

ADVENTURE

Life cycle



Kate Leeming peddles a positive message as she raises awareness about children at risk.

Cyclist Kate Leeming is not the first person in her family to pedal great distances.

In 1897, her great-great-uncle, William Snell, rode from Fremantle to Melbourne to propose to his childhood sweetheart. "It's a great story I remember my grandmother always telling me," says Leeming. "I guess you could say it's in my blood."

In 1993, Leeming became the first woman to cycle across Russia as part of a project to aid children affected by the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster. She then claimed

another first when she rode across Australia in 2004 and became the first woman to cycle the roughly 1000 sand dunes of the Canning Stock Route in Western Australia. "Riding through the desert can be hell," Leeming says. "The Canning Stock Route took 28 days to ride, and I had problems with dehydration about 10 days in."

Next, the 41-year-old will be cycling across Africa, from Senegal in the west to the Horn of Africa in the east. Covering 24,000 kilometres and 20 countries, it will be her longest journey yet. "Physically, it's going to be tough. Nothing can really prepare you for sitting on a bike for six to eight hours a day, for 10 months."

The Breaking the Cycle expedition has been designed to draw attention to the extreme poverty in the region. There are plans to film Leeming's experience for a documentary, and the Victorian Department of Education has created a program to complement the trip. "What we want to do is inspire people, especially kids, to develop innovative ways to give people a leg-up rather than a handout," she says. Leeming plans to start on October 21.

Caitlin Chang

Follow the expedition at www.btcycle.com.

