

Cycle Connect CEO Transition

September 2022





Cycle Connect CEO Transition - 2022

As Cycle Connect, we would like to share with you an exciting, and significant change. After ten years of successfully leading Cycle Connect to its current status, Molly Burke has transitioned out of her role as CEO and is taking a seat on our Board. Molly has grown Cycle Connect from a start-up to an impactful, professional, and well-positioned entity that is prepared for scale. Molly has been instrumental in building Cycle Connect and we are grateful to have had her lead us in our mission and vision over the past decade.

As a result of effective preparation over the past three years, Emmy Okkema, who has been serving as Managing Director will now lead Cycle Connect as our next CEO. Emmy has been the catalyzing force behind Cycle Connect's expansion over the past three years. Our team is excited to have her lead Cycle Connect into the future.

In the next few pages, you will hear from Molly Burke as she reflects on the last 10 years, and meet our new CEO, Emmy Okkema. Our team at Cycle Connect is celebrating this milestone and we are excited about the momentum that this transition brings for our work.



A Letter from Molly Burke

Dear Friends,

I'm sharing a rather exciting, yet bittersweet, update. After ten years of leading Cycle Connect, I am transitioning from CEO to a board member and welcoming Emmy Okkema to the role of CEO. Emmy is our long-time Managing Director and an inspiring, committed, and strategic leader who I firmly believe in. Simply put, we're at the right stage with the right leader in place to take us to even higher heights.

It has been the greatest honor and privilege to serve Cycle Connect for the last ten years. I leave feeling incredibly lucky to have had such an opportunity and for so many to trust me in the process. It is one of the most humbling experiences to reflect on (and one that I hope my fellow entrepreneurs do so they, too, can appreciate!)

Throughout my time, I showed up every day because I believed in our mission. I believe in the potential of farmers in Uganda and across East Africa. They are resilient, resourceful, and deeply focused on creating a better life for their children. Everything is an investment for the next generation, a lesson that I carry over and relate to in my own personal journey as a mother.

If the mission is what got me up for the day, our team is what got me through it. We have an amazing group of people who challenge me to consistently reflect, slow down, and build community. They are humble, deeply committed, and passionate about our clients and mission.

I have never been more proud of our team and what we have accomplished, than how I feel at this moment. I remember the early days when it was just myself and a couple of early team members huddled in our first office. And, today we have more than 60 team members spread across eight locations.

My favorite part about our expansion over the past few years is that it wasn't even led or initiated by me- Emmy joined our team in 2019 as Managing Director and pushed for expansion. Given what she strategized and then led, it made me recognize that this was the right time for me to take a step back. Emmy is the right leader for this next stage of Cycle Connect and I am truly eager to see where she leads us.

I see myself handing over Cycle Connect to a strong leader, partner, and friend. Emmy inspires, optimizes, and rallies the team to push forward. She is always a supportive person herself and, as I think about the journey to hand something over, I couldn't imagine a more perfect person to do that with.

To our clients, team, partners, funders, and stakeholders: thank you for trusting me, partnering with our vision, and giving grace when it was needed. We have an incredible community and I fervently believe it is only getting stronger with Emmy as our CEO.

With much gratitude,



Molly Burke, Co-Founder



Where We've Been Under Molly Burke

As CEO of Cycle Connect, Molly Burke has:

- Grown our team from a single employee in a cramped garage office to a team of 60 employees across eight locations
- Gone from testing our model with a savings group in northern Uganda to working with 12,000 smallholder farmers across Uganda--impacting over 60,000 lives
- Expanded our portfolio from a singular bicycle offering to a range of productive assets that are empowering smallholder farmers to improve their livelihoods
- Added >\$6M in wealth into Ugandan last mile communities
- Rebranded Bicycles Against Poverty to Cycle Connect in 2019



The Cycle Connect team in January 2022

A Letter from Emmy Okkema

Dear Friends,

It's an honor to be stepping into the role of CEO at Cycle Connect! In 2019, I joined the team as Managing Director on the ground in Uganda. Over the past three years, I've navigated our team through the impacts of the pandemic, grown our leadership team to be fully East African, and expanded our reach through the addition of six satellite offices across Uganda. Despite the many challenges of the past three years, our team has displayed the commitment to go the distance to unlock better livelihoods for farmers trapped in poverty. As Molly and I have worked together, we have both begun to feel the shift of Cycle Connect from a growing organization to one that is prepared for scale.

I have a deep personal passion for improving the lives of farmers. After the second world war my grandfather provided a ploughing service with a horse for farmers in his village in the north of the Netherlands. Once he heard about the mechanization options to plough land, my grandfather reached out to his network to access a loan to purchase a tractor. He was among the first in his village to mechanize his services and the tractor also allowed him to offer additional agricultural services relevant for the dairy value chain. It was this initial investment that brought my grandfather to grow a successful agricultural contracting company that three generations later still has a lasting impact on my family.

Having witnessed firsthand how financing and agricultural tools can change the lives of people, I feel strongly connected to the mission of Cycle Connect. I firmly believe in the potential of improving the lives of farmers in rural areas of Uganda, the country that has been my home for the past 10 years. Seeing both the challenges of poverty as well as the great potential of agriculture I feel dedicated to ensure that the farmers living in poverty are equipped with knowledge and tools to set their families up for success for the generations to come.

Cycle Connect is gearing up to connect thousands of Ugandan families to the knowledge and the tools to propel themselves out of poverty. As I step into this role, I will be focused on scaling our impact throughout Uganda.

I'm extremely grateful and in awe of where Molly has brought Cycle Connect—from a young start-up to an organization that has served over 12,000 Ugandan families. With the strong foundation built by Molly, Cycle Connect is now positioned to create even more impact throughout Uganda.

Our team is ready to meet this next chapter and I am ready to lead us there. This is the time to invest in the agriculture sector of Uganda. This is the time to equip rural farmers to ensure they have access to the services to catalyze their families out of poverty for generations to come. This is the time to invest in the mission and vision of Cycle Connect. Together, we can work towards a world where every family living in the last mile is thriving, not merely surviving.

If you're looking to invest your resources into this vision, I would love to connect with you. Let's bring Cycle Connect into the future together.

With much excitement,



Emmy Okkema, CEO



Want to get in touch?

Connect with Emmy over email at emmy@cycleconnect.org



Our whole team in June 2022



Our leadership team in 2022

Where We're Going Under Emmy Okkema

Over the next five years, under the leadership of Emmy Okkema, Cycle Connect is gearing up to:

- Expand across the four different regions of Uganda to create access to thousands of smallholder farmers in deep rural areas
- Create new partnerships to scale our model beyond our team to unlock the next level of impact
- Test and launch productive assets across three different agricultural value chains, diversifying our reach
- Equip over 50,000 smallholder farmers with transformative tools that will impact a total of 250,000 rural Ugandans

Hear From Our Stakeholders

“

Molly's accomplishments are obvious for anyone that has seen Cycle Connect grow from a student organization to a leader in asset financing in Uganda. Her sacrifice to get Cycle Connect to a place where it is now is something to marvel at. It has been a pleasure to watch her inspiring leadership, passion, resilience and perseverance. I am excited to see Emmy interpret our dream and vision in her own way and push Cycle Connect beyond it.

”

Muyambi Muyambi, Founder at Cycle Connect



“

Cycle Connect would not be where it is today without Molly's outstanding leadership, and we will miss her contributions. However, our Board is confident about the proposed transition and turning the reins over to Emmy's extremely capable hands to take Cycle Connect to the next exciting stage in its development. Few organizations get to this point, and we are proud that Cycle Connect is here.

”

Bill Morrow, Board Chair at Cycle Connect



“

Molly is a strategic thinker who tested and developed an innovative approach to better assist the missing middle in agriculture. I call them the missing middle since formal banking does not recognize them due to their status and physical distance from most financial institutions. Emmy is a strong executor and I feel confident in her ability to lead Cycle Connect into the future to better serve this demographic in deep rural areas.

”

Joash Mango, Director of Field and Growth at Cycle Connect



Thank you!

Thank you for supporting our vision of a world where every family in the last mile has the means to thrive, not just survive.

