

Expedition with a cause

A 10-month trek will highlight poverty and hunger in Africa, writes

Kamah! Cogdon

PEDALLING 24,000km across Africa will be a gruelling physical and mental challenge. But with thousands of Victorian students behind her, failure is not an option for adventure cyclist Kate Leeming.

The Kew woman, 42, hopes to highlight the causes and consequences of extreme poverty during her epic 10-month Breaking the Cycle journey between Africa's most westerly and easterly points.

In doing so, she aims to educate and inspire students and others to get involved.

"We want people to learn by understanding and feeling where we are and what we're experiencing."

Leeming plans to write on her blog once a week and file audio reports every few days, documenting her experiences, including visits to projects that are making a difference to impoverished lives.

She will delve into women's education in Burkina Faso, the rights of the Baka pygmies in Cameroon, the impact of slavery and colonialism in Senegal, and the history of education across the Sahara.

War's imprint, food security,

different cultures and health issues are also on Leeming's agenda.

Students will be able to follow Leeming's progress on her website, and learn more at school.

The Victorian Education Department has developed a program to complement Leeming's expedition.

Aimed at years 5 to 9, it is designed to deepen awareness about African culture, geography, environmental sustainability and extreme poverty.

Breaking the Cycle, an official activity of the United Nations' Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, follows Leeming's earlier record-breaking rides.

In 2004, she cycled 25,000km around Australia and became the first woman to cross the arduous Canning Stock Route, with its 1000 sand dunes and temperatures above 40C.

In 1993 she was the first woman to cycle across the new Russia.

Leeming and her team — Australian cameraman Patrick MacAleavey, British adventure cyclist Daniel Harman and driver John Davidson — will start their African journey in Senegal in mid-October.

They plan to take in 20 countries including Mali, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Angola, Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia, before finishing in Somalia.

Schools can follow her expedition at www.btcycle.com



African adventure: cyclist Kate Leeming has a bumpy road ahead.

Picture: ROB BAIRD

