

Big Dreams

A disabled cyclist is changing the world, one race at a time.

Emmanuel Ofori Yeboah was once a shoeshine boy on the streets of Accra, the capital of Ghana. That is a nation in western Africa. Because he was born with a badly deformed right leg, he could not run, walk, or even stand alongside other children. Now 29 years old, Yeboah is a **triathlete**. He competes in long-distance events that involve three sports: swimming, bicycling, and running.

"He's an inspiration," filmmaker Lisa Lax told *WR News*. Lax and her sister, Nancy Stern, told Yeboah's story in the documentary *Emmanuel's Gift*. Their film and Yeboah's hard work have brought about huge changes in the way many people in Ghana view disabled individuals.

The country recently passed the Persons with Disability (PWD) Bill. The bill had been debated in Ghana's government for more than a decade. The bill provides people with disabilities access to public places, jobs, transportation, and special medical care. "Emmanuel was the catalyst," Lax told *WR News*.

Riding High

In Ghana, as in many poor countries around the world, people with disabilities are often **shunned**, or deliberately avoided, by other members of society. They are forced to beg for food. But even as a little boy, Yeboah refused to accept that fate. Instead, he dreamed of riding a bicycle across Ghana. All he needed was a bike.

Yeboah wrote a letter to the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF) in California. CAF sent Yeboah money not only for a mountain bike but also for shorts, socks, gloves, and a helmet. In the spring of 2002, Yeboah rode his bicycle across his home country—almost 400 miles. Since then, Yeboah has been fitted with a **prosthetic**, or artificial, leg, and has competed in sporting events around the world.

Inspiring Others

Yeboah is now a celebrity in Ghana. He runs Emmanuel's Educational Fund, which helps disabled children in Ghana go to school. He also has built or bought more than 800 wheelchairs for other disabled people in his country.

Now Yeboah wants to form a Ghanaian team to compete at the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing. "I want children to learn my story and do more than I've done," he told *WR News*. "I want kids to say, 'Emmanuel inspired me to do this!'"