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Pedal-powered farm machinery for use in rural Guatemala

Cory Doctorow at 1:45 PM Thursday, Sep 2, 2010

Maya Pedal (Part 1 of 3)



Maya Pedal is a Guatemalan NGO that works with international volunteers and local experts to remanufacture old bicycles to serve as "people-powered farm machines." The dozens of "Bicimaquina" designs include bike-powered washing machines, blenders, grain mills, water irrigation devices and animal-feed mills.

Up to ten volunteers from around the world take up residency in San Andreas Itzapas each year for several weeks at a time. Based on bicycle parts contributed by their partner organizations around the world, they work with Mr. Marroquin and his staff to produce between five and ten bicimaquinas a month, and up to fifty over the course of a year. Roughly half the working time at Maya Pedal is devoted building these machines, and the remainder is directed to an extensive bicycle maintenance program for the residents of the city. The bicimaquinas are sold locally for the cost of manufacturing. Several family-run businesses have developed from the bicimaquinas program including a shop that grinds different grains for customers, and a building contractor that uses a bicycle-powered concrete compaction machine at construction sites in the region.