a first class company with incredible service, quality and timeliness. When mixing these two goals one will gain many gray hairs and sleepless nights.

Another road block is educating your market that if they put work hard to get a quality Zambike or accessory, it can be a life changing tool. It is hardest to get the first couple to jump on board, but soon others will follow and the snowball effect happens. An example is the use of our cargo carts, which we like to call "Zamcarts." One can go from making less than \$2 per day to well over \$20 with our Zamcart because they can carry more goods, faster and easier, even on treacherous dirt roads. Impoverished, uneducated people cannot always plan well into the future nor be visionaries, but once they see their neighbors making real strides in their lives, they often think to themselves, "Wow, if they can do it, so can I!"

One important tool of our work is staying connected with the people you are trying to serve. This could be during work but even more importantly after work through church or sports or other activities. Another tool is making sure we have fun while on the field so we don't get burned out. The final thing would be prayer.

Without God's favor, I feel like no matter what I do, the sweat is in vain. Our mindset at Zambikes which has been the most beneficial has been to not be afraid to try. We say, "ready, shoot, aim" quite often. We have made plenty of mistakes but have had buckets of success and are well on our way to helping hundreds of thousands of people ride out of poverty. Some people can be so hypercritical and over plan so much that it overwhelms them and they never get the thing going because they lose so much sleep worrying about the details. Planning is essential but trying is much more essential

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